

THE INTERNATIONAL PLATO SOCIETY



UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA
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X SYMPOSIUM PLATONICUM

The Symposium



Pisa, 15th - 20th July, 2013

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X Symposium Platonicum

The *Symposium*

Pisa, 15th - 20th July, 2013

Sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica

Con il Patrocinio dell'Università di Pisa

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Thursday

18th July, 2013

Plenary session

Chair: Michael Erler

Are the ‘higher mysteries’ of Platonic love reserved for ethical-educational pederasty?

Christopher Gill

My question here is about the scope of the kind of interpersonal relationships that can form part of the ascent in Diotima’s ‘higher mysteries’. There are indications at least that the ascent can incorporate a version of (what we might call) ethical-educational pederasty. But does that mark the limit of the scope of relationships that are compatible with the ascent? In particular, I want to ask whether marriage and childbirth, and parenthood, constitute a context in which the ascent can be conducted successfully. In some ways, I acknowledge, this may seem a strange, even perverse, question to pose. Diotima has, at an earlier stage, presented marriage and childbirth as an inferior expression of *erōs*, one that is directed at the body rather than the psyche, by contrast with ethical-educational pederasty. Also, of course, on some readings, the ascent is not about interpersonal relationships at all, but only about an individual’s quest for philosophical truth. However, I think that there are reasons to pursue the question I am raising. The higher mysteries in the *Symposium* constitute what is perhaps the most famous and influential expression of Plato’s ideal of love. Diotima’s account of *erōs*, in the earlier part of her conversation and in the mysteries, is exceptional in the extent to which it seeks to locate the concept of *erōs* in the broadest, most universal, framework.¹ It would be a paradoxical outcome if Plato’s ideal, despite this aspiration to universality, excluded what is, for a large percentage of the human race, the primary context for the sustained expression of love.

There is a further reason for pursuing this topic. It helps us to focus on a question that is crucial for the interpretation of Diotima’s account, but which is surprisingly hard to answer. What is the relationship, exactly, between the higher mysteries and Diotima’s earlier revisionist analysis of *erōs*? Her main earlier claim was that *erōs* should be reconceived as the desire to possess the good forever, an aim achieved by giving birth in beauty both in body and mind (206a-b). This is, explicitly, presented as a radical expansion of what *erōs* is normally taken to mean, and one which underlies a very wide range of motives expressed in human interpersonal relationships (205a-d). But how should we understand the relationship between this general claim and the ‘mysteries’ that she sketches at the end of her speech? More precisely, what is the relationship between the very broad population and spectrum of types of behaviour subsumed under Diotima’s general definition of *erōs* and what is envisaged in the ascent-passage?

In exploring this question, I begin by developing some points made by Frisbee Sheffield (2012: 122-7). She suggests, plausibly, that Diotima’s analysis of *erōs* constitutes a pioneering specification of human happiness, conceived as the goal or *telos* of a human life. Thus, *erōs* represents the desire to have the good forever (which constitutes human happiness), and the ‘work’ or ‘function’ of *erōs*, by which this goal is achieved, is ‘giving birth in beauty both in mind and body’.² Although Diotima is enigmatic on how, precisely, the ‘mysteries’ relate to this earlier analysis (209e-210a), the relationship can be understood in two related ways. The mysteries indicate, in the form of an ascent, the process of quest, journey, education or development, by which someone can move towards achieving this *telos* of human happiness, or at least doing so in the best possible way. In another sense, the mysteries can be seen as spelling out, though in a rather impressionistic form, what is meant or implied in Diotima’s earlier account of human happiness and its ‘work’. The climatic image of the mysteries (211e4-212a7) suggests that one gains possession of the good (life) (forever - as far as a human being can) by performing the work of *erōs* at its best, that is, by giving birth to true virtue through engaging deeply with the true nature of beauty. The *telos*, to spell this out a bit more, is not just ‘gazing at and being with’ beauty in its essence, but also ‘giving birth to true virtue’; the combination of the two elements in the final image of the ascent thus matches the complexity of Diotima’s earlier definition of *erōs*.³ The earlier stages of the ascent (210a4-c2) offer preliminary versions of what is involved, namely reaching the best available understanding of what beauty (or ‘the fine’, *kalon*) means and expressing this understanding in one’s motivational pattern and relationships (thus doing the ‘work of *erōs*’). The underlying thought, implied in the image of ‘ascent’, is that the better one comes to understand the nature of ‘beauty’ and to embed this in one’s character and mode of life, the closer one gets to achieving the *telos*, human happiness at its best. In this sense, we can see

¹ See 205a-d, also 211e-212a (*erōs* directed at the form of beauty, i.e. a universal idea).

² See 206a-b, cf. 204e-205a on the idea that this constitutes happiness, *eudaimonia*.

³ i.e. gaining possession of the good (life) forever (as far as a human being can) and doing so by giving birth in beauty (cf. 211a4-212a7 with 206a11-12, and b7-8).

the mysteries as closely integrated with the earlier analysis of *erōs* and its role in enabling human happiness, and as spelling out or illustrating what it means.

Is initiation in the mysteries reserved for philosophers? This is often assumed; and is suggested by the indications of intellectual processes (such as generalisation or induction from instances and inferential reasoning) often linked in Platonic dialogues with attempts to understand a given notion by definition or analysis (210a8-b5, c6-e1). Also, of course, the ascent concludes with what is normally seen as an imagistic characterization of key features of a Platonic ‘form’ or ‘idea’, specifically, that of the beautiful or fine (211c7-d1, d8-e4). So one can, plausibly, interpret the ascent as a distinctively philosophical process leading to dialectically based understanding of the nature of the *kalon*. On this view, then, the mysteries resemble analogous claims in the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*-palinode. The implication in those passages, and here, would then be that philosophers (as characterised in the relevant context) are the only people who can properly complete the process described, for instance, of achieving virtue in the full sense or of expressing human happiness at its best.⁴ On the other hand, it is striking that here, by contrast with the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, the initiates are not specifically presented as philosophers or as engaged in specifically philosophical inquiry (the term *philosophia* occurs once in the ascent but it is not clear quite how technical its meaning is here).⁵ Although the account also refers to the role of a ‘guide’ or ‘tutor’ (*paidagōgos*) (210a6-7, c7, e3), it is not stated that this role is a specifically philosophical one. Also, despite the allusions just noted to the intellectual processes linked with Socratic-Platonic dialectic, the explicit focus is not on philosophical debate or inquiry. The account seems deliberately to combine a progression that makes sense in philosophical terms (marked out by increasing generalisation and abstraction, moving from perception of particulars to knowledge of forms) with other kinds of life-experience. The life-experiences named are, conspicuously, erotic interpersonal relationships (in 210a-c), but also engagement with social ‘practices and laws’ (210c3-4, 6) as well as forms of knowledge. The implication might be that Diotima is charting, in philosophically significant terms, a process – growth in ethical understanding and the expression of this in one’s life – which is not necessarily limited to philosophers. The movement from focusing on interpersonal erotic relationships to social ‘practices and laws’ (in 210c3-4, also c5-6, 211c4-5) might be seen as evoking a shift in concern, from erotic friendship to involvement in social and political activities, that could form part of the normal life-cycle of many Athenian citizens in this period.⁶ Alternatively, if we take the ascent as reserved only for philosophers, the process, explicitly, does not depend solely on effective involvement in (for instance) dialectical inquiry but on the interplay between distinctively philosophical activity and inferences drawn from other life-experiences and actions.

How important in this process is the interpersonal dimension?⁷ To put it differently, to what extent does *erōs*, as conceived in the ascent-passage, overlap with ‘love’ (or *erōs*), as conventionally understood? Discussion of this topic was dominated for a long time by a vigorous critique of Plato’s theory by Gregory Vlastos (1981). Vlastos’s claim was that Plato’s theory was defective because it failed to bring out the idea which is fundamental to any adequate account, namely that love is a response to an individual and to that individual for his or her sake. Sheffield, again, can help us to pinpoint what is problematic in Vlastos’s treatment.⁸ Part of the problem is that Vlastos’s criterion for an adequate account of love is specifically modern (it is indebted to Kant’s idea of valuing the other as an end in herself and also places inherent value on individuality as such), although Vlastos himself claimed to find the criterion in Aristotle’s theory of friendship.⁹ A second problem is that Vlastos’s view, arguably, involves a misreading of the sense in which, during the ascent, love of the form of beauty replaces love of particular people. What is replaced, is one understanding of what beauty means by another, more profound, one, an understanding which informs all aspects of someone’s pattern of responses, including one’s interpersonal relationships. It is not a matter, simply and straightforwardly, of jettisoning (or at least devaluing) relationships with people in favour of a relationship with the form of beauty.¹⁰ Thirdly, and most fundamentally, assessing Diotima’s account

⁴ See e.g. *Phaedo* 68c-69d, concluding with the contrast between those who are or are not initiated; *Republic* 485d-e. 486a-b, 518d-e, 586e-587a (see further Sedley forthcoming); *Phaedrus* 256a-e.

⁵ See *en philosophia(i) aphthonō(i)*, 210d6: this could mean something as non-technical as ‘ungrudging (or ‘generous’) love of knowledge’, though the linkage with *dianoēmata* might suggest something more technical.

⁶ However, the next stage is engagement with forms of knowledge; so one cannot press too far the idea that the ascent matches the normal life-cycle of an Athenian citizen.

⁷ On this question, see Belfiore 2012: 140-60.

⁸ Sheffield 2006: ch. 5, 2012: 119-22, 128-9;

⁹ See Gill 1990 (on individuality, in Vlastos and others) and Gill 1996: 349-50, on what Aristotle meant by valuing friends ‘for their own sake’.

¹⁰ *Symp.* 210d, 211d-e might, superficially, seem to suggest this; but the entities involved (people, forms) are not the same in

solely as a theory of love (taken to mean ‘interpersonal love’) can lead us to overlook the distinctive character and structure of the account. As suggested earlier, the structure consists in a combination of a general analysis of human happiness (204e, 206a-b) and the ascent-passage (210a-212a), which illustrates and explains what this analysis implies. The core idea in the ascent-passage, I think, is that deepening understanding of the nature of the beautiful (and thus of what human happiness involves) informs and transforms *all* aspects of one’s motivation and responses. It does not *only* affect one’s interpersonal relationships, though it does not exclude them either. Thus Plato’s theory, put generally, is not just about (interpersonal) love, as Vlastos assumed. It is about one’s most fundamental and profound desires and objectives – what Bernard Williams calls ‘ground projects’¹¹ – though these will, of course, also affect one’s interpersonal relationships.

How, more precisely, do other people figure in this process? To judge from the early stages of the ascent, they have two main roles. They figure as sources of erotic stimulus and as recipients of the progressively transforming effect of the ascent on the lover. Thus, the lover (or main figure in the ascent) is attracted first to someone with a beautiful body and then, as he progresses, to someone with a good or admirable (*epieikēs*) mind or character (psyche) even if he has little of the bloom of beauty. In the second case, we are given a clear indication of the transforming effect of the ascent on the lover’s motivation and on how this affects the way he treats the other person. The lover ‘will love and care for him and give birth to the kinds of discourse that help young men to become better’ (210c1-3). The lover’s improved understanding of what constitutes beauty (*to kalon*) means that he is attracted to signs of ethical goodness in another and wants to ‘procreate’ (*tiktein*) by improving the other person’s virtue. Diotima is more explicit here than in later stages about the interpersonal dimension of the ascent. This leads some, such as Vlastos, to infer that the interpersonal aspect is wholly replaced or at least radically devalued. Others, notably Anthony Price, on the other hand, note the recurrence, later in the passage, of phrases or ideas which figure in the description of the second stage of love (210c1-3): especially ‘giving birth (*tiktein*) to discourses’ (210d5) and ‘giving birth to true virtue and bringing it up’ (212a5-6). This is taken by them to imply that the whole process of the ascent – like the partly parallel description of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus* palinode – is envisaged as taking place within a single one-one relationship, the quality and depth of which is progressively increased during the ascent.¹² Recent discussions of this question, for instance, by Elizabeth Belfiore, are more cautious about Price’s suggestion, since the indications are ambiguous.¹³ In general, as already indicated, I think that the main thrust of the account points in a different direction from either of these readings. The overall theme is that progressive understanding of the nature of beauty (and thus of the nature of human happiness, seen as the *telos*) reshapes one’s fundamental motivations and objectives as a whole, including one’s life as an independent agent and one’s relationships (perhaps both interpersonal and communal). Hence, the ‘true virtue’ procreated by the ascent (212a4-5) may be one’s own, or that of another person affected by one’s actions or attitudes; and one’s own virtue may be developed, in part, by engagement in this interpersonal relationship. All these possibilities are included, but none are explicitly accentuated.

I now turn to what was presented earlier as the key question addressed in this paper: what is the scope of the contexts in which the ascent described by Diotima can take place? In particular, is this limited to ethical-educational pederasty, as some phrases in the ascent-passage might indicate, or can it take place in a much broader range of types of relationship, including marriage and parenting? On the second view, as suggested earlier, there is a closer fit between Diotima’s earlier, highly inclusive, even universal, analysis of *erōs* and the ascent-passage. Let me consider first the view that the ascent is presented as one which can only take place in the context of ethical-educational pederasty.

In using this phrase (ethical-educational pederasty), I refer to – what seems to be – Plato’s idealised version of a relatively familiar pattern in Athenian society, an erotic relationship between an older man (though he may be still quite young) and a younger one, typically still adolescent.¹⁴ In Plato’s version of this relationship, the focus is, typically, on the development of virtue in the younger partner though it can also include ethical development (effected through the relationship) in the older one. A version of this ideal figures in Diotima’s earlier review of types of procreation in beauty (as

kind. See also Sheffield 2012: 129: ‘all that follows is that beautiful bodies and souls rank low *as objects of understanding*’ (her italics), responding to the claim of Vlastos 1981: 31, that ‘personal affection ranks low in Plato’s *scala amoris*’.

¹¹ Williams 1981: 12-14.

¹² See e.g. Price 1981, 1989: 43-54; also Kosman 1976.

¹³ Belfiore 2012: 152-4; also Sheffield 2012: 13-4.

¹⁴ The underlying social pattern has been much studied (and debated); for a recent treatment, challenging most previous assumptions, see Davidson 2007; also Detel 1998: 120-37.

one example of mental or psychic procreation, 209b-c); and there is a more extended description in the *Phaedrus* 'palinode', in which the relationship is, unusually, conceived as a life-long, one-one relationship (256c-e). The ascent-passages, as a whole, is couched in terms of pederasty; and at quite a late stage, Diotima characterises her account as being about the right way to love boys (*paiderastein*) (211b5-6). Ethical-educational pederasty, as described in a passage cited earlier,¹⁵ is presented as constituting the second stage in the ascent, though this does not necessarily mean that the relationship itself is discontinued in the later stages.¹⁶ Since this is the only type of interpersonal relationship that is evoked in the ascent, does this mean that, for Diotima, ethical-educational pederasty is the only, or at least, best context in which this process can be taken forward?

Why would Diotima's account single out this type of relationship if the intention was *not* to suggest that this was the best context for ascent? A possible answer to this question is this. This kind of relationship – more precisely the *contrast* between ethical-educational pederasty and a more conventional one, directed at physical beauty and aiming at sexual satisfaction (210a4-8, b6-c3) – provides a very clear exemplification of the kind of progress in ethical understanding that is the main theme of the ascent-passages. But it does not follow from this that the ascent can only – or even best – be conducted in this type of interpersonal context. The fact that Diotima does not refer to this context again in the ascent, even though she picks up key motifs from the description of educational pederasty, can be taken as indicating that the description of ethical-educational pederasty is exemplary or illustrative of a more general pattern. The implication, then, may be that the transformative process presented in the ascent can be taken forward in a whole range of types of interpersonal relationships and indeed of activities or types of involvement – perhaps in *any* of these.

What about marriage and parenthood? These are, for much of the human race, key contexts for love, and also for ethical development and the formation of ideas about one's grounding projects in life, themes which are central to the ascent, even if 'love', in the conventional sense, may not be. By contrast with ethical-educational pederasty, I acknowledge, there is little reason to see marriage as singled out for special consideration. But should we therefore assume that, if challenged on this point, Diotima would actively rule marriage and parenthood out as appropriate contexts for ascent?

I consider first some possible objections to the idea that, for Diotima, marriage could function as a suitable context for the ascent, and then reasons for thinking that, by contrast, this context might be especially valuable for this purpose. A possible objection to this idea is that Diotima earlier presented marriage and parenthood as the expression of a lower or more basic form of human motivation, namely being 'pregnant' in body (208e, cf. 207a-b), rather than in mind (209b-c). However, in the earlier passage, Diotima has a very specific point in view, the contrast between self-immortalisation through (physical) children and through 'children' produced by mental or intellectual activity. This does not, of course, mean that Diotima assumes (bizarrely!) that human marriage and parenthood are purely physical processes. It would have been entirely possible for Diotima to have described a version of these activities that focused on the mental aspect, and on the ethical development of one or both partners, just as she does in the case of pederasty (209b, 210c1-3). It would, of course, be impossible to present marriage (leading to childbirth and parenting) as a context for the kind of celibate life and interpersonal relationship that is presented as the goal in the *Phaedrus*-palinode (256a-d). But that is not explicitly presented here as the goal: and life-long engagement in family life is surely fully compatible with the focus on ever deepening understanding of beauty and the expression of this in virtue, which is the explicit theme here.

A second possible objection to this line of thought is that, given the contrast between ancient Greek (or at least Platonic) views of marriage and the modern West, Plato could not have conceived marriage and parenthood as appropriate frameworks for the programme of transformative intellectual and ethical development presented in the ascent. The issues here are potentially complex ones; and my comments here can only be brief. But simply to notice two pieces of evidence: Aristotle presents as uncontroversial the idea that marriage is a context in which both partners can be expected to show virtue (if not quite of the same kind); and the *Symposium* itself twice cites the case of Alcestis' voluntary death for her husband as an exceptional act both of *erōs* and courage.¹⁷ I do not think it would be difficult to find ample evidence that thinkers of this period commonly present marriage and parenthood as contexts in which both (or all) of those involved can in principle exercise or develop virtue. Also, Plato, famously, in Book 5 of the *Republic*, argues for the radically innovative view that women are not *ipso facto* inferior to men in intellectual or ethical capacity and are indeed capable of

¹⁵ 210c1-3: The lover 'will love and care for him and give birth to the kinds of discourse that help young men to become better'.

¹⁶ On the question whether interpersonal love continues in the later stages of the ascent, see Sheffield 2006: 163-74.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1162a25-7; *Symp.* 179b, 208d2-3.

the highest possible mode of development in these respects, and of becoming philosopher-queens (540c). If we combine these two points, we have the materials, at least, for maintaining that marriage and parenthood are perfectly feasible contexts for the ascent that Diotima outlines. In a slightly later period of Greek thought, marriage or its equivalent is explicitly seen as a possible vehicle for living out a philosophically defined ideal of the best life. There are versions of this idea in Cynicism, Epicureanism and Stoicism;¹⁸ and one can argue that, conceptually at least, there is nothing to stop Plato formulating the same idea.

However, one might reasonably ask, what would have been the positive merits for Diotima in introducing the marriage and parenthood framework in connection with the ascent, alongside or in preference to educational pederasty? In pursuing this question, I am concerned not only to interpret Plato's theory, understood in its own terms – though I am still concerned with this question – but also to ask what this theory, as so interpreted, has to say to us, living in the modern world. One clear benefit is that full engagement in family life provides a rich and rounded context for sustained ethical development for either partner or both, together with scope for expressing the transforming effect of this development in 'procreative' education of others. For instance, let us consider the demands or challenges of the marital relationship, which can include childbirth, bringing children up, helping children to mature into adulthood, coming to terms with the deaths of the parents of one's partner as well as one's own parents, and perhaps also the death of the partner, and (especially in the ancient context) one's children. Responding appropriately, deeply, to these demands, in actions and in attitudes, offers a very full basis for gaining a steadily increasing understanding of 'the beautiful' or 'fine' (*kalon*) and of expressing this understanding in the development of virtue, in oneself or in one's partner or children. A further advantage of marriage (and parenthood, actually, in its later stages), though not perhaps the kind of marriage and parenthood that Plato would recognise, is that it offers scope for a shared, and in some sense, equal participation in the process of ascent in a way that can have a 'procreative' effect on the ethical development of the other person or persons involved as well as oneself.¹⁹ Also (and this point would apply also in terms of ancient Greek social patterns), the positive effects linked with ethical-educational pederasty here and in the *Phaedrus*-palinode, might seem more effectively or appropriately produced in the context of a relationship between father and son or parent and maturing adult. Arguably, Plato's idealised version of this relationship nudges it towards the pattern of the father-son relationship.

Obviously, the points just made about the merits in this connection of marriage and parenthood, considered both from a modern standpoint and as relevant to Plato's thought-world, could be explored and debated much further. But I hope the points made give some indication why we might see these as constituting an especially appropriate framework for completing the ascent described by Diotima, though I am not claiming that there are any explicit references to this framework in the ascent-passage. A further advantage of adopting this suggestion is that it brings out how both Diotima's redefinition of *erōs* and her innovative vision of 'ascent' have a universality of reference, or at least relevance, for a wide spectrum of human lives.

I end this paper by highlighting two features of Stoic thought that are highly suggestive here, and which bring out quite explicitly dimensions of Plato's theory (or possible implications of Plato's theory) that I am accentuating here. The Stoic account of ideal *erōs* resembles Plato's (and may have been partly inspired by this) in underlining the thought that this is directed primarily at the ethical development of the other person, though also fostering that of oneself (or the lover).²⁰ Reconstructing the history of the Stoic theory is, for various reasons, not at all easy. But it looks as though, originally, the theory may have been formulated in terms of ethical-educational pederasty. However, in the course of the Hellenistic and, more clearly, the Roman period, Stoics stress that the marriage framework presents one possible context and indeed, an especially valuable context for *erōs* conceived as a mode of ethical development.²¹ A second feature of Stoic thought potentially relevant

¹⁸ On the Cynic marriage of Crates and Hipparchia, see D. L. 6.88, 93; on women as part of the 'family' of Epicurus' Garden, see Nussbaum 1994: 117-119; on Stoicism on marriage, see below.

¹⁹ Detel 1998: ch. 4 argues that (by contrast with modern patterns) Athenian interpersonal relationships, both familial and erotic, in the 5th-4th centuries are conceived in 'asymmetric' terms, those of unequal, active and passive, partners. But I am not sure things are so straightforward. For the idea that 'the shared life' (as well as reciprocity) are key ideals for family as well as other interpersonal relationships in this period, see Gill 1996: 346-52, 354-5; also 158-72 (on Medea).

²⁰ See e.g. *erōs* 'is an attempt to gain *philia* resulting from the appearance of beauty; and is not directed at intercourse (*sunousia*) but at friendship ... and youthful beauty is the flower of virtue' (D. L. 7.129-30, cf. Stob. 2.65-6, 115).

²¹ See e.g. Antipater (2nd cent BC): marriage 'involves the truest and most genuine good-will', involves the 'total blending of mind and body' and is a bond in which we treat the other person as ourselves (D. L. 7.124). Musonius (1st cent AD) claims women are capable of philosophy and virtue in a full sense and characterises marriage as, ideally, 'perfect companionship (*sumbiōsis*) and mutual love (*kēdemonia*) of husband and wife' (fr. 13A Lutz).

here, and one central to their ethical philosophy, is their analysis of ethical development (characterised as *oikeiōsis*, familiarisation or appropriation), which underlies their view of *erōs*. Fundamental to this analysis is the idea that personal ethical development (growth in the understanding of what is good) and social ethical development (widening and deepening the circle of those with whom one is ethically engaged), though constituting separating strands of ethical development, are also potentially mutually informing and supportive.²² A further dimension is the thought that, although philosophy provides the best means of analysing the stages and nature of this development, the development itself can take place in *any* context, including that of family life or communal engagement.²³ In this paper, I have suggested that all the features just highlighted in Stoic thinking are – or at least may – also form part of the Platonic theory of love, as presented by Diotima. Listeners may conclude that the paper has been an exercise in (over-) assimilating Plato's theory to a different and later ancient one. However, I hope that my treatment has, rather, brought out some interesting and unnoticed points of resemblance between them, and ones which underline the credibility and cogency of both ancient theories.

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²² See Long and Sedley 1987: 57 and 59D.

²³ On Stoic *erōs*, see Gill 2013; on relevant aspects of Stoic thinking about ethical development, see Gill 2006: 145-66, esp. 162-6, 377-89, esp. 387-9.

Ἔρως y συνουσία en el *Simposio* o cómo hay que apasionarse en vista de la vida buena *

Marcelo D. Boeri

§1 “Amor platónico” y Alcibíades enamorado

La expresión “amor platónico” se ha convertido en parte del habla común, en cuyo dominio suele designar un “amor ideal”, no carnal. Como sabemos, ni “amor platónico” ni “ideal” (en la expresión “amor ideal”) tienen mucho que ver con lo que Platón entiende por ἔρως en el *Simposio*, donde es bastante claro que de lo que se trata es de un *deseo*¹ de aquello que no se posee.² Es probable que la expresión “amor platónico” (como “amor ideal”) esté inspirada en un pasaje del *Alcibíades I* (127e-131e), que tiene un paralelo bastante preciso en *Simposio* 183e: el amante vulgar es el que desea el cuerpo más que el alma. Este tipo de amor no es constante porque desea algo que de ningún modo es permanente (el cuerpo, que está sujeto a cambio): en cuanto cesa la belleza del cuerpo (*i.e.* lo que ese amante deseaba), el amante “escapa volando”. El amante de un carácter noble (ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἡθους χρηστοῦ ὄντος ἐραστής), en cambio, permanece constante durante toda su vida, porque está apegado a algo permanente (ἄτε μονίμῳ συντακεῖς; 183e6). Tal vez hay un sentido en el que esta permanencia en la fidelidad de un solo amante parece ser objetada por Diotima (cf. *Simposio* 210a-b);³ pero no es menos cierto que Diotima considera más valiosa la belleza del alma que la del cuerpo, *i.e.* la belleza que no cesa, porque si alguien es excelente en cuanto a su alma (ἐπιεικὴς ὢν τὴν ψυχὴν), aun cuando su lozanía sea escasa (σμικρὸν ἄνθος), eso será suficiente para amarlo, desearlo, engendrar y buscar “bellos discursos” que sean de una índole tal que produzcan jóvenes mejores (210a-c). Esto es lo que advierte Alcibíades: Sócrates no es bello en el sentido de la belleza corpórea, pero es de un alma excelente, de modo que eso basta para desearlo eróticamente.

Lo que quisiera sugerir en esta presentación es que, a pesar de que hay buenas razones para suponer que el discurso de Diotima es *el* discurso filosófico del diálogo, los demás discursos pueden entenderse como movimientos argumentativos que describen etapas en la conversión hacia la filosofía, conversión en la que la *sunousiva* entre el joven y su mentor filosófico constituye el entrenamiento necesario para alcanzar la “sabiduría erótica” de la que están enamorados tanto Agatón como Alcibíades, pero probablemente sin saber muy bien por qué. Mi discusión, centrada en el discurso de Alcibíades y en el contraste que puede establecerse con el de Diotima, intentará mostrar el carácter complementario que ambos discursos tienen como enfoques que permiten favorecer la conversación dialógica que hace comprensible la identificación entre καλόν y ἀγαθόν como objeto de amor.

§2 Alcibíades un “filósofo erótico” a mitad de camino

Cuando Alcibíades irrumpe (“totalmente ebrio”; 212e3: μεθύοντα ... πάνυ σφόδρα) en el recinto en el que ha tenido y sigue teniendo lugar el simposio, su propósito es “coronar la cabeza del más sabio y del más bello” (212e7-8: ἵνα ... τὴν τοῦ σοφοτάτου καὶ καλλίστου κεφαλὴν). Aunque completamente ebrio, Alcibíades declara que *sabe bien* (212e9-213a1: εὖ οἶδα) que lo que dice es verdad. ¿Cómo podría un ebrio saber de lo que está hablando? Tal vez la respuesta a esta pregunta puede ayudar a entender que Alcibíades, aunque no escuchó el discurso de Diotima, no sólo tiene en cuenta algunos detalles de su enseñanza, sino también que, aun cuando parece entender tal enseñanza, no ha sido aún capaz de incorporarla a su acción.

Como saben muy bien los estudiosos del *Simposio*, la aparición de Alcibíades es

* Borrador para lectura pública.

¹ En 204d3 se dice que “Eros lo es de las cosas bellas”, sin duda un *deseo* (ἐπιθυμία; 200e4) de las cosas bellas. Véase también 206a11-12 y 206b7-8, donde Eros es “la procreación en lo bello (τόκος ἐν καλῷ), tanto según el cuerpo como según el alma” (la procreación en lo bello es la visión de lo Bello mismo, la “inmortalidad a través de la procreación”. Una buena discusión de este tema se encuentra en Fierro 2001: 30-36 y en Follon 2001: 55-61). En éste y en los demás pasajes citados textualmente del *Simposio* utilizo la traducción de Juliá 2004 (a veces con ligeras modificaciones). Uno podría tener dudas respecto de la identificación que establece Platón entre ἐπιθυμία y ἔρως, siendo ἐπιθυμία la palabra habitual para hacer referencia a un deseo corpóreo y, en particular, sexual (cf. Platón, *República* 329c7; 390c1; 437b7-8. *Filebo* 34d10-11). Pero en *Simp.* 205a-d es claro que esa asimilación es completa.

² *Simposio* 200a-b y, especialmente, 200e3-5: ὁ μὴ ἔχει καὶ ὁ μὴ ἔστιν αὐτὸς καὶ οὐ ἐνδεής ἐστι, τοιαῦτ' ἅττα ἐστὶν ὧν ἡ ἐπιθυμία τε καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐστίν; (cf. también 200e8-9 y *Lisis* 221d-e).

³ Juliá 2004: 59, n. 42 (comentando *Simp.* 183e).

probablemente una de las mejor logradas desde el punto de vista dramático y literario: “de repente” (ἐξαίφνης) la puerta del patio es golpeada con fuerza, “como por un grupo de parranderos” (*Simp.* 212c7: ὡς κωμαστῶν); hay mucho ruido y se oye la voz de una flautista, parte del cortejo de Alcibiades. Además de un jolgorio, uno puede imaginarse una partida de borrachos, bromeando y profiriendo sinsentidos en tono intimidante para quien todavía, después de haber bebido, conserva cierta claridad en sus pensamientos. Ese tono intimidante creo que adelanta el temor que experimenta Sócrates ante la violencia y locura de la pasión erótica de Alcibiades, quien sentencia que entre él y Sócrates no hay reconciliación posible (*Simp.* 213d6-8). Este detalle no es para nada trivial; describe el carácter apasionado de Alcibiades, el mismo que no le permite terminar de entender en qué consiste la belleza de Sócrates. Quien pone atención al escándalo festivo es Agatón, el otro personaje “bello”, junto con Alcibiades, en el diálogo; Agatón recomienda hacer pasar a quien golpea sólo si se trata de uno de sus allegados. Si es alguien ajeno a ellos, hay que decir que ya están descansando, no bebiendo. La voz que sobresale en medio del griterío es la de Alcibiades quien, “muy borracho” (σφόδρα μεθύοντος), pregunta a los gritos por Agatón y pide que lo lleven junto a él.

“El más sabio y el más bello” a quien Alcibiades desea coronar es Agatón, un poeta talentoso y en la flor de la edad que acaba de ganar una contienda trágica. Alcibiades está tan ebrio que debe ser sostenido por una flautista y algunos otros que lo acompañan. Pero, ¿cómo sabe Alcibiades que debe coronar a Agatón? La respuesta la proporciona el propio Alcibiades: porque es para lo que vinieron y es lo que están celebrando, a saber, la victoria del joven y bello Agatón. El encuentro de Alcibiades con Agatón es planeado; el de Alcibiades con Sócrates no, o eso es lo que quiere hacernos creer Platón a través de su vocero Alcibiades (aunque al final del diálogo es el mismo Sócrates quien advierte que Alcibiades se acostó entre Agatón y Sócrates para separarlos: si lo que dice Sócrates es cierto, el encuentro no fue casual; 222c-e). Sócrates se le aparece “de repente” (ἐξαίφνης; 213c1) a Alcibiades, quien aparentemente distraído (uno podría suponer que a causa de su borrachera) y con su rostro cubierto por las cintas que colgaban de su cabeza, no advierte la presencia de Sócrates. Alcibiades también llega a la reunión de “repente”; como sabemos, el “de repente” es un giro perfectamente buscado y planeado por parte de Platón,⁴ cuyo propósito es enfatizar el hecho de que tanto la aparición de Alcibiades como la de Sócrates son manifestaciones de la belleza. Pero Alcibiades y Sócrates son personas de una belleza muy diferente y el discurso de Alcibiades en la sección final del diálogo contribuye a terminar de develar en qué consiste esa diferencia.

Un tema central del *Simposio* es “lo bello”, o lo bello vinculado con eros (aunque no todo eros es bello, si es realizado “correctamente”, sí lo es; *Simp.* 180e-181a). Desde el comienzo del diálogo los adelantos que proporciona Platón a este respecto son relativamente obvios: Sócrates llega bañado y calzado, algo que “solía hacer pocas veces” (ἐκεῖνος ὀλιγάκις ἐποίει; *Simp.* 174a4). Declara que “se embelleció (ἐκαλλωπισάμην) para ir bello a casa de los bellos”; este detalle dramático inicial, si se lo mira superficialmente, puede hacernos pensar que de lo que se trata es de mostrar el interés de Sócrates por equipararse con su anfitrión (Agatón), un joven bello o “buen mozo” (καλός), o que el interés de Sócrates meramente es adaptarse a la convención que indica que uno debe llegar acicalado y limpio a un banquete. Pero, como sabemos, esos detalles dramáticos nunca son irrelevantes en Platón y, con cierta frecuencia, sirven para introducir el tema central del diálogo (o alguno de sus temas centrales), en este caso, la belleza.⁵

Hay que notar que Sócrates se resiste permanentemente a los embates eróticos de Alcibiades;⁶ seguramente esto tiene como propósito por parte de Platón enfatizar la templanza socrática, su continencia ante un deseo cuyo contenido no es estrictamente “bello” en el sentido filosófico de lo bello. Es decir, no es que Sócrates no sienta un deseo erótico (carnal) por los jóvenes bellos, pero en el contexto del *Simposio* es claro que ese tipo de deseo erótico no es algo καλόν (cf. 181a5): es bello en todo sentido complacer (χαρίζεσθαι) en vista de la excelencia (185b4), pero Sócrates no parece

⁴ “De repente, de improviso” tocan la puerta y aparece Alcibiades, una “visión de lo bello”; “de repente”, tras las guirnalda que caen sobre su frente y tapan parcialmente su visión, a Alcibiades se le aparece Sócrates, otra visión (sensiblemente diferente) de la belleza. Sobre este detalle dramático en particular cf. Nussbaum 1986: 184-185.

⁵ Cf. Centrone 2009: vii-viii; como señala Nucci (2009: 11, n. 17 al pasaje de *Simp.* 174a4), la costumbre de estar limpio obedecía al hecho de evitar ensuciar la cama en la que se echaban los simposiastas (*Simp.* 213c3; 213e7; 217d6; 222e1). Para un caso parecido (en el que un detalle dramático ayuda a introducir el tema central de discusión) cf. *Teeteto* 185e: Teeteto es καλός porque el que “habla o argumenta bella o noblemente” (ὁ καλῶς λέγων) es “bello y bueno” (καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός), i.e. es una persona “meritoria” en sentido moral (142b). Una escena muy similar se encuentra en el *Cármides* 153d: el muchacho talentoso y bien parecido es el joven Cármides y, como en la escena introductoria del *Teeteto*, es un joven que había estado practicando lucha en un gimnasio e impresiona (a jóvenes y adultos) tanto por su belleza como por su talento (ver *Cármides*, 154a-c y Dover, 1989: 55-56).

⁶ Un aspecto importante señalado por Rowe (1998b: 61) para mostrar la relevancia de la swfrosuvnh socrática (cf. *Simp.* 216d6-7). La conducta moderada de Sócrates encarna bien a Eros como lo “eminente moderado” (διαφερόντως ἂν σωφρονοῖ; cf. *Simp.* 196c3-8, con el comentario de Rowe 1998a:164).

tener indicios de que Alcibiades tenga en vista la ἀρετή cuando hace sus propuestas amorosas. Este pasaje puede ser relevante para comprender por qué Sócrates rechaza permanentemente a Alcibiades, pero también puede serlo para advertir qué es, en realidad, “lo bello”.

La templanza y continencia socráticas son proverbiales en los informes del carácter socrático;⁷ pero para tener un carácter que revele templanza o continencia y para ejercer esas perfecciones del carácter hay que ser capaz de sentir un deseo que pueda moderarse dentro de los patrones racionales que impone la virtud o excelencia de la templanza. Sócrates siente atracción por el bello Alcibiades, pero se modera, se contiene. Esto es sin duda advertido por Alcibiades, quien compara a Sócrates con Áyax a causa de su invulnerabilidad (219e2: ἄτρωπος) y con Odiseo debido a su resistencia (220c2: καρτερός). Con frecuencia Platón nos recuerda que Sócrates se inquieta ante la presencia de jóvenes bellos; en el *Cármides*, Sócrates cree que ha superado la impresión inicial que le produce el fulgurante Cármides cuando entra en escena. Pero un momento más tarde Sócrates afirma que ha sucumbido ante la belleza del jovencito cuando éste se sienta entre él y Critias. Sócrates declara que se encuentra en un callejón sin salida (ἡπόρουν; 155c5) y que la confianza que tenía respecto del hecho de que iba a poder dialogar fácilmente con Cármides se desmoronó. Es claro que Sócrates, que había insistido en la belleza anímica de Cármides, ahora sucumbe ante su belleza física: cuando el jovencito “clava su mirada” en Sócrates, éste declara: “vi lo que estaba dentro de su manto, me encendí y ya no estaba en mis cabales” (ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἐν ἑμαυτοῦ ἦν; *Cárm.* 155d4). A pesar de esta declaración, Sócrates logra recomponerse y, aunque sigue lanzando señales seductoras al jovencito, desarrolla un nuevo argumento que logra reanimarlo pues despierta el interés de Cármides (156d).⁸

No es entonces que Sócrates no sienta deseos eróticos en el sentido mundano de la palabra, pero *sabe* que ese tipo de deseo puede no coincidir con lo bello o con el bien como objeto de verdadero amor. Ese “saber” coincide con su acción; es el mismo saber que busca Alcibiades pero del que, sin embargo, se queja cuando vocifera que durmió con Sócrates como si lo hubiera hecho con su padre o con su hermano mayor (*Simp.* 219c7-d2) y eso, cree Alcibiades, es un signo de arrogancia (ὕπερηφανία) por parte de Sócrates (también lo acusa de engañador; 222b4: ἐξαπατῶν). Alcibiades no entiende: Sócrates lo desea pero se contiene. El deseo erótico que Alcibiades le prodiga no es uno que se “complete” o “realice” en relación con los bienes que se dan acompañados de templanza y justicia, y si el eros de Alcibiades es de tal índole no puede garantizar que proporcionará un “poder supremo” y una “absoluta felicidad” (οὗτος τὴν μεγίστην δύναμιν ἔχει καὶ πᾶσαν εὐδαιμονίαν ... παρασκευάζει; *Simp.* 188d7-8).⁹ La relevancia que tiene para Platón el diferente objeto de amor es un detalle que seguramente no puede ser exagerado (cf. *Gorgias* 481c5-e1). Pero aunque Sócrates sabe esto, de todos modos, no puede evitar enamorarse de Alcibiades. Sócrates es consciente de que es inevitable comenzar por los cuerpos bellos; también sabe que Eros, en su carácter de entidad intermediaria, vincula lo mortal (cuerpo) con lo divino (alma). La declaración explícita de su enamoramiento de Alcibiades (ἡράσθην; 213d1) hace que Sócrates nos recuerde que es parte de su disposición habitual enamorarse de los jóvenes bellos;¹⁰ en su discurso Alcibiades dice que Sócrates se encuentra “dispuesto eróticamente” (ἐρωτικῶς διάκειται; 216d2) en relación con ellos¹¹ y que es “perturbado” (ἐκπέπληκται) por ellos. Pero, a diferencia de Alcibiades, Sócrates es capaz de distinguir tipos de apasionamiento: aun sintiendo atracción sexual por Alcibiades, es capaz de diferenciar el mero apasionamiento por el amado (que presupone una relación sexual) del verdadero eros. Sí, Sócrates es “perturbado” por la belleza de los jóvenes; pero parece haber aprendido la lección de Diotima: cuando uno contempla lo bello en sí, no creará que es bello como el oro o como los jovencitos que ahora lo perturban. Porque entre lo bello en sí y las cosas bellas hay una diferencia esencial: *la belleza es “inmaculada, pura, sin mezcla, y no contaminada con carne humana”* (*Simp.* 211e2: μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων).¹²

⁷ Cf. Platón, *Cármides* 154c: aunque el personaje Sócrates dice que le pareció que *todos los demás* estaban enamorados de Cármides, quien produjo un estado de turbación y alboroto, en el contexto es evidente que él está tan perturbado como los demás. Véase también Jenofonte, *Memorabilia* I 2, 1; I 2, 15; I 5, 6.

⁸ Creo que este pasaje del *Cármides* y otros del *Simposio* (por ejemplo, 216d) muestran que Sócrates tiene interés por las cosas mundanas (cf., sin embargo, Gonzalez 2012: 57) y en particular por los jóvenes bellos, aunque también por la bebida: Sócrates bebe, pero nunca se emborracha; (214a3-5), sino que, aun teniendo interés por tales asuntos, es capaz de encuadrarlos en parámetros racionales.

⁹ Esta afirmación se encuentra en el discurso de Erixímaco, pero, como el resto de los discursos, es parte del λόγος platónico: doy por sentado sin argumento alguno que cada uno de los discursos puede entenderse como aspectos parciales del discurso de Platón, quien habla a través de sus personajes.

¹⁰ En *Gorgias* 481d3-4 Platón le hace decir a Sócrates que está enamorado de Alcibiades y de la filosofía (cf. también *Protágoras* 309a-c).

¹¹ Cf. Jenofonte, *Simposio* VIII 2, donde Sócrates declara que no recuerda un momento en que no haya estado enamorado de alguien.

¹² Es la misma tesis que se encuentra en *República* V: la Forma “es”, lo que participa de la Forma “es y no es”. Se trata de

Si Sócrates no hubiese aprendido la lección de Diótima, no podría distinguir, como distingue, entre “afición o ansia amorosa” (φιλεραστία) y amor, ni sería capaz de resistir los embates seductores de Alcibíades. Su disposición hacia Sócrates (sostiene Sócrates) es φιλεραστία, no ἔρως (*Simp.* 213d6); si Alcibíades sintiera un genuino ἔρως por él, sería capaz de mediatizar su deseo sexual. La palabra φιλεραστής aparece varias páginas antes en el discurso de Aristófanes, quien subraya el hecho de que el filerasta no quiere separarse ni siquiera un breve momento de su amado y, aunque no está dispuesto a admitirlo, casi exclusivamente funda su vínculo amoroso en la “relación de los placeres sexuales” (ἡ τῶν ἀφροδισίων συνουσία; *Simp.* 192c6).¹³ Esta sección del discurso de Aristófanes adelanta y describe muy bien la condición erótica en que se encuentra Alcibíades respecto de Sócrates, además de mostrar por qué un genuino ἔρως y una genuina συνουσία erótica no pueden estar anclados del lado de la pura satisfacción sexual. Este detalle también ayuda a entender la violencia de Alcibíades, quien, motivado por sus celos y envidia, no permite que ningún bello se acerque a Sócrates (*Simp.* 213d1-2).

Lo que hace de Alcibíades una persona alocada y muy celosa es su disposición “filerasta” (213d6). Es el propio Alcibíades quien reconoce que había pensado que Sócrates tenía interés en su “belleza juvenil” (i.e. su belleza física: ἐπὶ τῇ ἐμῇ ὥρῃ) y que si ofrecía sus favores a Sócrates iba a recibir de él su sabiduría (217a). Este detalle es relevante, porque Alcibíades, además de tener deseos carnales, piensa que la belleza de Sócrates es su sabiduría. Sí, Sócrates no es buen mozo, no es “bello”: es *parecidísimo* (ὁμοιότατον) a los silenos; también se parece al sátiro Marsias. Pero sólo se parece a ellos en su aspecto exterior (εἶδος; *Simp.* 215b5; σχῆμα; 216d4), como los silenos que están en los talleres de escultura que cuando se abren contienen “estatuas o imágenes de dioses” (ἀγάλματα ... θεῶν). Esa “estatua divina” que hay dentro del sileno Sócrates, de aspecto feo e intimidante, es su templanza (216c-219e); ésa es su belleza.¹⁴ Pero si Alcibíades “sabe” esto, ¿por qué piensa que por el mero hecho de ofrecer sus favores a Sócrates iba a recibir de éste su sabiduría? Porque en él eros no es eros, sino filerastia. Platón insistentemente nos recuerda que la fealdad física de Sócrates contrasta con su “belleza anímica”. Tanto Agatón como Alcibíades, los dos personajes más “bellos” del diálogo en su apariencia física, experimentan una atracción por la “belleza” de Sócrates, i.e. por su sabiduría (*Simp.* 175d; 219d; 222a). Pero Alcibíades, aunque atraído por la sabiduría de Sócrates, no puede (¿no quiere?) controlar su atracción carnal hacia él; Sócrates también siente esa atracción, pero la contiene. Naturalmente, el enamorado y erotizado Alcibíades no tiene la menor intención de contenerse ni de encuadrar su deseo en un patrón racional dado por la σωφροσύνη. Pero si ése es el caso, ¿por qué se siente atraído por la belleza de Sócrates? La respuesta más obvia, creo, que se enmarca en el modelo platónico de amor debería ser: porque Alcibíades carece de dicha belleza y uno desea lo que no tiene, no lo que tiene.¹⁵ Si uno se preguntara por qué esa atracción por la belleza anímica de Sócrates no tiene un poder causal efectivo en la conducta de Alcibíades, debería decir que ello sucede porque, aunque Alcibíades advierte que la belleza socrática es deseable y genera algunos beneficios que, en el nivel puramente prudencial, le “convienen”, no ha sido aún capaz de “internalizar” ese saber a su carácter y, por ende, tampoco a su conducta. Sí, Alcibíades “sabe” que lo bello de Sócrates es su sabiduría, y lo sabe a punto tal que es consciente (σύννοια ἐμμαντῶ) de que ese sileno de cuya compañía (συνουσία) le era imposible privarse (*Simp.* 219d8-9) tiene razón: él, el bello Alcibíades, lleno de talento, belleza y éxito no es capaz de conservar sus acuerdos con Sócrates; es por eso que sólo siente vergüenza ante el sileno que, incomprensiblemente, ejerce sobre él una atracción irresistible (i.e. Alcibíades se “siente feo” ante él; *Simp.* 216b2-3: τοῦτον ... αἰσχύνομαι; 216b6: αἰσχύνομαι τὰ ὁμολογημένα), y sabe que no puede argumentar en contra de lo que Sócrates dice que debe que hacer (216b2-6). Pero si es así, Alcibíades no es verdaderamente consciente de lo que debe hacer ni “sabe” lo que cree saber; si efectivamente lo supiera, actuaría tal como le indica lo que cree que hay que hacer.

El énfasis que Platón pone en la confusión de Alcibíades (quien cree que puede seducir a Sócrates a través de su belleza física; *Simp.* 217a-c) puede leerse como la descripción del curso que sigue el alma de quien confunde los bienes aparentes con los reales (218e6: ἀντὶ δόξης ἀλήθειαν καλῶν κτᾶσθαι ἐπιχειρεῖς). Platón parece retomar aquí la tesis de que cosas tales como belleza o dinero son bienes si y sólo si están acompañados de inteligencia.¹⁶ Alcibíades (o Platón a través de

una “versión epistemológica” de lo mismo porque lo que es, por un lado, y lo que es y no es, por el otro, están asociados, respectivamente, al conocimiento (ἐπιστήμη) y a la opinión (δόξα; *Rep.* 476e-480a).

¹³ Sobre la necesidad de contacto físico (e incluso del orgasmo) exigida por el eros homosexual cf. Dover 1989: 203.

¹⁴ Sócrates también es ὕβριστής, como los sátiros; pero como en el caso de su fealdad, su “insolencia” también es diferente de la de los sátiros (*Simp.* 175e7; 215b7; 221e3-4).

¹⁵ Cf. Centrone 2009: XLVI-XLVII.

¹⁶ *Eutidemo* 278e3-280b6; *Gorgias* 466e9-11; 467a4-6.

Alcibíades) se encarga de recordarnos que a Sócrates no le importa si uno es bello (“guapo”), sino que, aun cuando es atraído por ese tipo de belleza, termina despreciándola (καταφρονεῖ; 216d8). Tampoco es objeto del interés de Sócrates si uno es rico o si posee alguna honra (τιμή; 216e2), sino que cree que todas esas posesiones no valen nada. La apariencia física (εἶδος; *Simp.* 215a5; b5) de Sócrates es fea, pero esa apariencia no es real: como advierte Alcibíades, Sócrates, aunque parece feo, es bello. Su apariencia es la de un fau'lo", pero en realidad es un σπουδαῖος. Alcibíades es completamente consciente de esto, por eso al comienzo de su elogio de Sócrates declara que no es su intención ridiculizarlo: el aspecto, la apariencia de Sócrates es ridícula, pero Alcibíades advierte que, detrás de esa apariencia, Sócrates es bello.¹⁷ Alcibíades, el joven bello, divertido y arrogante, es seducido por la belleza de Sócrates que lo “turba”; Alcibíades, que funda su vida en el honor, el poder, el dinero y su belleza, declara que una vez “vio” la belleza de Sócrates (216e7: ἐγὼ ... εἶδον); al describirla evoca el lenguaje que se usa antes en el diálogo para referirse a la Forma de belleza (parece entonces que Alcibíades también entendió la lección de Diotima).¹⁸ Como Sócrates, que se sentía perturbado por los jóvenes bellos, éstos también lo son por las “meras palabras” (ψιλοῖς λόγοις; 215c7) de Sócrates, quien logra el mismo efecto que Marcias, aunque no mediante instrumentos (215c7-d). Alcibíades dice que esas palabras “le han mordido” el corazón, el alma, y que se han apoderado de su “alma joven y no mal dotada por naturaleza” (μὴ ἀφροῦς; 218a6). Está deslumbrado por la belleza de Sócrates, pero esa belleza lo hace sufrir: la locura y la “agitación báquica” (βακχεῖα; 218b4) del filósofo lo mortifica. Alcibíades ha descubierto que Sócrates no es menos alocado y “báquico” que él mismo, pero el Sócrates dionisiaco que ha descubierto tiene explicaciones capaces de hacer coherente lo que cree y lo que hace, algo Alcibíades no puede hacer.

Pero si Alcibíades se da cuenta de que la belleza de Sócrates no está en su cuerpo, sino en su alma, ¿por qué insiste en presionar a Sócrates a que se fije en su propia belleza física y por qué cree que eso sería suficiente para seducirlo?¹⁹ Con cierta resignación Alcibíades declara que, aunque conversaban a solas como un amante conversa con su amante, y aun cuando practicaban gimnasia juntos sin que nadie estuviera presente, “no sucedía nada más” (οὐδὲν γάρ μοι πλεόν ἦν; *Simp.* 217c3-4). Pero si Alcibíades sabe que Sócrates posee templanza y autocontrol, ¿por qué cree que habría de suceder algo más? Quizás es la esperanza irracional del enamorado alocado que centra su eros en una emoción que no hace más que nublar su comprensión. Que Platón debe estar pensando en un estado emocional capaz de bloquear la comprensión del eróticamente enloquecido Alcibíades lo muestra el hecho de que describe a Sócrates como una persona realmente temerosa por lo que pueda hacer el joven enamorado. Pero eso no sólo se debe a la borrachera de Alcibíades, sino a su carácter (*i.e.* a su alma); es una persona violenta y ante el continuo rechazo que Sócrates hace de su persona, hay razones para pensar que el despreciado Alcibíades puede cometer una locura. Es claro, entonces, que Sócrates se toma en serio la amenaza de castigarlo que le profiere Alcibíades.²⁰

En el “ascenso erótico” descrito por Diotima el impulso erótico puede transformarse y guiar a la persona desde la gratificación carnal particular a la gratificación proporcionada por la visión de las Formas. Es Diotima quien recomienda que el joven amante comience por dirigirse a los cuerpos bellos y que, luego de ser guiado correctamente (ὀρθῶς ἡγήται), se enamore (ἐρᾶν) de un solo cuerpo y genere en él “discursos bellos” (*Simp.* 210a6-8). La belleza física es necesaria pero no suficiente. Alcibíades es un filósofo erótico a medio camino porque, aun cuando parece visualizar la razón por la cual hay una verdadera belleza en Sócrates (belleza que sin duda no posee y desea poseer), todavía no logra incorporar a su propio carácter el aspecto erótico de dicha belleza y, por tanto, aunque se sabe bello, sabe que aún no es completamente bello o, peor aún, tal vez sospecha que su belleza no significa mucho si se la compara con la de Sócrates.

Pero de nuevo, ¿cómo es que un ebrio puede saber que lo que dice es verdad? El elogio que hace Alcibíades de Sócrates (*Simp.* 215a-222a) así como otros discursos dentro del diálogo contienen algunos de los ingredientes fundamentales de la idea que habitualmente tenemos de Sócrates como persona y como filósofo: Sócrates ironiza, “disimula” (en eso consiste su ser *uJbristhv*; *Simp.* 215b7). Su insolencia, su disimulo, como lo muestra su conversación con Agatón (175d3-e10) y como

¹⁷ σπουδᾶσαντος; 216e5. La seriedad de Sócrates se advierte cuando se abre y puede verse su interior.

¹⁸ Cf. *Simp.* 210e, 211e, 216e7 y Sheffield 2006: 189.

¹⁹ Sin duda Alcibíades no ignora la fealdad física de Sócrates, pero, de todas maneras, encuentra en él un fuerte atractivo erótico. Como hace notar Lev Kenaan (2010: 172), este tipo de juicio no deja de tener dificultades, ya que Alcibíades describe a Sócrates como “el más bello” y, a la vez, como un feo y grotesco sileno. Pero esa fealdad se refiere solamente al aspecto externo de Sócrates, pues es como la de las estatuillas que, al ser abiertas, contienen “estatuas o imágenes de dioses” (*Simp.* 215b4-6; 221d-222a).

²⁰ Cf. *Simp.* 213d6-8; en d6 Sócrates declara expresamente que la locura y “filarastia” de Alcibíades “le dan mucho miedo” (πάνν ὀρρωδῶ). Con razón observa Nussbaum que la amenaza y violencia burlonas que rodean el discurso de Alcibíades van más allá de un mero juego pues es alguien que está por cometer actos de verdadera violencia (1986: 171).

lo denuncia Alcibiades, consiste en mostrar su sabiduría como inferior a la del flamante ganador del concurso trágico (algo que ni siquiera puede creer el victorioso joven Agatón) y en afirmar que ignora todo y no sabe nada (216d). Sócrates genera el estado de perplejidad –no sólo en los demás sino también en sí mismo– característico de quien es capaz de comenzar a revisar lo que antes creía que sabía.²¹ Además, se queja Alcibiades, a Sócrates no le interesa la belleza, el dinero o el honor (216d; 219c). Sócrates es resistente, no sólo a los embates de los jóvenes bellos, sino también al vino y a las inclemencias del tiempo (214a; 220a-c). Además es valiente; es quien salva la vida de Alcibiades a costa de la suya (220e). Alcibiades está tan seguro de que todo esto es cierto que, al comienzo de su elogio, desafía a Sócrates a que lo corrija si está mintiendo (214e-215a; cf. 220e5).

Pero, ¿se puede decir que lo que Alcibiades ha dicho de Sócrates no es verdad? Probablemente no: su descripción parece ser correcta; Sócrates nunca dice que miente. Más aún, se puede pensar que Alcibiades es el medio que usa Platón para hablar, una vez más, de su maestro.²² Pero la terrible decepción de Alcibiades es que Sócrates no le cree; quienes estaban escuchando su elogio estallan en risas, pero reconocen su franqueza (222c1-2). Con su “silénica insolencia” Sócrates le dice que, en realidad, parece estar sobrio pues, si así no fuere, no habría podido formular con tantos y tan sofisticados rodeos su verdadero propósito: enemistar a Agatón y a Sócrates, de manera que éste únicamente ame a Alcibiades. Sócrates califica el discurso de Alcibiades de “drama satírico” y convence a Agatón de que tiene razón (222c-e). En ese momento uno confirma, gracias al comentario de Agatón, lo que ya sospechaba: no es cierto, como decía Alcibiades cuando se suma al simposio, que Sócrates lo estaba acechando (213b9: ἐλλοχῶν). Fue el mismo Alcibiades quien se acostó entre Agatón y Sócrates; en este momento Agatón, persuadido por Sócrates, cree que lo ha hecho a propósito, para separarlo de Sócrates.

§ 3 Epílogo: ¿por qué Alcibiades tiene tantas dificultades para entender a Sócrates?

Aunque es el propio Sócrates platónico quien valora la belleza física en los demás como el complemento ideal de la belleza del alma,²³ el contraste entre Sócrates (poseedor de una “extraña belleza” que no parece bella) y Alcibiades (poseedor de una belleza evidente para cualquiera pero consciente de una belleza incompleta) le sirve a Platón para enfatizar aún más que Eros “edifica su morada en los caracteres y en las almas de dioses y hombres” (*Simp.* 195e), y quizá también para acentuar el carácter “demónico” de Sócrates como encarnación de Eros y su posición mediadora entre lo mortal y lo inmortal.²⁴ El Eros de Alcibiades se encuentra firmemente enraizado en lo mortal, pero advierte que eso no es suficiente; el eros socrático no elimina sin más los ingredientes corpóreos del deseo erótico (Sócrates desea a Alcibiades), pero sabe que la belleza más firme o más real es la anímica, no la corpórea. Inexperto como era Alcibiades en asuntos eróticos (*i.e.* en τὰ ἐρωτικά en el sentido en que quiere entender dichos asuntos Platón), después de pedir a Sócrates que lo ayude a mejorar su alma (*Simp.* 218d1-2), le ofrece a cambio su cuerpo. Entonces Sócrates le dice:

“querido Alcibiades, en verdad parece que no eres tonto, si es por acaso verdad lo que dices acerca de mí y si hay en mí cierta capacidad por obra de la cual tú podrías hacerte mejor (ἀμείνων). Una irresistible belleza (ἀμέχανον κάλλος), por cierto, estarías viendo en mí, y muy distinta de tu aspecto bello (εὐμορφία). Si al verla intentas asociarte (κοινώσασθαι) conmigo y cambiar belleza por belleza, no en poco piensas aventajarme (πλεονεκτεῖν), sino que en lugar de apariencia (δόξα) verdaderas cosas bellas intentas adquirir” (*Simp.* 218d7-e6).

No sólo Alcibiades desea conseguir a cualquier precio lo que quiere (en eso consiste su pleonektei'n; 216b5), sino que además su propia belleza es su *aspecto bello* (εὐμορφία), y la apariencia en que consiste su belleza sigue amarrada a su cuerpo.²⁵ Sócrates sugiere que es como cambiar oro por bronce, siendo la belleza de Alcibiades bronce y la de Sócrates oro. La comparación es apropiada: el oro es un metal más precioso porque es más duradero y permanente que el bronce, y lo mismo pasa

²¹ Cf. *Simp.* 198a4-10; 201b11-12.

²² Cf. Centrone 2009: xxxix.

²³ Blondell 2002: 71; cf. *Cárm.* 153d; 154d-e y *Simp.* 210b.

²⁴ Cf. *Simp.* 210d7-e1, con el comentario de Lev Kenaan 2010: 165-66. Eros, como el filósofo Sócrates, se encuentra entre la posesión y la carencia (Sheffield 2006: 199).

²⁵ Véase Nucci 2009, 205, n.338 (nota a *Simp.* 219a). Además del hecho evidente de que en el contexto εὐμορφία se refiere al aspecto o “buena forma” de Alcibiades, cf. Platón, *Leyes* 716a6, donde la “forma bella” del propio cuerpo se da unida a la juventud e insensatez (algo que describe perfectamente la condición de Alcibiades). Este pasaje de las *Leyes* parece ser el modo en que Platón en su vejez todavía recuerda a Alcibiades: “alguien que cree que no necesita de gobernante ni de ningún guía, sino que él mismo es capaz de guiar a los demás” (ver también *Leyes* 744c1).

con la belleza socrática.

El pasaje recién citado del *Simposio* recuerda las líneas iniciales del *Alcibiades I*: Sócrates advierte la sorpresa de Alcibiades, pues aunque fue su primer amante, es el único que no lo abandona cuando los demás ya han dejado de amarlo (130a1-5). Alcibiades –como sus amantes, que ahora advierten que su belleza corpórea ha comenzado a decaer y lo han abandonado– centra el motivo de su amor en la belleza corpórea. Pero eso es, según la terminología del *Alcibiades I*, estar enamorado *de lo de* la persona, no *de la* persona, y eso explica que los antiguos amantes de Alcibiades lo haya dejado solo: es que únicamente estaban enamorados del cuerpo de Alcibiades, que no es lo mismo que Alcibiades (*Alcibiades I* 131c5-7). Sócrates es el verdadero y único amante de Alcibiades porque está enamorado de su alma, que es lo permanente y que se identifica con la persona de Alcibiades. Lo que Sócrates quiere decirle a Alcibiades es que si en él hay alguna belleza o algún bien, éste es un bien anímico y que no podrá ayudarlo a ser mejor tomando su cuerpo o dándole el suyo. Cuando Alcibiades le dice a Sócrates que éste es el único que merece ser su amante (*Simp.* 218c7-8) tiene toda la razón, pero no por lo que cree. Sócrates merece ser su único amante porque se interesa por su alma. Es también por eso que cuando en el *Simposio* Sócrates desprecia la belleza de Alcibiades no desprecia a Alcibiades, sino a “lo de” Alcibiades.

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Plenary session

Chair: María Isabel Santa Cruz

Eros und Unsterblichkeit: das Zeugen im Schönen und das Zusammenhalten des Alls

Filip Karfik

ABSTRACT

Eine der zentralen Thesen in Platons *Symposion* sagt, dass der Eros ein Streben nach der Unsterblichkeit ist (207a3-4). Eine andere, dass das Werk des Eros das Zeugen im Schönen ist (206b6-7, e5). Eine dritte, dass der Eros dem Bereich des Dämonischen angehört, welches das All mit ihm selbst zusammenbindet, indem es zwischen Göttlichem und Sterblichem vermittelt (202e13-203a8). Wie genau soll man jede von diesen drei Thesen verstehen? Wie hängen alle drei zusammen? Es werden unter Bezugnahme auf andere Dialoge Platons (vor allem *Phaidon*, *Phaidros*, *Timaios*) die Fragen behandelt, was im Kontext des *Symposion* die Unsterblichkeit bedeutet, was das Zeugen im Schönen besagt, und in welchem Sinne der Eros für den Zusammenhalt des Alls konstitutiv ist. Abschließend wird eine Interpretation von Platons Auffassung des Eros versucht, die das Verhältnis von Produktivität und Schönheit in den Vordergrund stellt und von da aus die kosmologische Funktion des Eros erhellt.

Le *Banquet* de Platon: un dialogue sur le rôle de la séduction dans l'éducation

Luc Brisson

ABSTRACT

Le *Banquet* évoque le *symposion* donné par Agathon pour fêter sa première victoire comme poète tragique (173a), lors du concours de tragédies aux Lénéennes en 416. On remarquera que dans le *Banquet* tous les éloges (sauf un) d'Éros sont faits par des hommes, et tournent autour de relations amoureuses entre hommes. C'est d'ailleurs Phèdre qui, par la bouche d'Éryximaque, son ami depuis près de 20 ans, propose de prendre Eros pour thème des discours, lui qui, dans le dialogue qui porte son nom, récite le discours paradoxal de Lysias qui recommande à un jeune homme d'accorder ses faveurs à celui qui n'est pas amoureux. Plus fondamentalement, le succès qu'Agathon vient de remporter au concours de tragédies, s'inscrit dans le cadre de ce système d'éducation, la *paiderastia*, pratiquée dans les classes aisées de la société athénienne, et qui permettait à un jeune homme qui se mettait sous la protection d'un plus âgé, avec qui il avait des relations sexuelles, d'acquérir connaissance, pouvoir et richesses. Agathon en effet est l'aimé de Pausanias avec qui il vivra une trentaine d'années, depuis 433 date dramatique du *Protagoras*; c'est cette durée qui viole les règles de la *paiderastia* qui explique pourquoi critiquera durement Aristophane en 411 dans les *Thesmophories*. Or dans le discours qu'il prononce durant le *symposion*, Pausanias fait l'éloge de la *paiderastia*, et Agathon dans son discours se présente comme l'exemple même du succès de ce type de relation éducative. C'est alors que Socrate soumet Agathon à un *elenchos* que, pour des raisons de politesse à l'égard d'un hôte attentif et charmant, il met dans la bouche d'une femme, Diotime qui fera l'apologie d'un autre type d'éducation appartenant à un autre ordre de réalité; Diotime veut en effet remplacer un modèle d'éducation masculin fondé sur la transmission associée à des relations sexuelles entre hommes par un autre modèle d'éducation, féminin celui-là, et inspiré par l'accouchement, car fondé sur la découverte de connaissances que l'on possédait déjà. Le magnifique éloge où Alcibiade décrit ses tentatives infructueuses pour séduire Socrate, illustre la position de Socrate à cet égard. Le *Banquet* doit donc être considéré comme une critique de la *paiderastia* au profit de la *philosophia*. C'est un dialogue où se trouve posée la question de la place de la séduction dans l'éducation; sur quoi porte-t-elle, le corps ou l'âme ? à quoi sert-elle, transmettre la connaissance ou la faire découvrir au plus profond de son âme ? Et cette question elle-même renvoie à une autre, plus fondamentale, celle du «genre».

Philosophical Writing and the Immortality of the Soul

PhD Parallel Workshop

Introduction: Bruno Centrone

Lector in dialogo: images du lecteur et coopération interprétative dans le Banquet de Platon

Christian Keime

Comme cela a déjà été remarqué et décrit, le *Banquet*, plus que tout autre dialogue de Platon, se caractérise par une complexité du cadre énonciatif analogue à la « polyphonie » reconnue par M. Bakhtine dans les romans de Dostoïevski¹ : au lieu de parler en son nom ou par la voix d'un porte-parole explicite, l'auteur fait s'exprimer différents points de vue concurrents et parfois contradictoires, parmi lesquels son propre point de vue n'est pas toujours identifiable. Je ne parlerai pas ici des cinq premiers éloges d'*eros*, qui méritent à mon sens un traitement à part. Je m'intéresserai au discours de Socrate (201d-212c), aux différents énonciateurs et énonciataires qu'il met en jeu (Diotime, Socrate jeune homme, Socrate adulte et Agathon), ainsi qu'au discours d'Alcibiade (212c-222b), et au rôle des narrateurs qui rapportent le dialogue, Aristodème et Apollodore (172a-174a). L'hypothèse que je formule ici est que tous ces personnages, mis à part celui de Diotime, peuvent être envisagés comme des images du lecteur : des lecteurs implicites (Iser 1972) ou des *lectores in fabula* (Eco 1979) qui exprimeraient chacun un point de vue singulier sur la leçon philosophique énoncée par Diotime et rapportée par Socrate (201d-212c). En présentant à son lecteur ces différents interprètes de la leçon philosophique, Platon l'engagerait dans une « coopération interprétative » (U. Eco), l'invitant à faire, à son tour, une interprétation judicieuse de cette leçon.

I. Le discours de Diotime

Mais avant de nous intéresser à ces interprètes de la théorie sur *eros*, comprenons ce que Diotime elle-même nous indique de la manière dont il conviendrait d'interpréter sa théorie. En effet, le discours de Diotime sur *eros* est aussi une théorie de la connaissance : il fournit donc des indications précieuses sur la manière dont *eros* peut être connu et faire l'objet d'une leçon.

(1) Tout d'abord, selon Diotime, l'objet de la connaissance véritable, ou philosophique, ce n'est pas *eros*, mais la beauté : les choses belles et en dernier lieu le beau en soi, que l'amour cherche à contempler (θεάσασθαι, 210c3 ; ἰδεῖν, 210c4 ; βλέπων, 210c8 ; θεωρῶν, 210d5 ; καθορᾶν, 211b7 etc, voir texte 1). C'est la raison pour laquelle *eros* n'est ni beau, ni bon, ni complètement divin (202b1-c3), et doit être conçu non pas comme l'objet passif du désir de connaître (τὸ ἐρώμενον, 204c2), mais comme un sujet actif (τὸ ἐρῶν, 204c3, voir texte 2). Il n'y a donc aucune raison de supposer une forme d'*eros* analogue à la forme du beau contemplée au terme de l'initiation (210e6-211b5)². *Eros* étant un objet ambigu de connaissance, l'*idée* (au sens platonicien) que l'on peut se faire de lui est forcément imparfaite : c'est pourquoi, pour décrire *eros*, pour le donner à voir, Diotime rapporte un mythe (203b1-e5). Et si l'on veut connaître complètement l'amour, on ne saurait se satisfaire de cette description, qui l'appréhende comme un objet théorique : on doit aussi et surtout connaître *eros* en tant qu'il est sujet de la connaissance théorique, on doit être amoureux du beau en soi. Dans ce cas, une initiation complète aux mystères d'*eros*, comme celle menée par Diotime, ne doit pas seulement dispenser une connaissance théorique d'*eros*, mais aussi transmettre l'*eros* de la connaissance théorique.

(2) En outre, comme Socrate le dit à Agathon au début du dialogue, la sagesse philosophique ne peut se transmettre d'un esprit plein vers un esprit vide (175c8-d9, voir texte 3). Ce point de vue est confirmé par la théorie de Diotime, qui montre que devenir sage et vertueux, c'est mettre au monde soi-même la sagesse et la vertu (φρόνησίν τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετήν, 209a3), lorsque l'on rencontre un beau corps, une belle âme, une belle science, etc (voir textes 1 et 4). Dans ce processus, toute intervention extérieure, y compris celle d'un maître et de son discours, ne peut jouer que le rôle d'un bel objet qui stimule l'apprentissage, mais qui n'instruit pas directement (voir texte 1). La leçon de Diotime ne peut donc avoir transmis à Socrate la connaissance d'*eros* : jouant le rôle d'un *beau* discours, cette leçon a seulement aidé Socrate à mettre au monde une connaissance dont il était déjà gros.

(3) Enfin, Diotime nous apprend que, pour accoucher d'une sagesse, il faut non seulement être fécond (ἐγκύμων, 209b1), mais il faut que ce dont on est gros soit mûr, comme un enfant arrivé à terme, et que l'on soit pressé par le besoin de le mettre au monde (τίκτειν τε καὶ γεννᾶν ἤδη ἐπιθυμῇ, 209b2-3, voir texte 4b).

¹ Voir Bakhtine 1970, pp. 128-155, Gold 1980, Corrigan et Glazov-Corrigan 2004 et 2005.

² Voir Sheffield 2006, p. 44.

Si donc Socrate, comme il le proclame, est véritablement devenu savant en matière d'*eros* après avoir rencontré Diotime (textes 5), il faut supposer : (1) qu'il a développé une connaissance *pratique* d'*eros* – il est devenu amoureux de la connaissance ; (2) que Diotime et son discours ont stimulé, et non pas transmis ce désir de connaître ; (3) que Socrate, en rencontrant Diotime, était sur le point d'accoucher de cette sagesse pratique d'*eros* : son amour de connaître était mûr, et demandait à être pleinement réalisé³. C'est à ces trois conditions que Diotime peut avoir véritablement instruit Socrate sur l'amour, et c'est à ces trois conditions que le lecteur du dialogue peut espérer retirer du discours de Diotime une connaissance complète d'*eros*.

Néanmoins, cette manière d'envisager le rôle d'une leçon contredit les préjugés et les attentes d'un lecteur qui est non seulement engagé dans un mode de réception passif du savoir (la lecture), mais qui est censé avoir été éduqué, comme Agathon, dans le cadre de la *paiderastia* traditionnelle, où la communication du savoir est conçue comme un transfert de connaissances (cf. 175c8-d9, texte 3)⁴. C'est pour prévenir le lecteur contre ce préjugé, pour l'empêcher de considérer que la connaissance théorique qu'il retire de la lecture du discours de Diotime lui permettra de connaître complètement *eros*, que Platon ne se contente pas d'énoncer cette leçon, mais qu'il met en scène autour de l'énonciatrice de la leçon (Diotime), différents types de récepteurs pouvant servir au lecteur tantôt de modèles, tantôt de repoussoirs.

II. Agathon et le jeune Socrate

En faisant prononcer à Diotime la leçon sur *eros*, Platon met en scène deux auditeurs de cette leçon : un auditeur direct (Socrate plus jeune, interlocuteur de Diotime) et un auditeur indirect (Agathon), auquel Socrate rapporte la leçon.

(1) Platon signale ainsi que l'initié, le bénéficiaire direct de cette leçon de philosophie, fut Socrate, et non Agathon. Or le lecteur sait quel type d'initié en matière d'*eros* est devenu Socrate suite à sa rencontre avec Diotime. Même s'il rapporte volontiers des théories sur l'amour, comme dans le *Banquet* ou dans le *Phèdre*, Socrate est avant tout un praticien de l'amour du savoir, un « amoureux (ἐραστής) des divisions et des rassemblements » dialectiques, qui permettent de « penser et de parler » (λέγειν τε καὶ φρονεῖν, *Phèdre* 266b3-5), un homme qui ne cesse de s'interroger lui-même et d'interroger les autres pour leur transmettre son désir de connaître (*Théétète*, 149c8-d3, 150d2-8, *Ménon*, 84b6-c3). C'est même ainsi qu'il apparaît dans le *Banquet* : il arrive en retard car il s'est arrêté en route pour méditer (174d4-7), et il engage à deux reprises son hôte Agathon dans un entretien dialectique, un *elenkhos* qui fait prendre conscience au poète de son ignorance (193d-194e et 199b-201c). Quant au jeune Agathon, destinataire indirect de la leçon, le lecteur sait que, suite au symposion, il n'est pas devenu philosophe⁵. C'est la preuve qu'il ne suffit pas de connaître la leçon de Diotime pour connaître véritablement l'*eros* philosophique. Au reste, Socrate dit bien que Diotime ne l'a pas seulement instruit, elle l'a persuadé (πέπεισμαι, 212b2) de s'engager dans une pratique de l'*eros* philosophique (τιμῶ τὰ ἐρωτικά καὶ [...] ἀσκῶ, 212b6, voir texte 6).

(2) En outre, pour décrire son entretien avec Diotime, Socrate use de toutes les ressources (et de toutes les ambiguïtés) du langage pour laisser entendre que cet entretien ne fut pas seulement un cours magistral, mais aussi une expérience amoureuse : la rencontre avec une femme qui participe du divin, donc de la beauté⁶, et qui prononce un *beau* discours propice à la procréation (cf. 204c7 : καλῶς λέγεις⁷, et les paronomases : Ἔρως - ἐρῶν - ἐρῶ - ἔροιτο - ἐρώτησιν, voir textes 7)⁸.

(3) Enfin, le lecteur peut remarquer une différence significative entre ces deux destinataires de la leçon sur *eros*. Agathon et le jeune Socrate ont à peu près le même âge⁹, ils partagent la même ignorance théorique d'*eros*, puisque, dans l'*elenkhos* préliminaire, Socrate a répondu à Diotime à peu près comme Agathon a répondu à Socrate (201e2-4, voir texte 8b)¹⁰. Mais ils ne partagent pas la

³ Autrement dit, le jeune Socrate a un naturel philosophe (φιλόσοφος φύσις, *Rép.* 410e1), dont M. Dixsaut a bien montré qu'il s'agissait d'un naturel érotique (Dixsaut 1985, pp. 129-186).

⁴ Sur la *paiderastia*, voir Brisson 2006, pp. 250-251.

⁵ En vertu du regard critique qu'il peut porter sur un dialogue raconté par les narrateurs (et écrit par l'auteur) bien longtemps après les événements (voir voir Halperin 1992, p. 100, qui parle à juste titre de « biographical criticism »), le lecteur sait qu'Agathon est mort poète (*ut artifex* !), loin d'Athènes, à la cour du tyran Archélaos de Macédoine (voir Brisson 1998, p. 25, Nails 2006, p. 205 et Corradi 2012, p. 501).

⁶ Voir Ficin 2002, pp. 127 et 150-151, Friedländer 1964, p. 157-159, D. Frede, 1993, p. 415, Horn 2012b, pp. 2 et 13.

⁷ Sur ce point, voir Wersinger 2012, § 49.

⁸ Sur la valeur du personnage de Diotime qui, en tant que femme, contredit le paradigme traditionnel de la *paiderastia*, voir Ast 1816, p. 312, Rosen 1968, p. 203, Dover 1980, p. 145, Halperin 1990, Dean-Jones 1992 et Hobbs 2006, p. 264.

⁹ Socrate prétend avoir rencontré Diotime dix ans avant la peste d'Athènes (430 av. J.-C.) : en 440, il avait donc à peu près trente ans, l'âge d'Agathon à la date du banquet (416). Voir Athénée, *Deipn.* 217a, Robin 1929, p. XLV, Sier 2012, p. 55, n. 4, Nails 2002, pp. 8-10.

¹⁰ Sur les similitudes entre les deux personnages, voir Rehn, 1996, pp. 82-83.

même ignorance de la pratique d'*eros* : tandis que, réfuté par Socrate, Agathon lui répond « οὐτως ἐχέτω ὡς σὺ λέγεις » (201c5) et qu'il abandonne la partie, le jeune Socrate réfuté par Diotime avec les mêmes arguments, réplique « πῶς λέγεις [...], ὦ Διοτίμα ; » (201e7. Comparer les textes 8a et 8b). Contrairement à Agathon, le jeune Socrate s'avère un interlocuteur déjà amoureux du savoir, et par la suite, il ne cesse d'interroger la prêtresse (202a2, d6-7, e2, 203a9, 204c8, 205b6 etc), de la contredire (202b5-6, 208b9) ou d'exprimer ses réserves sur ce qu'elle avance (205b3, 206e4). C'est en raison de cette curiosité du jeune Socrate pour la connaissance que Diotime a continué de discuter avec lui, et l'a initié complètement à l'*eros* philosophique, tandis qu'Agathon, interlocuteur docile mais passif de Socrate, n'a été le destinataire direct que de l'*elenkhos* (219b-201c).

La mise en scène énonciative complexe de la leçon sur *eros* est donc elle-même porteuse d'une leçon de communication, qui confirme : (1) que la théorie de Diotime est censée transmettre une connaissance pratique, et non seulement théorique, d'*eros* ; (2) que, dans ce cas, il s'agit d'un beau discours stimulant, dont l'objectif ultime est d'aider le destinataire à développer son amour pour le savoir ; (3) que ce destinataire n'est devenu philosophe que parce qu'il était déjà vivement amoureux du savoir. Si Agathon n'est pas devenu philosophe, suite à sa rencontre avec Socrate, c'est parce qu'il n'a pas compris, comme le lecteur est invité à le faire, que la leçon de Socrate sur *eros* (201d-212c) n'est pas portée seulement par la leçon théorique de l'énonciatrice (Diotime), mais aussi et surtout par l'attitude de son énonciataire (le jeune Socrate), qui montre, par sa manière de converser et par ce qu'il est devenu par la suite, que connaître l'*eros* philosophique ne consiste pas seulement à comprendre théoriquement ce que Diotime expose.

III. Alcibiade

On ne peut certes accuser Alcibiade d'avoir commis ce malentendu. Ce personnage s'invite au banquet après le discours de Socrate, mais dans le portrait qu'il fait de Socrate, il témoigne, à son insu, de l'effet que la leçon de Diotime a produit sur le dialecticien : Socrate est bien devenu un amoureux de la connaissance, qui pratique la méditation (220c3-d5) et le dialogue (217b6-7), et dont les discours provoquent chez ses interlocuteurs un furieux désir de sagesse (218a3-6). Alcibiade lui-même, contrairement à Agathon, est devenu, au contact de Socrate, un *erastês* du philosophe et de sa *sophia* (218d1-4). Pour autant, le lecteur sait qu'Alcibiade, suite à sa rencontre avec Socrate, n'est pas devenu plus philosophe qu'Agathon. Et Platon engage son lecteur à réfléchir aux causes de cet autre échec pédagogique, en lui suggérant deux types d'explication.

Une première explication est fournie par Alcibiade lui-même, qui décrit Socrate comme un *erastês* (216d2-3), attiré par les beaux garçons comme Alcibiade, qu'il charme avec les trésors de sagesse (ἀγάλματα) que laissent entrevoir son âme (215b3, 216d7-8, 216e7) et ses discours (222a4, voir textes 9 et 10). Mais après avoir attiré sa proie, Socrate se montre soudain méprisant à l'égard de la beauté (καταφρονεῖ, 216d9) et refuse d'échanger, comme c'est l'usage, ses trésors de sagesse contre les faveurs sexuelles du jeune homme (ἀλλάξασθαι, 218e5, διαμείβεσθαι, 219a1, voir texte 11). Socrate se comporte donc comme un éducateur incohérent : il joue d'abord à l'*erastês*, puis il se dérobe à ce rôle, comme un *eromenos*, fuyant les avances de son soupirant et refusant de lui livrer ce qu'il possède (222a7-b4, voir texte 12). D'où les accusations d'Alcibiade : Socrate est un *hubristês* (215b7, 219c5, 222a8) et un trompeur (ἐξαπατᾶσθαι, 222b3 et 5). D'où, également, le trouble profond d'Alcibiade, qui est partagé entre amour et répulsion à l'égard de cet homme, dont il admire la sagesse mais dont il ne peut tirer profit. Le problème d'Alcibiade, comme il l'avoue lui-même, est qu'il ne sait pas *comment s'y prendre* (ὅτι χρήσωμαι, 216c4) avec Socrate et sa sagesse (216c1-4, 219d3-e5, voir textes 13).

Mais le lecteur peut trouver dans la théorie de Diotime qu'il vient de lire une explication alternative de l'échec éducatif dont Alcibiade fait le récit. Grâce à Diotime, on peut comprendre que le comportement de Socrate est moins troublant qu'il n'y paraît, et que, si Alcibiade avait connaissance de la théorie sur *eros*, il saurait comment s'y prendre avec le philosophe et sa sagesse. En effet, d'après ce que dit Diotime, il est normal que le philosophe, qui est attiré par le beau sous toutes ses formes, soit amoureux (*erastês*) des beaux corps (210a6-b6). Il est tout aussi normal qu'il ne cherche pas à jouir sexuellement de ces corps, puisque ce vers quoi tend son *eros* n'est pas l'objet beau mais le bien (205e8-206a1), et le beau en soi auquel renvoie cet objet (210e2-211a1, 211c9, voir texte 1)¹¹.

Quant aux *agalmata theia kai pankala* qu'Alcibiade aperçoit en Socrate (216e7-9, texte 10c), il est bien normal que Socrate ne lui ait pas transmis, puisque devenir sage et vertueux, c'est mettre au

¹¹ Voir aussi 210b5-6 : ἐνὸς δὲ τὸ σφόδρα τοῦτο χαλάσαι καταφρονήσαντα καὶ σμικρὸν ἡγησάμενον, passage qui évoque – et justifie – le mépris (καταφρονεῖ, 216d9) que manifeste Socrate pour les beautés *individuelles* des jeunes gens qu'il charme.

monde soi-même la sagesse et la vertu (φρόνησίν τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετήν, 209a3, texte 4b). Si donc Alcibiade veut progresser vers la sagesse et la vertu, c'est à lui de produire ses propres *agalmata theia kai pankala*. En outre posséder ces *agalmata* de Socrate, cela ne serait pas posséder la science de Socrate, puisque la science du philosophe, c'est la connaissance du beau, et, comme Alcibiade le dit lui-même (sans comprendre le sens précis de ses paroles) les trésors de Socrate ne sont *que* des *agalmata*, c'est-à-dire des images, des reflets de la beauté divine, et non la beauté elle-même. Socrate exagère à peine lorsqu'il dit qu'il ne vaut rien (219a1-2, voir texte 11) : de fait, les richesses qu'il possède ne sont pas l'objet de la connaissance véritable, elles n'en sont que le reflet¹².

Pour autant, puisque ces images sont *theia kai pankala*, Alcibiade aurait pu s'en servir comme des instruments (et non des sources) de la sagesse (211c, voir texte 1¹³), comme de beaux objets, dont la fréquentation permet de progresser vers la connaissance du beau, comme de belles images, dont la fonction n'est pas d'instruire mais de convertir le regard vers le beau en soi dont elles sont le reflet¹⁴. Il est donc tout à fait cohérent que le philosophe, *en tant qu'éducateur*, soit un *eromenos*, et non plus un *erastês*, puisque son rôle n'est pas de communiquer directement la science du beau au disciple, mais de stimuler son désir de connaître le beau en lui présentant de beaux objets désirables.

Tout ce que dit Alcibiade, qui parle sous le contrôle de Socrate (216a1-2, 217b1-3, 219c2-3), est donc parfaitement exact du point de vue de la vérité historique. Mais Alcibiade ne comprend pas le sens de ce qu'il rapporte : que le philosophe soit un objet à la fois désirable et fuyant est à ses yeux un problème, tandis que c'est en réalité une solution, c'est la clé de la réussite d'une initiation véritable à la philosophie¹⁵. Et si Alcibiade est dans une telle aporie (Ἡπόρουν, 219e3), s'il s'avère incapable de satisfaire l'*amour* qu'il éprouve pour le *savoir* du philosophe (voir textes 13), c'est parce qu'il n'a pas conscience des sens nouveaux que le philosophe lui-même donne aux mots « aimer » et « savoir ». Pour le philosophe, en effet, « aimer » ne signifie plus posséder un corps, ou une connaissance, mais chercher à connaître le bien et le beau ; et « savoir », ce n'est plus posséder le contenu discursif transmis par un sage, c'est contempler les formes par ses propres moyens. Et c'est pour signaler dramatiquement ce malentendu, c'est pour mieux montrer qu'Alcibiade aime le savoir du philosophe de manière traditionnelle, et non philosophique, que Platon fait arriver le personnage d'Alcibiade en retard à la fête, après que Socrate, par la voix de Diotime, a redéfini philosophiquement les notions d'amour et de savoir.

Le point de vue d'Alcibiade sur la philosophie est donc strictement complémentaire de celui d'Agathon : avec Agathon, Platon nous montre que pour devenir philosophe, il ne suffit pas d'entendre la théorie de Diotime sur l'amour : encore faut-il devenir soi-même amoureux du savoir ; avec Alcibiade Platon nous montre que l'on ne peut être correctement amoureux du savoir du philosophe sans tenir compte de l'exposé théorique de Diotime. En effet, grâce à Diotime, Alcibiade aurait compris qu'être amoureux du savoir du philosophe, ce n'est pas chercher à s'emparer de ses connaissances, c'est imiter le philosophe dans sa pratique de la connaissance¹⁶.

IV. Les narrateurs du dialogue : Aristodème et Apollodore

Dans ce cas, les narrateurs qui rapportent le dialogue (Aristodème et Apollodore) ne seraient-ils pas des élèves modèles de la leçon philosophique ? Ces personnages ont en effet les moyens d'éviter les deux écueils sur lesquels ont achoppé Alcibiade et Agathon. Contrairement à Alcibiade, et comme Agathon, ils sont témoins de tout ce qui s'est dit au cours du symposion : les avertissements liminaires de Socrate sur la communication du savoir (175c7-d9, voir texte 3), et le sens nouveau que la théorie de Diotime a donné à « aimer » et à « savoir ». En outre ils partagent avec Alcibiade cet amour pour Socrate (Σωκράτους ἐραστής, 173b3) et pour les discours philosophiques (172c6, 173c2-5) dont Agathon s'est montré dépourvu. Et contrairement à Alcibiade, ils n'éprouvent pas cet amour comme un problème ou une frustration : Aristodème vit dans une communion mimétique avec le maître (ἀνυπόδητος αἰεί, 173b2), Apollodore est convaincu d'être devenu philosophe (φιλοσοφεῖν, 173a3, cf. 173c2-8, voir textes 14 et 15), et l'un et l'autre s'enquière avec un zèle exemplaire (μελέτη) des discours du philosophe (voir textes 16). Contrairement à Alcibiade, ces deux disciples semblent avoir compris qu'il fallait imiter le philosophe. Mais sont-ils pour autant de bons imitateurs ?

Ici encore, Platon nous invite à comparer l'*eros* des personnages pour la sagesse du

¹² Voir Reeve 2006 et Blondell 2006, p. 165.

¹³ Dans ce texte, « ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρῶμενον », 211c3, constitue une solution lexicalement explicite à l'aporie exprimée par Alcibiade : « οὐκ ἔχω ὅτι χρήσωμαι τούτῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ », 216c4, texte 13a.

¹⁴ Sur cette conversion du regard (περιαγωγή, μεταστροφή), voir *Rép.* VII, 518d4, 532b8 etc.

¹⁵ Voir Edmonds 2000 et Destrée 2012, p. 199-200.

¹⁶ Sur tous les malentendus d'Alcibiade, voir les analyses très pertinentes d'E. Belfiore 1984, p. 142-149, dont mes remarques s'inspirent largement.

philosophe avec ce que le philosophe lui-même dit d'*eros* et de la sagesse, par la bouche de Diotime. Être philosophe, c'est aimer le beau (texte 1). Ce n'est pas aimer l'homme qui aime le beau (Socrate), ni même les beaux discours que cet amour du beau engage le philosophe à prononcer. La philosophie n'est pas reproduction de discours philosophiques sur le beau, c'est la recherche de la nature du beau, qui permet de produire soi-même de beaux discours, et d'éveiller, grâce à ces beaux discours, l'*eros* de la connaissance du beau chez ses interlocuteurs. Autrement dit, si Apollodore était devenu philosophe, il ne mettrait pas toute sa joie (*ὑπερφύως ὥς χαίρω*, 173c5) dans la récitation des discours philosophiques (voir texte 15b), lui-même et Aristodème ne montreraient pas tant de zèle à faire la narration du *Banquet*, mais ils pratiqueraient la philosophie. Comme Socrate, ils méditeraient sur la nature du beau, et transmettraient à leurs interlocuteurs, par le dialogue, cette curiosité qui anime Socrate à l'égard des beaux objets. Autrement dit, l'imitation de la philosophie que propose Aristodème et Apollodore est un leurre : c'est une imitation *servile*, comme l'a montré R. Blondell (« slavish imitation », Blondell 2002, p. 107). À l'instar d'Agathon et d'Alcibiade, les narrateurs du texte sont des faux frères du lecteur.

C'est à cette même imitation servile que s'adonne l'écrivain Platon en rapportant et en publiant le récit d'Apollodore. Ce que l'auteur dénonce, ce n'est donc pas la reproduction des discours en elle-même, ce sont les illusions de ceux qui, comme Apollodore et Aristodème, confondent cette pratique (la chronique des discours philosophiques) avec l'exercice même de la philosophie¹⁷. Renouvelant (ou préparant) les mises en garde prononcées par Socrate à l'encontre de l'écrit dans le *Phèdre* (274b-276d), Platon signale à son lecteur que le dialogue philosophique dans son ensemble, à l'image du discours de Diotime, doit faire l'objet d'un bon usage : il ne doit pas être utilisé seulement comme la source de connaissances philosophiques, mais aussi comme un bel objet qui stimule le désir de connaître la nature du beau et du bien¹⁸. Platon invite ainsi son lecteur à prolonger, en dialoguant avec lui-même ou avec d'autres personnes, les enquêtes menées par Socrate et interrompues par l'aporie (201c4-8) ou le sommeil (223d6-8) de ses interlocuteurs.

Conclusion

Résumons-nous. Dans le *Banquet*, Platon se sert de la forme dialogue pour souligner et préciser tous les enjeux de la leçon de Diotime sur l'amour du savoir. L'exemple d'Agathon montre au lecteur que, pour connaître véritablement *eros* (devenir philosophe), il ne faut pas seulement connaître la leçon sur *eros*, il faut devenir *amoureux* du savoir. L'exemple d'Alcibiade montre qu'être amoureux du savoir, ce n'est pas désirer les connaissances du philosophe mais *imiter* le philosophe dans sa pratique de la connaissance. L'exemple des narrateurs, montre enfin qu'imiter le philosophe et sa pratique de la connaissance, ce n'est pas reproduire les gestes et les discours du philosophe, c'est chercher, comme le philosophe, à connaître les essences. Seul le jeune Socrate a visiblement compris cela, et c'est à ce personnage que le lecteur est finalement convié à s'identifier¹⁹.

Le dialogue du *Banquet* nous montre donc qu'il y a différentes manières d'aimer un discours et une science, et que l'amour philosophique pour le savoir ne se résume ni à une écoute attentive (Agathon), ni à un désir de possession (Alcibiade), ni à une reproduction zélée (Aristodème et Apollodore). Ainsi, la leçon du *Banquet* sur *eros* ne tient pas seulement à ce que les discours disent de la nature d'*eros*, mais aussi aux rapports (plus ou moins érotiques, plus ou moins philosophiques) que les personnages entretiennent avec ces discours, en particulier le discours de Diotime et de Socrate. La leçon de Diotime a donc deux dimensions, dont l'interprète doit tenir compte de manière équivalente : il faut comprendre ce que ce discours dit d'*eros* et de la connaissance ; il faut aussi comprendre comment ce discours peut et doit être lui-même objet de désir et objet de connaissance.

En outre, ces analyses permettent peut-être de corriger le point de vue que le lecteur nourrit spontanément sur la « ventriloquie »²⁰ de Platon. Pour peu que l'on envisage les multiples « masques discursifs »²¹ du dialogue non pas comme des porte-parole de l'auteur mais comme des porte-parole du lecteur, la multiplication des points de vue n'apparaît plus comme un moyen pour Platon de brouiller la transmission de ce qu'il pense²² : loin d'être un problème à résoudre, cette complexité énonciative s'avère alors un outil herméneutique proposé au lecteur pour relire, de plus près, ce qu'il a déjà lu. Si Platon nous engage à lever des masques, ce ne sont pas ses propres « masques

¹⁷ Voir Wildberger 2012, p. 33 et Reeve 2006, p. 138.

¹⁸ Voir Sinaiko 1965, p. 16, Belfiore 1984, p. 138, Sayre 1992, p. 231.

¹⁹ Pour des analyses analogues sur des malentendus commis à propos de la leçon philosophique par d'autres personnages, et dans d'autres dialogues, voir Erler 2003.

²⁰ Kosman 1992, p. 75.

²¹ Calame 2005, p. 36.

²² C'est le point de vue d'H. Neumann 1965, p. 37 (« The problem, then, in interpreting the dialogues is to sift out Plato's meaning from that of his creations. ») ; c'est aussi la lecture des tenants des doctrines non écrites, voir Reale 1997.

d'autorité »²³, ce sont nos masques de lecteurs²⁴, c'est-à-dire les réflexes interprétatifs auxquels nous engageant, souvent à tort, notre position passive de lecteurs et l'éducation traditionnelle (la *paiderastia*) dont, en tant que lecteurs implicites de Platon, nous sommes censés être les produits. On s'est déjà beaucoup demandé : *Who Speaks for Plato ?* (cf. Press 2000), et des réponses aussi nombreuses que suggestives ont été apportées à cette question. Peut-être est-il temps de prêter plus d'intérêt à la question : « Who speaks for Plato's readers ? ».

TEXTES

TEXTE 1. Connaissance du beau et usage des belles choses, 211b5-211c9

[ΔΙ. –] « Ὅταν δὴ τις ἀπὸ τῶνδε διὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδεραστεῖν ἐπανιών ἐκείνο τὸ καλὸν ἄρχηται καθορᾶν, σχεδὸν ἂν τι ἅπτοίτο τοῦ τέλους. Τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ ἐστὶ τὸ ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ [211c] τὰ ἐρωτικά ἰέναι ἢ ὑπ' ἄλλου ἄγεσθαι, ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ἀεὶ ἐπανιέναι, ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον, ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐπὶ δύο καὶ ἀπὸ δυοῖν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ καλὰ σώματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπ' ἐκείνο τὸ μάθημα τελευτῆσαι, ὃ ἐστὶν οὐκ ἄλλου ἢ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ μάθημα, καὶ γνῶ αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἔστι »

[ΔΙ. –] « Toutes les fois donc que, en partant des choses d'ici-bas, on arrive à s'élever par une pratique correcte de l'amour des jeunes garçons, on commence à contempler cette beauté-là, on n'est pas loin de toucher au but. Voilà donc quelle est la droite voie qu'il faut suivre dans le domaine des choses de l'amour ou sur laquelle il faut se laisser conduire par un autre : c'est, en prenant son point de départ dans les beautés d'ici-bas pour aller vers cette beauté-là, de s'élever toujours, comme au moyen d'échelons, en passant d'un seul beau corps à deux, de deux beaux corps à tous les beaux corps, et des beaux corps aux belles occupations, et des occupations vers les belles connaissances qui sont certaines, puis des belles connaissances qui sont certaines vers cette connaissance qui constitue le terme, celle qui n'est autre que la science du beau lui-même, dans le but de connaître finalement la beauté en soi. »

Pour tous les extraits du *Banquet*, texte établi par P. Vicair (CUF, 1989) et traduction de L. Brisson (GF, 1998), parfois modifiée.

TEXTE 2. Eros est sujet, non objet du désir et de la connaissance, 204b3-c6

[ΔΙ. –] « ἔστιν γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἡ σοφία, Ἔρως δ' ἐστὶν ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλόν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι, φιλόσοφον δὲ ὄντα μεταξὺ εἶναι σοφοῦ καὶ ἀμαθοῦς [...] ὃν δὲ σὺ φήθης ἔρωτα εἶναι, θαυμαστὸν οὐδὲν ἔπαθες· φήθης δέ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ τεκμαιρομένη ἐξ ὧν σὺ λέγεις, τὸ ἐρώμενον ἔρωτα εἶναι, οὐ τὸ ἐρῶν· διὰ ταῦτά σοι οἶμαι πάγκαλος ἐφαίνετο ὁ Ἔρως. Καὶ γὰρ ἔστι τὸ ἐραστὸν τὸ τῷ ὄντι καλὸν καὶ ἄβρὸν καὶ τέλεον καὶ μακαριστόν· τὸ δέ γε ἐρῶν ἄλλην ἰδέαν τοιαύτην ἔχον, οἷαν ἐγὼ διήλθον. »

[ΔΙ. –] « La sagesse est une des plus belles choses du monde, or l'Amour est amoureux de ce qui est beau, d'où il suit que l'Amour est amoureux de la sagesse, c'est-à-dire philosophe, et qu'à ce titre il tient le milieu entre sage et ignorant [...] Cette idée que tu te faisais d'Éros, il n'est pas surprenant que tu t'y sois laissé prendre. Tu te figurais, si j'ai bien saisi le sens de tes paroles, que l'amour est l'objet aimé, non le sujet aimant. Voilà la raison pour laquelle, j'imagine, Éros te paraissait être doté d'une beauté sans bornes. Et de fait ce qui attire l'amour, c'est ce qui est réellement beau, délicat, parfait, c'est-à-dire ce qui dispense le bonheur le plus grand. Mais autre est la nature de ce qui aime, et je t'ai exposé ce qu'elle est. »

TEXTE 3. La communication de la sagesse, 175c7-d9

Τὸν οὖν Ἀγάθωνα (τυγχάνειν γὰρ ἔσχατον κατακείμενον μόνον)· « Δεῦρ', ἔφη φάναι, Σώκρατες, παρ' ἐμὲ κατὰκεισο, ἵνα καὶ τοῦ σοφοῦ ἀπτόμενός σου ἀπολαύσω, ὃ σοι προσέστη ἐν τοῖς προθύροις· δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι εὗρες αὐτὸ καὶ ἔχεις· οὐ γὰρ ἂν προαπέστης. » Καὶ τὸν Σωκράτη καθίζεσθαι καὶ εἰπεῖν ὅτι· « Εὖ ἂν ἔχοι, φάναι, ὦ Ἀγάθων, εἰ τοιοῦτον εἴη ἡ σοφία ὥστ' ἐκ τοῦ πληρεστεροῦ εἰς

²³ Calame 2005.

²⁴ Il conviendrait de transposer à l'analyse des textes de Platon une lecture qui a déjà été bien expérimentée à propos d'autres auteurs : voir notamment les analyses de P. Demont sur la figuration des énonciateurs dans la VIII^e *Pythique* de Pindare (Demont 1990, pp. 82-83).

τὸ κενώτερον ῥεῖν, ἡμῶν ἐὰν ἀπτόμεθα ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν ταῖς κύλιξιν ὕδωρ τὸ διὰ τοῦ ἐρίου ῥέον ἐκ τῆς πληρεστερας εἰς τὴν κενωτέραν. »

Alors Agathon, qui était seul sur le dernier lit, s'écria : « Viens ici Socrate t'installer près de moi, pour que, à ton contact, je profite moi aussi du savoir qui t'est venu alors que tu te trouvais dans le vestibule. Car il est évident que tu l'as trouvé et que tu le tiens, ce savoir ; sinon, tu ne serais pas venu avant. » Socrate s'assit et répondit : « Ce serait une aubaine, Agathon, si le savoir était de nature à couler du plus plein vers le plus vide, pour peu que nous nous touchions les uns les autres, comme c'est le cas de l'eau qui, par l'intermédiaire d'un brin de laine, coule de la coupe la plus pleine vers la plus vide. »

TEXTES 4. *Eros* et la procréation

4a. *Eros* est désir de procréer, 206c1-d2

[ΔΙ. –] « Κυοῦσιν γάρ, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ, ἐπειδὴν ἔν τινι ἡλικίᾳ γένωνται, τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡμῶν ἡ φύσις· τίκτειν δὲ ἐν μὲν αἰσχροῦ οὐ δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ καλῷ. [...] Μοῖρα οὖν καὶ Εἰλείθυια ἡ Καλλονὴ ἐστὶ τῇ γενέσει. Διὰ ταῦτα **ὅταν μὲν καλῷ προσπελάζῃ τὸ κυοῦν, ἰλεῶν τε γίγνεται καὶ εὐφραϊνόμενον διαχεῖται καὶ τίκτει τε καὶ γεννᾷ**. »

[ΔΙ. –] « Socrate, dit-elle, tous les êtres humains sont féconds dans leur corps et dans leur âme, et, parvenue à un certain âge, notre nature éprouve le désir de procréer. Mais elle ne peut procréer dans la laideur, elle doit le faire dans le beau. [...] Ainsi ce qui dans la génération joue le rôle de la Moire et d'Ilithyie, c'est la Beauté. Par suite, quand l'être fécond approche du beau, il éprouve du bien-être, et, submergé par la joie, il se dilate, il procrée et il enfante. »

4b. La procréation selon l'âme, 208e6-209b4

[ΔΙ. –] « εἰσὶ γὰρ οὖν, ἔφη, οἱ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κυοῦσιν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν, ἃ ψυχῇ προσήκει καὶ κυῆσαι καὶ τεκεῖν· τί οὖν προσήκει ; **φρόνησίν τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετήν**. [...] Τούτων δ' αὖ ὅταν τις ἐκ νέου **ἐγκύμων** ἢ τὴν ψυχὴν, θεῖος ὢν καὶ ἡκούσης τῆς ἡλικίας, **τίκτειν τε καὶ γεννᾷν ἤδη ἐπιθυμῇ**, ζητεῖ δὴ, οἶμαι, καὶ οὗτος περιὼν τὸ καλὸν ἐν ᾧ ἂν γεννήσειεν· ἐν τῷ γὰρ αἰσχροῦ οὐδέποτε γεννήσει. »

[ΔΙ. –] « Il y en a, précisa-t-elle, qui sont plus féconds dans leur âme que dans leur corps, pour les choses dont la fécondation et la procréation reviennent à l'âme. Et que sont ces choses ? La pensée et toute autre forme d'excellence. [...] Et quand, parmi ces hommes, il s'en trouve un qui est fécond selon l'âme depuis son jeune âge, parce qu'il est divin, et que, l'âge venu, il sent alors le désir de procréer et d'engendrer, bien entendu il cherche, j'imagine, en jetant les yeux de tous côtés, la belle occasion pour engendrer ; jamais, en effet, il ne voudra engendrer dans la laideur. »

TEXTES 5. Socrate instruit par Diotime

5a. 177d7-e1 : [ΣΩ. –] « ἐγὼ [...] ὃς οὐδέν φημι ἄλλο ἐπίστασθαι ἢ τὰ ἐρωτικά » – [ΣΟ. –] « moi, qui déclare ne rien savoir sauf sur les sujets qui relèvent d'Éros. »

5b. 201d5 : [ΣΩ. –] « ἡ δὲ καὶ ἐμὲ τὰ ἐρωτικά ἐδίδαξεν » – [ΣΟ. –] « Oui, c'est elle qui m'a instruit des choses concernant l'amour. »

5c. 207a5-6 : [ΣΩ. –] « Ταῦτά τε οὖν πάντα ἐδίδασκέ με, ὅποτε περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγους ποιοῖτο » – [ΣΟ. –] « Voilà donc tout ce qu'elle m'enseignait, quand il lui arrivait de parler des questions relatives à Éros. »

TEXTE 6. Fonction pragmatique de la leçon de Diotime et du discours de Socrate, 212b1-8

[ΣΩ. –] « Ταῦτα δὴ, ὦ Φαῖδρε τε καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι, ἔφη μὲν Διοτίμα, **πέπεισμαι δ' ἐγὼ· πεπεισμένος δὲ πειρώμαι καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πείθειν** ὅτι τούτου τοῦ κτήματος τῇ ἀνθρωπείᾳ φύσει **συνεργὸν ἀμείνω** Ἐρῶτος οὐκ ἂν τις ῥαδίως λάβοι. Διὸ δὲ ἐγὼ γέ φημι χρῆναι πάντα ἄνδρα τὸν Ἐρῶτα τιμᾶν, καὶ αὐτὸς **τιμῶ τὰ ἐρωτικά καὶ διαφερόντως ἀσκήω**, καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις παρακελεύομαι »

[ΣΟ. –] « Voilà Phèdre, et vous tous qui m'écoutez, ce qu'a dit Diotime ; et elle m'a convaincu. Et, comme elle m'a convaincu, je tente de convaincre les autres aussi que, pour assurer à la nature humaine la possession de ce bien, il est difficile de trouver un meilleur aide qu'Éros. Aussi, je le déclare, tout être humain doit-il honorer Éros. J'honore moi-même ce qui relève d'Éros et je m'y

adonne plus qu'à tout ; j'exhorte aussi les autres à faire de même. »

TEXTES 7. La leçon de Diotime : une expérience érotique ?

7a. 203b1 (introduction du mythe) : [ΔΙ. –] « ὅμως δέ σοι **ἐρῶ** » – « Je vais pourtant te le dire »

7b. 204c7 (fin du mythe) : [ΣΩ. –] « Καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον, ‘εἶεν δὴ, ὦ ξένη, **καλῶς** γὰρ λέγεις’ » – « Et moi de reprendre : ‘Eh bien poursuis, Étrangère, ce que tu dis est admirable’ » (voir aussi 206b6 et 206c1).

7c. 204d3 : [ΔΙ. –] « Εἰ δέ τις ἡμᾶς **ἔροιο**· ‘τί τῶν καλῶν ἐστὶν ὁ **Ἔρως**, ὃ Σώκρατες τε καὶ Διοτίμα;’ ὧδε δὲ σαφέστερον· ‘ἐρῶ ὁ ἐρῶν τῶν καλῶν· τί ἐρῶ;’ » Καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον ὅτι « γενέσθαι αὐτῷ. – Ἀλλ’ ἔτι **ποθεῖ**, ἔφη, ἡ ἀπόκρισις **ἐρώτησιν** τοιάνδε· ‘τί ἔσται ἐκείνῳ ὃ ἂν γένηται τὰ καλά;’ – Οὐ πάνυ ἔφην ἔτι ἔχειν ἐγὼ πρὸς ταύτην τὴν ἐρώτησιν προχείρως ἀποκρίνασθαι. »

[ΔΙ. –] « Or, si l'on nous demandait : ‘Socrate et Diotime, en quoi consiste l'amour de ce qui est beau ?’, ou en termes plus clairs : ‘Celui qui aime les belles choses, aime ; qu'est-ce qu'il aime ?’ – Qu'elles deviennent siennes, répondis-je. – Cette réponse, reprit-elle, appelle encore la question que voici : ‘Qu'en sera-t-il pour l'homme dont il s'agit quand les belles choses seront devenues siennes ?’ – Je déclarai que je me trouvais dans l'incapacité absolue de répondre à cette question sur-le-champ. »

TEXTES 8. Réactions de l'interlocuteur à l'*elenkhos*

8a. Agathon réfuté par Socrate, 201c2-d1

[ΣΩ. –] « Εἰ ἄρα ὁ Ἔρως τῶν καλῶν ἐνδεής ἐστί, τὰ δὲ ἀγαθὰ καλά, κἂν τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐνδεής εἴη.

[ΑΓ. –] Ἐγώ, φάναι, ὦ Σώκρατες, σοὶ οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην ἀντιλέγειν, **ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἐχέτω ὡς σὺ λέγεις**.

[ΣΩ. –] Οὐ μὲν οὖν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, φάναι, ὦ φιλούμενε Ἀγάθων, δύνασαι ἀντιλέγειν, ἐπεὶ Σωκράτει γε οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν. Καὶ σὲ μὲν γε ἤδη ἐάσω. »

[ΣΩ. –] « Par conséquent, si Éros manque de ce qui est beau, et si les choses bonnes sont belles, alors il doit manquer de ce qui est bon.

[ΑΓ. –] En ce qui me concerne, Socrate, dit-il, je ne suis pas de taille à te contredire ; qu'il en soit comme tu le dis.

[ΣΩ. –] Non, très cher Agathon, c'est la vérité que tu ne peux pas contredire ; contredire Socrate, ce n'est vraiment pas difficile. Je vais maintenant te laisser en paix. »

8b. Socrate réfuté par Diotime, 201e1-11

[ΣΩ. –] « Δοκεῖ οὖν μοι ῥᾶστον εἶναι οὕτω διελθεῖν, ὥς ποτέ με ἡ ξένη ἀνακρίνουσα διήει. Σχεδὸν γάρ τι καὶ ἐγὼ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἕτερα τοιαῦτα ἔλεγον οἷάπερ νῦν πρὸς ἐμὲ Ἀγάθων, ὡς εἴη ὁ Ἔρως μέγας θεός, εἴη δὲ τῶν καλῶν· ἤλεγχε δὴ με τούτοις τοῖς λόγοις οἷσπερ ἐγὼ τοῦτον, ὡς οὔτε καλὸς εἴη κατὰ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον οὔτε ἀγαθός. Καὶ ἐγώ, **πῶς λέγεις**, ἔφην, ὦ Διοτίμα ; αἰσχυρὸς ἄρα ὁ Ἔρως ἐστὶ καὶ κακός ; »

[ΔΙ. –] Καὶ ἦ, ‘οὐκ εὐφημήσεις ; ἔφη· ἢ οἶε, ὅτι ἂν μὴ καλὸν ἦ, ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὸ εἶναι αἰσχυρόν ; »

[ΣΩ. –] « Dès lors, le plus facile, me semble-t-il, est de suivre dans mon exposé l'ordre que suivait jadis l'étrangère quand elle posait des questions. Mes réponses en effet étaient à peu de choses près celles qu'Agathon vient de faire. Je soutenais qu'Éros était un grand dieu, et qu'il faisait partie de ce qui est beau. Et elle me réfutait en faisant valoir les mêmes arguments précisément que ceux que je viens d'utiliser avec Agathon, à savoir qu'Éros n'est ni beau ni bon, comme je viens de le dire. Je lui répliquai : ‘Que dis-tu là, Diotime ? Si tel est le cas, Éros est laid et mauvais ?’

[ΔΙ. –] ‘Pas blasphème, reprit-elle. T'imagines-tu que ce qui n'est pas beau doive nécessairement être laid ?’ »

TEXTES 9. Socrate *erastês*

9a. 215c1-8 : [ΑΛΚ. –] « ὁ μὲν γε δι' ὀργάνων **ἐκθήλει** τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῇ ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος δυνάμει, [...] Σὺ δ' ἐκείνου τοσοῦτον μόνον διαφέρεις, ὅτι ἄνευ ὀργάνων ψιλοῖς λόγοις ταῦτόν τοῦτο ποιεῖς. »

[ΑΛΚ. –] « Lui, effectivement, il se servait d'un instrument, pour charmer les êtres humains à l'aide de la puissance de son souffle [...]. Toi, tu te distingues de Marsyas sur un seul point : tu n'as pas besoin

d'instruments, et c'est en proférant de simples paroles que tu produis le même effet. »

9b. 216d2-3 : [ΑΛΚ. –] « Ὅρατε γὰρ ὅτι Σωκράτης ἐρωτικῶς διάκειται τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀεὶ περὶ τούτους ἐστὶ καὶ ἐκπέληται »

[ALC. –] « Vous voyez de vos yeux, en effet, quelles dispositions amoureuses portent Socrate vers les beaux garçons : il ne cesse de tourner autour d'eux, il est troublé par eux. »

TEXTES 10. Les trésors de sagesse

10a. Dans les silènes, 215a7-b4

[ΑΛΚ. –] « Φημί γὰρ δὴ ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸν εἶναι τοῖς σιληνοῖς τούτοις [...], οὓστινας ἐργάζονται οἱ δημιουργοὶ σύριγγας ἢ αὐλοὺς ἔχοντας, οἱ διχάδε διοιχθέντες φαίνονται **ἐνδοθεν ἀγάλματα ἔχοντες θεῶν.** »

[ALC. –] « Je maintiens donc que Socrate est on ne peut plus pareil à ces silènes [...], que les artisans représentent avec un *syrinx* et un *aulos* à la main ; si on les ouvre par le milieu, on s'aperçoit qu'ils contiennent en leur intérieur des figurines de dieux. »

10b. Dans l'âme de Socrate, 216d6-8

[ΑΛΚ. –] « ἐνδοθεν δὲ ἀνοιχθεὶς πόσης οἴεσθε γέμει, ὦ ἄνδρες συμπόται, σωφροσύνης ; »

[ALC. –] « Mais, à l'intérieur, une fois qu'il est ouvert, avez-vous une idée de toute la modération dont il regorge, messieurs les convives ? »

10c. *idem*, 216e6-217a2

[ΑΛΚ. –] « Σπουδάζαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνοιχθέντος οὐκ οἶδα εἴ τις ἐώρακεν τὰ ἐντὸς **ἀγάλματα**· ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἤδη ποτ' εἶδον, καὶ μοι ἔδοξεν οὕτω **θεῖα καὶ χρυσᾶ εἶναι καὶ πάγκαλα καὶ θαυμαστά**, ὥστε ποιητέον εἶναι ἔμβραχυν ὅτι κελεύει Σωκράτης »

[ALC. –] « Mais quand il est sérieux et qu'il s'ouvre, je ne sais si quelqu'un a vu les figurines qu'il recèle. Moi, il m'est arrivé de les voir, et elles m'ont paru si divines, si précieuses, si parfaitement belles et si extraordinaires, que je n'avais plus qu'à exécuter sans retard ce que me recommandait Socrate. »

10d. Dans les discours de Socrate, 222a1-6

[ΑΛΚ. –] « Διοιγομένους δὲ ἰδὼν ἂν τις καὶ ἐντὸς αὐτῶν γιγνόμενος πρῶτον μὲν νοῦν ἔχοντας ἐνδον μόνους εὐρήσει τῶν λόγων, ἔπειτα θειοτάτους καὶ πλείστα **ἀγάλματ' ἀρετῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔχοντας** καὶ ἐπὶ πλείστον τείνοντας, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐπὶ πᾶν ὅσον προσήκει σκοπεῖν τῷ μέλλοντι καλῷ κάγαθῷ ἔσεσθαι. »

[ALC. –] « Mais une fois [ces discours] ouverts, si on les observe et si on pénètre en leur intérieur, on découvrira d'abord qu'ils sont dans le fond les seuls à avoir du sens, et ensuite qu'ils sont on ne peut plus divins, qu'ils recèlent une multitude de figurines de l'excellence, que leur portée est on ne peut plus large, ou plutôt qu'ils mènent à tout ce qu'il convient d'avoir devant les yeux si l'on souhaite devenir un homme accompli. »

TEXTE 11. Socrate n'échange pas son savoir, 218e3-219a2

[ΣΩ. –] « ἀμήχανόν τοι κάλλος ὁρώης ἂν ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ τῆς παρὰ σοὶ εὐμορφίας πάμπολυ διαφέρων. Εἰ δὲ καθορῶν αὐτὸ κοινώσασθαί τέ μοι ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ **ἀλλάξασθαι** κάλλος ἀντὶ κάλλους, οὐκ ὀλίγῳ μου πλεονεκτεῖν διανοῇ, ἀλλ' ἀντὶ δόξης ἀλήθειαν καλὴν κτᾶσθαι ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ τῷ ὄντι “χρύσεια χαλκείων” **διαμείβεσθαι** νοεῖς. Ἀλλ', ὦ μακάριε, ἄμεινον σκόπει, **μή σε λανθάνω οὐδὲν ὄν.** »

[SO. –] « Tu vois sans doute en moi une beauté inimaginable et bien différente de la grâce que revêt ton aspect physique. Si donc, l'ayant aperçue, tu entreprends de la partager avec moi et d'échanger beauté contre beauté, le profit que tu comptes faire à mes dépens n'est pas mince ; à la place de l'apparence de la beauté, c'est la beauté véritable que tu entreprends d'acquérir, et, en réalité, tu as dans l'idée de troquer 'de l'or contre du cuivre'. Mais, bienheureux ami, fais bien attention, de peur de te méprendre sur mon compte, et sur mon néant réel. »

TEXTE 12. Socrate *eromenos*, 222a7-b4

[ΑΛΚ. –] « Καὶ μέντοι οὐκ ἐμὲ μόνον ταῦτα πεποίηκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Χαρμίδην τὸν Γλαύκωνος καὶ

Εὐθύδημον τὸν Διοκλέους καὶ ἄλλους πάνυ πολλούς, οὓς οὗτος **ἐξαπατῶν ὡς ἐραστής παιδικὰ μᾶλλον αὐτὸς καθίσταται ἀντ' ἐραστοῦ.** »

[ALC. –] « Du reste, je ne suis pas le seul qu'il ait traité de cette manière. Il s'est conduit de même avec Charmide, le fils de Glaucon, avec Euthydème, le fils de Dioclès, et avec beaucoup d'autres qu'il dupe en se donnant l'air d'un amant, alors qu'il tient le rôle du bien aimé plutôt que celui de l'amant. »

TEXTES 13. Aporie d'Alcibiade

13a. 216c1-4 : [ΑΛΚ. –] « καὶ πολλάκις μὲν ἡδέως ἂν ἴδοιμι αὐτὸν μὴ ὄντα ἐν ἀνθρώποις· εἰ δ' αὖ τοῦτο γένοιτο, εὖ οἶδα ὅτι πολὺ μείζον ἂν ἀχθοίμην, ὥστε **οὐκ ἔχω ὅτι χρήσωμαι** τούτῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ. »

[ALC. –] « Souvent j'aurais plaisir à le voir disparaître du nombre des hommes, mais si cela arrivait, je serais beaucoup plus malheureux encore, de sorte que je ne sais comment m'y prendre avec cet homme-là. »

13b. 219d3-e1 : [ΑΛΚ. –] « Τὸ δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο τίνα οἶσθέ με διάνοιαν ἔχειν, ἡγούμενον μὲν ἡτιμάσθαι, ἀγάμενον δὲ τὴν τούτου φύσιν τε καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν, ἐντετυχηκότα ἀνθρώπῳ τοιούτῳ οἷῳ ἐγὼ οὐκ ἂν ᾤμην ποτ' ἐντυχεῖν εἰς φρόνησιν καὶ εἰς καρτερίαν; ὥστε οὔθ' ὅπως οὖν ὀργιζοίμην εἶχον καὶ ἀποστερηθείην τῆς τούτου συνουσίας, **οὔτε ὅπη προσαγαγοίμην αὐτὸν ἡπόρουν.** »

[ALC. –] « Imaginez, après cela, quel était mon état d'esprit. D'un côté je m'estimais méprisé, et de l'autre j'admirais le naturel de Socrate, sa modération et sa fermeté. J'étais tombé sur un homme doué d'une intelligence et d'une force d'âme que j'aurais cru introuvables. Par suite, il n'y avait pour moi moyen ni de me fâcher et de me priver de sa fréquentation, ni de découvrir par quelle voie je l'amènerais à mes fins. »

13c. 219e3-5 : [ΑΛΚ. –] « **Ἡπόρουν** δὴ, καταδεδουλωμένος τε ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὡς οὐδεὶς ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἄλλου **περιῆα.** »

[ALC. –] « Je ne trouvais donc pas d'issue. J'étais asservi à cet homme comme personne ne l'avait été par personne, et je tournais en rond. »

TEXTE 14. Aristodème *erastês* de Socrate, 173b1-3

ΑΠΟΛ. – Ἀριστόδημος ἦν τις, Κυδαθηναίεύς, σμικρός, **ἀνυπόδητος** ἀεί· παρεγγόνει δ' ἐν τῇ συνουσίᾳ, Σωκράτους **ἐραστής** ὢν ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα τῶν τότε, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ.

APOLLODORE. – C'était un certains Aristodème, du dème de Kydathénéon, un homme petit, qui allait toujours pieds nus. Il était présent à la réunion, car, parmi ceux d'alors, c'était l'amant le plus fervent.

TEXTES 15. Apollodore philosophe ?

15a. 172c4-173a3 : ΑΠΟΛ. – οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅτι πολλῶν ἐτῶν Ἀγάθων ἐνθάδε οὐκ ἐπιδεδήμηκεν, ἀφ' οὗ δ' ἐγὼ Σωκράτει συνδιατρίβω καὶ **ἐπιμελὲς πεποιήμαι ἐκάστης ἡμέρας εἰδέναι ὅτι ἂν λέγῃ ἢ πράττει**, οὐδέπω τρία ἔτη ἐστίν; πρὸ τοῦ δὲ περιτρέχων ὅπη τύχοιμι καὶ οἰόμενος τι ποιεῖν ἀθλιώτερος ἢ ὅτουοῦν, οὐχ ἦττον ἢ σὺ νυνί, οἰόμενος δεῖν πάντα μᾶλλον πράττειν ἢ φιλοσοφεῖν.

APOL. – Tu ne sais pas que depuis plusieurs années Agathon ne réside plus ici, alors que cela ne fait pas encore trois ans que je fréquente Socrate et que je m'emploie chaque jour à savoir ce qu'il dit et ce qu'il fait. Auparavant, je courais de-ci de-là au hasard m'imaginant faire quelque chose, alors que j'étais plus misérable que quiconque, à l'instar de toi maintenant, qui t'imagines que toute occupation vaut mieux que de pratiquer la philosophie.

15b. 173c2-5 : ΑΠΟΛ. – Εἰ οὖν δεῖ καὶ ὑμῖν διηγήσασθαι, ταῦτα χρὴ ποιεῖν. Καὶ γὰρ ἔγωγε καὶ ἄλλως, ὅταν μὲν τινας περὶ φιλοσοφίας λόγους ἢ αὐτὸς ποιῶμαι ἢ ἄλλων ἀκούω, χωρὶς τοῦ οἶσθαι ὠφελεῖσθαι ὑπερφυῶς ὡς χαίρω·

APOL. – « Si donc il me faut, à vous aussi, faire ce récit, allons-y. En tout cas, pour ce qui me concerne du reste, c'est un fait que parler moi-même de philosophie ou entendre quelqu'un d'autre en parler, constitue pour moi, indépendamment de l'utilité que cela représente à mes yeux, un plaisir très vif. »

TEXTES 16. Le zèle (μελέτη) des narrateurs

16a. 172a1 : ΑΠΟΛ. – Δοκῶ μοι περὶ ὧν πυθάνεσθε οὐκ ἀμελέτητος εἶναι. APOL. – J'estime ne pas être trop mal préparé à vous raconter ce que vous avez envie de savoir.

16b. 173c1 : ΑΠΟΛ. – ὅπερ ἀρχόμενος εἶπον, οὐκ ἀμελετήτως ἔχω. APOL. – comme je vous le disais en commençant, je ne suis pas si mal préparé à vous en informer.

16c. 173b4-5 : ΑΠΟΛ. – ἀλλὰ καὶ Σωκράτη γε ἔνια ἤδη ἀνηρόμην ὧν ἐκείνου ἤκουσα, καὶ μοι ὁμολόγει καθάπερ ἐκεῖνος διηγείτο. APOL. – Mais j'ai après coup posé à Socrate quelques questions sur ce que m'avait rapporté Aristodème, et il confirma que le récit d'Aristodème était exact.

16d. 173e7-174a2 : ΑΠΟΛ. – Ἦσαν τοίνυν ἐκεῖνοι τοιοῦδε τινές - μᾶλλον δ' ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑμῖν ὥς ἐκεῖνος διηγείτο καὶ ἐγὼ πειράσομαι διηγέσασθαι. APOL. – Eh bien, voici à peu près quels furent [ces discours]. En fait, il vaut mieux que je reprenne le récit d'Aristodème à partir du début, et que j'essaye à mon tour de le refaire à votre intention.

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I proverbi nel *Simposio*

Enrico Maria Polizzano

1.1 Il proverbio in Platone: quadro introduttivo.

L'attenzione rivolta dalla comunità scientifica e dagli studiosi di paremiologia all'identificazione e alla definizione del **concetto di proverbio** ha prodotto una sterminata gamma di posizioni diversificate, che hanno contribuito ad isolare gli aspetti basilari del concetto, ossia la **brevità della formulazione, il carattere tradizionale e condivisibile del contenuto e la sua funzione sociale**¹. Immediatamente intellegibile per la sua connotazione di saggezza e per il suo alto grado di circolazione sociale, il proverbio si configura come uno degli strumenti principali della comunicazione umana, riuscendo a catalizzare l'attenzione degli studiosi fin dall'antichità. *E.g.* nel *De elocutione* Demetrio afferma che il proverbio è qualcosa di popolare e di comune, che possiede una natura indiscutibilmente arguta, comprensibile e pragmatica²; Platone, invece, rileva del proverbio il carattere di validità assoluta³.

La vastità e l'eterogeneità dell'opera platonica hanno richiesto l'adozione di un preciso criterio guida di orientamento: è stato adottato un metodo di natura lessicale, volto ad individuare le forme proverbiali e ad isolare il concetto di proverbio in Platone. Come ricordato numerose volte da Renzo Tosi, nella Grecia arcaica non è possibile delimitare i confini esatti della nozione di *paroimia*: essa racchiude, infatti, espressioni di tono sentenzioso e moraleggiante, aforismi, esempi di apoftegma, *gnomai* e detti di tono proverbiale, appartenenti ad una tradizione sapienziale dotta, come nel caso delle massime tratte dalla produzione omerica e di Esiodo, oppure risalenti allo sterminato patrimonio della cosiddetta 'saggezza popolare'⁴. L'analisi approfondita dei generi letterari pre-ellenistici evidenzia la presenza di molteplici termini per indicare le espressioni di tono gnomico – proverbiale e sentenzioso: a proposito della produzione platonica è stata rilevata una sovrapposizione lessicale costituita dalla presenza di diversi termini identificanti proverbi veri e propri o forme di tono proverbiale.

In quest' ampio lavoro di ricerca sono state considerate, prioritariamente, le modalità introduttive di tali forme proverbiali, ossia come esse vengono introdotte e denominate all'interno dei *Dialoghi*. Tale scelta ha consentito la distinzione delle diverse espressioni terminologiche adottate da Platone per indicare un proverbio o una massima di tono proverbiale; è emerso, inoltre, il variegato e variegato uso dei *verba dicendi* per l'introduzione di numerose forme proverbiali. La puntuale analisi dell'intero *corpus* platonico ha permesso di comprendere che Platone introduce proverbi o detti moraleggianti o mediante alcuni termini precisi, ovvero

ἡ παροιμία, τὸ ῥῆμα, ὁ λόγος e τὸ λεγόμενον

oppure mediante forme dei *verba dicendi*, o attraverso l'introduzione diretta delle forme proverbiali, senza l'ausilio di altre espressioni. Si possono inoltre individuare anche diverse forme definite in due articoli di Dorothy Tarrant⁵, come detti "semi-proverbiali": si tratta di frasi, di carattere prettamente colloquiale e di uso familiare, frequentemente attestate nell'opera platonica.

1.2 I proverbi nel *Simposio*: sintetica interpretazione

All'interno del *Simposio* si individuano quattro forme di carattere proverbiale, che vengono introdotte direttamente all'uso dei quattro termini che richiamano immediatamente l'idea del proverbio, del detto moraleggiante:

in 174b e 222b si incontrano due esempi di παροιμία, in 195b un esempio di παλαιὸς λόγος e in 217e un caso di τὸ λεγόμενον. Il lavoro di ricerca ha mostrato non soltanto il variegato uso dei proverbi in Platone, ma anche la presenza di forme proverbiali in contesti argomentativi, introduttivi, conclusivi o in sezioni di transizione. Spesso, come nel caso di 174b, il proverbio si trova in una sezione introduttiva, oppure a chiusura di un discorso, come nel caso del proverbio citato da Alcibiade a 222b. In diversi casi il proverbio appare in contesti di transizione, come in 217e, oppure risulta funzionale all'argomentazione: nel *Simposio* il proverbio citato a 195b è situato all'interno del discorso di Agatone su Eros, in una sezione puramente argomentativa.

¹ Per una rapida rassegna vd. Tosi 1991, pp. IX – XXIV e Lelli 2007, pp. 11-16.

² Marini 2007, p.238.

³ Kindstrand 1978, p. 73.

⁴ Tosi 1991, pp. IX – XI; Lelli 2010, pp. 13-16.

⁵ Tarrant 1946, p.114, e Tarrant 1958, p. 159.

Simposio 174b:

“... Ἐπου τοίνυν, ἔφη, ἵνα καὶ τὴν παροιμίαν διαφθείρωμεν μεταβαλόντες, ὥς ἄρα καὶ Ἀγάθων ἐπὶ δαίτας ἴασιν αὐτόματοι ἀγαθοί...”

Il proverbio viene introdotto dall'incontro tra Socrate, diretto a cena da Agatone, e Aristodemo, che viene sollecitato a recarsi al medesimo evento pur non essendo stato invitato. Aristodemo accoglie la proposta di Socrate che pronuncia non la forma originaria del proverbio, bensì una forma alterata volontariamente. Il riferimento al proverbio non termina in 174b 5, bensì continua nelle righe successive, quando Socrate afferma che Omero ha trattato quasi con disprezzo il proverbio: Agamennone, uomo di grande forza, riceve la visita, durante un banchetto, del fratello Menelao, dipinto in precedenza come un molle guerriero⁶.

Il proverbio in questione offre alcuni spunti di riflessione molto significativi. Già il testo si presta ad un problema interpretativo: la tradizione concorda nel tramandare la forma ἀγαθῶν, genitivo plurale; Burnet, invece, accogliendo una congettura di Lachmann, legge Ἀγάθων, dativo singolare, che, oltre ad essere un chiaro riferimento all'ospite di Socrate, rappresenterebbe la modifica apportata da Socrate stesso alla forma originaria del proverbio, che era

αὐτόματοι δ' ἀγαθοὶ ἀγαθῶν ἐπὶ δαίτας ἔνται.

attestata in Esiodo, fr. 264 M.-W., in Bacchilide, fr. 22 Snell⁷, parodiata poi da Eupoli, fr. 315 K.-A. αὐτόματοι δ' ἀγαθοὶ δειλῶν ἐπὶ δαίτας ἴασιν, e da Cratino, fr. 182 K.-A., οἱ δ' αὐτὸ ἡμεῖς, ὥς ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος, αὐτομάτους ἀγαθοὺς ἰέναι κομψῶν ἐπὶ δαίτα θεατῶν.⁸ L'aspetto più importante del proverbio è costituito dall'espedito paronimico presente, che si collega ad altri esempi del genere presenti nel *Simposio*⁹, ma che trova piena realizzazione in tutto il contesto, caratterizzato da un clima di giochi linguistici e di riprese, più o meno velate, di Omero. Analizzando infatti il passo più in profondità emerge che Platone attribuisce ad Omero un intervento su un proverbio che, in realtà, nella sua forma base non è attestato prima di Esiodo. La presenza di due citazioni omeriche, ovvero *Iliade* 17, 588 a proposito di Menelao dipinto come fiacco guerriero che partecipò, non invitato, al banchetto sacrificale organizzato da Agamennone (*Iliade* 2, 408), vengono usate da Platone per dare l'idea che Omero abbia “usato violenza” nei confronti del proverbio. Interessante diventa il confronto tra l'episodio omerico e l'invito di Socrate ad Aristodemo che, in un primo momento, risponde a Socrate di trovarsi nella stessa situazione di Menelao, ovvero quella di un uomo di poco valore che si reca da un uomo sapiente senza essere invitato. Successivamente Aristodemo cambia opinione, affermando che giustificherà la sua presenza con la motivazione dell'invito ricevuto da Socrate stesso. Immediatamente giunge la risposta rassicurante di Socrate:

“Σύν τε δύ’,” ἔφη, “ἐρχομένῳ πρὸ ὁδοῦ” βουλευσόμεθα ὅτι ἐροῦμεν.

Anche questo passo, che potrebbe essere considerato come una semplice formula di transizione, racchiude un significato particolare. Infatti la prima parte richiama direttamente l'ennesimo passo omerico, *Iliade* 10, 224-225, passo in cui Diomede si offre di entrare nel campo dei Troiani per comprenderne le intenzioni:

σύν τε δύ’ ἐρχομένῳ καί τε πρὸ δ τοῦ ἐνόησεν
ὅπως κέρδος ἔη· μῶνός δ' εἴ πέρ τε νοήσῃ

Questa nuova allusione ad Omero da parte di Socrate nasconde un ribaltamento della prospettiva: se in Omero il passo indica che “tra due che vanno insieme, l'uno vede prima dell'altro che cosa sia meglio”, qui Socrate sembra attribuire alla frase un valore diverso, affermando che si saranno in due a camminare, ma entrambi decideranno che cosa dire. Qui il gioco di allusione e di cambiamento del passo omerico da parte di Platone viene confermato direttamente dal testo: all'omerico πρὸ δ τοῦ si oppone il πρὸ ὁδοῦ platonico.

Simposio 195b:

“...πολλοῦ πλησιάζειν. μετὰ δὲ νέων ἀεὶ σύνεστί τε καὶ ἔστιν· ὁ γὰρ παλαιὸς λόγος εὖ ἔχει, ὥς

⁶ *Il.* 17, 588.

⁷ Cfr. *Athen.* 5,5,20

⁸ Vd. *CPGI*, p.36, n. 19, e Tosi 2010, p. 416. Interessante che Cratino definisca il proverbio come un παλαιὸς λόγος.

⁹ 185c (Pausania) e 198c (Gorgia).

ὅμοιον ὁμοίῳ ἀεὶ πελάζει... “

Tra le caratteristiche attribuite da Agatone al dio Eros sono presenti la sua condizione di eterna giovinezza e la sua presenza tra i giovani, che viene sancita da Agatone con il richiamo all'antico detto - ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος - “il simile si avvicina sempre al simile”. Il proverbio, che risale ad Omero, *Odissea* XVII, 218, ed è spesso citato da Platone¹⁰, viene collocato nel *Simposio* all'interno degli argomenti a favore della tesi di Eros come divinità eternamente giovane.

Simposio 217e

“...καὶ πρὸς ὄντιν' ἄνθρωπον λέγειν· τὸ δ' ἐντεῦθεν οὐκ ἂν μου ἡκούσατε λέγοντος, εἰ μὴ πρῶτον μὲν, τὸ λεγόμενον, οἶνος ἄνεν τε παίδων καὶ μετὰ παίδων ἦν ἀληθής...”.

Mentre narra il suo tentativo di sedurre Socrate, Alcibiade cita un detto, τὸ λεγόμενον, che condensa due proverbi, ovvero

οἶνος καὶ ἀλήθεια e οἶνος καὶ παῖδες ἀληθεῖς

L'importanza della citazione del proverbio, che sviluppa un tema molto diffuso nella Grecia arcaica¹¹ è confermata dal pubblico che Alcibiade si aspetta di avere: non è più possibile, infatti, rivolgersi a tutti nel tessere l'elogio di Socrate, bensì occorre parlare a pochi, ovvero a coloro che sono accomunati dalla follia e dal furore del filosofo.

Simposio 222b

“...ὦ Ἄγαθον, μὴ ἐξαπατᾶσθαι ὑπὸ τούτου, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων παθημάτων γνόντα εὐλαβηθῆναι, καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν ὥσπερ νήπιον παθόντα γνῶναι...”

In chiusura dell'elogio di Socrate Alcibiade si rivolge ad Agatone e lo invita a prestare attenzione all'operato di Socrate, reo di averlo offeso: il discorso si conclude con l'esortazione a mantenere alta la guardia, per evitare di “imparare come lo sciocco, dopo aver sofferto. Questa finale παροιμία riprende un motivo molto diffuso, quello dell'apprendimento attraverso la sofferenza, idea che affonda le sue radici in Omero, *Iliade* 17, 32 e 20, 198 ed in Esiodo, *Opere* 218, e che trova paralleli anche in Eschilo, *Agam.* 177¹².

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¹¹ Vd. Reale 2001, p. 262 e CPG I, p. 290, n. 28

¹² Vd. Reale 2001, p. 264.

Becoming Immortal in the *Symposium* and the *Timaeus*

Chad Jorgenson

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is one of the most distinctive features of Plato's philosophy. It has long been remarked, however, that there is a certain tension between a general commitment to the immortality of the soul in Plato's dialogues and Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, in which she lays out the different ways in which it is possible for human beings to partake of immortality. If the rational soul is immortal and if we are fundamentally rational souls, in what sense can we be said to aspire to become immortal? Immortality, it would seem, is an intrinsic feature of our existence.

Over the course of the previous century, a good deal of effort was expended, at least in the Anglo-Saxon scholarship, attempting to resolve this apparent contradiction by chronological or literary means, with various arguments being advanced that the *Symposium* predates the *Phaedo* and the mature doctrine of the immortality of the soul, that it represents momentary uncertainty on Plato's part about the immortality of the soul, or that Diotima is not intended to represent Plato's own views.¹ It seems to have gone largely unnoticed in the debate, that we find both doctrines happily co-existing in the *Timaeus*. Plato himself clearly believed that the intrinsic immortality of the rational soul was somehow compatible with the notion that we can become immortal, and there is no reason to suspect that this does not apply to the *Symposium* as well.

A somewhat more cogent interpretation of the compatibility of the two doctrines, and one that takes into account the *Timaeus*, has been advanced by David Sedley who, after an initial flirtation with a developmental explanation, proposed that immortalization is the result of an identification of our true self with the rational soul.² Although the rational soul is immortal *per se*, we become immortal through a process of self-identification with it. The qualifier 'so far as possible', which is found in both dialogues, is thus an indication of an incapacity to identify ourselves entirely with either of our constituent elements.

While I am sympathetic to Sedley's suggestion of a rather fluid notion of the self in Plato, I am less certain that becoming immortal involves a self-identification with an entity that is already intrinsically immortal. It seems to me that when Plato speaks of *becoming* immortal, it is in a rather stronger sense. In what follows, I would like to raise two questions that I hope will shed some light on the matter. First, who or what is it that becomes immortal? Second, what meaning are we to attach to the term 'immortal'? In attempting to provide at least a partial answer to these questions, I shall refer to the corresponding passage in the *Timaeus*, which seems to me to be largely consistent with what we find in the *Symposium* and helpful in illuminating what Plato might have had in mind.

I

A first observation, and one that already goes some way toward bridging the gap between the doctrines of intrinsic and acquired immortality, is that Plato is quite consistent in distinguishing the subjects of these two processes. If we limit ourselves for a moment to the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*, we see that although they both focus on immortality, they are concerned with the immortality of two rather different entities. In the *Phaedo*, the question is whether the soul survives the death of the human being. Socrates' arguments aim to show that death of a living being consists in the separation of its two constituent elements, body and soul, and that, while the body perishes in the process, the soul continues to exist. On this account, Socrates *qua* human being is mortal, while Socrates *qua* rational soul is immortal, with the additional premise often being supplied that what Socrates really *is* is his immortal soul.³ Throughout the discussion, and indeed in the other dialogues, the distinction between the living being, as a composite of body and soul, and the soul as an entity existing in and of itself is rigidly maintained.

¹ The key paper in starting the debate is Hackforth, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*' in *The Classical Review*, 64, 1950. For an overview of its subsequent course, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* IV (Cambridge 1975), pp. 387-92 and F. C. C. Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire* (Oxford 2006) pp. 147, n. 47.

² See D. Sedley 'Three Kinds of Platonic Immortality' in D. Frede and B. Reis (eds.) *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy* (Berlin 2009), pp.156-161. Compare with D. Sedley, 'The Ideal of Godlikeness in G. Fine. (ed.) *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion and the Soul* (Oxford 1999), p. 792.

³ This claim can be understood in a descriptive or a normative sense. Thus the identification of the self with the immortal soul can either be taken as a brute fact about our nature, or it can be understood as the end result of a process of self-identification with the immortal element within us.

In Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, on the other hand, what is at issue is not the immortality of soul, but of living beings in general and of the human being in particular. So long as we cleave to the distinction between living being and soul, which Plato himself seems to have consistently maintained, there is no *prima facie* conflict between the two accounts; they are simply talking about different things. The immortality of the soul does not imply the immortality of the human being, as a composite of body and soul, nor, conversely, does the mortality of the human being detract from the immortality of the soul.

Now it might be objected that Diotima distinguishes between becoming immortal *kata to soma* and *kata ten psychen*, which implies that the soul is itself mortal. It is, however, quite possible that the soul is immortal *per se*, while the living being transmits something of itself, *qua* compound of body and soul, *via* the soul, as the use of the preposition *kata* suggests. Thus Diotima's second route to immortality is by virtue (which is explicitly located on the level of soul) and the fame that comes with it - the same path pursued by the Homeric heroes. But fame attaches to the concrete individual, Achilles, for instance, or Hector, and is to be distinguished from the immortality of the soul as a principle of life and - at least for Plato - of thought. The comparison with the Homeric epics is particularly relevant here, since for Homer too the soul is intrinsically immortal. But the posthumous existence of the soul in Hades is quite different from the immortality won by glorious deeds on the battlefield. It is the latter, rather than the shadowy afterlife in Hades common to all, that is the object of the heroes' striving. In the same way, it is one thing to say that Socrates' rational soul survives his death and goes on to animate a number of other bodies in succession, in each case taking on a new identity, and quite another to say that Socrates himself, as a concrete individual who lived in a particular time and place, has acquired immortal fame through the writings of Plato. Both forms of immortality have their origin in the soul, but in two rather different senses. One is the intrinsic immortality of the soul itself, the other is the immortality of the composite living being propagated on the level of soul. There is no contradiction involved in affirming that both forms of immortality can exist side by side.

The distinction between the subject of acquired and intrinsic immortality is also to be found in the *Timaeus*. While the immortality of the human soul is established early on in the dialogue (41d-42d), the passage on becoming immortal comes at the end of the long section on the genesis of the human being. Having laid out the general structure of the human body, Timaeus proceeds to an analysis of the various things that can go wrong with it, including both diseases of the body and diseases of soul that have a physiological foundation, before concluding with an exhortation to maintain the equilibrium between body and soul, as well as to balance the motions associated with the three forms of soul by exercising each to a degree that is fitting.

It is no accident that the discussion of becoming immortal closes a detailed analysis of the structure and function of the human body and of the mortal forms of soul. Happiness and immortality are not something particular to the rational soul, but a condition of the whole animal, and the terminology employed throughout this section reflects that fact. It is in the first instance the *anthropos*, and not the soul or some nebulous self that becomes immortal.

II

In Greek, as in English, the adjectives 'mortal' and 'immortal' do not generally admit of degrees. The gods are immortal, human beings are mortal, and with a handful of notable exceptions, there is no movement from one group to the other. Those heroes who manage to attain immortality do not become *more* immortal, they simply become *immortal*. Indeed, there seems to be something paradoxical in talk of degrees of immortality. Death is, after all, a singular event. Those beings that will eventually experience it, however long-lived they might be, are mortal, while those that do not it are immortal. There seems to be little room for anything in between.

At the beginning of her account, Diotima seems to be using the terms mortal and immortal as synonyms for 'god' and 'man' without putting any special emphasis on their lifespans. The mortals are human beings, the immortals the gods, while the daimons, the third class of beings she identifies, act as mediators between them, carrying the prayers and offerings of men to the gods, and the instructions of the gods to men, including knowledge of the arts necessary for correct religious practice (202e). At this stage, there is no indication of a doctrine of degrees of immortality, despite her insistence on the intermediary status of the daimons. When she asserts that Eros is 'between the mortal and the immortal' (202d11), the emphasis is mainly on the differences in goodness, beauty and wisdom between gods and men, not on their longevity. There is no reason to attribute any special

significance to her use of ‘mortal’ and ‘immortal’ here, particularly since she freely substitutes ‘god’ for ‘immortal’ two lines later.

After having recounted the birth of Eros from the union of Poros and Penia, the claim that Eros is halfway between the mortal and the immortal is restated in somewhat stronger terms. Eros is neither mortal nor immortal in the sense that ‘on the same day, he can at one moment thrive and live, when he is prospering, and, at another, die, to be revived again by his father’s nature’ (203d8-e3). But although the terms to live (*zen*) and to die (*apothneskei*) are used, the immediate context quite clearly indicates that they are not to be understood literally. Immediately before this passage, Diotima calls Eros a ‘clever hunter’, a ‘desirer of wisdom (*phronesis*)’ and ‘a perpetual philosopher’, and immediately afterwards she continues with the claim that he is ‘never poor or rich, but always in between wisdom (*sophia*) and ignorance’ (203d-e). Her statements about living and dying are thus woven into a broader discourse about the acquisition and loss of wisdom, where mortal and immortal seem to take on the meaning ‘possessing wisdom’ and ‘not possessing wisdom’, once again without any special reference to being subject to death in the ordinary sense.

Although this may seem to be a rather unusual sense to give to the word ‘immortal’, it fits well with what we find in the *Timaeus*, where we are said to become immortal insofar as we exercise our rational part and think thoughts ‘immortal and divine’ (90c1). The sense of the passage seems to be that we partake of immortality by elevating ourselves intellectually to the level of the gods, thinking the same divine thoughts as they do, rather than closing ourselves off in our private, hopelessly partial world of human belief.

The first sense that we can give to the term ‘immortal’ is thus vertical, in that it seems to signify first and foremost an approximation to the divine without any explicit reference to persistence through time. We become immortal to the extent that we possess, at least in part, a divine wisdom and thus instantiate something that is proper to the gods, ‘the immortals’, on the level of man. It is striking that in both dialogues, we find a variation of the expression ‘*athanasias metechein*’ (*Symp.* 208b3; *Tim.* 90c2-3), which can be understood prosaically as ‘to have a share of immortality’, but which also echoes the technical vocabulary of metaphysical participation. To become immortal, in this sense, is to become like god, to instantiate as fully as possible a divine paradigm in one’s own soul.

However, this does not mean that we are to abandon the ordinary, horizontal meaning of ‘immortality’. After having recounted the story of the origins of Eros, Diotima moves on to the case of humans, establishing in a brief exchange with Socrates that we do not simply desire the good, but that we desire to possess the good perpetually. The product of this desire for the perpetual possession of the good is procreation (*gennesis*), whether it takes place on the level of the body or of the soul (206b-c). Procreation is the only way in which mortal beings can be said to exist forever. But, she continues, procreation does not refer only to the creation of one generation of animals by another, as if an animal were one and the same entity throughout its whole life. Rather, on the level of body, the physical elements that constitute us are ceaselessly wasting away and being replenished, while on the level of soul, all our mental phenomena, our desires, our beliefs, our habits and even what we know, are in a process of constant decay and replenishment (207d-208a). The characteristic means by which the mortal participates in immortality is through the perpetual renewal of elements that themselves waste away and disappear - that is, through the persistence of a formal structure governing the relationship between the parts that are themselves constantly changing. On this level there can be no true identity, only a weak identity consisting in a greater or lesser degree of resemblance between successive moments of a process. This loose continuity is contrasted with the complete, eternal self-identity of the truly immortal and divine, which is ‘always completely the same’ (208a7-b1).

Procreation is thus not merely the creation of one distinct individual by another, but also the constant self-perpetuation of the individual across time on the level of both body and soul. In this sense, we can speak of a greater or lesser degree of immortality even within the lifespan of a mortal being, where it takes on the sense of a stronger or weaker identity of the individual with himself over the course of his life.

But for Plato, continuity and consistency is itself a product of true virtue, which is to say of wisdom. Whereas the vicious man is inherently unstable and has an intrinsic tendency to dissipation, self-contradiction, and self-destruction, both psychically and physically, the mark of true virtue, as we learn in the concluding section of the *Timaeus*, which echoes, among other dialogues, the *Republic*, is the harmonious equilibrium of the whole human animal, a beautiful order within soul itself and a perfect proportion between soul and body. Like the divine city of the *Republic*, which, although it is the most stable constitution, is nonetheless destined eventually to decay, the life of true virtue is intrinsically the most stable human life, although it too has its own natural end. To become immortal through procreation in true virtue does not simply refer to the transmission of virtue to the next

generation, say from Socrates to Plato, but also to the integrity, harmony and self-consistency of the individual.

Both in the *Symposium* and the *Timaeus* we find an interplay between two axes of immortality, which are, in reality, two aspects of one and the same process. The first and most important sense of immortality for Plato is the immediate atemporal assimilation to god, the instantiation of a divine paradigm within one's own soul, but this immortality produces a second, more familiar, but also derivative form of immortality, as the earthly image of the divine, whether on the level of body or soul, perpetuates itself through time. Plato never confuses immortality with mere indefinite temporal extension. Without the vertical assimilation to the divine, the horizontal continuity would be entirely devoid of value and meaning.

The Immortality of a Philosopher in Plato's *Symposium*

Ikko Tanaka

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I consider the immortality of a philosopher in Plato's *Symposium*. Diotima says, as reported by Socrates, that the mortal nature always comes into existence and passes away, and seeks to be immortal as long as possible. Human beings can attain immortality through begetting and procreating their 'offspring' such as children and glorious virtues. On the other hand, Diotima concludes her speech by saying that when the one who grasps the Form of Beauty has begotten and nurtured true virtue, 'it is allowed him to be a friend of gods and to become, if anyone can, immortal (212a6-7).' Here the immortality (of a philosopher) is not derived from his offspring. Rather, Diotima suggests the possibility that the philosopher himself can become immortal.

Though the term 'immortal (ἀθάνατος)' reminds us of the immortality of the soul in the afterlife in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, it does not seem to directly correspond here because the immortality that is described in those dialogues is of every soul while Diotima refers especially to a philosopher's immortality. Some scholars think that this immortality is not about the imperishability of the soul, but about the heavenliness of the divine philosophical life (see Dover, 1932, xlv n.2; O'Brien, 1984, 199-201; Sheffield, 2006, 151 n.3). But in what sense is the one who lives the heavenly philosophical life called 'immortal'? I argue that though it is about divine philosophical life, the immortality of a philosopher depends on the immortality of the soul; a mortal philosopher can become immortal in the sense that he avoids and tries to keep away from his mortal and earthly nature through the activity of his immortal soul.

First, Diotima clearly distinguishes the way that mortals partake in immortality from that of the immortal gods (207c-208b). I argue that the ordinal mortals and philosophers can also be distinguished from each other in terms of the ways of their partaking of immortality. In other words, I insist, the concept of 'immortal' itself does not change depending on the immortality of philosophers and that of other mortals.

Second, in her final revelation, Diotima stresses that a philosopher comes to disregard the bodily and earthly beauty in the course of the mystery (210b, 211e). He contemplates the Form of Beauty 'with the faculty he must use (212a1),' namely, the soul; moreover, it is at this time that his life becomes worth living (cf. 211e4-212a2). This shows that the philosophical life with the Form of Beauty is lived by his own soul even if he has his earthly body.

Finally, if the soul is immortal as in other dialogues, we can say the philosophical life is led by the immortal soul. Then, I compare the disregarding of the earthly body in the *Symposium* with 'the practice of death' of the *Phaedo*, and indicate some similar thoughts between these dialogues.

Eros, Psyche, Eidos

PhD Parallel Workshop

Introduction: Franco Ferrari

What Lovers Seek: *Eros* and *Poiesis* in the *Symposium*

Jonathan Fine - Usha Nathan

At *Symposium* 204d8, young Socrates tells Diotima that a lover of beautiful things desires that beautiful things become his. But when Diotima asks what the lover will have when those beautiful things become his (τί ἔσται ἐκεῖνῳ ὃν ἂν γένηται τὰ καλὰ), Socrates admits that he's at a loss. He can readily answer, however, when Diotima changes her question from one about beautiful things to one about good things: the lover will be happy, Socrates claims (*Symp.* 205e). This exchange has understandably led some commentators to wonder what justification, if any, allows Diotima to substitute the good for the beautiful. We would like to approach this exchange from a different angle and ask instead: why can't Socrates answer what a lover gets when she gets the beautiful things she wants? We believe that an answer to this question can help us elucidate Diotima's justification.

We argue that one significant reason why Socrates cannot answer Diotima's question about beautiful things is that *erōs* is genuinely puzzling in a particular way. It is puzzling in that, despite how intensely lovers desire their beloved and how arduous their pursuits are, lovers still cannot say what *erōs* aims at. We call this the puzzle about *erōs*: that lovers cannot say what they really want and why. When Diotima then substitutes the good for the beautiful, we believe, she does not shift the topic of discussion away from or begin to mischaracterize erotic desire, as some commentators have suggested.¹ Rather, she points the way to the complex relation in erotic desire between the beautiful and the good. According to Diotima, although lovers are drawn to and pursue beauty (*to kalon*), the constitutive aim of *erōs* is to possess the *good* perpetually by bringing it about. The gap between our experience of *erōs* – in which beauty plays a key role – and the constitutive aim of *erōs* explains why erotic pursuits, puzzlingly, are blind as to their aim. However, the beautiful still plays a crucial role for Diotima insofar as beautiful objects instigate the production of good things. This intimate relation between the beautiful and the good justifies her substitution at 204e. On our reading, Diotima's account articulates the compelling and seemingly inexplicable hold that beauty has on us.²

Section 1 elaborates the puzzle about *erōs*. In Sections 2 and 3, we show how Diotima's account explains why *erōs* should be puzzling in this way. Before we begin, we should note, as many commentators have pointed out, that ἔρως (*erōs*) does not correspond in meaning with the English word 'love' and refers almost exclusively to an intense desire felt for a beloved person.³ This is crucial to Diotima's account of the aim of *erōs*, in which *erōs* is in the first place a kind of *desire*.⁴

1 A puzzle about *erōs*

We can begin to appreciate why young Socrates is unable to answer the question about beautiful things if we notice that his puzzlement at Diotima's question is similar to another case of puzzlement that occurs earlier in the dialogue. In the myth that Aristophanes tells, Hephaestus stands above two lovers having sex with one another and asks them, "What is it you human beings wish to have [lit: to come to be] for yourselves from one another?" (τί ἔσθ' ὃ βούλεσθε, ὦ ἄνθρωποι, ὑμῖν παρ' ἀλλήλων γενέσθαι;) (192d).⁵ But the lovers are perplexed (ἀποροῦντας) by the question.⁶ Aristophanes adds

¹ See Nussbaum (1979): 147-8, 158, 164 and Vlastos (1981). Nor does Diotima trick Socrates with an unwarranted equation between the good and the beautiful. Notice that Diotima doesn't simply or subtly change her initial question about beautiful things, but in fact calls explicit attention to the change at 205e2.

² Gregory Vlastos acknowledges that *erōs* usually refers to erotic desire for a beloved, but comes to the conclusion that love for an individual has no place in Plato's view. However, Vlastos's conception of love seems to include a condition of fidelity, based on a particular conception of a person, which belongs to a post-Christian conception of love and marriage. See Vlastos (1981).

³ In Homer, *erōs* designates desires for water and food as well. The kind of erotic relationship at issue in the *Symposium* is the Greek pederastic relationship between an older man and a teenage boy, and not a marital relationship, for which *philia* would be used. See the canonical Dover (1978) and (1980), Halperin (1985): 162 and Hunter (2004): 15-7. For this reason, we either transliterate ἔρως as *erōs* or translate it as 'erotic desire.' We refer to those with erotic desires or engaged in erotic pursuits as 'lovers' for the sake of comprehension and because *erōs* in the *Symposium* primarily refers to erotic desire for a beloved, even though Diotima expands the scope of *erōs* to include other objects. However, please bear these qualifications in mind.

⁴ Cf. Halperin (1985): 171.

⁵ Translation modified from that of Nehamas and Woodruff in Cooper and Hutchinson, eds. (1997). All translations are theirs unless noted otherwise.

that lovers who do find their other halves and even live out their entire lives together are still unable to say “what it is they want from one another” (192c). What Aristophanes makes striking and comical for us is that lovers so ardently pursue their beloveds and yet cannot say *what* it is they really want from them or *why* they want it. Put more concisely, we may say that the lovers in Aristophanes’ myth do not know the *aim* of their *erōs*.⁷

Of course, there is a sense in which lovers do know what they want. According to the myth, they want each other or to be with one another. In this sense, lovers can specify what is nowadays called the intentional object of their *erōs*. Similarly, Socrates can say that a lover desires beautiful things to become his. His answer is true in an obvious sense, but he cannot say further what his possession of beauty brings him or even what that possession consists in. Just the same, the mythical lovers cannot say what they will have once they finally unite with their beloveds. Absent that information, even though Aristophanes maintains that the soul somehow “divines” (μαντεύεται) what it wants (192c), it seems that lovers don’t know why they pursue their beloveds because they don’t know what their erotic desires are really about.⁸ One straightforward possibility is that their aim is sexual congress, as erotic desire is sexual in nature. However, as Aristophanes describes, lovers do not desire sexual congress alone.⁹ According to his myth, erotic desire is more primordial than the possibility of sex itself. The soul, he says, clearly “longs for something else” other than sexual congress, but it “cannot say” just what it is (192c).

We propose that these two cases of puzzlement – of Socrates at 204d and the lovers at 192c – reflect a genuinely puzzling feature of erotic desire for a beloved: that despite the intensity, difficulty, and significance for a lover of erotic pursuit, lovers are unable to say what it is that *erōs* aims at. Let’s call this the puzzle about *erōs*.¹⁰ Just what is so puzzling here? To be clear, the puzzle about *erōs* is not simply that lovers lack an account of the aim of *erōs*, as though the puzzle were a purely epistemological one. Instead, the blindness of the lovers is itself at issue here: the aim of *erōs* is not immanent to lovers from a first-personal perspective, i.e. while they engage in erotic pursuits.¹¹ One reason why this is puzzling – so much so that Plato gestures towards it at least twice in the dialogue – is that the importance we accord to our erotic pursuits in our lives would suggest that it’s precisely not the sort of thing whose aim we couldn’t cite.¹² In other words, the puzzle about *erōs* is *that* it should be puzzling in the way that Aristophanes aptly captures. A psychological or philosophical account could not diminish from what’s puzzling about *erōs* because it’s in the nature of desire for a beloved that its aim is inaccessible from a first-personal perspective. So, when we say that Diotima’s account of *erōs* is in part a response to this puzzle, we don’t mean that it solves the puzzle, but that it answers *to* it: she articulates what is puzzling about *erōs* by giving an account of it.

⁶ One textual basis for reading *Symp.* 204d-e in connection with 192c-d is that the two questions posed there are syntactically similar. Indeed, Sheffield (2006): 1-2 proposes that all speeches in the *Symposium* somehow address Hephaestus’ question. There are at least two further indications in the text that these passages are related. First, as Ferrari (1992): 254 notes, young Socrates is portrayed as a lover of young boys; we could expect that the puzzlement of Aristophanes’ lovers should apply to young Socrates as well. Second, Diotima refers to Aristophanes’ myth at 205e1-2 in order to correct the account. This suggests that Diotima is offering a competing account of the aim of *erōs*, that it is to possess the good and not simply to unite with one’s other half. Although Diotima’s question is about beautiful things (*ta kala*) whereas Hephaestus’ is about the love of two human beings for one another, this difference does not rule out our comparison, for Diotima considers *erōs* as a broader phenomenon such that it applies to many types of things, including other human beings.

⁷ Nehamas and Woodruff aptly have ‘point’ at *Symp.* 204d and 205a for what we are calling the aim. By ‘aim’ we mean the constitutive aim of *erōs*. In other words, Diotima proposes that *erōs* is the kind of desire that it aims at what is in fact good. See *Symp.* 200a-e with Vogt (unpublished) and Sheffield (2006): 75.

⁸ We follow Halperin (1985) here. See also Halperin (2005): 52-55.

⁹ According to the myth, Zeus provides human beings with the means for sexual congress so that the lovers can go about their business and not remain in the perpetual state of longing (ποθοῦν) that had deprived them even of the desire to eat. See *Symp.* 191c-d.

¹⁰ This puzzle is different in two chief ways from the many cases of *aporia* that arise from Socrates’ questioning. First, it doesn’t seem that, for Plato, it’s on account of the nature of (say) piety that pious people or folks with beliefs about piety don’t really know what piety is. However, in our view, the nature of *erōs* itself is at least partly responsible for covering up its aim. Second, if lovers indeed can’t say what they aim at, then their situation is different from many of Socrates’ interlocutors who *can* reply to his characteristic ‘What is X?’ question, even if their answers are somehow deficient. Thanks go to Professor Lydia Goehr for bringing this comparison to our attention.

¹¹ We believe that the puzzle holds in so far as lovers are in the grip of loving. It is likely that this holds even when one introspects on her experience of love, ex post facto.

¹² We’ll suggest later that the puzzle about *erōs* extends beyond the pursuit of a beloved to other pursuits that Diotima includes the category of *erōs*, such as doing philosophy and making laws.

Aristophanes' myth and Socrates' confusion together suggest that neither sexual congress nor the possession of beautiful things satisfy erotic desire because they are not what the desire aims at.¹³ The myth shows sharply that, although *erōs* is sexual in nature, sex does not extinguish one's desire for a beloved – if it did, Hephaestus' solution to fuse lovers together would not seem grotesque or comical.¹⁴ Thus Aristophanes portrays a particularly gripping case in which the puzzling aspect of *erōs* shows itself. We may then begin to suspect that the intentional object of *erōs* does not coincide with what we truly seek *qua* lovers. Let's turn now to Diotima's account of *erōs* to see how this thought is developed.

2 *Analogy between erōs and poiēsis*

Diotima claims that the aim of *erōs* is to perpetually possess good things. She infers that every human being is in this sense a lover, since we all desire to possess good things. On her account, the range of objects of *erōs* includes but is not limited to desire of a beloved person. Her explanation relies on an unusual analogy between *erōs* and poetry (*poiēsis*). She says, "...poetry has a very wide range...everything that is responsible [αἰτία] for creating something out of nothing is a kind of *poiēsis* [ποίησις]" (205c1). And she claims that all craftsmen (δημιουργοὶ) are poets (ποιηταί), even though the term *poiēsis* usually denotes, more restrictedly, a particular kind of making that involves music and meter (205c2-5). So too are all human beings lovers even though the term *erōs* usually denotes the desire of a beloved.

In our view, the analogy does not just make the linguistic point that the term *erōs*, like *poiēsis*, has a broad meaning that ranges wider than its customary use.¹⁵ For Diotima gives a metaphysical reason for the linguistic claim that the term *poiēsis* has a broad meaning: all craftsmen are poets in a sense *because* *poiēsis* is responsible for all making. This is to say that "making," or poetic activity, is responsible for anything coming into existence. Thus, according to Diotima, all craftsmen are poets in that they all engage in some kind of making. The point of the analogy is to apply the same metaphysical moral to *erōs*. The term *erōs*, if properly understood, ranges more widely than the desire for a beloved because *erōs* is the cause of such human pursuits and is therefore in some sense responsible for them (205d). For Diotima, then, *erōs* or erotic desire is what impels a wide range of human pursuits that culminate in happiness (*eudaimonia*).¹⁶ Therefore, the desire for honour, philosophy, or whatever might actually conduce to happiness *is* a desire that falls under the heading of *erōs*. So, Diotima is claiming that *erōs* can and does take other intentional objects besides a beautiful beloved. This foreshadows the description of the famous Ascent passage, in which we learn that all particulars that instantiate the beautiful (*kalon*) qualify as an intentional object of *erōs*, whether those beautiful things are bodies, souls, laws, or Forms. None of those intentional objects, however, coincide with the aim of *erōs*.¹⁷

This analogy between *erōs* and *poiēsis* gives us part of Diotima's response to the puzzle with which we began. What lovers seek, without being able to state it, is to possess good things, or more precisely, to permanently possess good things. But we might still ask what justifies Diotima's expansion of the scope of *erōs*. Our suggestion is that Diotima's claim is justified insofar as the various pursuits that aim at good things share significant similarities with the descriptive account of the experience of erotic desire for a beloved, such that it makes sense to say that they are all impelled by *erōs* in its general sense. Firstly, Diotima describes pursuits for good things in terms that recall Aristophanes' description of the lovers. In her description of men seeking honour and even animals seeking to protect their young, she indicates the "awful" (δαινῶς) state they are in, "ailing"

¹³ This may be why Diotima describes *Erōs*, the demi-god, as living intermittently, dying but again springing to life on the very same day (203e1-3).

¹⁴ The significance of Hephaestus' offer would not be lost to a Greek audience since it draws on a myth in *The Odyssey* about the punishment Hephaestus gives his own wife Aphrodite and her lover Ares by binding them inextricably to one another, when he finds out about them. See Dorter (1969): 230. That bodily fusion is here a punishment suggests further that there's something comical and grotesque about Aristophanes' solution to the puzzlement of the lovers: it is no solution at all.

¹⁵ Although Diotima suggests that she is the first to expand the scope of *erōs*, there is a long poetic tradition that attests to nonsexual uses of the term. See Luwig (2002): 121 and the reference to Homer in n.3.

¹⁶ By this account, *erōs* is a kind of motivation. For a discussion of this proposal see Vogt (unpublished).

¹⁷ It is true that for Plato the same thing can appear both as good and as beautiful, for these terms are co-extensive. See Lear (2006): 97. However, even if we were to consider what we pursue as good, the object of our pursuit would not coincide with its aim because we satisfy the aim of *erōs* only through producing good (and beautiful) things through that pursuit, on which see below.

(νοσοῦντα) with an intense desire for the thing they seek (208c6, 207b2). Aristophanes had described lovers similarly longing for one another, so much so that they would go hungry and die because they only would embrace (191b). Such affliction, almost pathological in nature, is well documented in Greek poetry describing lovers, and was both closely associated with, and considered distinctive of the experience of erotic desire.¹⁸ So, as G.R.F. Ferrari notes, even as she broadens the scope of *erōs*, Diotima never loses touch with “*how* it is to be in love” ((1992: 260). Indeed, she broadens its scope partly because the experience of erotic desire for a beloved so closely resembles how it is to pursue other good things besides a beloved.

The above similarity suggests, and perhaps depends upon, a second similarity. Diotima’s account of *erōs* explicates a further feature of the desire of a beloved that Aristophanes and other symposiasts captured, namely, that lovers are willing to go to unimaginable lengths in their pursuits.¹⁹ Diotima observes that animals are willing to fight the strongest animals to protect their young and suffer from hunger themselves and men are willing to do anything for the sake of immortal glory (*Symp.* 207b3-4, 208e1).²⁰ The relevant point for us is that these various pursuits – such as care for children and ambition for glory (*philotimia*) – are similar to the pursuit of a beloved in that they are no less onerous and equally undertaken under the impulsion of an intense, compelling desire. If this is right, then we can see why Diotima justifiably extends the scope of *erōs* beyond the case of erotic desire for a beloved. The intensity, and difficulty of the latter characterize the various kinds of erotic pursuits in general. These aspects of desire for a beloved, we may recall, motivate the puzzle about *erōs*. We would like to suggest therefore that those who undertake whichever erotic pursuit are plausibly also blind to their aim just as Aristophanes’ lovers are.²¹ For instance, it is not obvious what answer we could give to someone who asks why we pursue philosophy. And it is likely unsatisfactory to either party to say that philosophy strikes us as somehow significant or compelling. If the puzzle about *erōs* does extend to these other pursuits that aim at the good for Diotima, then she would have further grounds to consider *erōs* the general desire to possess good things forever.

3 Giving birth in beauty

The analogy between *erōs* and *poiēsis* also prepares us for the surprising claim that all human beings are makers, or poets, in the general sense that they bring something into being. Diotima does not claim only that everyone is a lover because everyone wants the good to be hers always (206a6). She also states that the way in which lovers pursue the good is by “giving birth in beauty” (τόκος ἐν καλῷ) (206b1-2). She says we are “fertile” in body or soul, but that one cannot give birth in anything that is not beautiful (206c1-3). *Symp.* 209a-210e makes clear that τόκος refers not only to biological reproduction but all manner of what we call creative pursuits, which includes the manifold pursuits that were earlier classed under the broad heading of *erōs*. For Diotima, the various pursuits that *erōs* impels are creative pursuits in a broad sense, whether pursuits of fame, art or philosophy.²² What’s crucial is that Diotima’s account of how lovers pursue the aim of *erōs* – its ἔργον (206b3) – reintroduces the beautiful into the story after she switches it out at 205e. On her account, lovers desire to possess the good permanently and they come to possess the good by bringing it into being or creating it, as it were. It is only beauty that instigates and enables the giving birth of the good things that can make a lover happy when she possesses them (207d, 209b-c). Socrates is thus partially right when he claims that lovers desire beautiful things. Diotima leads us to see that beautiful things are not merely the intentional objects of erotic desire, but that the beautiful plays a crucial function for their happiness. Although the aim of *erōs* is distinct from the intentional object, the aim is nevertheless fulfilled with the aid of the intentional object. This helps to explain why we are drawn to beauty, apart from any inherently captivating qualities of beauty, even though the aim of erotic desire is deeply structured towards the good.²³

¹⁸ The relation between love and sickness (*nosos*) is familiar from Greek poetry, such as the works of Hesoid. See Cyrino (1995): 46-54.

¹⁹ See for example 178a-b and the use of ἡ σπουδὴ καὶ ἡ σύντασις at 206b2.

²⁰ These instances are used to illustrate the mortal desire for immortality that accompanies the desire to possess the good forever, but they are nevertheless illustrative of the experience of love.

²¹ For agreement, see Halperin (1985): 181.

²² She has indicated earlier that the work of all craft (*technē*) is to bring something into being (205c1). On Diotima’s account this is also a case of reproduction in the sense that these pursuits are means by which one somehow extends himself past his biological death in order to gain immortality.

²³ Indeed, the aim must be deep at least in the sense that it escapes articulation by lovers. Aristophanes adds that the soul “disguises” (αἰνίττεται) what it really wants (192d2). Perhaps *erōs* is so structured as to cover its aim up.

To be sure, the role of beauty is left essentially obscure.²⁴ Here it suffices to note that our desire for beauty, through a fairly complicated and temporally extended process, helps fulfill a deep need for attaining the good things that would make us happy, as much as it is possible for mortals at any rate. This does not mean, however, that we value beauty instrumentally and merely for the sake of the good. The claim that our desire for beauty is our means for happiness is not to say that *in* desiring beauty we have our eyes set on happiness. We have suggested that a puzzle that Diotima accounts for is that we can neither articulate nor comprehend the aim of our erotic desire from a first-personal perspective. So, if anything, Diotima's account of the aim of *erōs* is in the service of the fact that we value beauty so utterly for itself, to the point of blindness. This would be no less true of a philosopher who loves the Form of Beauty. The fact that all human beings, or rather all mortals, are attracted to beauty is a datum about the experience of *erōs*, whether it is a desire for a beloved or for wisdom. Diotima does not replace the beautiful with the good in her account of *erōs*. Far from marginalizing the many beautiful things we love or mischaracterizing our experience of love, her account explains the hold that beauty has on us and why we love what we love in the way that we do.

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²⁴ In Diotima's description of this process the terms for conceiving and giving birth are run together so that it appears that the act of begetting is somehow indistinct from the act of giving birth. See Dover (1980): 147. See also Price (1989): 15–16. Part of the confusion may be attributed to the understanding of sexual reproduction at the time of Plato, but perhaps Plato thinks that the role of beauty is complex and includes more than one function. Besides enabling the reproduction of the good, the beautiful plays a pedagogical role in the ascent of the lover towards the Form of Beauty. Beautiful objects cultivate a finer appreciation of beauty in which one expands and unifies her love of beautiful things until she finally communes and comprehends what the Beautiful Itself is. See *Symp.* 210a–211d with Lear (2007) and Nehamas (2007).

*Eros e l'Anima nel Simposio di Platone*¹

Giusy Maria Margagliotta

La questione che vorrei affrontare riguarda il significato e la provenienza di Eros (δαίμων μέγας) nel *Simposio* platonico e del suo rapporto con l'Anima. Anche se di primo acchito essa può apparire semplice, solleva una serie di problemi ai quali non è facile rispondere:

- Chi è davvero Eros?
- In che rapporto sta con l'Anima, così come ci viene presentata nelle diverse rappresentazioni offerteci da Platone nei suoi dialoghi?
- Come vedremo, le funzioni di Eros e quelle dell'Anima, sono per molti aspetti sovrapponibili: entrambi sono intermedi e mediatori.
- Ma, se già l'Anima ottemperava alla funzione di mediare tra il sensibile e il noetico, perché Platone ha sentito la necessità di introdurre Eros come “demone mediatore”?
- Quest'ultimo è da considerare come un'entità esistente in maniera indipendente o è identificabile con l'Anima?
- Oppure si tratta di una particolare condizione dell'Anima, inseparabile da essa?

Nel poco tempo a mia disposizione cercherò di sviluppare queste questioni, limitandomi all'analisi del discorso di Socrate contenuto nel *Simposio*.

La maggior parte degli studiosi moderni, occupandosi del *Simposio* platonico e, in particolare, del discorso che Platone fa pronunciare a Diotima, si sono concentrati sull'analisi del significato della “scala dell'Eros” – che, procedendo per gradi, conduce dall'amore della bellezza dei corpi, sino al vertice rappresentato dall'amore del Bello-Bene in sé. Tuttavia, per quanto grande sia l'importanza che questa parte del dialogo riveste per la comprensione della dottrina platonica dell'amore, la sua analisi ha spesso distolto la critica dalla prima parte del discorso di Socrate e, in particolare, dalla questione della nascita di Eros, questione che, nell'antichità, aveva interessato filosofi come Plutarco e Plotino. Qui, allora, solleverò i problemi relativi al mito della genealogia di Eros e cercherò di rendere meglio comprensibile la sua natura tentando di sciogliere il nodo legato al suo concepimento.

1. Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ Ἔρως καὶ ποῖός τις

Socrate sostiene che, la prima volta che era stato interrogato da Diotima sull'Eros, aveva risposto, analogamente ad Agatone, che era un gran dio, bello e buono. La sacerdotessa lo aveva confutato affermando che Eros non era né bello né buono, «οὔτε καλός...οὔτε ἀγαθός» (201d5-e7), ma che ciò non doveva significare che egli fosse brutto e cattivo. Chi o che cosa è allora? Di certo non è un dio, perché non si può sostenere che un dio possa non essere bello o buono, ma non è neanche un essere mortale. Si tratta un gran demone (δαίμων μέγας; 202d13), intermedio (μεταξύ; 202a3) e intermediario tra gli dèi e gli uomini.² Porta ai primi le preghiere e i sacrifici degli uomini e a questi ultimi i comandi e le ricompense divine (202e3-7). Eros può dunque essere inteso come una sorta di «copula mundi, ossia come ciò che connette le cose e rende unitario il tutto».³ Si configurerebbe come il tramite tra le due dimensioni che Platone aveva prima separato, quella sensibile e quella intellegibile,⁴ in funzione del Bello-Bene (202e6-7).⁵

¹ Le questioni sollevate dal presente articolo sono frutto anche delle lunghe e interessanti discussioni avute con il professor Filip Karfik e del professore Salvatore Lavecchia, che per questo vorrei ringraziare.

² Questo passo sembrerebbe entrare in contraddizione con ciò che Platone fa affermare a Socrate nel *Fedro* (242d9-e4). Qui, rivolgendosi a Fedro, Socrate chiede: «τὸν Ἔρωτα οὐκ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ θεὸν τινα ἤγη;» («Non è un dio, per te, Eros, figlio di Afrodite?»; 242d9). Socrate, o Platone per bocca di Socrate, dunque, nel *Fedro* sembra assumere una posizione differente rispetto al *Simposio*: non soltanto definisce Eros un dio piuttosto che un demone, ma lo descrive – secondo la tradizione comune – come figlio di Afrodite, mentre nel *Simposio*, come vedremo più avanti, egli è sì seguace e ministro di Afrodite (τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἀκόλουθος καὶ θεράπων; 203c2), in quanto concepito il giorno della sua nascita, ma figlio di Poros e Penia. Perché il filosofo qui sembra contraddirsi? Per quale motivo fonda l'essenza dell'Eros del *Simposio* nel suo carattere demonico, sottolineando che in nessun caso può essere considerato un dio («Πῶς ἂν οὖν θεὸς εἶν ὃ γε τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἄμειρος; 202d5»), se nel *Fedro* afferma l'esatto contrario? Se leggiamo attentamente il testo, possiamo supporre che in questo dialogo Platone si stia limitando ad esporre l'opinione che ha di Eros la gente comune, prima di introdurre la sua nuova e autentica definizione attraverso il discorso di Socrate. Quando il filosofo dichiara che Eros è un dio, in quanto figlio di Afrodite, Fedro esclama «Lo si dice!» («Λέγεται γε δῆ;»; 242c10) facendo probabilmente riferimento alla tradizionale concezione di Eros. Allora Socrate precisa che Eros è «un dio o qualcosa di divino» («θεὸς ἢ τι θεῖον ὁ Ἔρως;»; 242e2). Sta facendo uso dell'ironia? Questo non possiamo saperlo con certezza, ma se così fosse la contraddizione si dimostrerebbe solo apparente.

³ G. Reale, *Eros, demone mediatore e il gioco delle maschere nel Simposio di Platone* (Milano 2005) 168.

⁴ Cfr. L. Robin, *La Théorie Platonicienne de l'Amour* (Paris 1964) 167 (§157).

⁵ Cfr. G. Reale, *Eros, demone mediatore e il gioco delle maschere nel Simposio di Platone*, op. cit., p. 169; G. Reale,

La teoria del ruolo mediatore dei demoni verrà ripresa e trattata anche da Apuleio nel *De Deo Socratis*. Egli prenderà le mosse dalla teoria platonica secondo la quale nessun dio si mescola agli uomini («θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπων οὐ μείγνυται»; Pl., *Symp.*, 202e3-7) per spiegare l'importante posizione dei demoni che fungono da intermediari tra gli dèi immortali e gli uomini mortali.⁶ Apuleio descrive i demoni come: «esseri animati, dotati di facoltà razionali»,⁷ e ce ne fornisce una classificazione dettagliata; le informazioni che, invece, Platone ci offre sulla sua demonologia sono molto frammentarie. Ciò che sappiamo è che ha inserito Eros nella categoria dei numerosi e svariati demoni («οὗτοι δὲ οἱ δαίμονες πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποὶ εἰσιν, εἷς δὲ τούτων ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Ἔρως»; Pl., *Symp.* 203a6-8) e che il suo ruolo è fondamentale per colmare la frattura fra due mondi apparentemente inavvicinabili: 1) quello degli immortali e 2) quello dei mortali.

Ma com'è possibile che tra due categorie assolute come quelle di mortalità e immortalità possa esserci un che di intermedio? Perché qui Platone, per creare un ponte tra ciò che è immortale e ciò che è mortale, chiama in causa il demone invece di ricorrere alla funzione mediatrice dell'Anima? Prima di rispondere a questa questione è d'uopo analizzare il racconto mitico della nascita di Eros.

2. La nascita di Eros

In occasione della nascita di Afrodite⁸ gli dèi tennero un banchetto. Tra di essi c'erano Zeus e Poros, figlio di Metis. Quando il banchetto fu terminato, giunse un altro personaggio difficile da classificare; si tratta di Penia che, avendo saputo che aveva avuto luogo una grande festa, se ne stava vicino alla porta a mendicare. Poros, ubriaco di nettare – visto che il vino non c'era ancora («οἶνος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν»; 203b6) – entrò nel giardino di Zeus e si addormentò. Penia se ne accorse e, poiché bramava a quello che Poros possedeva e di cui lei era mancante, decise di avere un figlio da lui (203b7-8). Così, quella notte, fu concepito Eros. Eros, dunque, a causa della natura della madre, è sempre povero («πρῶτον μὲν πένης αἰεὶ ἐστὶ»; 203c6), non è un dio, ma un demone «duro e ispido, scalzo e senza casa» (203c7-d1); in quanto figlio di Poros invece è audace, coraggioso e desideroso di sapere. Filosofo per tutta la vita («φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου»; 203d7). Non possiede nulla – poiché non è mai ricco – ma, in quanto filosofo, è sempre «tendente a...», per questo non è mai povero di risorse.

Ma cosa intende Platone esattamente quando afferma che Eros possiede la “natura della madre” («τὴν τῆς μητρὸς φύσιν ἔχων»; 203d3)? Di che natura si tratta? Da nessuna parte è spiegato chi sia, di fatto, Penia. Viene semplicemente detto che è arrivata dopo il banchetto degli dèi per raccogliere i resti e che era “mancante” di qualcosa («τὴν αὐτῆς ἀπορίαν»; 203b8). Il fatto che Platone, riferendosi a Penia, utilizzi il termine «ἀπορία», vuole – già etimologicamente – alludere al suo essere povera di risorse, a-poria, proprio di quelle risorse di cui Poros è invece ricco⁹ («πατρὸς μὲν γὰρ σοφῆς ἐστὶ καὶ εὐπόρου»; 204b6). Penia è mancante di Poros.

Tuttavia non ci viene detto niente di più. Non può essere una dea perché, se così fosse, Eros sarebbe nato dall'unione di due divinità e sarebbe stato immortale, un dio, e non un demone

⁶ Introduzione e note al *Simposio di Platone* (Milano 2001) 22; F. Karfik, 'Éros et l'Âme', in: A. Havlíček – M. Cajthaml (eds.), *Plato's Symposium. Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Platonicum Pragense* (Prague 2007) 150.

⁷ Per un'analisi del ruolo del demone di Socrate nel *De Deo Socratis* di Apuleio cfr. G. Margagliotta, *Il demone di Socrate nelle interpretazioni di Plutarco e Apuleio* (Nordhausen 2012), in particolare pp. 67-106.

⁸ App., *De Deo*, XIII 148.

⁹ Afrodite, qui, viene definita da Platone, che in questo caso si attiene alla mitologia classica, come una dea. Tuttavia, più tardi, negli scritti di Apuleio, la sua classificazione non risulterà più così univoca e il confine che separa gli dèi dai demoni perderà – malgrado l'autore si impegni a fornirci una classificazione più precisa possibile dei demoni – i suoi contorni netti. Nel *De Deo Socratis*, infatti, Apuleio, prendendo spunto dal *Simposio* platonico, afferma che nessun dio si mescola all'uomo («nullus deus miscetur hominibus; *De Deo*, IV 128»), ma nelle *Metamorfosi* leggiamo di dèi irascibili e vendicativi, che provano gli stessi sentimenti e le stesse passioni degli uomini. Venere, come le altre dee invocate da Psiche per ottenere protezione dall'ira di quest'ultima, si manifestano a Psiche senza ricorrere a intermediari e a tratti appaiono addirittura corporee. Queste caratteristiche sono estranee alla prima definizione che Apuleio aveva dato degli dèi. Che fossero allora tutti demoni quelli di cui Apuleio parla nelle *Metamorfosi*? Questo è impossibile: basti pensare a come viene presentata Iside all'asino Lucio nel libro XI delle *Metamorfosi*. Gli dèi di Apuleio sono divinità autentiche, supreme creatrici del mondo, poste al di sopra dei demoni e degli uomini. Ma come spiegare il fatto stesso che una dea si fosse resa direttamente manifesta a un essere mortale – e addirittura a un asino? Com'è possibile conciliare questi versi con le dottrine demonologiche del *De Deo Socratis*? Si tenga presente che in quest'opera Osiride è annoverato tra i demoni-anima insieme a Anfiarao, Mopso ed Esculapio. E se a Osiride è riservata questa sorte, cosa ci trattiene dal pensare che anche Iside, sua sorella e sposa, non fosse stata altrettanto un demone? Anche per Plutarco, Iside e Osiride sono demoni (Plu., *De Is.*, 360 D-E). Cfr. G. Margagliotta, *Il demone di Socrate nelle interpretazioni di Plutarco e Apuleio*, op. cit., pp. 72-76. Tutto questo ci fa comprendere che non dobbiamo dare per scontato che ciò che leggiamo nei testi filosofici sia da riferire, senza dubbio e senza interrogarsi in maniera critica, alla mitologia classica tradizionale e che i filosofi fanno uso di essa in modo molto parziale, come è evincibile in Platone, nel mito del concepimento di Eros, a proposito di Poros e Penia.

⁹ Cfr. G. Reale, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone. Rilettura della metafisica dei grandi dialoghi alla luce delle "dottrine non scritte"* (Milano 20 1997) 470-471.

“intermedio”. Del resto, di Penia – come di Poros – non c’è traccia nella mitologia tradizionale greca.¹⁰ Inoltre, Platone afferma che, avendo ereditato insieme le caratteristiche del padre e della madre, Eros non è né mortale né immortale («καὶ οὐτε ὡς ἀθάνατος πέφυκεν οὐτε ὡς θνητός»; 203d8-e1); dobbiamo ritenere allora che essa fosse mortale? Anche questo non è possibile perché, se così fosse, l’unione con Poros non avrebbe potuto aver luogo in quanto avrebbe contraddetto l’enunciato di Diotima, di cui ho già parlato, secondo il quale nessun dio si mescola all’uomo. Chi è allora? Un’allegoria? Ma di che cosa?¹¹ Nell’antichità, già Plutarco e Plotino si erano interrogati sul significato del mito della nascita di Eros e avevano elaborato un’interpretazione che gli conferiva un senso filosofico generale e lo designava come la chiave di lettura dell’intera dottrina platonica.¹² Qui mi limiterò ad accennare brevemente ai loro argomenti:

3. Plutarco:

Nel suo *Iside e Osiride*, Plutarco accosta la dottrina platonica al mito egizio. Facendo riferimento al *Timeo* (35a1-b3), sostiene che Platone ha parlato, in maniera misteriosa, di due principi: lo Stesso e l’Altro (Plu., *De Is.*, 48, 370f1-3), pensiero che, nelle *Leggi*, ha espresso in maniera più chiara affermando che il Mondo non è mosso soltanto da un’anima («οὐ μὲν ψυχῇ φησι κινεῖσθαι τὸν κόσμον»; Plu., *De Is.*, 48, 370f5; cfr. anche Pl., *L.*, 896e4-5), ma da almeno due anime: una che produce il bene e l’altra, sua antagonista, che è artefice di tutto ciò che al bene è contrario (Plu., *De Is.*, 48, 370f6-8; Pl., *L.*, 896e5-6); esiste, infine, una terza natura, intermedia («καὶ τρίτην τινὰ μεταξὺ φύσιν» Plu., *De Is.*, 48, 370f9), che non è priva né di anima né di ragione e che in sé possiede il principio del proprio movimento. Per Plutarco, nel mito egizio, il Bene s’identifica con Osiride, il Male con Tifone e il ricettacolo del cambiamento con Iside. Il frutto dell’unione di Iside e Osiride, Horos, sarebbe l’immagine sensibile del mondo intellegibile (Plu., *De Is.*, 49, 371a-e; 54, 373a-c).¹³ Iside, inoltre, è il principio femminile della natura e riceve in sé ogni forma di generazione. Egli la paragona a ciò che Platone, nel *Timeo*, definisce come una nutrice, ossia il ricettacolo¹⁴ di tutto ciò che si genera («πάσης εἶναι γενέσεως ὑποδοχὴν αὐτὴν οἶον τιθήνην»; Pl., *Tim.*, 49a5-6). Essa avrebbe un innato Eros verso colui che è il Primo e supremo signore di tutte le cose (Plu., *De Is.*, 53, 372f1-2), il quale si identifica con il Bene, e per questo lo desidera e lo ricerca («δ’τάγαθὸν ταυτόν ἐστι κάκεινο ποθεῖ καὶ διώκει»; 53, 372f2-3).

In modo analogo, per Plutarco, nel mito platonico Poros è identificabile con il Primo amato, desiderato, perfetto e bastevole a se stesso (57, 374d5-6) e Penia con la povertà, perché è bisognosa di quello che lei non possiede e che ritrova, invece, in Poros. Per questo lo brama e anela a lui. Eros, generato dall’unione di queste due nature, per Plutarco, starebbe a indicare il Mondo, che, pur non essendo eterno, incorruttibile e sempre identico a se stesso – come il padre – riesce a rinascere senza sosta e a rimanere, nonostante le mutazioni e i cicli degli eventi, sempre giovane.

Questa interpretazione, che già dal primo sguardo appare troppo libera, sembra forzare l’originale testo platonico. Sui due principi a cui Platone allude nel *Timeo* ci soffermeremo più tardi; qui vorrei esprimere solo un paio di considerazioni: se pure ammettessimo che Penia, la povertà, rappresenti la materia senza forma, non c’è motivo di ritenere che Poros rappresenti il “Primo amabile”, una perfezione bastevole a se stessa. Dal testo platonico possiamo desumere che Poros fosse un dio antichissimo, che Penia si trovava in mancanza di quello che invece Poros possedeva, ma questo non basta per fare di lui il Principio Primo.

Inoltre, perché Eros dovrebbe essere identificabile con il Mondo? Secondo l’interpretazione di Plutarco, se Poros rappresenta il Bene e Penia la Materia, dall’unione di Bene e Materia scaturirebbe Eros, il Mondo. Ma, come abbiamo visto, non risale a Platone l’identificazione di Poros con il Bene Assoluto, quindi l’equazione elaborata da Plutarco si ritrova priva di fondamento. Occorre aggiungere che, nella rappresentazione platonica, Eros è ciò che tiene unito il mondo, ma nulla ci lascia intendere che esso sia il mondo stesso. Infatti, il Cosmo è definito da Platone nel *Timeo* come un dio perfetto e intero («ὅλον καὶ τέλειον»; Pl., *Tim.*, 34b2; cfr. anche 33d1-3), mentre l’Eros del *Simposio* non è un dio bastante a se stesso, ma un demone che si trova perennemente nella condizione di essere

¹⁰ Cfr. F. Karfik, ‘Éros et l’Âme’, op. cit., p. 154; (W.H. Rocher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, II, 2 (Leipzig 1902-1909), s.v. „Penia“, coll. 1921, e s.v. „Poros“, coll. 2775-2778).

¹¹ Cfr. F. Karfik, ‘Éros et l’Âme’, op. cit., p. 154; L.Robin, *La teoria platonica dell’amore* (Milano 1973) 142-143.

¹² Cfr. L.Robin, *La teoria platonica dell’amore*, op. cit., p. 143.

¹³ Cfr. ibi, p. 144.

¹⁴ Pl., *Tim.*, 51a4-b2: «Διὸ δὴ τὴν τοῦ γεγονότος ὁρατοῦ καὶ πάντως αἰσθητοῦ μητέρα καὶ ὑποδοχὴν μήτε γῆν μήτε ἀέρα μήτε πῦρ μέτε ὕδωρ λέγωμεν, μήτε ὅσα ἐκ τούτων μήτε ἐξ ὧν ταῦτα γέγονεν· ἀλλ’ἀνόρατον εἰδός τι καὶ ἄμορφον, πανδεχές, μεταλαμβάνον δὲ ἀπορώτατά πη τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ δυσαλωτότατον αὐτὸ λέγοντες οὐ ψευδόμεθα». Da questa descrizione, con ogni probabilità, Aristotele avrà desunto il suo concetto di materia, come assolutamente priva di forma (ἄμορφος).

“mancante di” qualcosa, e dunque in continua tensione verso ciò che non possiede.¹⁵

4. Plotino:

Passiamo ora all'analisi offertaci da Plotino.

Anche lui, nell'*Enneade* III 5,1 si sofferma sul significato del mito della nascita di Eros. La sua indagine è più precisa di quella di Plutarco, tuttavia non possiamo considerarla una “genuina” interpretazione del pensiero platonico, in quanto troppo impregnata del pensiero dello stesso Plotino.

Egli afferma che occorre, innanzitutto, comprendere la natura di Eros, ovvero capire se è un dio, un demone o una passione dell'anima («Περὶ ἔρωτος πότερα θεός τις ἢ δαίμων ἢ πάθος τι τῆς ψυχῆς»; Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 1, 1-2). Per questo bisogna risalire alle origini del suo concepimento.

Facendo verosimilmente riferimento al discorso che Platone fa pronunciare a Pausania nel *Simposio* (180d3-e3), Plotino dichiara che ci sono due Afrodite: un'Afrodite di natura celeste, discendente di Urano (Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 2, 15-16), e una di natura demonica, figlia di Zeus e Dione (III 5, 2, 16).

1) L'Afrodite celeste è una dea “senza madre” («ἀμέτορα»; III 5, 2, 17); il padre, invece, è Crono, l'Intelligenza divina; di conseguenza essa è un'Anima celeste («ψυχὴν θειοτάτην»; III 5, 2, 20), assolutamente divina e separata dalla Materia (III 5, 2, 22-24).

2) L'altra Afrodite, invece, non è una dea, ma un demone. Mentre la prima rappresentava l'Anima celeste, essa rappresenta l'Anima del Mondo, dalla quale dipendono le anime individuali. Correlativamente alle due Afrodite ci sono due tipi di Eros:

1) Uno è generato da Afrodite Urania e Urano, ovvero dall'Anima celeste e dal Bene. Esso è un essere reale, poco inferiore rispetto all'Anima celeste che, a sua volta, è subordinata a un essere di ordine superiore, e che guarda fissa al suo principio, ovvero alla sostanza prima («ὁ πρώτη ἦν οὐσία»; III 5, 3, 5).¹⁶ Come l'Anima celeste, anche l'Eros che da essa è generato guarda verso l'alto, verso il Principio Primo, ed è del tutto separato dalla Materia (III 5, 3, 26-27).

2) L'altro Eros è invece un demone. Ha una Materia, che però è puramente intellegibile,¹⁷ e da esso dipendono tutti gli Eros particolari che sono i demoni delle anime particolari (III 5, 4, 5-6).¹⁸ Ora, mentre Afrodite raffigura la nostra Anima («ἡ μὲν γὰρ Αφροδίτη ψυχὴ ἦν ἡμῖν»; III 5, 8, 2-3), Zeus, che ospita nel suo palazzo la festa indetta in onore della sua nascita, per Plotino rappresenta l'Intelletto divino.¹⁹ Durante il banchetto si beve il nettare. Esso rappresenterebbe le Ragioni che si diffondono da una realtà superiore a una inferiore (III 5, 9, 5-9). Anche Poros è la Ragione formale delle cose che esistono nel mondo intellegibile e nell'Intelligenza, e siccome è sovrabbondante, si dispiega tutto intorno e dentro all'Anima (III 5, 9, 1-3). È palese che qui Poros sta perdendo le caratteristiche attribuitegli da Platone nel *Simposio* per diventare un mezzo per esporre la teoria

¹⁵ Cfr. Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 5, 5-11. Contro l'interpretazione di Plutarco che identifica Eros con il Cosmo, Plotino si chiede: per quale ragione questo demone che è Eros dovrebbe essere il Mondo mentre agli altri demoni, che traggono origine dalla medesima sostanza, non tocca la stessa sorte? («εἴτα διὰ τί οὗτος μὲν δαίμων ὢν ὁ κόσμος ἔσται, οἱ δ' ἄλλοι δαίμονες – δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς οὐσίας εἰσὶν – οὐ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται;»; Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 5, 15-17). Come potrebbe essere il Cosmo colui che, nel *Fedro*, viene chiamato «protettore dei bei giovani» («καλῶν παίδων ἔφορον» 265c4) e che, nel *Simposio*, viene descritto come «senza giaciglio», «scalzo» (ἀνυπόδητος) e «senza dimora» (ἀοικος)? (203d1).

¹⁶ Eros è proprio concepito attraverso lo sguardo intenso e attivo rivolto dall'Anima celeste alla sostanza prima, per questo Plotino definisce Eros “l'occhio riempito” («ὄμμα πληρωθέν»; III 5, 3, 13), cioè una visione accompagnata dall'immagine («οἶον μετ'εἰδὸλον ὄρασις»; III 5, 3, 13). In questo modo, qui, Plotino fa derivare il nome di Eros da ὄρασις, visione: è un essere che deve la sua esistenza al vedere («ὅτι ἐξ ὄρασεως τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει»; III 5, 3, 15). Così facendo egli fonda la sua dottrina metafisica della “processione” – che non significa meramente “derivare da...”, ma che comporta anche la “visione” e la “contemplazione” da ciò da cui deriva – anche dal punto di vista terminologico ed etimologico (Cfr. G. Reale, ‘Introduzione e note a: Plotino, *Enneadi*’, III 5, 3, nota 16).

¹⁷ I demoni, infatti, partecipano in qualche modo della materia. Quest'ultima, tuttavia, non può essere la materia corporea perché, se così fosse, essi sarebbero esseri viventi ben visibili, e non demoni (Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 6, 37). Plotino afferma che si tratta di una materia intellegibile («ὅλην δεῖ νοητὴν»; III 5, 6, 44). Ma che cosa intende con questo? Arthur H. Armstrong, nel suo commento alle *Enneadi*, sostiene che la «materia intellegibile» qui ottempera alla funzione di mediare tra l'incorporeo e il corporeo materiale, dunque non coincide con quella di cui il filosofo parla in *Enn.*, II 4, 2-5, ma si tratta di un unicum nell'opera plotiniana. Cfr. A.H. Armstrong, ‘Plotinus, *Ennead* III’, vol. III (Cambridge-London 4 1999) 189, nota 2.

¹⁸ Probabilmente qui stava pensando al secondo mito escatologico contenuto nel *Fedone* platonico, dove è detto che l'uomo, dopo la morte, è condotto dal demone che lo aveva avuto in custodia durante la vita («ὁ ἐκάστου δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήγει»; Pl., *Symp.*, 107d6-7), verso il luogo dove le anime, dopo essere state sottoposte a giudizio, iniziano il loro viaggio verso l'Ade (107d6-e2; 113d1-4). Platone qui non parla esplicitamente di Eros, ma di un demone in generale. Potremmo essere indotti a pensare che si stesse riferendo piuttosto a un “demone custode” o “demone guida”, quale potrebbe essere il δαιμόνιον che accompagnava Socrate, e non all'Eros di cui invece parla nel *Simposio*. Ma questo non è chiaro, e noi qui possiamo limitarci a supporre.

¹⁹ Cfr. Pl., *Phil.*, 30d1-2 = Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 8, 9-11; Pl., *Phil.*, 30d2; Pl., *Phdr.*, 246e5 = Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 8, 7-8; Plot., *Enn.*, III 5, 8, 11-14.

plotiniana dell'emanazione. Perché e di cosa Poros sarebbe sovrabbondante? E in che senso si dispiega intorno all'Anima? Con "Anima" Plotino si sta riferendo di nuovo ad Afrodite? Ma Poros si unisce a Penia non ad Afrodite – l'Anima –, quindi questo passaggio sembra allontanarsi del tutto dall'intento platonico.

Plotino aggiunge che ciò che in Poros è sovrabbondante sono le Ragioni emanate dall'Intelligenza, sotto forma di nettare. Egli se ne ubriaca perché improvvisamente si trova pieno di un Bene che non è il suo stesso Bene, ma che proviene dal di fuori (III 5, 9, 3-5). Penia, invece, per Plotino sarebbe identificabile con la Materia («ἡ δὲ μήτηρ αὐτῷ Πενία»; III 5, 9, 48-49). Unendosi a Poros, Penia, da Materia interamente indeterminata quale era, diventa Materia intellegibile, mescolanza di indeterminazione e di forma, e la confusa reminiscenza delle Ragioni ha fatto sbocciare in essa questa tendenza verso il Bene, il cui nome è Eros.²⁰

La Ragione formale, dunque, intervenendo in qualcosa che non era Ragione, bensì una sorta di desiderio amorfo, produce un frutto imperfetto e inefficace, sempre manchevole di qualcosa (III 5, 7, 9-12), in altre parole: Eros.

Appare chiaro che l'esegesi di Plotino sia troppo impregnata del pensiero di quest'ultimo. Le idee che qui, attraverso costruzioni più o meno metafisiche, Plotino attribuisce a Platone, superano di molto lo sviluppo filosofico del pensiero che l'Ateniese aveva esposto nel *Simposio*.²¹ Per comprendere il significato del mito della nascita di Eros non bisogna isolarlo arbitrariamente dal dialogo e interpretarlo secondo le categorie della propria filosofia, ma è necessario rimanere quanto più possibile aderenti al testo originale e al pensiero filosofico che sta dietro quest'esposizione.

5. Poros e Penia: allegorie dei Principi?

Per questo motivo l'interpretazione che critici contemporanei, come Giovanni Reale e la "Scuola di Milano", hanno dato della natura e del ruolo dei "genitori" di Eros – Penia e Poros – ci pone di fronte ad alcune criticità. Innanzitutto Reale afferma che Eros viene concepito da Poros e Penia, «dea della povertà»;²² ma, come abbiamo visto, non c'è nessun passo in cui Platone ci faccia intendere che Penia sia una dea. Inoltre, partendo dal fatto che Penia simboleggia il Principio materiale, Reale sostiene che, il principio con il quale essa si unisce, deve essere, per contrapposizione, il Principio antitetico alla Materia.²³ Forzando, a parer mio, l'interpretazione del mito platonico, vuole applicarvi la dottrina dell'Uno e della Diade delle cosiddette "dottrine non scritte" identificando Penia, simbolo della Materia, con la Diade indefinita e Poros con l'Uno. Prendendo spunto dal *Timeo* – che presenta il principio materiale come avente in sé delle tracce dell'Intellegibile e tale da lasciarsi dominare e persuadere dall'Intelligenza (Pl., *Tim.*, 47e3-48b3) – e dalla conseguente interpretazione aristotelica – secondo la quale la materia, pur essendo contraria al divino e al Bene, per sua natura aspira e anela ad esso²⁴ – Reale sostiene che tutto ciò è espresso da Platone, in forma mitica, con la metafora di Penia che si fa fecondare da Poros.²⁵ Attingendo dalla tradizione indiretta (Ar., *Phys.*, 209b14-15; *Metaph.*, 988a8-15) – e quindi non da Platone stesso – Reale afferma inoltre che l'Uno rappresenta il Bene e la Diade il Male. Ma perché Penia dovrebbe essere la Diade, che, secondo questa interpretazione, è il principio del Male?

La dicotomia Uno = Bene/ Diade = Male porterebbe ad alcune contraddizioni:

- Innanzitutto, come potremmo spiegarci che il Bene ponga in se stesso il principio del Male quando, agendo sulla Diade, dona a tutte le cose la loro essenza?
- Inoltre, se davvero la Diade fosse il Male, ciò comporterebbe che anche le idee parteciperebbero del Male, e ciò è impossibile (Pl., *Resp.*, 500c2-5).²⁶

È vero che l'Uno è il Principio dell'ordine e della misura e la Diade dell'indefinito, ma ciò non implica che essa sia il Principio del Male.²⁷ Al contrario, la Diade indeterminata si trova a principio di ogni possibile essere buono perché rende reale l'automanifestarsi immediato del Bene.²⁸

Negli sviluppi che accompagnano l'esposizione del mito, possiamo limitarci ad affermare che Poros e Penia sono due figure allegoriche che rappresentano proprio ciò che sta a indicare il loro stesso nome: l'Espediente e la Povertà. Ciò possiamo desumerlo a partire dalle caratteristiche con le

²⁰ Cfr. L. Robin, *La teoria platonica dell'amore*, op. cit., p. 146-147.

²¹ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 148.

²² G. Reale, Autotestimonianze e rimandi dei dialoghi di Platone alle "dottrine non scritte" (Milano 2008) 64.

²³ G. Reale, Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone alla luce delle "dottrine non scritte" (Milano 2010) 471.

²⁴ Arist., *Phys.*, A 9, 192 a 16-19: «ὄντος γάρ τινος θείου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἐφετοῦ, τὸ μὲν ἐναντίον αὐτῷ φαμεν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ ὃ πέφυκεν ἐφίεσθαι καὶ ὀρέεσθαι αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν».

²⁵ G. Reale, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone alla luce delle "dottrine non scritte"*, op. cit., 471.

²⁶ Cfr. S. Lavecchia, *Oltre l'Uno e i Molti* (Milano-Udine 2010) 31.

²⁷ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 31.

²⁸ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 32.

quali è dipinto Eros²⁹ che partecipa del bello e del brutto, del buono e del cattivo, dell'immortale e del mortale, della sapienza e dell'ignoranza, e che tuttavia tende solo verso il Bello-Bene, ovvero verso ciò di cui è privo, perché Eros è amore di quello che gli manca e rappresenta dunque un'incessante tendenza a passare da un gradino più basso a uno più alto della perfezione,³⁰ senza raggiungere mai una totale pienezza e sazietà.

7. Eros e l'Anima

Ora, appare più o meno chiaramente che tra Eros e l'Anima debba sussistere un qualche rapporto, ma di che genere di rapporto si tratta? Potrebbero forse avere un significato e una funzione equivalente e, addirittura, sovrapporsi l'uno all'altra? Oppure sussistono come due nature separate e differenti?

Potremmo avanzare tre ipotesi:

- 1) Eros è identico all'Anima;
 - 2) Eros è una determinata condizione dell'Anima.
 - 3) Eros non si identifica con l'Anima, ma una natura demonica indipendente.
- A quali conseguenze possono condurci queste tre possibilità e qual era davvero l'intento platonico nel *Simposio*?

(1) Cosa potrebbe indurci a credere che Eros sia identificabile con l'Anima?

Entrambi hanno tratti comuni e sovrapponibili:

a) Sono *intermedi* e *mediatori*:

- *Intermedi*: anche l'anima riunisce in sé una doppia natura: α) quella immortale, a causa della sua origine divina β) quella mortale a causa della sua caduta – dalla quale tuttavia può risollevarsi, avvicinandosi di nuovo alla sua dimora divina, attraverso il processo della reminiscenza, perché il simile tende sempre verso ciò che gli è simile (Pl., *Phd.*, 79d1-6).

- *Mediatori*: l'Anima è descritta quelle caratteristiche che, come abbiamo visto, sono proprie dell'Eros platonico perché svolge cioè la funzione di mediare tra ciò che è corporeo e ciò che è noetico (Pl., *Phd.*, 79d1-6), calandosi nel corporeo – anche a causa della tendenza a rimanere in comunicazione con il mondo nel quale ha vissuto³¹ – ed elevandosi al divino.³²

b) Entrambi sono detti alati: nel *Fedro* (252b8-9) Platone sostiene che, proprio perché messaggeri, i demoni sono alati; così facendo fa derivare il nome Eros dal greco πτερός, ala.³³ Allo stesso modo anche l'anima, nel *Fedro*, è chiamata "alata".³⁴

c) La loro natura è sintetica: dal momento in cui ogni anima è legata a un essere vivente, è composta da elementi eterogenei.

Tuttavia, identificando Eros e l'Anima ci troviamo di fronte a una serie di questioni:

- Se partiamo dal presupposto che l'anima è immortale, ci imbattiamo già in una prima evidente differenza con Eros: esso non è immortale, ma una via di mezzo tra mortale e immortale (203d8-e5).

²⁹ Cfr. F. Karfik, 'Éros et l'Âme', op. cit., p. 154.

³⁰ Cfr. L. Robin, *La teoria platonica dell'amore*, op. cit., p. 148.

³¹ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 165.

³² Quando l'anima si serve del corpo per fare qualche indagine attraverso uno degli organi sensoriali, è tratta da esso verso le cose divenienti, che non permangono mai identiche a se stesse, allora si confonde e barcolla come se fosse ubriaca, mentre quando si raccoglie sola in se medesima, senza subire "contaminazioni" dal corpo e da ciò che è corporeo, essa si eleva a ciò che è affine alla sua natura, ovvero a ciò che è puro, eterno, immortale e immutabile. Pl., *Phd.*, 79d1-6: « Ὅταν δέ γε αὐτὴ καθ'αὐτὴν σκοπῇ, ἐκείσε οἴχεται εἰς τὸ καθαρὸν τε καὶ αἰὲν καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον, καὶ ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα αὐτοῦ αἰὲν μετ'ἐκείνου τε γίγνεται, ὅταν περ αὐτὴ καθ'αὐτὴν γένηται καὶ πέπανταί τε τοῦ πλάνου καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνα αἰὲν κατὰ ταῦτ' ὡσαύτως ἔχει, ἅτε τοιούτων ἐφαπτομένων ».

³³ Richiamando i versi che appartenevano a quel patrimonio poetico spurio che gli Omeridi – una sorta di corporazione rapsodica residente a Chio – Platone declama: τὸν δ' ἦτοι θνητοὶ μὲν Ἐρωτα καλοῦσι ποτηνόν/ ἀθάνατοι δὲ Πτέρωτα, διὰ πτεροφύτορ' ἀνάγκην («I mortali lo chiamano Eros alato, gli immortali invece Pteros, perché costringe a mettere le ali»). Qui, evidentemente, Πτέρως è nato dall'unione dei nomi Ἐρος e πτερός. Non è chiaro se questi versi risalcano davvero agli Omeridi o se siano un'invenzione di Platone).

³⁴ Alcuni passi nei quali l'anima viene descritta come "alata": Pl., *Phrd.*, 246d4-5 «τὴν δὲ αἰτίαν τῆς τῶν πτερῶν ἀποβολῆς, δι' ἣν ψυχῆς ἀπορρεῖ, λάβωμεν» («cerchiamo invece di afferrare la causa della caduta delle ali per la quale esse si staccano dall'anima»); 246d6-7 «πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθεὶς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα ἢ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ» («la forza naturale dell'ala consiste nel condurre in alto ciò che pesa, sollevandolo là dove abita la stirpe degli dèi»); 246e2-4 «τὸ δὲ θεῖον καλόν, σοφόν, ἀγαθόν, καὶ πᾶν ὅτι τοιούτων· τούτοις δὲ τρέφεται τε καὶ αὔξεται μάλιστα γὰρ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πτέρωμα, αἰσχροῦ δὲ καὶ κακῶ καὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις φθίνει τε καὶ διόλλυται» («il divino è bello, saggio, buono e dotato di tutte le qualità di questo genere ed è soprattutto per mezzo di esse che la parte alata dell'anima si nutre e si accresce, mentre con ciò che è vergognoso, malvagio e contrario ad esse, le ali si consumano e periscono»); 249a1 («οὐ γὰρ πτεροῦται πρὸ τοσούτου χρόνου» «prima che tale tempo sia trascorso essa non mette le ali»); 256b4-5 «τελευτήσαντες δὲ δῆ, ὑπόπτεροι καὶ ἐλαφροὶ» («poi, una volta morti, divenuti alati e leggeri»).

- Nei miti escatologici contenuti nel *Fedone*, Platone distingue chiaramente le anime dai “demoni custodi” o “demoni guida” (Pl., *Phd.*, 107d6-e4; 108b3).

- Se l'anima fosse un demone, allora dovrebbe essere capace di abbandonare il corpo, anche mentre l'uomo è ancora in vita, e fare ritorno alla sua dimora divina.³⁵ Invece essa può ricongiungersi al divino solo dopo aver concluso la sua esistenza mortale (Pl., *Phdr.*, 256a7-b8).

A quest'ultima obiezione, tuttavia, possiamo rispondere che, com'è stato mostrato sopra, anche quando è ancora legata al corpo, l'anima attraverso reminiscenza³⁶ o ritirandosi sola in sé medesima, senza alcuna contaminazione da parte di ciò che è corporeo, si unisce alle realtà immutabili e si chiama intelligenza («φρόνησις»; Pl., *Phd.*, 79d7).

(2) È allora possibile identificare l'Eros con una parte dell'Anima? Nel *Fedro* Platone afferma che soltanto la parte intellettuale dell'anima può essere paragonata al demone e, anche nella *Repubblica* (X 617e, 620d) e nel *Timeo*, sostiene che, nell'anima umana, ciò che è affine al divino o al demonico è solo l'elemento intellettuale. Ma se solo l'Anima superiore è affine alla natura del demone, che rapporto c'è tra quest'ultimo e le parti “mortalì” dell'Anima?

Secondo le diverse esposizioni dell'anima forniteci da Platone, infatti, sembra che l'Anima sia a volte mortale e a volte immortale. Tuttavia non bisogna ritenere che esse siano delle parti dell'anima distinte e separate: la sua mortalità o immortalità va affrontata a seconda delle componenti dell'anima prese in esame, prestando una particolare attenzione all'educazione alla quale sono state sottoposte. Per Platone, infatti, il *Nous* è sempre divino e immortale, il problema si pone per le parti dell'anima che – a seconda della condotta di vita e dell'educazione – possono tendere verso di esso – e dunque verso l'immortalità³⁷ – o verso il suo contrario, ovvero verso una sorta di “animalizzazione”.³⁸ Quindi, i contesti che sembrano contraddittori possono essere conciliati concentrandosi sulle varie componenti.

(3) Eros, nel Simposio, è dunque un’“entità” demonica a sé solo in senso allegorico, per indicare l'impulso della volontà dell'Anima verso una certa direzione: se tende verso il Bello-Bene esso porta l'Anima a divinizzarsi, al contrario la conduce al suo più basso grado animalesco. Come abbiamo detto, l'anima è tale perché è ponte tra il sensibile e il noetico. Infatti, se fosse tutta noetica sarebbe già da sempre in rapporto con la propria natura e non avrebbe bisogno di un Eros – così come non ce l'ha il *Nous*, che è in se stesso una piena realizzazione. L'Anima invece è intermedia e, per questo, legata all'Eros, che è ciò che tiene insieme le cose (Pl., *Symp.*, 202e6-7), che collega l'universo e lo rende un tutto coerente. Inoltre, è solo nel dominio dell'Anima che Eros riesce veramente a legare il mortale con l'immortale, attraverso la conoscenza della vera virtù.³⁹

Dunque, l'Eros di cui parla Platone per bocca di Diotima, non è da intendere come un essere a se stante, un demone da inserire nella sua demonologia più generale, ma piuttosto come un'allegoria di una forza costitutiva dell'Anima, il suo slancio verso il Bene-Bello, e dunque verso l'intelligibile, o la sua pulsione verso il corporeo – facendo tuttavia attenzione a non sovrainterpretarlo attribuendovi categorie estranee al pensiero platonico.

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³⁵ Cfr. L. Robin, *La teoria platonica dell'amore*, op. cit., p. 172.

³⁶ Cfr. ibidem.

³⁷ Pl., *Phdr.*, 256a7-b4, «ἐὰν μὲν δὴ οὖν εἰς τεταγμένην τε δίαίταν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν νικήσῃ τὰ βελτίω τῆς διανοίας ἀγαγόντα, μακάριον μὲν καὶ ὁμονοητικὸν τὸν ἐνθάδε βίον διάγνουςιν, ἐγκρατεῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κόσμοι ὄντες, δουλωσάμενοι μὲν ᾧ κακία ψυχῆς ἐνεγίγνετο, ἐλευθερώσαντες δὲ ᾧ ἀρετῇ» («Se dunque prevalgono le parti migliori dell'anima che conducono a un comportamento disciplinato e alla filosofia, essi trascorrono beatamente e concordemente la vita di quaggiù, padroni di se stessi e moderati, perché hanno asservito ciò che ingenera la malvagità dell'anima e hanno invece liberato ciò che vi ingenera la virtù»).

³⁸ Pl., *Phdr.*, 256b8-c4 «ἐὰν δὲ δὴ διαίτη φορτικωτέρα τε καὶ ἀφιλοσόφου, φιλοτίμῳ δὲ χρήσονται, τάχ' ἂν που ἐν μέθαις ἢ τινὶ ἄλλῃ ἀμελείᾳ τὸ ἀκολάστῳ αὐτοῖς ὑποζυγίῳ λαβόντες τὰς ψυχὰς ἀφρούρους, συναγαγόντες εἰς ταῦτόν, τὴν ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν μακαριστῆν αἵρεσιν εἰλέτην τε καὶ διεπράξαντο» («se, al contrario, si comportano in maniera più rozza, lontana dalla filosofia e avida di onori, può capitare forse che nell'ubriachezza o in qualche altro momento di abbandono, i cavalli sfrenati di entrambi, avendo sorpreso le anime indifese e avendole unite per condurle allo stesso scopo, compiano la scelta ritenuta dalla maggior parte della gente la più beata e la portino a compimento»).

³⁹ Cfr. F. Karfik, 'Eros et l'Âme', op. cit., p. 162.

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Eros as a Quality of the Rational Element of the Soul

Guilherme Domingues da Motta

One of the most interesting of all themes addressed in Plato's *Republic* is the psychology proposed in that work. In it Plato presents the model a tripartite soul and although the passage where he establishes it is very clear, some further understanding may be attained by reading other passages from the *Republic* itself and of other dialogues.

An interesting passage on the soul is the 485d et seq. of the *Republic* in which Socrates states that if the desires (*epithymiai*) lean heavily towards an object, they become weaker for the rest, like a diverted stream.

As shown by Charles Kahn¹, a good understanding of that passage requires it to be read along with the statement made in 580d from the same work, according to which there are three types of desires (*epithymiai*) associated with each of the three elements of the soul. For the author it is this last passage that provides the grounds for a better understanding of the meaning of the claim that desires can be diverted to different objects.

According to Kahn, considering the two passages together, one could not conclude that for Plato the different kinds of desire direct themselves to any object whatsoever, nor can we conclude that the desire comes from a single source and, from there, is directed to different objects².

The text of the *Symposium*, also according to Kahn, supports this interpretation to the extent that *eros* is its main theme and it culminates in the presentation of a form of *eros* that is equivalent to the desire of the *logistikon* element of the soul. This desire, which Kahn calls "rational desire" has a specific object, the good, as perceived by reason. For him, the passage of the channeling of desires (*Republic*, 485d) would be better interpreted as referring only to the rational desire. Thus, desire could not be mistaken for a psychic energy originating from a common source, which would be distributed to the various elements of the soul³.

Moreover, still according to Kahn, the intention of Plato in the *Symposium* by presenting the Forms related to the form of beauty, would be to make it clear that the Forms are not only the highest object of knowledge, but also of desire⁴.

Following his view, the higher form of rational desire, the desire for the knowledge of the Forms, would be a specific kind of the general desire of reason for the good. He calls it "philosophical *eros*", which is the highest form of the desire for the good⁵. He also argues that Plato sees the commitment to philosophy as something comparable to a religious conversion⁶ and to illustrate the point he quotes passages from the *Symposium*, from the *Phaedo* and from the *Republic* where the philosopher is referred to as a lover whose passion (*eros*) for the ultimate object of knowledge makes his contact with it only describable in the language of sexual union⁷. From all these points one could proceed to argue that the practice of philosophy as depicted in the work of Plato is a very specific endeavor which cannot be taken to be the effect of a more or less unconscious desire for an unidentifiable good but rather implies a drive towards some specific kind of object which one has to be able to recognize as existing and good.

If philosophical *eros* is understood as specifically as Kahn depicts it, the question to be further pursued is, thus, that of the conditions of emergence of philosophical *eros*, the clarification of which can be further pursued with the aid of various passages from the *Symposium*, from the *Phaedrus* and from the *Republic*.

First, what I would like to propose is that philosophical *eros*, as understood by Kahn, is specific not because its particular condition of emergence is a contact with an instance of the Beautiful, but rather because it presupposes the capacity to see something that is an instance of a Form as an instance of that Form. Moreover, since philosophical *eros* is desire, it also implies the capacity to recognize the value of the acquisition of the knowledge of the Forms.

¹ KAHN, Charles. *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 276. See also. "Plato's Theory of Desire." *The Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1987): 77-103.

² KAHN, 1996, p. 278-279.

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⁴ KAHN, 1987, p.94.

⁵ KAHN, 1996, p.278.

⁶ KAHN, 1996, p. 273.

⁷ KAHN, 1996, p.275.

Now, if philosophical *eros* is directed to knowledge of the Forms, one has to accept that it would be awakened by the consideration of any instance of a Form, and not only by instances of the Form of Beauty, although one has to accept that the instances of the Beauty are somewhat eminent.

The *Phaedrus* seems to establish both these points when, referring to the contemplation of the forms in the soul's voyage through the region above the sky, Socrates states:

But beauty as I said before, shone in brilliance among those visions; and since we came to earth we have found it shining most clearly through the clearest of our senses; though wisdom is not seen by it, for wisdom would arouse terrible love, if such a clear image of it were granted as would come through sight, and the same is true of the other lovely realities; but beauty alone has this privilege and therefore it is most clearly seen and loveliest⁸.

This passage alone would provide enough ground to theorize that philosophical *eros* is not awakened exclusively by beauty, but this could be corroborated by an earlier passage of the same dialogue:

Few then are left which retain an adequate recollection of them; but these when they see here any likeness of the things of that other world, are stricken with amazement and can no longer control themselves, but they do not clearly perceive. Now in the earthly copies of justice and temperance and the others ideas which are precious to souls there is no light, but only a few, approaching the images through a darkling organs of sense, behold in them the nature of that which they imitate, and these few do this with difficulty. But that former time they saw beauty shining in brightness, when, with a blessed company – we following the train of Zeus, and others in that of some other god – they saw the blessed sight and vision and were initiated into that which is rightly called the most blessed of mysteries, which we celebrate in a state of perfection (...)⁹

Thus, an instance of the beautiful is not the necessary condition for triggering philosophical *eros*: it can be aroused by instances of other Forms. However, the mere encounter with instances of any Form is not sufficient for the awakening of philosophical *eros*; some other conditions must have previously been met. Such conditions are the existence of a specific nature and of a specific training, which together will produce a *dynamis*.

In support of what has been said so far, note that in the *Symposium*, when Diotima's distinction between one who is pregnant in body and one who is pregnant in soul is introduced¹⁰, it is the beautiful, or the desire to procreate in the beautiful, which in both cases awakens *eros*. In this passage, which precedes what is often called “the higher mysteries”, it is clear that even in the case of the one pregnant in soul, it is not the very specific philosophical *eros* that is being referred to. This is so, because what the pregnant in the soul will ultimately produce is civic virtue¹¹. The lover does not start any philosophical quest or instruction of the beloved concerning philosophy.

That confirms, again, that beauty, or a context proper to generate in beauty is not a sufficient condition to awaken philosophical *eros*. Surprisingly, when it comes to “the higher mysteries” part of Diotima's speech, the context is externally the same: the passion for a beautiful boy triggering educative discourses; but now philosophical *eros* will emerge.

Philosophical *eros* could not be triggered in the first instance because it is was not there in the first place, nor was it developed by the lover or the beloved. If we take the “educative process” first depicted by Diotima, the one concerning the relation between lover and beloved in view of civic virtue, and the one described in the “higher mysteries”, in both cases it is the beauty of a beautiful boy which triggers each process. However, the process in the first case is quite different from the second. This may seem quite obvious, but makes one wonder why there are two very different processes in two almost identical external contexts.

To begin with, it must be admitted that there are two distinct kinds of *eros* involved in the two speeches: on the one hand, *eros* as a desire for immortality and procreation in the beautiful,

⁸ PLATO, *Phaedrus*. With an English translation by Harold North Fowler. London: Harvard University Press, 2005, 250d-e.

⁹ PLATO, *Phaedrus*. With an English translation by Harold North Fowler. London: Harvard University Press, 2005, 250a-c.

¹⁰ *Symposium*, 201d-209e.

¹¹ On this point, see KAHN, 1996, p. 272.

whether in body or in soul, which one could see as an specific form of the general desire for the good, but does not include philosophy; on the other hand, a specific kind of *eros* which is the most original and the one which Plato wants to clarify, the philosophical *eros*. Such kind of *eros* must be understood as the driving force of the dialectical search for what unifies the many, i.e., the search for a Form, which, in the case of the *Symposium*, is the Form of Beauty.

What the comparison of the two speeches of Diotima seems to show is that there is a remarkable difference between the lovers of the first and of the second speeches, and what is really decisive for making possible the “ladder of love” is the presence of the philosophical *eros*. However, one has to consider that even in the presence of the object capable of arousing it, i.e., an instance of a Form, unless it is perceived as an instance of a Form, philosophical *eros* is not awakened. Only a true philosopher or at least a promising apprentice, who has the appropriate nature and also enough philosophical training, can be erotically attracted to the higher objects of knowledge, the Forms. That is so because only in those cases is the *dýnamis*¹² present which enables one, on one side, to see the value of the knowledge of Forms, and on the other side, to grasp, in the presence of some of its instances, that they are instances of Forms.

If one accepts that in the *Republic* the path to true philosophy implies the existence of a very specific nature allied to a very specific education, one could begin to understand that the philosophical *eros*, as presented in the *Symposium* and further clarified in the *Phaedrus*, seems to be another way of presenting the *dynamis* necessary to philosophy. Thus, the formula which explains the emergence of philosophical *eros* is: *physis* + *paideia* = *dynamis*. This formula seems to be, moreover, applicable not only to philosophy but to all kind of *erga* performed in the city presented in the *Republic*.

Comparing the *Symposium* and the *Republic*, it is worth noting that the “appropriate nature” of the apprentice of philosophy is not explicitly dealt with in the former dialogue as it is in the latter. I propose that “good nature” in the *Symposium* should be equated with beauty of soul. From the beginning of the passage concerning the “higher mysteries”, it is the beauty of soul that matters¹³. However, the reference to beauty of body is still necessary for two reasons: first, to show that there are sensible instances of the Form of Beauty, which cannot be disregarded in describing the process of dialectical training, and also because the exclusion of physical beauty at this point would damage the *Symposium*’s dramatic force and unit.

Thus, in the context of the *Symposium*, when the right nature is well conducted, there can be *philosophical eros*. Its appearance is equivalent to a conversion of the intellect which enables one to recognize the value of searching for what unifies the many. It also enables one to recognize the instances of what unifies the many as instances of it, and to feel a most compelling drive to approach whatever object which can be approached in the dialectical way.

Understood in this way, philosophical *eros* can be seen as a quality of the rational element of the soul. This quality is decisively dependent on nature, but also dependent on *paideia* in order to really become a *dynamis*, which once established would make one who acquires it a true philosopher. To understand philosophical *eros* as a *dynamis* that once established is permanently and inescapably operating would also shed light on Socrates’, depiction in Plato’s dialogues as a lover.

If that *dynamis* is permanently operating in Socrates, much of his apparent absences of mind could be explained as well as his erotic behavior. Philosophical *eros* will be aroused: (1) in the presence of beauty, even physical beauty, as that of Charmides¹⁴; (2) on the assumption that he is in the presence of beauty of the soul, i.e., the assumption that he is facing a philosophical nature ready to be guided; (3) whenever things come to be considered as instances of what unifies the multiple.

¹² The word *dynamis* is used here in the sense established by Socrates in the *Republic*: “Shall we say that faculties, powers, abilities [*dynameis*] are a class of entities by virtue of which we and all other things are able to do what we or they are able to do?”. PLATO, *The Republic*. With an English translation by Paul Shorey. London: Harvard University Press, 1994, 477c1-2.

¹³ As becomes clear in a later passage: *Symposium*, 210d.

¹⁴ What I propose here is that Socrates’ arousal before Charmides’ physical beauty in the *Charmides* should be understood either as an example of what happens when the philosopher grasps physical beauty as an instance of the Form of Beauty or as an example of Socrates’ erotic disposition before a beautiful soul. This thesis, of course, may seem difficult to accept and in need of further support, but I think it becomes more plausible when one compares *Charmides* 155c-d and *Phaedrus* 250e-252c. Note that in the *Phaedrus*’ passage Socrates describes the attitude of a non initiated or corrupted man before physical beauty, contrasting it to that of a initiated one. To see Socrates in the *Charmides* as the non initiated of the *Phaedrus*, or as almost that, would be to abandon the assumption that Socrates is a coherent character throughout Plato’s dialogues. Embracing the literary coherence of Socrates as a character should put the reader in the pursuit of a different interpretation of the passage, which, moreover, would be the key to understand Socrates as lover of beautiful boys.

That Socrates can be mistaken about the nature of boys like Charmides or Alcibiades only proves that philosophical nature, or true beauty of soul, cannot be known until *paideia* has played its part. If Socrates is the same guide both to Plato and to Alcibiades, then philosophical nature cannot be known until the *dynamis* of the beloved shows itself as philosophical *eros*.

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Le *Banquet* et la cohabitation de deux points de vue ontologiques sur le sensible et l'intelligible

Luca Pitteloud

Le but de cette contribution est de montrer à travers l'analyse de la description de la Forme du Beau en 210e-211b comment Platon évoque la relation entre le sensible et l'intelligible de deux façons alternatives au sein des mêmes lignes. D'une part, la description de la Forme du Beau en tant qu'ultime objet de désir, description orchestrée au moyen d'une rhétorique apologétique, propose une vision de l'intelligible en tant que catégorie ontologique possédant un *degré* ontologique supérieur au sensible. Il y aura dans cette vision, pour ainsi dire, uniquement de la place pour l'intelligible dans la famille de l'être et, en reflet, les belles choses ne peuvent être que des images suspicieuses et dépréciées de la Forme du Beau. La caractérisation du Beau comme étant tout ce que les belles choses ne sont pas suggère ainsi la supériorité ontologique de l'intelligible, supériorité telle qu'elle amène à faire douter, en conséquence, de la consistance ontologique du sensible. Néanmoins, la même description semble pourtant proposer la distinction de deux *catégories* ontologiques distinctes, à savoir les belles choses et la Forme du Beau dont la relation est décrite au moyen du vocabulaire de la participation (211b2). Cela semble ainsi indiquer qu'il y a bien deux catégories ontologiques distinctes et non deux degrés de la même catégorie d'être.

Cette double description de l'intelligible illustre bien une tension présente dans la façon dont est représentée la relation entre le sensible et l'intelligible dans la métaphysique de Platon. D'un part, il y a la volonté de décrire la manière dont l'intelligible peut rendre compte du sensible en tant que ce dernier manifeste en lui un certain degré d'intelligibilité. Mais, d'autre part, la description de Diotime semble bien aller au delà de l'évocation de la déficience des particuliers en termes de propriétés, puisque la supériorité ontologique extrême du Beau pourrait bien plaider pour un véritable manque d'être du sensible. L'antagonisme entre le Beau et les belles choses peut ainsi être compris comme un révélateur de la coexistence chez Platon de deux visions du rapport entre l'intelligible et le sensible : la première, en distinguant le Beau et les belles choses en termes de catégories, entraîne notamment les problèmes de la participation et de la Forme immanente, alors que la deuxième, en incluant uniquement l'intelligible dans la famille de l'être, pose la question du statut ontologique problématique du sensible. Le texte du *Banquet* illustre une telle tension et doit ouvrir la voie à la révision du statut du sensible opérée par Platon dans le *Parménide* et le *Sophiste*.

Autrement dit, il y a deux points de vue possibles sur la relation entre l'intelligible et le sensible. Soit le sensible est considéré comme une catégorie ontologique propre qui possède certaines propriétés (par exemple, x est à la fois F et non F), soit il est considéré comme étant un degré inférieur totalement dépendant de l'intelligible (dans ce sens, le sensible est décrit comme l'image de l'intelligible). Le premier point de vue en substantialisant le sensible entraînera une difficulté majeure : comment deux catégories distinctes, possédant chacune un type de propriétés différentes peuvent être en relation l'une avec l'autre¹ ? En d'autres termes, avec ce point de vue émerge la question de la participation. Quant au deuxième point de vue, en posant la supériorité ontologique de l'intelligible, et en se servant de la métaphore de l'image, il fait, au final, du sensible, non pas un degré inférieur d'être, mais, plus problématiquement, un degré qui manque d'être ou plutôt qui n'appartient pas à l'être. Or puisqu'il n'y a qu'à l'intelligible que peut être associée la notion d'être, quelle est donc la place du sensible par rapport à l'être ? N'est-il pas ? Est-il et n'est-il pas, ou alors aucun des deux à la fois² ? Si cette question peut sembler d'un premier abord absurde (les objets sensibles manquent, par exemple de beauté par rapport à la Forme du Beau, mais ne manquent pas d'être, dans le cas du *Banquet*), il faut néanmoins remarquer que la façon dont Platon décrit la supériorité ontologique de l'intelligible amène à se poser, en conséquence, la question du degré d'être du sensible. Comment le sensible peut-il être un degré d'être inférieur de l'intelligible sans toutefois ne pas être, si seul l'intelligible fait partie de la famille de l'être ?

Il apparaît que le *Banquet*, et sa description de la Forme du Beau, illustre d'une certaine façon la tension qu'il peut y avoir entre ces deux points de vue, et cela au travers de la description de la Forme du Beau et des belles choses qui *participent* en elle. Il y a, dans les mots de Diotime, une façon

¹ En outre, la question de la forme immanente caractérise ce point de vue. Voir *Phédon*, 103 b4-5 : «(...) αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον ἑαυτῷ ἐναντίον οὐκ ἂν ποτε γένοιτο, οὔτε τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν οὔτε τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει».

² C'est la question posée par Socrate dans l'argument des contraires de la *République* 479 c3-5 : «καὶ οὐτ' εἶναι οὔτε μὴ εἶναι οὐδὲν αὐτῶν δυνατόν παγίως νοῆσαι, οὔτε ἀμφοτέρω οὔτε οὐδέτερον».

d'évoquer la relation entre le sensible et l'intelligible qui semble bien demander un éclaircissement du statut du sensible par rapport à l'intelligible. Relevons brièvement les principaux éléments de cette description.

*La Forme du Beau et les belles choses*³

En examinant le passage central du *Banquet* qui décrit la Forme du Beau, il apparaît que, dans un contexte particulier, les termes utilisés possèdent non seulement une valeur technique mais aussi une dimension apologétique qui sert à suggérer le statut supérieur de la Forme du Beau par rapport aux belles choses.

Le texte du *Banquet* est intéressant à double titre : i) d'abord parce qu'il propose un catalogue du vocabulaire permettant la distinction entre la Forme du Beau et les belles choses, ii) mais aussi parce qu'il représente le point culminant de l'éloge platonicien de l'amour et qu'ainsi, il dépasse le cadre même de l'analyse technique d'un rapport métaphysique pour s'inscrire dans la description quasi-mystique d'une Forme, Forme qui s'impose comme l'ultime objet de désir pour tous les individus. Ayant montré que le but du philosophe est la contemplation de la Forme du Beau, il reste à Socrate à faire le plus difficile, à savoir à en fournir une description, ou plutôt à relayer les informations que Diotime lui a confiées sur la nature de la Forme du Beau (210e-211b)⁴. Platon semble distinguer les propriétés suivantes qu'il attribue à la Forme du Beau :

- 1) L'éternité (« ἀεὶ ὄν »). La Forme du Beau n'est pas soumise à la temporalité dans laquelle se situe le sensible. Globalement, Platon reprend ici les propriétés qui sont attribuées aux objets sensibles et en propose une négation systématique.
- 2) La non-engendrabilité et l'indestructibilité (« οὔτε γινόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλόμενον »). Cette double propriété découle de la précédente car si x est éternel, alors x ne connaît ni la naissance ni la mort.
- 3) L'identité à soi-même (« οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον »). La Forme n'augmente ni ne diminue. Cela implique que la Forme du Beau ne change pas quantitativement.
- 4) L'absence de relativité selon :
 - a) l'aspect (« οὐ τῇ μὲν καλόν, τῇ δ' αἰσχρόν »)
 - b) le lieu (« οὐδ' ἔνθα μὲν καλόν, ἔνθα δὲ αἰσχρόν »)
 - c) la relation (« οὐδὲ πρὸς μὲν τὸ καλόν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ αἰσχρόν »)
 - d) le sujet (« ὥς τις μὲν ὄν καλόν, τις δὲ αἰσχρόν »)

Ces propriétés se différencient ainsi : la Forme F n'est pas f pour un sujet et non f pour un autre sujet, la Forme F n'est pas f en relation avec x et non f en relation avec y et enfin la Forme F n'est pas f par rapport à l'aspect x et non f par rapport à l'aspect y. La Forme du Beau n'est soumise à aucun type de relativité. Elle ne dépend pas des jugements d'observateurs extérieurs, ni même de sa situation par rapport à d'autres entités pour être ce qu'elle est, ce qui est, au contraire, le cas des belles choses.

Il faut rappeler ici les réflexions de l'*Hippias Majeur*⁵ à propos du beau (*to kalon*) : il semble qu'il y ait une cohérence puisque Platon reprend la trame générale des catégories qui y étaient affirmées à propos du beau et de la relativisation des belles choses, tout en proposant une recension élargie et systématique de tout ce qui caractérise le sensible en termes de relativité. C'est notamment les relativités spatio-temporelle et subjective qui sont mises en avant avec plus de vigueur que dans l'*Hippias Majeur*⁶. En outre, il existe un lien indirect entre ces propriétés et le fait que les objets

³ Prenons par exemple la Forme F et un objet quelconque, x, participant à cette Forme : x est (participe à) F. Nous savons que x et F sont deux objets distincts l'un de l'autre dans le cadre d'une relation particulière (participation). Or, caractériser comment x et F sont séparés peut se faire en analysant l'énoncé « x est F » en termes de propriétés. Nous trouvons ici trois types de propriétés : 1) les propriétés de x, il s'agit de propriétés sensibles que x tient de sa participation à différentes Formes, 2) les propriétés de F en tant que F est une Forme intelligible (les propriétés eidotiques) et 3) les propriétés de F en tant que F.

⁴ Le texte est reproduit dans son ensemble ci-dessous en page 11.

⁵ La question de l'authenticité de ce dialogue est laissée ici de côté. Pour une synthèse des discussions à ce propos voir Pradeau (2005), pages 15-22 et 208-209.

⁶ Voir l'*Hippias Majeur*, 287e-293c. Le beau n'est ni identifiable à une jeune fille, ni à l'or ni à un beau comportement. Hippias est en effet amené à reconnaître : « Je vais te le dire : tu cherches, à mon avis, une réponse qui ferait du beau quelque chose qui, jamais, nulle part et pour personne ne puisse apparaître laid » (trad. Pradeau) (*Hippias Majeur* 291d1-3 : « {III.} Ἐγώ σοι ἐρῶ. ζητεῖν γάρ μοι δοκεῖς τοιοῦτόν τι τὸ καλὸν ἀποκρίνασθαι, ὃ μηδέποτε αἰσχρὸν μηδαμοῦ μηδὲν φανεῖται »).

sensibles soient caractérisés par la coprésence des contraires (si, par exemple, x est beau à *t1* et laid à *t2*, alors il sera beau et laid). Mais ce qu'il importe de noter ici, c'est que Platon n'analyse pas le sensible, soit en tant que caractérisé par les contraires, soit en tant que déficient, mais adopte *le point de vue* de l'intelligible, puisqu'il décrit la Forme du Beau. L'analyse ne porte donc pas prioritairement sur les objets sensibles.

5) La non-réduction au sensible (« οὐδ' αὖ φαντασθήσεται αὐτῷ τὸ καλὸν οἷον πρόσωπόν τι οὐδὲ χεῖρες οὐδὲ ἄλλο οὐδὲν ὧν σῶμα μετέχει »). La Forme du Beau ne peut pas être réduite à une quelconque propriété sensible⁷.

6) La non-réduction au *logos* (« οὐδέ τις λόγος »).

7) La non-réduction à une science (« οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη »).

8) L'impossibilité de réduire la Forme du Beau à un quelconque objet sensible en tant que celui-ci se situe toujours dans l'espace (« οὐδέ που ὃν ἐν ἐτέρῳ τινι, οἷον ἐν ζώῳ ἢ ἐν γῇ ἢ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἢ ἐν τῷ ἄλλῳ »). Il s'agit d'une propriété qui peut sembler redondante puisque Diotime a déjà affirmé que la Forme du Beau ne dépend ni de l'espace ni du temps. Or il semble bien que Platon, en reformulant cette idée, l'exprime d'une manière différente : il insiste sur le fait que le Beau n'est pas *dans* (ἐν est employé quatre fois) l'espace. Il existe donc ici une attention particulière à souligner qu'une Forme n'est pas *dans* les objets sensibles.

A l'exception de la première, toutes ces propriétés sont construites au moyen de la négation (οὐδέ). Platon énumère ensuite des propriétés positives qu'il est possible d'attribuer à la Forme du Beau :

9) La Forme du Beau est elle-même par elle-même (« αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ »).

10) La Forme du Beau est jointe à elle-même (« μεθ' αὐτοῦ »). Cela pourrait signifier que la Forme du Beau est identique à elle-même, coïncide avec elle-même. Cette expression indique sans doute l'idée de l'absolu: la Forme du Beau exclut toute relativité, elle se suffit à elle-même, représente une plénitude en tant qu'elle est *en* elle-même.

11) La Forme du Beau est une de forme (« μονοειδὲς »). Platon n'indique pas ici que la Forme du Beau est unique, mais qu'elle possède une uniformité absolue. La Forme du Beau est toute entière dans son contenu ce qu'est la beauté. Elle est, pour parler de façon imagée, entièrement remplie de beauté, elle constitue pleinement ce qu'est la beauté.

12) La Forme du Beau est ce en quoi tous les particuliers manifestant de la beauté participent (« μετέχοντα »). Il s'agit ici de l'affirmation de la relation qui existe entre les Formes et les objets sensibles *du point de vue* des sensibles : cette propriété, mettant en avant la participation, indique ainsi la différenciation de deux *catégories ontologiques distinctes*, le Beau et les belles choses (« πάντα καλὰ »).

13) La Forme du Beau ne dépend pas des particuliers (« τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα τρόπον τινὰ τοιοῦτον, οἷον γιγνομένων τε τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἀπολλυμένων μηδὲν ἐκεῖνο μήτε τι πλεόν μήτε ἔλαττον γίνεσθαι μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν »). Platon peut sembler ici se répéter en réaffirmant que la Forme du Beau ne va pas prendre part au devenir, ce qui a déjà été affirmé dans les cas des premières propriétés. Ce qu'il est important de relever ici est que cette exclusion de relativité est mise en rapport (« οἷον »), dans cette formule, avec la relation qui existe entre les objets sensibles et les Formes.

Platon semble ainsi vouloir affirmer que la relation de participation (d'un objet sensible pour une Forme F) implique l'impossibilité de la modification du statut et de la nature de la Forme. Il s'agit donc de l'expression de la nécessité, dans le cadre de la distinction entre les belles choses et la Forme du Beau, de soutenir à la fois l'idée selon laquelle les belles choses participent à cette Forme, en étant ainsi en relation avec elle, sans toutefois modifier sa nature, puisqu'en tant que telle, elle est une entité coïncidant pleinement avec elle-même, autosuffisante, non affectée par sa relation avec les sensibles : qu'ils participent ou cessent de participer à elle, la Forme du Beau ne sera nullement altérée par ces phénomènes dans la mesure où elle ne se trouve pas *dans* le sensible.

Quelques lignes plus loin, en conclusion à cette section, Diotime renforce cette idée en posant la question suivante :

A ce compte, quels sentiments, à notre avis, pourrait bien éprouver, poursuivait-elle, un homme qui arriverait à voir la Beauté en elle-même, absolue, pure, sans mélange, étrangère à l'infection des chairs humaines, des couleurs, et d'une foule d'autres futilités mortelles, qui parviendrait à

⁷ Cela s'accorde avec la métaphore de l'image puisque le modèle ne peut pas être réduit à ses images en termes de propriétés.

contempler la Beauté en elle-même, celle qui est divine et une de forme? Estimes-tu, poursuivait-elle, qu'elle est minable la vie de l'homme qui élève les yeux là-haut, qui contemple cette Beauté par le moyen qu'il faut et qui s'unit à elle ?⁸ (trad. Brisson)

Dans ce passage, Platon attribue un nouveau type de propriétés à la Forme du Beau (« αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν »). Cette dernière est ainsi:

- a) Absolue (« εἰλικρινές »).
- b) Pure (« καθαρὸν »)
- c) Sans mélange (« ἄμεικτον »)
- d) Divine (« θεῖον »)

Ces quatre propriétés doivent être interprétées dans leur contexte direct. D'abord, il semble exister une certaine équivalence entre les propriétés a, b et c. D'ailleurs, la phrase « ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆς φλυαρίας θνητῆς » paraît bien constituer une explication de la pureté de la Forme du Beau. Ainsi, la Forme F est pure (simple et sans mélange) si et seulement si elle n'est pas contaminée par des propriétés sensibles. En fait, Platon semble se placer ici du point de vue du sujet qui cherche à atteindre et contempler la Beauté. Pour l'atteindre, il doit prendre conscience que la Forme du Beau n'est pas caractérisée par les propriétés sensibles. Ainsi, considérer la Forme F en elle-même par elle-même équivaut à la considérer dans son uniformité et dans sa pureté, c'est-à-dire sans lui attribuer des caractérisations sensibles *dans la représentation même des propriétés* de la Forme en question. Finalement, Platon met en évidence le caractère divin (d) de la Forme du Beau.

La cohabitation des deux points de vue

Quelle est donc la signification métaphysique de ces quatorze propriétés ? Pourquoi Platon les attribue-t-il à la Forme du Beau ? Ce dernier écrit, dans le *Banquet*, l'éloge de l'amour philosophique, et il n'est pas surprenant de voir associer à la Forme du Beau, ultime objet de l'amour, des propriétés mettant en évidence sa supériorité ontologique par rapport à tout autre objet de désir. Platon ne s'arrête pas là, il ne se contente pas de mettre en avant la noblesse ontologique de la Forme du Beau, il se propose aussi de la caractériser en termes de propriétés objectives qui font partie de sa nature.

Le *Phédon* plaide pour l'idée que l'introduction de l'hypothèse des Formes découlait de la nécessité d'éviter ce que Platon considère apparemment comme une contradiction, à savoir celle induite par la coprésence de propriétés contraires au sein du même objet¹⁰. Si l'objet x peut sembler être à la fois F et non-F (selon un rapport ou un point de vue différent), alors il faut nécessairement supposer l'existence d'un objet qui ne possède pas cette coprésence en son sein, à savoir la Forme F. A ce titre, les Formes peuvent être dites *unes et identiques à elles-mêmes*. En somme, la première façon suggérée par Platon pour désigner une Forme intelligible est de la contraster par rapport aux objets sensibles en ce qui concerne *la façon dont est attribuée la propriété que la Forme représente*.

Il faut remarquer que la coprésence des contraires n'apparaît pas dans notre passage du *Banquet*. Qu'en est-il de la déficience ? Il semble qu'il est plausible de défendre l'idée que la déficience est un trait plus général que la coprésence des contraires lorsqu'il s'agit de décrire le sensible. Tout ce qui souffre de coprésence des contraires est déficient, alors que l'inverse n'est pas nécessairement vrai. Mais, cela ne s'arrête pas là, car il apparaît bien que la déficience rend aussi compte, de façon plus fondamentale, du statut intermédiaire du sensible entre être et non-être comme semble le suggérer l'argument des contraires du livre 5 de la *République*¹¹. Néanmoins le passage du *Banquet* tout en ne mentionnant pas directement la coprésence, n'exclut pas totalement la distinction de deux catégories ontologiques¹², puisque 1) la Forme du Beau est différenciée des belles choses et

⁸ *Banquet* 211d8-212a2 : « τί δῆτα, ἔφη, οἴομεθα, εἴ τῳ γένοιτο αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἰδεῖν εἰλικρινές, καθαρὸν, ἄμεικτον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆς φλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν δύναται μονοειδὲς κατιδεῖν; ἂρ' οἶε, ἔφη, φαῦλον βίον γίνεσθαι ἐκεῖσε βλέποντος ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐκεῖνο ᾧ δεῖ θεωμένου καὶ συνόντος αὐτοῦ. »

⁹ Derrière l'analyse de ces quatre termes, il faut bien évidemment reconnaître la couleur apologétique de ce passage et la fonction rhétorique de cette caractérisation. Néanmoins, au-delà de cette fonction rhétorique, il y a bien la volonté d'insister sur la plénitude et l'autosuffisance de la Forme du Beau.

¹⁰ Voir *Phédon*, 102 d5-e2.

¹¹ Cet argument débute par l'affirmation de la coprésence des contraires (479a6-8) pour déboucher sur la thèse de la déficience d'être du sensible (479 c3-5). Voir Fine (1978) pour une analyse complète de cet argument.

¹² La coprésence des contraires est une thèse associée à la distinction de deux catégories ontologiques puisque dans le cas de

2) la relation affirmée des secondes envers la première est bien la participation (propriété 12).

Ce passage, qui décrit le degré d'être supérieur de la Forme du Beau par rapport aux belles choses, semble ainsi franchir une étape supplémentaire. En effet, la façon dont le Beau est contrasté des belles choses implique que ces dernières soient une catégorie qui manque de stabilité et de permanence, et donc, d'une certaine façon, de valeur ontologique. Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de se rappeler la façon dont les belles choses étaient décrites dans l'*Hippias Majeur* : elles n'appartenaient pas à une catégorie problématique, mais leur situation était seulement relativisée sur la carte de l'être¹³. En outre, leur beauté était certes relative, mais néanmoins réelle. Il semble que dans le *Banquet*, Platon franchisse une étape supplémentaire notamment en élargissant le relativisme (subjectif, spatio-temporel) du sensible et en décrivant ce dernier comme une réalité qui ne possède pas les propriétés que l'intelligible, lui, possède.

Il est donc possible de supposer qu'en filigrane ce passage du *Banquet* associe un statut ontologique inférieur aux belles choses, ce qui n'est pas sans rappeler l'argument des contraires dans le livre V de la *République* qui posait la question du statut d'intermédiaire (μεταξύ) du sensible entre être et non-être¹⁴. Certes Platon n'affirme pas ici que les belles choses se situent entre l'être et le non-être, mais en les décrivant de la façon dont il le fait, il leur attribue ce statut ontologique inférieur. Or cela semble bien être un argument à verser à l'eau du moulin de la théorie des degrés de réalité, qui, tout en ne garantissant pas aux belles choses un statut de catégorie ontologique, inscrit ces dernières dans l'ombre de la Forme du Beau, et ce faisant les réduit ainsi à des entités dont la position sur la carte de l'être pourrait bien être problématique. Sans employer dans ce passage le vocabulaire de l'image (principale expression de la théorie des degrés d'être dans la métaphysique platonicienne¹⁵), et en insistant sur le caractère éminemment supérieur de la Forme du Beau, Platon semble faire des belles choses de pâles reflets de cette dernière. Et à partir de là se posera tout naturellement la question de leur statut ontologique, d'autant plus que la déficience du sensible a déjà été affirmée dans le *Phédon* (74d7-74e1 et 75a2) et dans le *Phèdre* (250b1-5). Platon fait donc bien ici une avancée supplémentaire en direction de l'idée de degrés d'être (et la question du statut problématique du sensible), tout en initiant son raisonnement à partir de la distinction de deux catégories ontologiques, la Forme du Beau et les belles choses puisque la première est effectivement distinguée *radicalement* des secondes.

Annexe :

Le texte du *Banquet* 210e1-211b5 :

«πειρῶ δέ μοι, ἔφη, τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν ὡς οἶόν τε μάλιστα. ὃς γὰρ ἂν μέχρι ἐνταῦθα πρὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά παιδαγωγηθῇ, θεώμενος ἐφεξῆς τε καὶ ὀρθῶς τὰ καλά, πρὸς τέλος ἤδη ἰὼν τῶν ἐρωτικῶν ἐξαίφνης κατόψεται τι θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλόν, τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὗ δὴ ἔνεκεν καὶ οἱ ἔμπροσθεν πάντες πόνοι ἦσαν, πρῶτον μὲν αἰεὶ ὄν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον, ἔπειτα οὐ τῇ μὲν καλόν, τῇ δ' αἰσχρόν, οὐδὲ τοτὲ μὲν, τοτὲ δὲ οὐ, οὐδὲ πρὸς μὲν τὸ καλόν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ αἰσχρόν, οὐδ' ἔνθα μὲν καλόν, ἔνθα δὲ αἰσχρόν, ὡς τισὶ μὲν ὄν καλόν, τισὶ δὲ αἰσχρόν οὐδ' αὖ φαντασθήσεται αὐτῷ τὸ καλὸν οἷον πρόσωπόν τι οὐδὲ χεῖρες οὐδὲ ἄλλο οὐδὲν ὧν σῶμα μετέχει, οὐδέ τις λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη, οὐδέ που ὄν ἐν ἐτέρῳ τινι, οἷον ἐν ζῳῳ ἢ ἐν γῇ ἢ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἢ ἐν τῷ ἄλλῳ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὄν, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα τρόπον τινὰ τοιοῦτον, οἷον γιγνομένων τε τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἀπολλυμένων μηδὲν ἐκεῖνο μήτε τι πλέον μήτε ἔλαττον γίνεσθαι μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν.»

la coprésence, il faut une catégorie ontologique propre qui puisse être caractérisée par F et non-F.

¹³ Voir notamment la distinction entre être beau et apparaître beau : *Hippias Majeur*, 294c8-d3 : «Ὁμολογήσομεν οὖν τοῦτο, ὦ Ἱππία, πάντα τὰ τῷ ὄντι καλὰ καὶ νόμιμα καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ δοξάζεσθαι καλὰ εἶναι καὶ φαίνεσθαι αἰεὶ πάντων, ἢ πάντων τούτων ἀγνοεῖσθαι καὶ πάντων μάλιστα ἔριν καὶ μάχην περὶ αὐτῶν εἶναι καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστοις καὶ δημοσίᾳ ταῖς πόλεσιν.»

¹⁴ Voir *République* 478d5-9.

¹⁵ Voir *République* 500e3, 592b2, *Parménide* 132d2 et *Timée* 29b3-4, 48e5-49a1.

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Friday

19th July, 2013

Plenary session

Chair: Mario Vegetti

Thauma and Eros: Philosophical Passion in Plato's Symposium

Gabriel Richardson Lear

ABSTRACT

In the *Symposium* Plato depicts erotic desire as being closely connected to the experience of wonder (*thauma*, *thambos*) and bewilderment (*ekplēxis*). The marvelous beauty of the beloved astonishes the lover; then, the passionate longing he feels itself becomes a cause of *aporia* and wonder. More interesting, Plato depicts, and has Socrates and Alcibiades comment on, the way different forms of speaking about love—rhetorical encomium; Socratic dialectic—inspire wonder. I argue in this paper that we should look to the *Symposium*'s depiction of erotic *thauma* for illumination of Socrates' claim in the *Theaetetus* that philosophy begins in wonder.

I begin by showing that Socrates' characterization of what it is like to see the beautiful beloved is a continuation of a Homeric tradition of thinking about wonder. Wonderful things (e.g., Achilles' shield, the freshly bathed Odysseus) are paradoxical insofar as a "heightened vitality" appears to be present in something merely mortal or even inert. (In making this case, I draw heavily on recent work by Christine Hunzinger and Richard Neer.) But whereas Homer identifies this heightened vitality with multiplicity, the Socratic philosophical lover is gripped by an intimation of unity behind the multiplicity. I then argue for a similar account of the audible wonders of Socratic dialectic. First, I examine scenes of audible wonder in Homer and Hesiod to show how they depend on the juxtaposition of multiple voices emanating from a single source. I then suggest that elenchus is also a case of speaking in many (because contradictory) voices. But whereas lovers of sophists and rhetoricians focus their wonder on what they take to be a god-like power of multiplicity, Socrates is instead enthralled by the echo of a unitary "voice" behind the multiplicity. Socratic wonder, therefore, is not simply confused awareness of ignorance; it is an erotic, dynamic way of being oriented to wisdom.

In closing, I argue that the picture of philosophical wonder that emerges from the *Symposium* is in important respects different from the account Aristotle gives in the *Metaphysics*. Wonder is not something which we, as philosophers, should try to get beyond. The Form of the Beautiful continues to astonish even the person who sees it clearly. And this is fortunate. For mortal beings, the contemplative life begins in wonder and is sustained by it.

Eros and Knowledge

Chair: Livio Rossetti

Plato's *Symposium*: The Ladder of the Philosopher's *Atopia*

Georgia Mouroutsou

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the philosopher's atopia in the dialogue the *Symposium*, for the appropriate inquiry of which it proposes a multilevel method. Whereas some approaches to Socrates' paradoxes have touched upon this multifarious problem, none has made atopia the key concept for the philosopher's nature beyond Socrates. Starting from Alcibiades' contribution, which depicts Socrates' strangeness, we will then draw upon a part of Diotima's analysis of the subject of love and the philosopher as a subject of love.

On a first level, we will focus on individuals, and will embark on Socrates' atopia as the key to Socrates' individual personality. His behavior appears "out of place", "strange" and even "extraordinary" to others, while the enigmas are not easy to solve: in the *Symposium*, both Agathon and Alcibiades characterize Socrates' deeds as odd: in the first case his silence before entering Agathon's house, and, in the second case, his turning upside down all social norms, and his exhibition of outstanding bravery.

On a second level, we will move from individuals to types. Plato may attribute individual attributes to his dialogue characters, and he may portray Socrates as an individualistic thinker (Nehamas, Gerhardt); he does not do so as a historian, though, but as a philosopher: for, above all, Plato is interested in depicting the general type and the nature of the philosopher as such, even when exemplifying the philosopher through Socrates (regarding this issue, Vlastos and Szlezák exhibit surprising similarities). We will decipher atopia as the key to Socrates' philosophy, moving from his deeds to his words. In this stage, the Socratic irony, which perplexes Alcibiades, will be at the center of our concern. Atopia is an attribute that is frequently ascribed to the Platonic Socrates, not only in the in our entire analysis, we will be moving from the philosophers' appearance to their true nature. For, the philosophical atopia does not exhaust itself in the "out of the way" character that people attribute to the philosopher, as a result of their ignorance (see *Politicus* 291b6). It is moreover a philosopher's necessary pedagogical tool so as to take the student from ignorance to knowledge compare the role of *aporein* and *diaporein* in many places in Plato's dialogues, as riddles to be solved and indeed solved; (see Erler and Szlezák on this). But this is not yet the whole story about the philosopher's atopia. Despite both facts that Plato's concept of philosophy raises and fulfills the claims of a science and the philosophical field and its objects are well defined and well situated, we need to delve into a deeper layer of the philosopher's atopia, which turns to be the fundamental disposition, which characterizes the Platonic philosopher. To do so, we have to understand the way in which both Eros and the philosopher "have" the objects of their pursuit when they do come to possess them.

Diotima's analysis of Eros' nature will be corroborated in the Platonic corpus. For, Plato shows throughout his work that he never rests on his laurels nor regards his intellectual achievements as an excuse for eternal rest (something like Glaucon's *anapaula* in *R.* 532e, but instead undertakes various modifications and further developments without pause.

The Naturalized Epistemology of the *Symposium*

Debra Nails

The unified account of the psyche¹ that Plato provides in the *Symposium* is developmental: *erôs* as the single drive, the motivator, of the psyche from brute appetite to the apprehension of forms *qua* forms. As such, the account challenges the more popular tripartite model of the *Republic**. While rudimentary from the perspective of contemporary cognitive psychology, the distinctions we observe or invoke between conative and cognitive desires—lust and intellectual curiosity, for example—obscure their origin in the same one reservoir of psychic energy, *erôs*. To borrow an apt image from the *Republic* (6.485d7–8), *erôs* is the source from which the streams of psychic energy flow toward their objects of desire and into which they recede. The epistemology of psychic-pregnancy in the *Symposium* (206c1–212a8), in many ways similar to the maieutic *Theaetetus*,² is derived from Plato's description of the psyche's *erôs*.

After (§1) setting out the account of human psychological motivation proposed in the *Symposium*, and defending its coherence, (§2) I argue that mystery religion cannot be more than a rung in the ladder toward the wisdom at which philosophy aims: like rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* and mathematics in the *Theaetetus*, it may be useful as a stepping stone, but the philosopher's examined life, with its attention to embodied particulars, is distinct from the contemplative life advocated by Diotima of Mantinea or any other mystagogue. Finally (§3), I look back at tripartition from the perspective of unity.

1. *Erôs: Its Nature and Extent*

The account of *erôs* in the *Symposium* is naturalistic, and the most general such account is that of the physician, Eryximachus, according to whom everything is moved, energized, by *erôs*; the planets owe their motion, and the seasons their changes, to *erôs*; plant and animal growth, disease, and even meteorological events such as hail are all “erotic things” (188a1–b6).³ Picking up on Pausanias' theme that *erôs* is two—one heavenly and one vulgar—Eryximachus' account of “double Love” (δωπλοῦν Ἔρωτα, 186b4) belies the notion of separation into two discrete drives. Instead, the physician emphasizes continua (hot-cold, wet-dry, the musical scale) with each extreme seeking the other to effect what medical expertise assists in producing: balance and harmony, achieved through “knowledge of the erotic affairs of the body in relation to filling up and emptying” (186c6–8). Eryximachus, at his broadest, says *erôs* “as a whole has all power” and that, when it is developed in relation to what is good, it results in “all happiness” (188d4–e1).⁴ This cosmic psychology, beginning with unconscious processes,⁵ provides a basis for what will be Diotima's more limited account.

Not mentioning cosmic *erôs* or even the *erôs* of nonliving things, she mentions the motivation of animals (206c6–8), then narrows her discussion to specifically human motivation, but she leaves the wider possibilities open by affirming the connection among *all* things: “all of this is mutually related” (210c5–6).⁶ Eryximachus' view that *erôs* can be developed in relation to what is bad and, indeed, that disease and unhappiness occur under just that circumstance, may initially appear incompatible with Diotima's view. It is not.

Diotima agrees that all desires whatever are erotic: and it is only we who “separate off one kind of love and apply to it the name which belongs to the whole” (205b4–5).⁷ That is, we humans fix on sexual passion, to which we apply the term ‘erotic’ exclusively, although *erôs* actually includes *all* wanting, loving, longing, wishing, or craving, whether unconscious or conscious, irrational or

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¹ The least laden term I can identify for ψυχή is the ordinary English ‘psyche’, in use since 1590.

² Cf. *Theaetetus* (148d4–151d3). There is a hint of it at *Republic* 6.490a8–b7 as well.

³ I rely on the texts and translations of Rowe 1998a for the *Symposium*, Rowe 1988 for the *Phaedrus*; Slings 2003 for the *Republic*, and Sharples 1985 for the *Meno*. *Ad hoc* translations are from Cooper 1997.

⁴ This description of the physician's skill is similar to that of the midwife who knows how to bring on labor pains or diminish them, how to birth and how to abort, and knows which matches will produce the best offspring (*Theaetetus* 148e–151d).

⁵ See Rowe 1998a: 147.

⁶ Cf. *Meno* 81c10–d1, “The whole of nature is akin.”

⁷ Echoed by Freud: “What psycho-analysis called sexuality was by no means identical with the impulsion towards a union of the two sexes or towards producing a pleasurable sensation in the genitals; it had far more resemblance to the all-inclusive and all-preserving Eros of Plato's *Symposium*” (1925: SE 14, 218).

rational.⁸ Diotima's general description of the psyche⁹ is decidedly developmental, increasing its complexity in a context of general change: human bodies, like those of other animals, passing from childhood to old age, constantly replace their "hair, or flesh, or bones, or blood" (207d4–e2). Likewise "pieces of knowledge" (ἐπιστήμαι, 207e6) are forgotten in the course of a lifetime and have to be studied anew (μελετᾶν, 208a3). And a lifetime is all that each of us has in the naturalistic account of the *Symposium*: to procreate is as close as a mortal can come to immortality (206e7–8), and "mortal nature seeks so far as it can to exist forever" (207d1–2). So far as it can. Consistently, to be alive, to have a psyche, is to have *erôs*, to desire; the psyche's function is *erôs* aiming at the good.

Desire is *initially* unconscious, non-rational, and appetitive, which is only to say that desire at its most primitive is a brute fact of being alive and exactly as true for a single-celled organism as for baby Einstein. Initially, all desire is for the avoidance of pain and the increase of pleasure. A human newborn, feeling the pain of deprivation—hunger or cold, say—desires first of all the absence of pain. Later, specific desires can be differentiated, desires *for* things such as food, warmth, and human contact, each of which delivers a distinct corresponding pleasure. There are unconscious desires as well. So long as there is air to breathe, an infant feels no pain of asphyxia, but it will be a long time before the recognition of oxygen as a distinct object of desire kicks in. So far for the human infant, as for most living things permanently, the crude approximation of pleasure-good and pain-bad delivers its evolutionary advantages. The priestess leaves no doubt that, for animals including humans, *erôs* is the mover, the motivator, between subject and object;¹⁰ *everyone* is in love (205a9), and "there is nothing else that people are in love with except the good" (206a1–2).¹¹ When a pine sapling turns toward the sun, it loves the good. When an amoeba extends its pseudopod in search of the nutrition that will benefit it, it loves the good. When a toddler reaches for a bright, pretty object, she too loves the good. None can be said to have a concept of the good, so the love of the good is a love of its *expression* in light, air, food, warmth and so on.

Eryximachus' view, that *erôs* can be developed in relation to what is bad, must be explained against Diotima's view that we love only the good. When the amoeba's pseudopod finds food, but the food is subtly toxic, the doctor's description is that the amoeba's *erôs*, seeking something good, nutrition, encountered something bad, toxins. If the toxins cannot be detected, then the amoeba keeps eating, developing its *erôs* in relation to the bad. If the bright, pretty object grasped by the good-loving toddler is a hot lightbulb, the explanation is similar: she reached for something good (bright and pretty) and encountered something bad, heat causing pain. She does not yet have the concepts of light-implies-heat or potential-pain, but those concepts will be learned through just such experiences as this one. If the toddler—let's call her Trixie—has caregivers who know good from bad nutrition, then they offer her yummy rice, spinach, beets, and other healthy foods, smiling and praising her every bite. Trixie's *erôs* develops in relation to what is good and she sets out on the path to happiness. Trixie's cousin Dixie's development proceeds by the same principle. If her caregivers are ignorant, they feed her fast foods and sugary puddings for which she quickly develops a taste, which pleases them all mightily. The doctor says Dixie's teeth are decaying and she's obese; as her *erôs* develops in relation to what is bad, she's on the path to misery.

There's the rub. Do we really want to say that, despite appearances, Dixie loves the good? Yes, insofar as Dixie seeks *happiness* (*Symposium* 204e6–205a3, 205d1–3). Her *wanting* to be happy and *wanting* the good are a far cry from her having them. One must *learn* that there is no direct correlation between pleasure and good, or pain and bad. If Dixie someday learns about good nutrition, then she will struggle against the tastes she has long since cultivated in relation to what is bad.¹² This is at the very root of *no one does wrong voluntarily*. It is why Diotima points out that, for love of the good, people willingly amputate diseased limbs (205e3–5). What delights one in infancy and early childhood, even before one is old enough to know the reason (*Republic* 3.402a1–4), affects one's later physical and psychological health.¹³ If little Bussy *feels* pleasure when pleasing his adored older brother and sensing his approval, then Bussy will enjoy and desire to repeat activities that his brother

⁸ When *exactly* Diotima discusses generic and when specific *erôs* is disputed. See Rowe 1998b and Sheffield 2006a.

⁹ 207c8–209e4, particularly 207e1–208b2.

¹⁰ In her mythic introduction, Diotima makes *erôs* an intermediary spirit between gods and human beings (202e3–203a7), wisdom and ignorance (203e4–5), but she then attributes *erôs* to animals as well (206c6–7, 207a6–208b6).

¹¹ ὥς οὐδέν γε ἄλλο ἐστὶν οὐ ἐρωσὶν ἄνθρωποι ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; cf. *Republic* 6.505d5–9.

¹² We might recall the story from Phaedo's *Zopyrus* that Socrates defeated his natural tendency to stupidity and lust through his efforts at reason.

¹³ I do not mean to overestimate the malleability of infants and small children—I mean rather to keep my discussion short. Physiological inheritance is at least a limiting factor, and not easily controlled. And children do not automatically like the activities that give their parents pleasure. In both those senses, I am aware of my oversimplification of the multiple interactions that result in the development of tastes.

has set for him—music and books, games, puzzles, Lego—all contributing in their different ways to the psyche’s growth in conative and cognitive features. Trixie may be moved by the elegance of a mathematical proof; Dixie may be stirred by a beautiful experiment. This interaction—our being affected and changed by contact with what we love—is something Diotima picks out as important: “it’s by contact with what is beautiful, and associating with it, that he brings to birth and procreates the things with which he was for so long pregnant” (209c2–3).

The human psyche of the *Symposium* develops in complexity under the influence of need and desire, adding more complicated and convoluted expressions of its single primitive *erôs*. That is what it is to mature psychologically, emotionally but also intellectually, and this specialization of psychic labor occurs naturally; it would fail to occur if the right stimulations were not present.¹⁴ Cognitive desires, as much as conative desires, have a trajectory of development.¹⁵ Just as a body needs nourishment and exercise for healthy growth and strong limbs, the embryonic capacity to learn and to reason requires stimulation through the senses and practice to grow into a healthy, mature intellect. All humans, females and males alike, are pregnant with innate ideas that are nourished and grow under certain conditions—by Diotima’s lights, in the presence of what it finds attractive. The psychic-pregnancy account of the *Symposium* (206c1–212a8) is not unique to the dialogue, but it is richly detailed, and it does the work managed elsewhere by *anamnêsis*.¹⁶ It explains why we learn under questioning, i.e., upon the stimulation of capacities formerly dormant; the value of figuring things out, which is similar to exercising the body; and how our holding false beliefs prevents our seeking true ones. Agathon, under the influence of Socrates’ questioning, for example, is purged of his false beliefs and becomes newly eager to learn (201b10–11)—much as Meno’s slave needed first to recognize that he didn’t know what he thought he knew (84a3). Sometimes, as in the case of philosophical learning, the midwifery of a dialectician is needed as well. The psyche responds to its environment by developing increasingly complex, finer varieties of *erôs*: mature intellectual curiosity manifested as scientific research into the recoil of atomic nuclei, for example, or the investigation of fractals.

In Diotima’s account of the higher mysteries, after expressing her uncertainty about whether Socrates will be able to make the climb, the mystagogue focuses on one segment of a lifetime, the psyche’s development from adolescence (*véov*, 210a5) to maturity, putting aside childhood and the aging process she countenanced earlier. Gabriel Lear (2006: 107) sets out exactly what is implied in Diotima’s account of the higher mysteries: “love aims to possess (a) the good (b) permanently. This is one desire, the desire for happiness,” and it is most likely to take place in the presence of beauty. Beauty is what attracts us, moves us, changes us. For the few who come under the appropriate kinds of intellectual influence, who obtain the proper nourishment during their intellectual pregnancies, and the services of a dialectical midwife when ready to give birth, contemplation of forms yields knowledge that does not supplant their earlier experiences and learning, not if those experiences were developed in relation to the good. Rather, the increasingly competent and skilled psyche becomes more adept at achieving goals that are more likely to bring happiness in more ways.

2. Diotima’s *Erôs*: Its Limitations

Although Diotima emphasizes the proper ascent that goes along with *paidierastia*, overwhelming us with the goal of the permanent possession of the good, we would do well to recall that the mature ideal that is her topic is anything but permanent, as she has already established with her example of our losing bits of knowledge we once possessed. Again, as *Phaedrus* is to rhetoric, and *Theaetetus* to mathematics, the *Symposium* is to mystery religion. For all Diotima’s wisdom, so admirable in the eyes of the young Socrates, what she outlines is nothing less than “a radical new vision of piety—one that utterly trumps all prior accounts,” as Mark McPherran put it (2006: 91): piety. Perhaps it was a similar inference that led David Sedley (1999: 310) to mark the *Symposium* as “Plato’s probable debut” on the topic of becoming like god, insofar as a human being can. For centuries after Plato’s death, platonists of antiquity almost universally considered *becoming like god* to be the end toward

¹⁴ By featuring Plato’s view of the early training of the desires, Brown 2004 has uncovered the far-reaching similarity between *Republic* and *Laws*, something even more important than explaining why there is no gap in the *Republic* between psychological and practical justice.

¹⁵ Reason (*qua* deliberative desire), for example, is explicitly identified as a type of desire at *Republic* 9.580d6–7, its object proving most true and permanent, and thus providing the greatest possibility for happiness. As Eryximachus promotes his expertise at filling and emptying, the argument at 9.585a–586e promotes filling the psyche with truth: a greater fulfillment (happiness) than such food and drink as fill the body.

¹⁶ Although *anamnêsis* is typically conceived as requiring psyches to be in communion with the forms before birth, Leibniz (1991: §26) dispenses with the “error of preexistence,” as he calls it, arguing that philosophical *anamnêsis* is the recognition or realization we call *inference*.

which all the striving of a philosopher properly aimed.¹⁷ Although the issue usually emerges from the *Theaetetus*, where the philosopher of the digression actually uses the expression (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, 176b1), Diotima's religious ascent has evident similarities: she describes the pinnacle as divine (τὸ θεῖον καλὸν, 211e4) and the climber, "when he has given birth to and nurtured true virtue," as "loved by the gods" (212a5–6). Both the philosopher of the digression and Diotima's climber represent idealizations—neither Socrates, nor Plato, nor any embodied philosopher. The climber eschews what is human, "seeing beauty itself, pure, clean, unmixed, and not contaminated with things like flesh, and colour, and much other mortal nonsense" (211e1–4, φλυαρίας at e3); and the philosopher of the digression eschews what humans value—gossip, political power, wealth, and breeding (*Theaetetus* 174d3–175b4). This raises the question whether any flesh-and-blood philosopher—Socrates, or Plato, or any one of us—experience erotic longing for *permanent* intellectual intercourse with the forms—which sounds more like a mystical experience or religious rapture than anything related to philosophy. Diotima gives us what we expect from an expert in mystery religion: the good as piety, the good life as the ascetic life, communion, contemplating rather than doing.

In one sense Diotima specifies a productive outcome beyond the vision itself: "he will succeed in bringing to birth, not phantoms (εἰδωλα) of virtue ... but true virtue, because he is grasping the truth" (212a4–5).¹⁸ There is a literature urging that we take virtue to be knowledge, which seems particularly appropriate when, as in this case, one is grasping truth about the good. A sympathetic version of the claim is that the ultimate vision of beauty or goodness enables the initiate to infer the implications of the form, useful in revisiting what one previously grasped only hypothetically. As I argue below, there is better reason to suppose that, as Diotima suspected (209e5–210a2), Socrates did not follow her to be initiated into the higher mysteries, into her version of the permanent possession of the beautiful and the good. He was a philosopher—not a mystic, a magician, a prophet, or a priest. Diotima's domain, "sacrifices, rites, spells, and the whole realm of the seer and of magic" (202e7–203a1), is not the domain of philosophy. As the philosopher of the digression is not Socrates, the Socrates of the *Symposium* is everywhere and nowhere on Diotima's ladder of love.¹⁹

2.1 The Examined Life. Both Socrates and Plato chose to conduct their lives as engaged philosophers, guiding actual human beings where they had the opportunity to do so, and creating further opportunities when they could. Take the account of the psyche provided in §1 as a starting point: a human being—nurtured and loved in infancy and childhood by caregivers with the inclinations and information required to rear a child in good health and happiness—develops into someone with fellow-feeling, empathy and concern with the lives of others. Training and education in rhetoric, mathematics, mystery religion, and philosophy do not remove these profound effects of early childhood on the psyche.²⁰ If a psyche has developed in relation to the good, then amputation of diseased limbs is specifically the *wrong* metaphor for abandoning the *healthy* objects of one's desires (*logoi*, youths, et al., 210a7). Although the developmental model of the psyche implies that the exertion of the intellect toward one objective results in diminished exertion toward other objectives, the most productive exertion of the intellect, dialectic, requires a great variety of *other* objects of desire, beginning with air and gravity, and including other human beings, along with thinking. Life itself is impossible on intellect alone. In the *Symposium*, where personal immortality is denied, the philosopher's death is the personal *end of the story*. Thus it is no wonder that Socrates and Plato chose to live examined lives.

How should a human being live?²¹ Socrates says "the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being" (*Apology* 38a6: ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ), but Diotima says, "life is worth living for a human being, in contemplation of beauty itself" (*Symposium* 211d1–3: τοῦ βίου...βιωτὸν ἀνθρώπῳ, θεωμένῳ αὐτὸ καλόν).²² Even if, for argument's sake, we deem 'examination' and 'contemplation' equivalent, the two claims are incompatible because their objects

¹⁷ See Sedley 1999 and Annas 1999: ch. 3 for ancient attributions of the view to Plato; and Gerson 2005: ch. 8 who shows why Neoplatonists (so-called) attributed the view to both Plato and Aristotle.

¹⁸ I thank Henry Dyson for this argument and for sending me back to Patterson 1993.

¹⁹ For the digression in *Theaetetus*, see Blondell 2002: 251–313, especially 289–300; and her 2006 for the *Symposium*.

²⁰ Brown 2004: 286 develops this point in relation to the higher education of the guardians in *Republic* 7, an overlay, but not a replacement of, what they learned in the description of *Republic* 2–3.

²¹ Reeve 2007: §3 identifies a cache of verbal and situational parallels between *Apology* and *Symposium*, one of which is a parallel between "whatever occupies Socrates on the road to Agathon's" and "the aporetic awareness of the absence of knowledge that distinguishes Socrates' 'human wisdom' from the 'more than human wisdom' claimed by the sophists (20c4–e8)." The *Apology* passage suggests a different parallel to me because both involve sophistry: "'Well now, most wise Diotima: is what you say really true?' Like an accomplished sophist, she said 'you can be sure of that'" (208b8–c1).

²² Alcibiades echoes the remark at 215e6–7, saying of his experiences with Socrates, "I was frequently reduced to thinking that it wasn't worth my living, in the condition I'm in."

are distinct: no one's *life* (that which is to be examined), no matter how beautiful and good, is the eternal *form* of beauty or the good (that which is to be contemplated). Well, on the one hand, perhaps one should contemplate those things that are beautiful and good *in one's life* because they are expressions of beauty and the good. After all, Socrates doesn't say, Tell me, Nicias, what is cowardice? Perhaps. On the other hand, what is examined in the dialogues is all manner of good *and bad* instances as the characters make their way toward deeper understanding of some particular virtue. In the dialectical process, knowledge of what is good brings with it knowledge of what is bad.

The evidence of how Socrates lived his own life would seem to support the claims of the examined life: openly and constantly questioning others—even the poor, women, and old men (215d2–5)—and encouraging them to care for their psyches, while denying he was wise. Yet his periods of oblivion (175a7–b3, 220c3–d5), his *daimonion*, and parts of Alcibiades' description of Socrates—imperviousness to winter cold, alcohol, fear, and the wiles of the young Alcibiades—might make one think him unworldly wise, a sage. The latter view would play havoc with the texts, however, because we would need to imagine a Socrates seeking *permanent* possession of something (the beautiful or good) he already possessed intermittently due to his initiation, despite his protests that he didn't have the knowledge he helped others to acquire. My imagination may be wanting, but I cannot think what would motivate Plato's Socrates to spend so much energy maintaining a deception. The conceit of the dialogue is that, as a young man, Socrates was persuaded by Diotima's speech (212b1–3); perhaps the goal, however impossible, served its purpose so well that he later used it to motivate others, and Plato later did likewise. An advantage of taking the text in this straightforward way is that it implies neither failure nor pretense to lead the examined life.

F. M. Cornford (1949: 125), commenting on Diotima's statement that Socrates might not be able to ascend to the higher mysteries (209e5–210a2), says, "I incline to agree with those scholars who have seen in this sentence Plato's intention to mark the limit reached by the philosophy of his master."²³ The implication, and it is not uncommon now, is that Plato saw *himself* as the contemplator of beauty and the other forms, saw himself as imitating the divine. That would rob us, however, of an explanation of Plato's long academic life and his attempts to reform the tyranny in Sicily, especially since there is no one in Athens to play the role of city-founders, *forcing* Plato back down into the cave. I suggest that he aspired to lead the examined life that he attributes to his Socrates. Plato, like Socrates, was determined to turn psyches toward the good, and no initiation into higher mysteries was required to generate that commitment.

An argument against my view that Socrates does not follow Diotima to pure contemplation of the beautiful and the good, i.e., is not initiated into the higher mysteries, is that Diotima—mystic, priestess, prophetess, and mystagogue—instructs young Socrates after *her* initiation into the higher mysteries, implying that Socrates could go on guiding young men after his.²⁴ Perhaps Socrates could go on "giving birth to the sorts of words ... that will make young men into better men" (210c2–3). That appears possible at first, but Diotima seems to block the option almost immediately afterwards when it becomes clear that making young men better was a *preliminary* stage, after which there is the initiate's sudden (ἐξαίφνης, 210e4) vision of beauty itself, when the life worth living for a human being (211d1–3), contemplation of beauty uncontaminated by the human distractions of previous stages, is reached.

There is another reason to doubt that we should view Diotima's exhibition as the sort of engaged philosophical commitment that Socrates and Plato showed throughout their lives: she plays the role of sage and instructor in the dialogue, *not* that of an elenctic guide. I concede that Socrates prepares his audience to compare him to Diotima, soothing the confused Agathon: "I myself was saying to her other things of pretty much the very sort that Agathon was saying to me just now, that Love was a great god, and was of beautiful things; and she then set about examining me by means of the very arguments I was using with Agathon" (201e3–6). The content of Socrates' two conversations overlaps, but their form does not. Whereas Agathon asks not a single question of Socrates, Socrates turns Diotima's statements and questions into questions of his own fifteen times. Often, she simply gives him the answers he seeks; to some questions, however, she replies with long didactic speeches (203b1–204a6; 207c8–208b6; 208c1–212a7); sometimes she pummels Socrates with questions without waiting for any answer (four in a row at 207a5–c1, three in a row at the end, 211d8–212a7); and sometimes she answers her own rhetorical questions without a pause (208d2–e2). Diotima needs

²³ See the appendix for more on this issue.

²⁴ Rowe's commentary on 210a6–7 takes Socrates' initiation to be a philosophical one; but he points to the conditional at 211e1, "if someone succeeded," as evidence against simply assuming that anyone succeeds. *Phaedo* 69c–d on philosopher mystics may be deployed in defense of the notion that Diotima was a philosopher. I pursue this issue from the question of where the tragedy of the *Symposium* lies in Nails 2006: 187–200.

little encouragement to dissent: Socrates says, “If I could [answer you], Diotima ... I wouldn’t be admiring you for your wisdom, and visiting you to learn just these very things” (206b5–6), so she obliges him. When Socrates cannot answer why unreasoning animals are strongly affected by love (207c2), she chides him, but when he protests, “But that’s the very reason ... I’ve come to you—because I recognize that I need teachers,” she immediately sets off on twenty-eight more lines—“like an accomplished sophist,” he says (208c1). This is not at all like Socrates’ conversation with Agathon. In fact, from Diotima’s behavior at argument, one might be reminded that Agathon wanted Socrates to recline beside him, prompting Socrates to say, “It would be a good thing, Agathon, if wisdom were the kind of thing that flowed from what is fuller into what is emptier” (175d4–6), for Diotima seems eager to transmit information. Unlike Plato’s Socrates, she has a kind of wisdom, and employs a didactic method, that make it very difficult to see her as illustrating someone’s living in contemplation of beauty while also leading the examined life of the philosopher.

A young Socrates, however, might nevertheless have been dazzled and motivated by the prospect of such a permanent state of the psyche. If I suspend disbelief momentarily, and imagine his youthful desire to be initiated into the higher mysteries, I am also driven to imagine his asking just how essential it is to proceed exactly “in order and in the correct way” (210e3; cf. 211b6) stipulated by Diotima. One rather trivial consideration is that she herself could not have been initiated by the procedure she recommends since *paiderastia* is not available to women. On the other hand, one cannot be a mystagogue without having been initiated. Perhaps it is best not to be too literal. For one thing, the prospect of pure communion with forms might seem possible from a great distance, the distance of youth perhaps; but Socrates may have found later that the more one pursues such a goal, the more it recedes, and the more one recognizes one’s own inescapable humanity and specificity. One’s knowledge is shed like one’s hair and skin; but that is no reason not to use the prospect of the beautiful and the good to attract others into improving their psyches.

2.2 The Erotic Longing of the Reflecting Subject. The second sense in which I see the mystic as inadequate is in her failure to exemplify what is unique to philosophy. Plato regularly distinguished philosophers from others, most especially in his passages of ascent.²⁵

What characterizes the reflecting subject as a philosopher is the insatiable desire for truths lying beyond the subject’s grasp, hence *love* of wisdom; in Plato’s dialogues, philosophers are not sages (*Symposium* 203e5–204b5).²⁶ Certainties or facts, once attained, are quickly assigned to some other discipline (physics, psychology, theory of x); they cease to motivate, and lose their attractiveness, compared to what is still out of reach; at best, facts are rungs to what remains attractive. The reflecting subject’s desire is so unique to the philosophical endeavor that Alcibiades calls it madness (218b3–4),²⁷ and it has been called worse. According to Plato’s developmental model of the psyche, philosophical practice increases philosophical success which, in turn, has the double effect of draining energy from the pursuit of other goals while honing the intellect of the reflecting subject, making it gradually more suitable for the pursuit of its object (at least until one reaches the age when the slipping away of “pieces of knowledge” begins to require returning to one’s earlier studies). The philosopher’s interest in proximate objects—whether physical, mathematical, human, fictional, or other—is in their actual, not their merely apparent, natures, i.e., in their structure, their formal principles;²⁸ the philosopher has no interest in making the predictions of cave dwellers. This is no less true of the contemporary philosopher of x (e.g., art, medicine, mathematics, physics) than of the metaphysician; each seeks as universal and fundamental an understanding of its object as possible, not just what is *good* about the object.²⁹

3. Conclusions

Philosophically speaking, the most important of our desires is the desire for truth, for formal knowledge. I have tried to show that Plato’s rich developmental account of the unified psyche coherently accounts for all human motivation—including the desire to learn and to know—from infancy to old age, and without the aid of immortality or anything else supernatural. The psyche desires happiness but pursues a wide variety of proximate objects of desire, adapting to a vast array of

²⁵ *Symposium* 204b4–5, *Republic* 5–7, and *Phaedrus* 248d2–4, 248e5–249d3.

²⁶ *Republic* 6.485a10–b3, 494a3, 496a11–497b7, et al.

²⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 249d4–250b2.

²⁸ At *Symposium* 205e3 x must be good (ἀγαθὸν ὄν); *Republic* 6.505d5–506a2 is more explicit.

²⁹ More accurately, philosophical interest in any object is interest in its instantiation or expression of forms; but making that case would require a supplementary paper.

available possibilities. Psychic conflict develops as soon as Bugsy, say, wants both to believe in his father's god and to accept the inference that god does not exist. However, because adult human beings can accurately describe the psyche's appetite and its rationality without overlap, or because they can *distinguish* the psyche's solving (as in solving for x) from its striving (as in striving to win) from its craving (as in craving chocolate), they then make the mistake of inferring that these are three separate and independent psychic functions when they are in fact different objects of the same one *erôs*.

The tripartite model of the psyche, however, requires nothing supernatural, so I've thus far said nothing that would recommend one over the other. Three and one are clearly non-identical. Are the two accounts thus fundamentally incompatible? Plato seemed to think they were compatible, offering the psyche-as stream analogy in the *Republic* (6.485d7–8): a single stream with three (or more) channels.

The unified psyche that develops over time and in relation to a variety of objects has one clear advantage over tripartition, however: it leaves Socratic intellectualism intact. I say 'advantage' not only because *I* consider it true that human beings seek the good and do no wrong voluntarily, but because *Plato* was still defending Socratic intellectualism, "no one does wrong willingly", in the *Laws* (9.860c–861d),³⁰ making the choice of a unified psyche more charitable to his enterprise as a whole.³¹

Appendix: Who Speaks for Plato?

In the background, the question has often enough been posed, Who speaks for Plato in the *Symposium*? The world has not been short of answers: (a) all the characters do, or (b) Socrates does, or (c) Diotima does — all with complications.³²

If all the characters speak for Plato, then either they all contribute important points (a1) to Plato's own view³³ or, as I prefer, (a2) to the views Plato deems it important to reflect on seriously and to subject to critical discussion.³⁴

If Socrates speaks for Plato, it is in one of four ways: perhaps (b1) in his whole speech beginning with his dialectical exchange with Agathon, when Socrates says he is willing to speak the truth (199a8–b2), to the end of Diotima's speech, when Socrates says he is persuaded (212b1–5). The *Symposium* is a "middle" dialogue, according to this unrefined developmentalist view, so the character Socrates *just does* give the mature Plato's views; besides, Socrates' comment that he earlier held Agathon's views himself gives dramatic continuity to the two parts of Socrates' speech. Another possibility is that Socrates speaks for Plato (b2) only when he converses with Agathon, on the view that Plato continues to see uses for the elenchus even into dialogues uncontroversially considered late, e.g., *Philebus*.

Despite Socrates' remark about truth and persuasion, however, one may take Socrates' remark that Agathon can easily argue against Socrates, but not against the truth (201c8–9) as a matched bookend to Socrates' earlier profession that he is willing to tell the truth, marking the *division* between Plato's Socrates and Plato's Socrates' Diotima at that point. In that case, (b3) Socrates may speak for Plato in his report of Diotima's speech *only*, a position often difficult to distinguish in the literature from (c1) Diotima speaks for Plato. According to Vlastos's Thesis III (1991: 48), Socrates_E (corresponding to early Plato) seeks knowledge only elenctically; elenchus is not supposed to appear in "middle" dialogues such as *Symposium* because Plato had lost faith in the method (117). Thus "Plato creates new voices," Diotima and Parmenides, "to supersede that of Socrates *pro tem*" (73–74, 117n50). Reeve (2006: 300) argues similarly that when Diotima is teaching Socrates the art of love, she is teaching him Platonism; "what the *elenchus* needs if it is to satisfy rather than frustrate love, in other words, is the theory of Platonic Forms."³⁵ There is also the view

³⁰ The *Laws*, more than any other dialogue, considers even prenatal effects on the foetus, and it has elaborate instructions on the care of infants, early childhood education, and the special needs of the elderly—emphasizing developmental aspects of the psyche.

³¹ A longer version of this paper was presented to the Ancient Circle at Michigan State University in January 2008. I am grateful for comments on that occasion from Darci Doll, Henry Dyson, Terry Echterling, William Levitan, Jason Mask, and Chet McLeskey; and later from Mary Tjiattas. At the Northwestern University conference organized by Richard Kraut, for which the paper was originally intended, I benefited especially from Connie Meinwald's formal comments and Jonathan Lear's informal ones. Sara Ahbel-Rappe gave the paper a thorough going-over that led to further improvements.

³² Scott and Welton 2000, arguing that "taking a character as Plato's mouthpiece often does very little to help understand a Platonic dialogue," provide a number of references to the earlier literature.

³³ A more recent contribution to the long debate on this topic, arguing for continuity among the dialogue's speeches, is Sheffield 2006b, citing previous approaches to the question. Some additional points are made in Sheffield 2006a, chapter 2, §5.

³⁴ Nails 1995: 213–235.

³⁵ Reeve 1992: 101 is succinct: "Diotima is Plato in disguise."

that (b4/c2) Socrates speaks for Plato in his report of the *end* of Diotima's speech, from when she tells Socrates she doesn't know whether he is capable of initiation into the higher mysteries. This was the view of Cornford noted in §2.1, and it would also appear to be the position of those who take Plato's own aim to be *ὁμοίως θεῶ*.

The difficulty of distinguishing (b3) from (c1) and (b4) from (c2) is brought about in part by the problem of which part of Diotima's speech, if not all of it, better fits Socrates himself—propaedeutic to who speaks for Plato. Sheffield (2001: 9–11), for example, argues that “the Socrates of the *Apology* is better identified, in many respects with the LHM [lover of the higher mysteries], whereas the LLM [lover of the lower mysteries] is reminiscent of those people with a reputation for wisdom whom Socrates examines.” In Sheffield's view, while Diotima's doubts about Socrates' ability to be initiated into the higher mysteries (209e5) were applicable when Socrates was young, as Agathon is at the time of the interior dialogue, the mature Socrates became expert in erotic matters, as he says (177d7–e1).³⁶ He later disowns his earlier remark (198c6–d3), but perhaps ironically.

What with all the pronoun issues facing anyone writing philosophy in this era, it is blissfully easier to write that *Diotima* says something and then to use feminine pronouns without confusion than to labor over references to Socrates or Plato's Socrates or Socrates' Diotima or Plato's Socrates' Diotima — easily explaining modern authors' diction. What is amusing is the insistence with which Diotima is so often claimed to be a *pure* fiction, Plato's creation, by authors who have taken the rhetorical easy road.³⁷ Various characters from the Platonic dialogues were dead before Plato was born, though his accounts of the Athenians and famous others are corroborated historically. If the historical Socrates ever *really* mentioned learning from men and women, priests and priestesses (*Meno* 81a5–b1) or put names to any of them, would it be so very surprising that his young friends took note of it? The familiar argument that Diotima could not in the late 440s have alluded (205d10–e5) to a speech that Aristophanes didn't make until 416 misses Kenneth Dover's (1966) point: Aristophanes was dressing up a folk tale, not inventing original material. Aristophanes had, after all, been persistently critical of Socrates (423, ±418, 414, and 405), earning a mention in Socrates' speech before his jury; so perhaps Plato's *Symposium* gives Aristophanes a comeuppance.

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³⁶ Sedley cautions, “Diotima's position should not too readily be assumed to be identical to Plato's view at the time of writing” (1999: 310n2).

³⁷ Ausland (2000: 186n11) points out that “Diotima's fictionality is a modern development,” citing ancient writers (testimonia in *Platonis Symposium*, ed. Otto Jahn, 2nd edn., Bonn: Marcum, 1875, 16–18); F. A. Wolf, *Platons Gastmahl*, Leipzig: Schwickert, 1782, xlv (2nd edn. [1828], lxiv); and Plato's nineteenth century prosopographer, G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Prosopographia Platonica*, Leiden: Hazenberg, 1823, 125.

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La visione dell'idea del bello: conoscenza intuitiva e conoscenza proposizionale nel *Simposio*

Francesco Fronterotta

In alcuni passi dei suoi dialoghi, Platone evoca un genere di conoscenza di carattere intellettuale che pare supporre una componente intuitiva¹. Si tratta di almeno due contesti particolarmente ampi ed espliciti, nel *Simposio* e nei libri VI-VII della *Repubblica*; di un terzo nella sezione centrale della *Lettera VII*, per molti aspetti altrettanto esplicito, ma soggetto alle note perplessità relative all'autenticità di questo scritto; di un quarto, nel *Fedro* (247c-250c), più difficile da inquadrare, perché fa riferimento, nell'ambito di un mito, alla condizione e alle competenze epistemologiche dell'anima disincarnata e potrebbe pertanto collocarsi al di fuori della classificazione ordinaria dell'attività intellettuale individuale, che appare strettamente connessa alla collaborazione, o all'interazione, fra anima e corpo; altri sporadici riferimenti compaiono nei dialoghi, e particolarmente un importante passo del *Timeo* solitamente trascurato dai commentatori. In questo intervento concentrerò la mia attenzione sul *Simposio*, ponendolo però in relazione, almeno in forma schematica, con le indicazioni che emergono dalla sezione finale del libro VI della *Repubblica*², per passare poi, nella seconda parte del lavoro, a esaminare il problema della conoscenza intuitiva, e della sua plausibilità o meno, nell'ambito più generale della concezione epistemologica di Platone.

1. Il contesto del *Simposio*

Al culmine del celebre discorso che la sacerdotessa Diotima tiene di fronte a Socrate, che mira a un elogio di Eros come demone mediatore fra l'umano e il divino³, viene illustrata la difficile ascesa dalla percezione della bellezza delle cose sensibili belle alla conoscenza del bello intellegibile in sé (209e-212a). Diotima espone infatti (210a4-b6) la progressiva presa di coscienza di chi, contemplando dapprima la bellezza di un corpo, riconosca – visivamente – l'omogeneità e l'uguaglianza della bellezza di tutti i corpi (ἐν τε καὶ ταὐτὸν ἡγεῖσθαι τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σώμασι κάλλος) e comprenda in seguito – intellettualmente – la superiorità e il più alto pregio della bellezza spirituale, che è ovunque affine a sé stessa (τὸ καλὸν ... πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συγγενές), nelle anime, nelle attività umane e nelle leggi (210b6-c6), quindi nelle scienze (210c6-e1), rispetto alla bellezza sensibile, “che è cosa di poco valore” (τὸ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καλὸν σμικρὸν τι). Al termine di questo estenuante percorso, dal “grande mare della bellezza” si manifesterà all'improvviso (ἐξαίφνης), come in una suprema e meravigliosa rivelazione, l'idea del bello in sé e per sé, piena e perfetta, pura, eterna e auto-identica. Si tratta precisamente, conclude Diotima, di un “retto avanzare dalle cose belle di questo mondo verso l'estrema bellezza, come salendo per gradini fino alla sommità, dove si conosce finalmente il bello in sé” (τὸ ὀρθῶς ... ἵεναι ... ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ... ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον ... καὶ γνῶ αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἔστι καλόν): “una bellezza eterna, che non si genera e non si corrompe, non aumenta né diminuisce, (...) univoca, (...), pura nella sua forma” (καλὸν ... αἰὲν ὄν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε ἀυξανόμενον, ... μονοειδὲς ... εἰλικρινές). L'idea del bello non si manifesta perciò con sembianze corporee (οἷον πρόσωπόν τι οὐδὲ χεῖρες οὐδὲ ἄλλο οὐδὲν ὧν σῶμα μετέχει) né sotto forma di un vuoto concetto o scienza particolari (οὐδὲ τις λόγος οὐδὲ τις ἐπιστήμη): in sé, per sé e con sé, è *sempre* (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ αἰὲν ὄν), mai affetta da diversità e trasformazione. E sebbene le cose belle, che si generano e si corrompono,

¹ Come si comprenderà via via, utilizzo il termine “intuizione” nel senso di una conoscenza immediata, cioè priva di mediazioni strumentali, che un soggetto realizza di un oggetto: tale conoscenza può essere rappresentata con tratti e modalità visivi, così avvicinandosi al significato abitualmente conferito all'intuizione nelle lingue moderne (dal latino *intueor*), ma anche con tratti e modalità tattili. Il carattere decisivo di questa forma di conoscenza, almeno nella forma in cui verrà da me chiamata in causa qui, è tuttavia quello dell'immediatezza, in virtù di cui può essere stabilita un'adesione diretta di un soggetto conoscente a un oggetto conosciuto.

² Mi sono già occupato in generale del problema della conoscenza “intuitiva” in Platone in F. Fronterotta, *Platonismo e scienze della mente: cosa è l'intuizione?*, in *Platonism and Forms of Intelligence*, ed. by J. Dillon and M.-E. Zovko, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2008, pp. 191-209; e, con riferimento specifico alla *Repubblica*, in F. Fronterotta, *ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΝ ... ΑΛΛ' ΟΥ ΝΟΥΝ. Su Resp. VI 511 D 3-5*, in “Elenchos”, XXVII (2006/2), pp. 441-58.

³ Lascio completamente da parte qui la descrizione e l'interpretazione del discorso di Diotima nel suo insieme, senza soffermarmi neanche sulle possibili suggestioni derivanti dall'impiego, nell'illustrazione dell'accesso alla conoscenza di Eros, della metafora misterica, che pare implicare che l'iniziato giunga, alla fine del suo percorso, a realizzare un contatto diretto, e di carattere visivo, con la divinità, il che potrebbe già alludere, appunto in forma metaforica, al percorso dell'anima che, rivolgendo il suo sguardo dalla realtà del bello sensibile al bello intellegibile, finisce per realizzare una visione o un contatto immediati con l'idea. Si vedrà su tutto ciò la dettagliatissima disamina di F. Bearzi, *Il contesto noetico del Simposio*, in “Études platoniciennes”, 1 (2004), pp. 199-251.

partecipino della bellezza in sé, questa partecipazione non intacca la perfezione e l'omogeneità dell'idea (τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα τρόπον τινὰ τοιοῦτον, οἷον ... μηδὲν ἐκεῖνο μήτε τι πλέον μήτε ἔλαττον γίνεσθαι μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν).

Sofferamoci sulle modalità epistemiche associate alle diverse tappe del percorso conoscitivo qui tratteggiato: in primo luogo, segnala Diotima, (1) il soggetto aspira alla prossimità fisica con altri corpi (ἵεναι ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ σώματα ... σώματος ἐρᾶν, 210a5-6), attratto dalla loro bellezza esteriore; poi (2), collocandosi sul piano della comprensione razionale o intellettuale dell'unità della bellezza in tutti i corpi (κατανοῆσαι ὅτι τὸ κάλλος ... ταῦτόν ... ἐννοήσαντα, 210a8-b4), il soggetto produce sistematicamente e senza eccezione bei λόγοι e διανοήματα, sia che si accosti all'unica bellezza di tutti i corpi (210a8) e delle anime (210c1), sia che si rivolga alla bellezza delle attività umane, delle leggi e delle scienze (210d5-6); infine, (3) il soggetto "scorgerà" (κατόψεται, 210e4) all'improvviso la meravigliosa natura del bello, che non gli "si manifesterà" (φαντασθήσεται, 211a5) né con fattezze sensibili o corporee né con caratteri discorsivi o concettuali, ma come una realtà immutabile ed eterna, come una forma unica e omogenea che sussiste di per sé; si tratta della meta cui giunge colui il quale si innalza a "vedere" (καθορᾶν, 211b6) il bello in sé, della conclusione del percorso in cui si concretizza l'effettiva scienza del bello, perché tale scienza, contrapposta alle scienze particolari esaminate in precedenza (ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ μάθημα τελευτήσαι, ὃ ἐστίν ... τοῦ καλοῦ μάθημα, 211c6-8), rappresenta il coronamento di un lungo percorso per chi "contempla" il bello in sé (θεωμένῳ αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, 211d1-2), per chi riesca a "vederne" la realtà in sé (ἴδης ... ἰδεῖν ... κατιδεῖν ... αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, 211d2, e1, e3-4): è la condizione di un'unione o di una fusione (συνόντος, 212a2) con il bello in sé, di un contatto con esso (ἐφαπτομένῳ, 212a5-6).

Vengono perciò nettamente distinti qui tre livelli epistemic: (1) una visione o un contatto evidentemente percettivi delle realtà sensibili (i corpi belli); (2) una comprensione razionale-discorsiva della bellezza universale presente identicamente nelle sue molteplici manifestazioni sensibili (l'unica bellezza di tutti i corpi) e intellettuali (l'unica bellezza delle anime, delle attività umane, delle leggi e delle scienze); (3) una visione e un contatto evidentemente non sensibili (perché privi di connotazioni materiali) e non discorsivi né concettuali (perché non mediati dalla produzione di λόγοι e διανοήματα), e tuttavia puramente razionali (perché consistenti nell'unica e vera scienza del bello contrapposta alle singole scienze particolari esaminate in precedenza), che determinano la conoscenza immediata del bello in sé come realtà universale ed eterna. Il livello (3) si distacca perciò dal livello (1), perché trascende l'ambito sensibile, sia dal punto di vista delle sue modalità epistemiche sia dal punto di vista del suo oggetto, ma anche dal livello (2), perché trascende l'ambito dei discorsi e dei concetti, non dal punto di vista del suo oggetto, che consiste sempre nell'unica bellezza in sé, ma solo dal punto di vista delle sue modalità epistemiche, appunto non discorsive né concettuali, bensì, comunque si debbano intendere la "visione" e il "contatto" con l'idea del bello (cfr. *infra*, § 4), immediate e propriamente "fusionali". Tale livello (3), in quanto prefigura l'acquisizione del più alto e conclusivo μάθημα del bello, conserva senza dubbio un carattere razionale e scientifico, benché di natura diversa dalla conoscenza, anch'essa razionale e scientifica ma di grado inferiore, realizzata nei λόγοι e διανοήματα e tramite essi.

2. Il contesto di Repubblica VI

L'associazione di un modello visivo e di un modello tattile per illustrare la natura della conoscenza intellettuale immediata del bello in sé nel *Simposio* va inevitabilmente connessa alle pagine conclusive del VI libro della *Repubblica*, che contengono la celebre rappresentazione della linea divisa (509d-511e)⁴.

Rivolgiamoci esclusivamente, e brevemente, ai segmenti superiori che si ricavano dalla duplice divisione della linea, per i quali Platone stabilisce una distinzione basata non sugli oggetti che essi contengono, che sono di natura intellegibile, ma esclusivamente sulla forma di conoscenza che a ognuno si addice⁵. Al primo segmento del genere intellegibile (510c-511a) conviene il metodo proprio della geometria che procede ipoteticamente (ἐξ ὑποθέσεων), non però risalendo verso il principio anipotetico (ἐπ' ἀρχὴν ἀνυπόθετον) per dimostrare la verità delle ipotesi formulate, ma assumendo tali

⁴ Per tutte le questioni generali sollevate dal dibattito critico intorno al testo della linea, alla sua dimensione, alla posizione e alla disposizione dei suoi segmenti componenti, sono essenziali gli studi di Y. Lafrance, *La théorie platonicienne de la doxa*, Bellarmin-Les Belles Lettres, Montréal-Paris 1981, pp. 153-67; Id., *Pour interpréter Platon. La ligne en République VI*, 509d-511e. *Bilan analytique des études (1804-1984)*, Bellarmin-Les Belles Lettres, Montréal-Paris 1986, pp. 63-172; Id., *Pour interpréter Platon II. La ligne en République VI*, 509d-511e. *Le texte et son histoire*, Bellarmin, Montréal 1994. Cfr. inoltre, più recentemente, N.D. Smith, *Plato's divided line*, in «Ancient Philosophy», XVI (1996) pp. 25-46.

⁵ Cfr. in proposito K. Dorter, *The Transformation of Plato's Republic*, London-New York-Toronto-Oxford 2006, pp. 192-93.

ipotesi come vere e discendendo analiticamente “fino alla conclusione” (ἐπὶ τελευτήν) del ragionamento. Gli studiosi di geometria giudicano infatti evidenti i concetti come il pari e il dispari, le figure, gli angoli e così via e non ritengono di doverne rendere conto (οὐδένα λόγον οὔτε αὐτοῖς οὔτε ἄλλοις ἔτι ἀξιοῦσι περὶ αὐτῶν διδόναι, ὥς παντὶ φανερόν), limitandosi a dedurre da questi presupposti i teoremi geometrici, il calcolo delle superfici e così via. Inoltre, essi sono obbligati a servirsi di immagini visibili (τοῖς ὁρωμένοις εἶδεναι), perché, pur riferendosi senza dubbio ai modelli ideali e astratti delle figure geometriche (οὐ περὶ τούτων [scil.: τῶν ὁρωμένων] διανοοῦμενοι, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνων περὶ οἷς ταῦτα ἔοικε), devono tuttavia tracciarne e disegnarne (πλάττουσιν τε καὶ γράφουσιν) materialmente una rappresentazione per svolgere e spiegare le loro dimostrazioni. Una simile specie di conoscenza, benché appartenente al genere intellegibile (νοητὸν ... τὸ εἶδος) e consacrata all’indagine delle realtà in sé (αὐτὰ ἐκεῖνα ἰδεῖν), in quanto richiede nella sua applicazione una duplice mediazione strumentale, linguistico-proposizionale – perché una dimostrazione va condotta tramite il linguaggio e nell’orizzonte proposizionale – e di immagini – perché i “geometri” si servono nelle loro dimostrazioni di immagini visibili – ed è incapace di trascendere le proprie ipotesi per raggiungere il principio incondizionato di ogni ipotesi (οὐ δυναμένην τῶν ὑποθέσεων ἀνωτέρω ἐκβαίνειν ... οὐκ ἐπ’ ἀρχὴν ἰοῦσαν), prende il nome di διάνοια. Al secondo segmento del genere intellegibile (511b-c) si addice invece il metodo dialettico (τῇ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει) che tratta le ipotesi, non come principi primi (τὰς ὑποθέσεις ποιούμενος οὐκ ἀρχάς), ma come ὑποθέσεις in senso proprio, ossia come “punti di appoggio” (ἐπιβάσεις) o “di lancio” (ὀρμάς), per muovere μέχρι τοῦ ἀνυποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντός ἀρχὴν e, dopo averlo toccato (ἄψάμενος αὐτῆς), discendere da quello secondo le conseguenze che ne derivano (ἐχόμενος τῶν ἐκείνης ἐχομένων) fino alla conclusione (ἐπὶ τελευτήν) del ragionamento, senza utilizzare nessuno strumento sensibile (αἰσθητῶ παντάπασιν οὐδενὶ προσχρόμενος), ma soltanto le idee in sé, per sé e rispetto a sé stesse (ἀλλ’ εἶδεναι αὐτοῖς δι’ αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτά). La dialettica fa così riferimento alla νόησις (511d-e, cfr. VII 533e-534a), la forma di conoscenza più alta e più pura, perché si dirige direttamente (e non tramite ipotesi) alle idee in sé e non ha bisogno di ricorrere ad altro, nel corso del suo svolgimento, se non alle idee stesse: essa suppone un contatto diretto (ἄψασθαι), che si traduce successivamente, nel VII libro della *Repubblica* (527d-e; 532a-534b), in un’immediata visione tramite l’intelletto (μόνῳ αὐτῷ ... ἀλήθεια ὁράται), vero e proprio “occhio dell’anima” (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμμα), che si distingue da quell’insieme di procedure che ricadono nell’ambito della διάνοια (511d-e, 533e-534a) e non meritano perciò il nome proprio di “scienza”: ecco perché la condizione del dialettico pare indissolubilmente connessa a una modalità visiva, a una visione “sinottica” (σύνοψις)⁶. Il fatto che la distinzione terminologica fra διάνοια e νόησις (o νοῦς) risulti talora oscillante in questi passi della *Repubblica* non compromette a mio avviso la chiarezza della scansione operata fra diverse forme di conoscenza intellettuale⁷.

Pare insomma indiscutibile che Platone faccia riferimento ancora una volta, nella *Repubblica* come nel *Simposio*, a un’attitudine o a una capacità noetica immediata, indipendente, perciò, tanto dai sensi quanto dalla mediazione dei λόγοι, e produttrice di vera conoscenza, di cui viene sottolineato il carattere realista, in quanto si costituisce nell’adesione, visiva o tattile, al proprio oggetto, in modo che i due segmenti superiori della linea divisa del libro VI della *Repubblica* sembrano riproporre, nella forma di una trattazione certamente più tecnica e comunque inserita nel contesto di una rigorosa distinzione fra discipline matematiche e metodologia dialettica, i livelli epistemici (2) e (3) riconosciuti sopra nel passo esaminato del *Simposio*. Si noterà invece che, nel suo insieme, il *Simposio* insiste esclusivamente sul processo di ascesa fino alla conoscenza immediata dell’idea (del bello), mentre trascura il processo discendente, cui la *Repubblica* attribuisce invece almeno altrettanta importanza, cui spetta il compito di tracciare una mappa delle relazioni fra l’idea conosciuta e le altre idee, che consente di giungere infine a rendere conto dell’essenza di ciascuna cosa⁸: non si tratta a mio avviso di una significativa divergenza, bensì di un diverso approccio al tema della conoscenza diretta delle idee, che solo la *Repubblica*, e non il *Simposio*, inserisce nel contesto più rigoroso di un’applicazione della metodologia dialettica.

⁶ Si noti che anche i contesti che, per le ragioni sopra spiegate, preferisco non utilizzare, si esprimono in modo analogo: la *Lettera VII* dichiara senza ambiguità che il νοῦς è quanto vi sia di più affine alla cosa conosciuta, in quanto le è massimamente congenere e simile (πολλοτάτα νοῦς καὶ τὸ γνωστόν ὅμοιον, 342a-d), così evocando un genere di conoscenza intellettuale diretta che pare supporre una forma di apprensione immediata; come anche il *Fedro* ripete a più riprese, nel contesto della celebre descrizione della processione delle anime al seguito degli dei nell’iperuranio (247c-248c), che l’anima vede e contempla con l’intelletto (μὲν τὸ θεῖον ὁρᾷ καὶ νοεῖ; ?d??sa; ?a????; ?easau??? ecc.) le idee intellegibili e l’essere.

⁷ Cfr. ancora il mio studio ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΝ ... ΑΛΛ’ ΟΥ ΝΟΗΝ. *Su Resp. VI 511 D 3-5*, cit., pp. 443-44 e n. 4, 452-53 e n. 14.

⁸ Cfr. ancora F. Bearzi, *Il contesto noetico del Simposio*, cit., pp. 233-39.

3. Conoscenza immediata e conoscenza proposizionale degli intellegibili

Come si comprenderà dall'estrema brevità e parzialità della rassegna proposta, non intendo dedicarmi qui a un dettagliato esame di questi passi; né tantomeno a una discussione delle diverse letture che ne sono state suggerite dai commentatori⁹: da (A) quanti in generale ammettono la presenza, in Platone, di una forma di conoscenza intuitiva¹⁰; a (B) quanti la negano recisamente¹¹ oppure, pur negandola in generale, tuttavia (B₁) la ammettono in casi eccezionali, per esempio nella *Lettera VII*¹², oppure (B₂) la ammettono solo in una forma particolare (radicalmente irrazionale e dunque di fatto inutilizzabile per la conoscenza e il giudizio ordinari¹³) oppure ancora (B₃) in casi del tutto eccezionali (per esempio solo per l'anima disincarnata¹⁴); infine a (A₁) quanti, pur riconoscendo che Platone abbia ammesso la plausibilità e perfino la necessità di un atto noetico immediato, ritengono però che si tratti, indipendentemente da come Platone lo ha inteso, di un momento extralogico di fatto incompatibile con una moderna concezione della razionalità e della scienza¹⁵. Intendo invece, in questa parte del mio intervento, porre il problema della conoscenza intellettuale immediata o intuitiva, nell'epistemologia di Platone, da un punto di vista filosofico più generale.

Basterà infatti osservare, di fronte all'ampissima serie di opzioni esegetiche appena evocate, che in generale la gran parte dei commentatori che negano ogni forma di conoscenza intuitiva in Platone (B₁), o che la ammettono solo in condizioni straordinarie (B₂- B₃), appaiono implicitamente o esplicitamente condizionati da un vero e proprio pregiudizio filosofico, tanto ragionevole e legittimo sul piano teorico quanto, però, immotivato e gravemente anacronistico nell'ambito di un'interpretazione storica di Platone, consistente nel giudicare difficile, o piuttosto impossibile,

⁹ Il dibattito su questi temi si è svolto nell'ultimo cinquantennio, soprattutto in ambito anglo-sassone, a partire dalla polemica fra R.C. Cross e R.S. Bluck appunto rispetto al carattere, intuitivo o discorsivo, del culmine del processo conoscitivo secondo Platone; ma si vedano, per uno *status quaestionis* recente, F. Trabattoni, *Il sapere del filosofo*, in M. Vegetti, a cura di, *Platone, La Repubblica*, Libro VI-VII, vol. V, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2003, pp. 151-86, e C. Horn & C. Rapp, *Intuition and Methode. Abschied von einem Dogma der Platon- und Aristoteles-Exegese*, in *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy*, ed. by U. Meixner & A. Newen, Paderborn 2005, pp. 11-45. Una posizione che tende a non accentuare la contrapposizione fra le due interpretazioni alternative è quella di M. Vegetti, *Dialettica*, in *Platone, La Repubblica*, Libro VI-VII, vol. V, cit., pp. 405-33, soprattutto 425-28, e Id., *Quindici lezioni su Platone*, Einaudi, Torino 2003, pp. 159-62, che, pur senza escludere una componente intuitiva immediata nella concezione platonica della conoscenza, tende tuttavia a privilegiare il momento discorsivo perché evidentemente più articolato e più razionalmente giustificato.

¹⁰ Si vedano per esempio, fra gli studi più recenti, H.T. Teloh, *The development of Plato's metaphysics*, Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, University Park 1981, pp. 139 ss., L. Brisson, *L'intelligibile comme source ultime d'évidence chez Platon*, in *Dire l'évidence (Philosophie et rhétorique antiques)*, Actes du colloque de Créteil et de Paris (24-25 mars 1995), textes réunies par C. Lévy et L. Pernot, (= Cahiers de Philosophie de l'Université de Paris XII - Val de Marne, nr. 2), Paris 1997, pp. 95-111, F. Aronadio, *Il problema dell'intuizione in Platone*, in A. Aportone, F. Aronadio, P. Spinicci, *Il problema dell'intuizione. Tre studi su Platone, Kant, Husserl*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2002, pp. 19-61, F. Bearzi, *Il contesto noetico del Simposio*, cit., e le osservazioni di W. Leszl e di M. Baltes & M.-L. Lakmann nel volume miscelaneo *Eidos-Idea. Platone, Aristotele e la tradizione platonica*, ed. F. Fronterotta & W. Leszl, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin 2005, rispettivamente pp. xvii-xix e 5; un'ampia rassegna degli studiosi che si sono espressi a favore della presenza di un'intuizione intellettuale immediata in Platone è presentata da P. Stemmer, *Platons Dialektik. Die frühen und mittleren Dialoge*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1992, specie pp. 214-15.

¹¹ Rappresentativi di questo filone esegetico sono i lavori di J.B.C. Gosling, *Plato*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, specie cap. VIII, e di Ch.H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic dialogue. The philosophical use of a literary form*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 354-55. A conclusioni analoghe, ma per percorsi diversi, approda M. Dixsaut, *Qu'appelle-t-on penser? Du dialogue intérieur de l'âme avec elle-même*, già edito con il titolo *Qu'appelle-t-on penser selon Platon*, in «Cahiers du Centre d'études sur la pensée antique Kairos kai logos», Université d'Aix-en-Provence, 1996; e, in lingua inglese, con il titolo *What is it Plato calls thinking*, in «Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy», XIII (1997), pp. 1-27, ora in M. Dixsaut, *Platon et la question de la pensée. Etudes platoniciennes I*, Vrin, Paris 2000, pp. 47-70, particolarmente 63-70, che sottolinea il carattere discorsivo, e in tal senso dialettico, del momento noetico del processo conoscitivo, con la conseguente esclusione di ogni possibile fondazione extra-discorsiva dell'epistemologia di Platone. Analoga posizione si trova in J. Szaif, *Platon über Wahrheit und Kohärenz*, in «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», LXXXII (2000), pp. 119-48.

¹² Per quanto riguarda la *Lettera VII*, ne sottolinea il carattere di eccezionalità K.M. Sayre, *Plato's literary garden: how to read the Platonic dialogue*, Notre-Dame-London 1995.

¹³ Cfr. F.J. Gonzalez, *Nonpropositional knowledge in Plato*, in «Apeiron», 31 (1998), pp. 235-84, e Id., *Perché non esiste una teoria platonica delle idee*, in *Platone e la tradizione platonica*, a cura di M. Bonazzi e F. Trabattoni, Milano 2003, pp. 31-67, specie 52-60 (che riprende il suo *Plato's dialectic of forms*, in *Plato's forms. Varieties of interpretation*, ed. by W.A. Welton, Lanham 2002).

¹⁴ Cfr. per esempio F. Trabattoni, *Sui caratteri distintivi della metafisica platonica (a partire dal Parmenide)*, in «Methexis», XVI (2003), pp. 43-63, 58-59.

¹⁵ Si vedano L. Brisson & F.W. Meyerstein, *Puissance et limites de la raison. Le problème des valeurs*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1995; tenta di difendere non solo l'autenticità "platonica" dell'atto noetico, ma anche il suo carattere genuinamente razionale, Y. Lafrance, *La rationalité platonicienne: mathématiques et dialectique chez Platon*, in *Platon. L'amour du savoir*, coordonné par M. Narcy, PUF, Paris 2001, pp. 13-48, che appare però costretto a intendere la novhisi" come un procedimento sostanzialmente discorsivo, di cui dunque sembra sfumare il carattere intuitivo (pp. 39-45).

ammettere un *insight* improvviso, imprevedibile e perciò, in ultima analisi, non razionale (una posizione diffusa specialmente nel mondo anglo-sassone, nelle discussioni intorno alla cosiddetta *knowledge by acquaintance*). Questa difficoltà suscita in molti interpreti l'imbarazzo di chi non può concepire che un esito irrazionale, quando non schiettamente estatico o persino mistico, per questo atto di visione o di intuizione immediata, che sorge improvvisamente al termine di una lunga preparazione che mira certamente a quell'esito, ma senza giustificarlo, senza che se ne possa insomma dare conto né dire come, quando e in quale forma esso si compirà. Tale imbarazzo è comprensibile, ma dipende largamente, mi sembra, da un diffuso luogo comune intorno al modo in cui si intende abitualmente, in un certo settore della tradizione filosofica occidentale contemporanea, l'opposizione fra ciò che è "dimostrabile" e ciò che è "indimostrabile", che si tende a far coincidere con l'opposizione fra un orizzonte discorsivo e un orizzonte extra-discorsivo e, di seguito, con quella, più ampia e generale, fra razionalità e irrazionalità o misticismo. Tutto ciò che non cade nell'ambito della dimostrazione discorsiva, in quanto non dimostrabile e non immediatamente dicibile, appare perciò *non razionale* o, più drasticamente, irrimediabilmente mistico. L'intuizione viene letta in questa ottica come un *monstrum* metodologico ed epistemologico, anzi come un evento che si situa al di fuori di ogni metodologia e di ogni epistemologia, come un atto semi-religioso estraneo alla pratica della filosofia¹⁶; donde il tentativo esegetico di ridimensionarne lo statuto e la funzione, interpretando la sua descrizione, da parte di Platone, in chiave essenzialmente metaforica. Tuttavia, benché possa certamente sussistere un elemento metaforico nella descrizione della conoscenza intuitiva dell'idea in termini di "contatto" o di "visione", non mi pare vi sia nulla di metaforico nella distinzione fra una forma di conoscenza mediata e una forma di conoscenza immediata e nell'affermazione che quest'ultima, in quanto in qualche senso "tocca" direttamente il proprio oggetto, risulta capace di coglierlo indipendentemente da ogni mediazione strumentale, che si tratti della procedura deduttiva/dimostrativa o dell'ausilio di supporti sensibili, così transcendendo perfino, in virtù di questa doppia esclusione, l'orizzonte linguistico-proposizionale. Anzi, se è proprio in quanto non si serve di una procedura deduttiva/dimostrativa che questa forma di conoscenza immediata può giungere al principio di ogni dimostrazione, allo stesso modo è proprio in quanto essa trascende l'orizzonte linguistico-proposizionale che può fornire i fondamenti del linguaggio: la differenza fra conoscenza discorsiva e conoscenza intuitiva è insomma a un tempo la radice e la ragione dell'inferiorità dell'una rispetto all'altra.

È quindi perfettamente lecito, e anzi auspicabile, usare prudenza nell'impiego di un termine, "intuizione", che, in virtù della sua lunga carriera nel corso della storia della filosofia (dall'epistemologia all'estetica), può apparire fuorviante in ambito platonico; ma nulla toglie che, lo si esprima come si vuole, il momento più alto del processo conoscitivo è tale, agli occhi di Platone, nella

¹⁶ Si tratta chiaramente di un'eredità proveniente dall'orizzonte analitico e dalla filosofia del linguaggio, che si trova particolarmente ben esemplificata da L. Wittgenstein, *Ursache und Wirkung: intuitives Erfassen*, raccolti ormai in *Philosophical occasions 1912-1951*, ed. by J.C. Klagge and A. Nordmann, Hackett, Indianapolis-Cambridge 1993, pp. 368-426 (trad. it. *Causa ed effetto*, Einaudi, Torino 2006, p. 22): «Che cosa sappiamo dell'intuizione? Quale concetto ne abbiamo? Dev'essere qualcosa come una sorta di vedere, un riconoscere ad un *singolo* sguardo; di più non saprei. "Così dunque tu sai che cos'è un'intuizione!" – All'incirca nello stesso modo in cui so che cosa significa "vedere con un singolo sguardo un corpo simultaneamente da tutti i lati". Non voglio dire che non si possa applicare quest'espressione ad un qualche processo sulla base di qualche buon motivo – ma so per ciò stesso che cosa essa significa? – "Riconoscere intuitivamente la causa" significa: *conoscere la causa in qualche modo* (fare esperienza di essa in modi diversi dal solito). – Dunque qualcuno la conosce – ma a che cosa gli serve questo, se il suo sapere non *dà buoni risultati*? Vale a dire, non ne dà nel tempo e nel modo usuale. Ma allora egli non si trova in una situazione affatto differente da uno che abbia in qualche modo *indovinato correttamente* la causa. Vale a dire: noi non abbiamo alcun concetto di una tale *conoscenza* speciale della causa. Possiamo certamente immaginarci qualcuno che dica, col marchio dell'ispirazione, che adesso egli conosce la causa; ma questo non ci impedisce di *accertare* se egli conosca la cosa giusta. (...) (È come se qualcuno affermasse che ha per intuizione la conoscenza dell'anatomia umana; gli diremmo: "Non abbiamo alcun dubbio su ciò; ma se tu vuoi diventare un medico, devi dare tutti gli esami come ogni altro")». Di una simile posizione si trova una significativa eco, in un contesto filosofico sensibilmente diverso, in D.C. Dennett, *Sweet dreams. Philosophical obstacles to a science of consciousness*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2005 (trad. it. Milano 2006, pp. 108-09): «"Non esiste una stringa, di qualsiasi lunghezza, di enunciati del linguaggio naturale liberi dal dimostrativo che esprima adeguatamente la conoscenza di cosa si prova a fare l'esperienza di una sensazione di blu". Si vorrebbe vedere questa affermazione provata (Sto facendo dell'ironia. Di tutte le cose che uno potrebbe volere, costruire una teoria formale dell'*ineffabilità* è in fondo alla lista, ma potrebbe essere proficuo considerare la difficoltà di tale impresa.) (...) A chi non ha mai visto o toccato un triangolo si può presumibilmente dire, con poche e ben scelte parole, cosa deve aspettarsi esattamente, e quando fa esperienza del suo primo triangolo non avrà difficoltà a individuarlo come tale sulla base della breve descrizione che gli è stata fornita. Non si imparerà nulla». Il punto di Dennett, quindi, non è quello di relegare ogni esperienza conoscitiva "diretta" e in qualche senso extra-linguistica in un ambito mistico o irrazionale, come per Wittgenstein, ma di negare recisamente che tale esperienza "diretta" ed extra-linguistica, ammesso che sia possibile, aggiunga alcunché alla corrispondente conoscenza dimostrativa e proposizionale. Personalmente, capisco e condivido in ampia parte l'osservazione di Dennett, ma non mi pare probabile che Platone, quanto a lui, la condividesse. Si noti come anche Dennett faccia uso, per alludere a tale esperienza "diretta" ed extra-linguistica, a quel linguaggio visivo o tattile che viene in questo contesto impiegato da Platone.

misura in cui consiste in una relazione diretta fra il soggetto conoscente e l'oggetto conosciuto, in una stretta corrispondenza fra l'intelletto e gli intellegibili, tale corrispondenza essendo descritta talora da Platone come un vero e proprio contatto (mutuando, sul piano intellettuale, la concreta relazione che sussiste sul piano sensibile fra gli organi di senso e i loro oggetti materiali) o come una visione immediata (ancora una volta utilizzando un modello sensibile, quello della visione e della vista, per alludere a un analogo grado di assoluta certezza percettiva sul piano intellettuale): se è vero che solo nel secondo caso si rivela forse legittimo parlare di "intuizione", in entrambi invece abbiamo a che fare con un modello epistemologico che fa consistere la verità della conoscenza e la sua certezza nella coincidenza di soggetto e oggetto, nell'adeguamento del primo al secondo¹⁷, dunque in un atto pre-linguistico di per sé comunicabile solo ostensivamente che fonda la verità e la possibilità dell'uso del linguaggio, fornendo le garanzie di senso necessarie per l'impiego dei termini linguistici in riferimento alle cose che nominano¹⁸.

Così concepita, la conoscenza intellettuale immediata o intuitiva, pur non costituendosi nell'orizzonte linguistico-proposizionale, nel linguaggio e tramite il linguaggio, si lascia tuttavia trasporre e quindi comunicare linguisticamente: se infatti l'apprensione o la percezione immediata dei propri oggetti di pensiero appartiene all'esperienza intellettuale individuale, tale esperienza è innanzitutto universalizzabile, perché comune a tutti gli individui che intraprendano l'opportuno percorso che culmina nella formazione dialettica; di tali oggetti di pensiero, proprio in quanto li si è pienamente e immediatamente conosciuti e più individui li hanno effettivamente conosciuti, è inoltre possibile parlare per indicarli scambievolmente gli uni agli altri, utilizzando i nomi che correttamente li nominano e li qualificano; infine, grazie alla conoscenza piena e immediata di più oggetti di pensiero, simultaneamente o successivamente, diviene possibile ricostruire le relazioni reciproche che essi intrattengono fra loro e con le altre cose esistenti, tracciando così una rete dialettica che, combinando i nomi e i predicati degli oggetti conosciuti e delle altre cose esistenti, conduce a costruire intorno a essi una conoscenza proposizionale, dunque di carattere deduttivo e dimostrativo. Il fatto che una conoscenza abbia natura noetica e immediata, visiva o tattile, non impedisce insomma che essa possa essere trasposta e comunicata attraverso il linguaggio; e il fatto che una conoscenza possa essere espressa e comunicata attraverso il linguaggio non impedisce che essa si fondi su un atto noetico e immediato, visivo o tattile: la stessa conoscenza può essere riproposta a livelli diversi, con procedure diverse caratterizzate da gradi di certezza diversi¹⁹, pur vertendo sugli stessi oggetti ed essendo portatrice degli stessi contenuti di verità²⁰.

¹⁷ Si veda su questo punto il mio ΜΕΘΕΞΙΣ. *La teoria platonica delle idee e la partecipazione delle cose empiriche*, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa 2001, pp. 66-79.

¹⁸ È del tutto evidente che si ha a che fare qui, a ogni livello, con un modello epistemologico di carattere integralmente intellettuale e pienamente razionale, almeno dal punto di vista di Platone. Non ha dunque nessun senso parlare in tal caso di "misticismo" o di "irrazionalismo" dell'intuizionismo platonico ed ecco perché utilizzare simili categorie appare storicamente infondato e filosoficamente anacronistico; soltanto a patto di ridurre il razionale al linguistico si finisce per condannare il non linguistico all'irrazionalità o al misticismo, come appunto avviene in Wittgenstein (cfr. *supra*, n. 16) e nella tradizione analitica che dai suoi scritti prende le mosse: ma questo è appunto un pregiudizio filosofico di cui forse occorrerebbe liberarsi in sede esegetica. Si può per esempio ricordare che G. Frege, nel suo *Über Begriff und Gegenstand* (trad. it. in *La struttura logica del linguaggio*, a cura di A. Bonomi, Milano 1973, pp. 373-86), già aveva segnalato l'impossibilità di ridurre la riflessione e il pensiero come tali entro l'orizzonte dimostrativo e definitorio del linguaggio proposizionale: «Non si può pretendere che tutto venga definito, così come non si può pretendere dal chimico che scomponga tutte le sostanze. Ciò che è semplice non si può scomporre, e ciò che è logicamente semplice non può essere propriamente definito. Come la maggioranza degli elementi chimici, ciò che è logicamente semplice non viene dato fin da principio, ma viene acquisito con il lavoro scientifico. Se si trova qualcosa che è semplice o che per il momento deve valere come tale, si dovrà coniare una nuova denominazione, giacché la lingua non ha un'espressione a esso esattamente corrispondente. Una definizione per introdurre un nome adatto a ciò che è logicamente semplice non è possibile. Non ci resta dunque altro che guidare il lettore o l'ascoltatore *con dei cenni* per fargli capire che cosa intendiamo con quella parola». (corsivo mio) Ho cercato d'altra parte di mostrare nei miei lavori citati in n. 2 come anche gli sviluppi contemporanei delle scienze cognitive e della mente abbiano in qualche misura riabilitato, contro i sacerdoti dell'ortodossia wittgensteiniana, quella porzione di fenomeni mentali di carattere cognitivo, la cui forma visiva non può che essere di natura extra-linguistica o pre-linguistica, non strutturabili secondo uno schema analitico o dimostrativo.

¹⁹ Questa diversità di grado è ben riconosciuta da H.J. Krämer, *Ist die Noesis bei Platon fallibel?*, in *Sein und Werden im Lichte Platons*, Festschrift für Karl Albert, hrsg. V. E. Jain & S. Grätzel, Freiburg-München 2001, pp. 111-21, anche se T. Butler, *Identity and Infallibility in Plato's Epistemology*, «Apeiron», XXXIX (2006) pp. 1-25, ritiene che anche una forma di conoscenza proposizionale possa attingere a un analogo grado di infallibilità.

²⁰ Non c'è dunque contraddizione fra l'acquisizione non linguistica della conoscenza noetica e la sua comunicabilità in termini proposizionali, ma non vedo come questo possa indurre a intendere tale conoscenza, in quanto riguarda i principi primi o le premesse di ogni dimostrazione o ragionamento, in termini integralmente proposizionali e linguistici, come vorrebbero per esempio M. Dixsaut, *Qu'appelle-t-on penser? Du dialogue intérieur de l'âme avec elle-même*, cit., pp. 63-70, e J. Szaif, *Platon über Wahrheit und Kohärenz*, cit. È naturalmente impossibile completare l'esame proposto qui, e verificarne l'esito, attraverso l'analisi delle pagine del libro vii della *Repubblica* che contengono l'illustrazione della «canzone della dialettica» (532-534), ossia del metodo conoscitivo che si situa al culmine della gerarchia dei saperi, e delle

4. Visione, contatto e conoscenza immediata degli intellegibili

Resta infine da chiedersi, anche se i passi esaminati del *Simposio* e della *Repubblica* non toccano questo punto, in cosa consista precisamente, dal punto di vista epistemico, e come avvenga concretamente, dal punto di vista psico-fisiologico, tale conoscenza noetica che appunto non si costituisce nell'orizzonte linguistico-proposizionale e consta di un'apprensione o percezione intellettuale immediata dei propri oggetti di pensiero o del loro principio incondizionato, una volta che sia stato ammesso il carattere almeno parzialmente metaforico del "vedere" e del "toccare" intellettivi. Se infatti questa apprensione percepisce immediatamente i propri oggetti intellegibili o il loro principio incondizionato in una relazione diretta e non mediata, si tratterà di un'apprensione o percezione di realtà individuali colte appunto, ciascuna, nella sua singolarità e immediatezza: ma come è possibile *conoscere* delle realtà davvero individuali, ossia dei puri individui irrelati? Una realtà propriamente individuale pare infatti, per definizione, inaccessibile, nella misura in cui la nozione di conoscenza suppone (1) una classificazione generica o (2) un riconoscimento dell'oggetto conosciuto, dunque (1) un giudizio che permetta di collocarlo in una o più classi di predicati cui appartiene come membro oppure (2) un'identificazione, per somiglianza o per dissomiglianza, a partire da suoi attributi già noti, in entrambi i casi, quindi, in virtù delle proprietà che possiede, delle relazioni che intrattiene o del genere di cui fa parte. Un *bare individual*, proprio in quanto privo di proprietà, attributi, relazioni ecc., sfuggirà perciò a ogni classificazione o riconoscimento, rivelandosi così, nella sua irriducibile individualità, estraneo a ogni forma di conoscenza.

Ora, lasciando da parte alcune ipotesi estreme che pure sono state proposte²¹, mi pare che almeno *una* proprietà debba essere concessa agli individui intellegibili, cioè quella che propriamente essi *sono*: questi oggetti di pensiero percepiti intellettivamente, che nell'immediatezza dell'atto noetico appaiono irriducibili a ogni classificazione o riconoscimento, consisteranno quindi, per esempio, non in *una cosa bella*, ma nella *bellezza in sé*, non in *una cosa identica*, ma nell'*identità in sé*, non in *questo uomo*, ma nell'*umanità in sé*, non, in generale, in una qualunque istanza particolare di un genere, ma nella proprietà immediata che ne è l'essenza. È indubbio che, quando percepisco per la prima volta la bellezza, non so ancora cosa sia il *bello in sé* né, quindi, *una cosa bella*, come posso non conoscere il nome "bello" né tantomeno riesco ad applicarlo correttamente; riesco però a cogliere *qualcosa* di determinato e di consistente che sussiste nell'individuo che percepisco intellettualmente, cioè la sua proprietà essenziale, ciò che esso è (il suo τί ἐστι). Solo in seguito, via via acquisendo la percezione immediata di più individui intellegibili, potrò procedere, accostandoli e confrontandoli, a ricostruirne le relazioni reciproche e con le loro istanze particolari, disegnando infine, sul piano logico-linguistico, le classi di predicati predicabili di soggetti particolari, reciprocamente inclusive o esclusive, che fondano l'orizzonte proposizionale. È vero dunque che, inizialmente e nella sua immediatezza, la percezione del singolo oggetto di pensiero, dell'individuo intellegibile, non ha nome né riconoscibilità dal punto di vista del soggetto della percezione intellettuale, ma non per questo risulta tuttavia del tutto "vuota" o priva di consistenza, in quanto si riempie di un contenuto che, appunto, "consiste", nel senso che si dà immediatamente al pensiero.

Un simile quadro epistemico si chiarisce forse, e si completa, ricordando che il *Timeo* (37a-c) fornisce una spiegazione in certa misura psico-fisiologica della conoscenza noetica (νοῦς ἐπιστήμη τε). È infatti nell'anima, che si compone di due cerchi concentrici che ruotano l'uno esternamente all'altro, il cerchio dell'identico e il cerchio del diverso, che hanno sede la percezione noetica e l'opinione sensibile: quando dunque l'anima, attraverso il cerchio dell'identico, tocca (ἐφάπτεται) un oggetto intellegibile, subendo tale contatto ne è affetta (κινουμένη διὰ πάσης ἐαυτῆς) e diffonde al

sue convergenze e divergenze rispetto ai gradini inferiori di tale gerarchia, di fatto ripercorrendo l'intera sequenza epistemologica tratteggiata nei successivi segmenti della linea divisa alla conclusione del libro vi.

²¹ Pagine assai stimolanti su questo tema sono state scritte da R.D. Mohr nel saggio che apre la raccolta intitolata *The Platonic cosmology* (Leiden 1985) dedicato alla questione dell'unicità del mondo nel *Timeo* (pp. 9-52): argomentando in favore di una concezione delle idee come realtà rigorosamente e radicalmente individuali, Mohr trae una serie di conseguenze assai peculiari che riguardano lo statuto epistemologico di tali individui noetici come oggetti di pensiero. Infatti, se le idee sono realtà davvero individuali, bisognerà considerarle come assolutamente prive di qualunque proprietà o caratteristica "comune" o a qualunque titolo "generale"; così stando le cose, la conoscenza noetica non potrà consistere in una loro generalizzazione o nel riconoscimento della loro appartenenza a un genere né tantomeno in una procedura ricettiva o passiva che permetta di "accogliere" gli individui noetici nell'anima o nell'intelletto, giacché, tali individui appunto essendo in sé del tutto vuoti, nessuna traccia intellegibile potrebbero imprimere nell'intelletto o nell'anima. Se capisco bene il suo ragionamento, Mohr intende ogni atto noetico come un punto di partenza di per sé privo di contenuto determinato o determinabile, e dunque singolarmente inconsistente, da cui tuttavia prendere le mosse per ricostruire, attraverso un processo psichico tanto automatico e immediato da apparire quasi inconscio, le relazioni fra i singoli individui noetici, giungendo così a stabilire la loro reciproca appartenenza generica (pp. 43-48).

proprio interno tale affezione (εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ψυχὴν διαγγεῖλη). Ma poiché l'intera struttura dell'anima, e i due cerchi di cui si compone, è di carattere matematico e consta di proporzioni e rapporti numerici (ἀνὰ λόγον μερισθείσα καὶ συνδεθείσα), ne segue abbastanza evidentemente che il contatto del cerchio dell'identico con l'oggetto intellegibile in cui consiste la percezione noetica ha come effetto quello di produrre una variazione nelle proporzioni matematiche e nei rapporti numerici del cerchio dell'identico, ed è precisamente questa variazione che viene trasmessa dal cerchio dell'identico al resto dell'anima, in modo che, al termine di questa catena di trasmissione, si giunge alla formulazione di un λόγος che traduce quel contatto immediato – di per sé non ancora riconoscibile né riconosciuto, non ancora classificabile né classificato, non ancora nominabile né nominato – in un giudizio, cioè in un costrutto proposizionale articolato intorno all'oggetto intellegibile con cui il cerchio dell'anima è entrato in contatto e di cui ha dunque avuto percezione noetica, intorno al suo statuto, alle sue relazioni, alle sue proprietà²².

La singola percezione noetica immediata dei *bare individuals* che sono la bellezza in sé, l'identità in sé o l'umanità in sé non può effettivamente ricevere riconoscimento o nome, ma non è vuota di contenuto, perché consiste nell'affezione subita dall'anima (dal suo cerchio dell'identico), a sua volta coincidente con una variazione numerica, quando subisce il contatto con quegli oggetti. Gli individui intellegibili “bello in sé”, “identico in sé” o “uomo in sé” non sono altro, sul piano ontologico, che “bellezza”, “identità” o “umanità”; sul piano epistemologico, il contatto immediato di tali individui con il soggetto noetico (l'anima e il suo cerchio dell'identico) non produce, come tale, “bellezza”, “identità” o “umanità” né le loro istanze particolari, ma semplici variazioni quantitative (numeriche) che, in seguito a un processo di diffusione nell'anima, quindi di valutazione e riconoscimento, ricevono un nome e una determinazione: dunque il nome “bellezza” come, per esempio, “armonioso equilibrio di parti”, il nome “identità” come, poniamo, “equiestensione di due o più enti” o il nome “umanità” come, infine, “vita razionale”, dando luogo così alla conoscenza proposizionale, al ragionamento “discorsivo” o dianoetico, che si colloca nell'orizzonte propriamente linguistico e dimostrativo.

Se questa lettura della psico-fisiologia dell'anima nel *Timeo* è corretta, il modello e la spiegazione visivi e tattili utilizzati da Platone per descrivere la conoscenza intellettuale immediata, o intuitiva, degli intellegibili, nel *Simposio* e nella *Repubblica*, sono forse assai meno metaforici e analogici, e ben più letterali e concreti, di quanto molti studiosi siano disposti ad ammettere.

²² Ho esaminato nel dettaglio questo passo del *Timeo* nei miei articoli *Platonismo e scienze della mente: cosa è l'intuizione?*, cit., e *Il Timeo e la matematica embodied*, in *La sapienza di Timeo*, a cura di L. Napolitano, Milano 2007, pp. 000. È interessante notare soltanto che, stando a questo passo del *Timeo*, tanto la percezione sensoriale di oggetti sensibili quanto la percezione noetica di oggetti intellegibili si fondano su un contatto diretto fra il soggetto e l'oggetto, mentre il λόγος inteso come giudizio o costrutto proposizionale, giunge *solo in seguito* a tale contatto, quando gli effetti di tale contatto, propagandosi all'insieme dell'anima, possono essere effettivamente valutati, confrontati, articolati in quel dialogo dell'anima con se stessa cui si riduce il ragionamento.

Ignorance, Knowledge and True Belief in Plato's *Symposium*

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Introduction

Throughout the dialogues, Plato discusses lack of knowledge in two different ways. Sometimes, Plato discusses simple cases of not knowing: the person in question simply lacks knowledge. Let us call this “simple ignorance.” At other times, the person under discussion not only lacks knowledge, but also thinks that he knows what he does not know. Let us call this kind of not-knowing “double-ignorance.” Often, when Plato discusses this first kind of ignorance, simple ignorance, he makes a clean dichotomy between knowing and not knowing—everything is either known or not-known, and there is nothing in between. When he discusses the second kind of ignorance, double ignorance, Plato draws a continuum between knowledge and double ignorance and places belief—sometimes true belief—between the two. The discussion of knowledge and true belief at *Symposium* 202a is an example of this second, “continuum,” approach. This approach is also taken at *Rep.* V and *Mn.* 97a-98b. Examples of the dichotomous approach, with which it is to be contrasted, are found at *Mn.* 80d-81a and *Th.* 188ab.

I believe that these two different approaches are consistent with each other, as they emphasize two different epistemological elements: knowledge and ignorance themselves, on the one hand, and epistemic cognitive states, on the other. These two approaches are echoed at *Rep.* 475-480, where Socrates presents beauty itself and ugliness itself as non-identical and mutually exhaustive (dichotomous), while he presents beautiful sights and sounds as continuous between beauty itself and ugliness itself, but identical with neither. In this paper, I focus on *Symposium* 200-212, in order to explore the compatibility between the dichotomous and continuous approaches to knowledge and ignorance, by analogy to the presentation of beauty and ugliness as dichotomous when applied to beauty itself, but continuous when applied to beautiful sights and sounds.

Continuity and Hierarchy

The continuous approach is also a hierarchical approach. Knowledge is the best kind of epistemological state, and double ignorance is the worst. Double ignorance is clearly a kind of ignorance, but so is simple ignorance. Still, simple ignorance is a better kind of ignorance than double ignorance. It is higher up in what we might think of as an epistemological hierarchy, with knowledge at the top and double ignorance on the bottom. The person who recognizes that he does not know what he does not know has made progress up the hierarchy—and along the continuum—that has knowledge at one end and double ignorance at the other. The continuum from double ignorance to knowledge progresses through simple ignorance and on to belief, in order to reach knowledge.

Now it might seem that the hierarchy would move straightforwardly from double ignorance, to simple ignorance, to false belief, to true belief, and then to knowledge. But what we learn from the *Symposium* and the other dialogues that give us the continuum and hierarchy is that the belief part of this progression is more complex. For example, some beliefs—especially some false beliefs—are going to be constitutive of double ignorance, while others are more likely to constitute simple ignorance. Furthermore, there can be better and worse true beliefs.

Double Ignorance

While it has no special names associated with it in Plato's text, double ignorance is described explicitly in the *Apology* and the *Meno*. At *Apology* 22d3-e1, Socrates describes his encounter with the craftsmen saying:

They knew things I did not know and to that extent they were wiser than I. But, gentlemen of the jury, the good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault as the poets: each of them, because of his success at his craft, thought himself very wise in most other pursuits, and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had . . . (Grube)

Then, at *Apology* 23a5-b4 Socrates concludes:

What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said: “This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless.” (Grube)

Socrates seems to allow that human beings have some knowledge of some particular craft, but that

this “human wisdom” is worth “little or nothing.”¹ The most important thing to recognize is what the poets and craftsmen do not: that their confidence in their knowledge of poetry or their craft is keeping them from appreciating how little they know. Most significantly, it somehow makes them think that they know things they don’t. This is the worst possible situation to be in because Socrates, who is said to be in the best possible situation, differs from them both in not knowing what they know, but—and this is what is emphasized—in not thinking that he knows what he does not know.

I would argue that this same sentiment is what Plato has Socrates put more plainly and succinctly at *Meno* 84a2-b1. After bringing the slave to *aporia*, he comments to Meno:

You realize, Meno, what point he has reached in his recollection, at first he did not know what the basic line of the eight-foot square was; even now he does not yet know, but then he thought he knew, and answered confidently as if he did know, and he did not think himself at a loss, but now he does think himself at a loss, and as he does not know, neither does he think he knows?—That is true.—So he is now in a better position with regard to the matter he does not know?—I agree with that, too. (Grube)

Socrates goes on to allude to the metaphor of the torpedo fish that Meno used earlier (80a6, c6) in order for us to see that Meno made the mistake of thinking he knew what virtue was when he did not, earlier in the conversation. Socrates observes that neither Meno nor the Slave have been harmed by being made numb—in fact, they have benefited. Whereas before they didn’t realize that they were making faulty assumptions about virtue and the length of the side of a square, now they do realize, so they can now seek the truth.

These passages demonstrate that Plato holds double ignorance to be the worst epistemological state and that simple ignorance—where one does not know but also realizes that one does not know (sometimes indicated by *aporia*), is a better epistemological position. Now let’s look at passages that place various belief states in between simple ignorance and knowledge, so we can see if those states can be ordered in this same epistemic hierarchy.

Republic V

At *Rep.* 476e4-479d5, Plato has Socrates place belief in between knowledge and ignorance. He does it with some ceremony: Through the process of questioning Glaucon, Socrates concludes that knowledge is “over” (*epi*) what is, ignorance is “over” (*epi*) what is not, and belief, as it is in between knowledge and ignorance, must be “over” (*epi*) whatever lies between being and non-being (467c7-8).²

This passage will be an exception to the other passages that place “belief” in between knowledge and ignorance, as it does not distinguish between true and false belief. Plato continues in this exceptional vein at *Rep.* 507b-519a where, in the three images of the sun, the line, and the cave, Socrates also does not distinguish between when images (*eikasia*), opinions (*pistis*), or encounters with shadows in the cave, are better or worse (true or false beliefs). Our two other passages from the *Meno* and the *Symposium* speak specifically about *true* belief as what lies in between knowledge and ignorance.³

Meno 96-98

At *Meno* 96d, after illuminating what seems to be a strong connection between those who are virtuous (bring benefit) and those who are wise, Socrates berates himself for not realizing that a person can benefit another with true belief; knowledge is not required. He says a guide to Larissa who has true belief will be no worse at getting a traveler to his destination than a guide who has knowledge of the road to Larissa. He concludes that true belief is no less useful than knowledge (97cd). When Meno wonders then why knowledge is more highly prized than true opinion, Socrates brings up the legend of Daedalus’ statues: they are so life-like that if not tied down they escape in the night. He analogizes true belief to these life-like statues. They are useful for as long as one has them, but they are not tied down and can, therefore, disappear. One turns true beliefs into knowledge by tying them down with a

¹ I will comment on whether Plato tends to treat this sort of thing as actual knowledge later in the paper.

² I believe that the proper translation of *epi* is an important key to understanding this passage and to understanding Plato’s epistemology. The paraphrase of this passage that leads to the claim that what-is is the “object” of knowledge and the other two relationships can also be understood as subject/object relationships has led to a misunderstanding of important parts of Plato’s epistemology. I will not be able to deal with this issue here. Please see my unpublished “The Targets and Contents of Knowledge, Belief and Ignorance in Plato’s *Republic*.”

³ Another interesting exception is *Theaetetus* 187d-200d, where both true and false belief appear to be kinds of ignorance, neither of which measures up to knowledge. We will not have time to discuss this here, but see my unpublished, “Knowledge and False Belief in Plato’s *Theaetetus*: Lessons of the Wax Block.”

“reasoned account” (*aitias logismo*) (98a3-4).⁴ Thus, while we might take the *Apology* to have shown us the lower end of the epistemological hierarchy—it is anchored by double ignorance, followed by simple ignorance—this passage appears to illustrate the upper end of the hierarchy: the ultimate state is knowledge, and true belief (or at least some kind of true belief) falls right below it.

Symposium 202a

At *Symposium* 202a, Socrates rehearses Diotima’s berating of him for making a false dichotomy. He responds to her claim that love is neither beautiful nor good (201e6-7) by asking, “Is love ugly then and bad?” She comes back with “Do you really think that if a thing is not ugly it has to be beautiful?” (201e10-11). When Socrates maintains his belief that the not-beautiful is ugly, she prods him further: And if a thing is not wise (*sophon*) it is ignorant? Or haven’t you found out yet that there’s something in between wisdom (*sophias*) and ignorance?—What’s that?—It’s judging things correctly without being able to give a reason. Surely you see that this is not the same as knowing (*epistasthai*)—for how could something unreasoning (*alogon*) be knowledge? And it’s not ignorance either—for how could what hits the way things are (*tou ontos*) be ignorance?⁵ Correct judgment, of course, has this character, it is in between understanding (*phroneseos*) and ignorance (201e10-202a9). (following Nehamas and Woodruff).

So now we have further instruction about the top end of the hierarchy that is bounded by knowledge (or wisdom, or understanding⁶) at the top and double-ignorance at the bottom. What is reasoning (*logon*) is better than what is unreasoning (*alogon*) and what hits what-is is better than what does not. Even better is for judgment to be both reasoning and to hit what-is. But, if we are going to have just one or the other—to hit what-is while being *alogon*, or to be *logon* without hitting what-is—is one to be preferred? This question has not been answered.

The Compatibility between Dichotomy and Hierarchy

Before we investigate this question, however, let’s take a look at the assumptions concerning beauty and ugliness with which Socrates enters the debate. He begins by maintaining a dichotomy between beauty and ugliness. If something isn’t beautiful then it is ugly. At *Rep.* 475e5-476a3, Socrates celebrates Glaucon’s (ostensibly unusual) ability to admit that beauty and ugliness are two and therefore each is one. The fact that they are each one means that they are non-identical. Thus it makes sense to say that what is not beauty is ugliness. However, when Glaucon plays the Lover of Sights and Sounds at 479c3-5, he readily (and apparently correctly, according to Socrates) agrees that beautiful sights and sounds are also ugly sights and sounds.

The idea seems to be that sights and sounds are both beautiful and ugly at the same time, although in different proportions, so that they form a continuum between beauty itself and ugliness itself, but that no sight or sound is absolutely beautiful or ugly, and also that no sight or sound is identical with either beauty itself or ugliness itself. So we see how the dichotomous approach can be compatible with the continuous approach when it comes to beauty and ugliness. If we focus on beauty and ugliness themselves, we get a dichotomy. If we focus on beautiful sights and sounds we get a continuum. If we were concerned with beauty and with making every sight and sound as beautiful as possible, we would have to admit that every sight and sound falls short of being unqualifiedly beautiful. So if we wanted to make a sight or sound as beautiful as possible, it would make sense for us to acknowledge that it would remain ugly (not-beautiful) even if it were the most beautiful sight or sound, which means it would be the least ugly one and, hence, remain on the ugly side of the beauty/ugliness dichotomy. For, while beautiful sights and sounds can approach beauty, they can never *be* beauty nor can they be unqualifiedly beautiful.

Now let’s see what happens when we make the analogous case for knowledge and ignorance. Knowledge itself and ignorance itself are mutually exclusive and dichotomous. However, when you approach knowledge and ignorance as qualities of human psychological states, it will make sense to see them as continuous between knowledge and ignorance, even while never fully embodying knowledge. If what we are most concerned with is the pursuit of knowledge—if we are focused on becoming as knowledgeable as possible—then we will evaluate all psychological states with respect to how they fall short of knowledge. They will be appreciated as better and worse forms of ignorance,

⁴ This will be surprising to those who interpret “*epi*” at *Republic* 467c7-8 as describing a subject/object relationship. For, here Socrates indicates that knowledge and true belief can have the same object—namely, the road to Larissa. See n. 2 (above) and also my unpublished “The Targets and Contents of Knowledge, Belief and Ignorance in Plato’s *Republic*.”

⁵ Here again, we have true belief hitting the same target as knowledge, see n. 2 and 4, above.

⁶ I do not think anything is to be gained by trying to establish a hierarchy among the references of various Greek terms that Plato apparently uses as synonyms for knowledge (*episteme*, *phronesis*, *sophia*, *nous*, etc.). But, I will not argue for this here.

approaching, but never deserving, the unqualified descriptor, “knowledge.” This is why Plato can maintain both a dichotomous approach and a continuous approach toward knowledge at different places in the dialogues, without contradicting himself. This is why, when he says that true belief is between knowledge and ignorance, we are not wrong to say that true belief—even reasoned true belief—as it is on the continuous hierarchy that has knowledge at the top and double ignorance at the bottom, is still usefully described as a form of ignorance, albeit a better form of ignorance than some others (like false belief). The pursuit of knowledge can, perhaps more realistically, be described as an exercise in ignorance reduction—depending on how well one thinks human psychological states can be unqualifiedly described as knowledge. That is, depending on where below knowledge they fall in the hierarchy of cognitive states that is continuous between knowledge and ignorance.

A Hierarchy or a Complicated Mess?

However, what happens next in the *Symposium* allows us to see that being reasoned and hitting what-is still doesn’t suffice for knowledge, if knowledge is to sit unambiguously at the top of a hierarchy, double-ignorance at the bottom. For when Diotima chides Socrates for thinking that Eros must be ugly if he is not beautiful, Socrates gives a different reason for thinking Eros is beautiful: everyone believes that Eros is a god (202b6-7) and everyone believes that all gods are beautiful and happy. Socrates includes himself among those who believe that Eros is a god (202c5).

After Socrates asserts that everyone believes Eros is a god, Diotima asks if by “everyone” he means only those not knowing (*me eidoton*) or also those knowing (*eidoton*).⁷ At this point Plato juxtaposes judgments that are *alogon* and *logon* and also judgments that hit what-is and those that don’t: Diotima’s questioning of Socrates makes it evident that he has some conflicting beliefs, all of which are reasoned, but only some of which are true. However, while he does have some reasoned beliefs that hit what-is, even those, it seems should not be called “knowledge” as he assents to them even while he assents to other beliefs that contradict them.

“Yet everyone believes he’s a great god,” I said.

“Only those who don’t know?” she said. “Is that how you mean ‘everyone’? Or do you also include those who do know?”

“Oh, everyone together.”

And she laughed. “Socrates, how could those who say that he’s not a god at all agree that he’s a great god?” (202b6-202c1) (following Nehamas and Woodruff)

Diotima seems to be thinking that anyone who *knew* Eros, would not be able to even entertain the belief that Eros is a god, because this is a false belief. Diotima seems clear that it is not possible to *know* Eros—or to *know* anything about Eros—if one also believes, falsely, that he is a god. We can *believe* what-is about something about which we also *believe* what-is-not. However, we cannot *know* anything about that concerning which we also *believe* what-is-not.

Witness Socrates’ beliefs as an example of how hard it will be to establish a hierarchy among them based on whether they are *logon* and hit what-is: Socrates believes that Eros is a god. Does he have a reason? It’s not clear from the text. If he doesn’t, then it is an *alogon*—false belief. Perhaps we could provide a rationale: Socrates believes that love is good and beautiful. Why does he believe that love is good and beautiful? Well, everyone desires it, and what do people desire other than what is good and beautiful?⁸ He also believes that all gods are good and beautiful. If this is his rationale, then Socrates has a belief that Eros is good and beautiful that is *logon* but does not hit what-is; a *logon*-false belief.

Socrates also believes that all gods are happy and beautiful (202c6-9). He believes that anyone who is happy possesses good and beautiful things (202c10-12). We are, perhaps, to understand this as a *logon* belief, as it is implied by an argument he makes at *Lysis* (218b).⁹ If Socrates believes that Eros is a god, then he must believe that Eros is happy and so he must believe that Eros possesses beautiful things. This would also seem to be a *logon* belief. However, it’s false as it is premised on the belief that Eros is a god.

Socrates also believes that Eros is desire. Since all desire is for good and beautiful things, it is *logon* to believe that Eros desires beautiful and good things. However, Eros cannot desire what he

⁷ It’s unclear what the object of *eidoton* is supposed to be here: knowing that Eros is beautiful? Knowing that Eros is a god? Neither one really makes sense. I would conjecture that the object is Eros itself. Those knowing Eros can’t think that that because he is a god he is beautiful; since they would have to realize that he is not a god. Diotima does not count Socrates among those who know Eros. She just realizes that he has to believe that Eros isn’t beautiful and therefore isn’t a god, since he does believe (and reasonably so) that all gods are beautiful.

⁸ It is widely agreed that Socrates argues that all desire is for the good at *Meno* 77b3-78c2 and *Gorgias* 466a-468e.

⁹ At *Lysis* 217a-218c, Socrates argues that only those who don’t have—who still long for—knowledge and happiness will continue to seek it.

already has, and if he is a god, he possesses good and beautiful things. So, according to Diotima, at the same time as Socrates has the *logon*-false belief that Eros is a god, he has the *logon*-true belief that Eros is not a god:

“Socrates, how could those who say that he’s not a god at all agree that he’s a great god?”

“Who says that?” I asked.

“You, for one,” she said, “and I for another.” (202c1-4) (Nehamas and Woodruff)

Socrates’ *logon*-true belief might be superior to his *logon*-false belief. However it can’t be knowledge, for he assents to it at the same time as he holds a contradictory false belief.

So, there are *alogon*-true and *alogon*-false beliefs and there are *logon*-true and *logon*-false beliefs. But can they all be arranged hierarchically? Perhaps it seems clear that the *alogon* false belief will be near the bottom. So far it’s not at all clear that any *logon*-true belief gets to be deemed knowledge, but perhaps they belong closer to the top—the knowledge end—of the continuum. But is there a hierarchy to be established among the *logon*-false and the *alogon*-true beliefs?

Even if we could make a hierarchy and a continuum among these beliefs, would it really be a continuous hierarchy of *human epistemological states*? Socrates is entertaining a number of beliefs at the same time. He’s unaware of the fact that he holds a false belief (either *logon* or *alogon*) and a different *logon*-true (and contradictory) belief, at the same time. This keeps him from having knowledge (despite his *logon*-true belief), but how is his state best described, and where does it belong in the hierarchy? Does Socrates not even realize what he doesn’t know? Is his apparently *logon*-true belief insufficiently *logon*? If it were really *logon*, wouldn’t he have thought through it carefully enough to realize that it contradicts his belief that Eros is a god? Plato rubs our noses in judgments that seem designed to make us despair of forming any hierarchy whatsoever among them. We at least see that any hierarchy of these sorts of judgments is going to be more complicated than we might have expected.

Or, perhaps we should note that while we might be able to make a hierarchy of individual beliefs as separate, individual, free-standing propositions (although we still might be unsure how to gauge the *alogon*-true against the *logon*-false), that is not what human epistemological or cognitive states are. To the extent that we can be said to have *individual* beliefs, we entertain many of them at the same time. Further, as we see in Diotima’s analysis of Socrates’ own views, our beliefs do not, on their own, prior to analysis and reflection, fall into discreet unities. Part of making them *logon* is reflecting and making critical judgments about where one belief begins and another ends. Individuated beliefs are created by human reflection and judgment, just as individual perceptual objects (sights and sounds) are. One can organize sights and sounds after a fashion, but it will always be somewhat contrived. Perceptual objects contain more than one property at a time, and it all depends upon how one chooses to narrow one’s focus.

Analogously, at the level of human epistemological states, there are only two categories: knowledge (which contains all of what-is and only what is) and everything that falls short of it (where various combinations of what-is/what-is-not and *logon/alogon* fit different human projects in better and worse ways).¹⁰

Does the Upward Path Help?

Plato rehearses apparent hierarchies that are consequential for epistemology in the cave (*Rep.* 514a-517d), the divided line (*Rep.* 509d), and on the upward path (*Symposium* 210-12). Might these shed light on that which lies in between ignorance and knowledge? For the purposes of this paper, let us look to the upward path in the *Symposium*.

A summary of this ascent is given at 211c.

One goes always upwards for the sake of the Beauty, starting from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives at the end in this lesson, which is learning of this very beauty so that in the end he comes to know (*gno*) just what beauty is. (Nehamas and Woodruff) Earlier in this section of the dialogue, Eros is described as poor and homeless, but a schemer after the beautiful and good and resourceful in the pursuit of intelligence (*phronesos*) (203cd). He is declared a *philosophos*—a lover of wisdom.

As he is a philosopher, he is placed between wisdom and ignorance. For no one who is ignorant loves wisdom and no one who is wise does either.¹¹ The assertion that the ignorant don’t love

¹⁰In the case of knowledge, which contains all and only what-is, we don’t have to worry about specifying that they are *logon*. The point of reasoning is to try to ensure that the beliefs we *think* true actually are and that we remember them. When we have all and only true beliefs, they can’t help but have those characteristics.

¹¹ Once more, the contention that the wise don’t love wisdom and that, therefore, philosophers are not wise is also asserted at

wisdom is quickly clarified with a description of double-ignorance stated in the language of desire:

For what's especially difficult about being ignorant is that you are content with yourself, even though you're neither beautiful and good nor intelligent. If you don't think you need anything, of course you won't want what you don't think you need. (Nehamas and Woodruff)

This accords with the observation that, when Plato puts knowledge into a continuum rather than a dichotomy with ignorance, he places double-ignorance at the bottom. This is a hierarchy among cognitive states, not individual beliefs. Notice that none of these states, even those in the "middle," and even those inhabited by Socrates, Eros, and by the philosopher, are deemed knowledge.

After telling us that Eros is useful to human beings because it motivates us to pursue our ultimate goal, happiness, we are cautioned against loving sights and sounds.¹² We might think that we love and pursue beautiful things, but, in fact, "what everyone loves is really nothing other than the good." (205e7-206a1). People want the good to be theirs forever. This leads to a discussion that connects having the good forever with reproducing beautiful and, hopefully, immortal ideas—like a blueprint for a just city (209ab).

As we near the end of Diotima's speech, knowledge plays a greater and greater role and we are, once more, shown the difficulty of hierarchically categorizing complex epistemological states that consist of multiple beliefs at the same time. At, 207e1-208a7, after describing the constant metamorphosis of an individual's body and soul, Diotima adds that we are never the same with respect to our epistemic states (*ai epistemai* [207e5] and *tas epistemas* [208a2]).¹³ One part of our epistemic state comes to be in us while another fades away. In fact we study because we are always forgetting something and needing to replace it with other things. Making it *seem* as though we have maintained some interconnected group of beliefs (*oste ten auten dokein enai*), when we have not. So that it is not stable and is not the stable, epistemic state at the top of the hierarchy that has double ignorance as the bottom.

Diotima's plural use of *epistemai* here and locutions that imply "pieces" of *episteme* (*mia ekaste ton epistemon* [208a3]) hearken back to all of those beliefs, even ones that are *logon* and true, that we have at the same time as we have many others, which are so numerous that they can become more and more internally consistent and more and more accurate, without ever completely closing in on what-is.

At 210c1-3, Diotima describes circumstances in which the lover will give birth to *logous* that will make young men better. At 211a7, she says that beauty will not appear to the lover as one *logos* or one knowledge (*tis episteme*). It is not clear how best to translate *logos* here, but it is clear that it is not "knowledge," and that it can be plural. Even an individual *logos* (which might be translated "account," "argument" or "reasoning") consists in multiple simultaneous beliefs. It at least seems to imply an epistemic state that consists of a collection of interrelated beliefs that may or may not be consistent.

At 210e6-211b2, we are given a description of the form of the beautiful. This passage also gives the contrasting description of the lover's epistemic state that is about the beautiful. Beauty doesn't change, but the lover's epistemic state is an unstable collection of beliefs. As long as this contrast between beauty itself and the epistemic state of the lover remains, it must be acknowledged that the lover doesn't have knowledge of the beautiful.

The Lover is also described as using sights and sounds "like rising stairs" (211c3) in order to arrive at knowledge of beauty. Knowledge of beauty is presented as discontinuous with all of the *logous* that lead up to it; it is different in kind. If anyone grasps beauty itself, it will no longer occur to him to judge beauty by gold or clothing or beautiful bodies (211d3-5). Actual beauty is described as pure and unmixed; while in the sights and sounds it is mixed with other properties (211d8-e2). Thus, both beauty itself and the knowledge of it are presented as categorically different from the non-beautiful sights and sounds that form a continuum between beauty and ugliness. Likewise, beliefs about beauty and ugliness will be *logon*, *alogon*, true and false, but not knowledge. Beauty and knowledge are in a category unto themselves, and their relationship to the sights and sounds and beliefs that fall short of them is not simply a matter of degree.

The description of the sight of beauty itself is stated counterfactually:

... if someone got to see the Beautiful itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality, but if he could see the divine Beauty itself in its one

Lysis 217a-218c.

¹² Which again invites analogy with the way knowledge, belief and ignorance are discussed with respect to the philosopher and the love of sights and sounds at *Rp* 475-480.

¹³ Note Diotima uses the plural here, so I think we should be reluctant to use the singular "knowledge." "Epistemic states" is the best English equivalent, it seems.

form? (211d8-e4) (Nehamas and Woodruff)

There is no assumption that human beings actually have succeeded, or will succeed, in reaching and seeing beauty. In just the same way, it seems unlikely that human beings will entertain epistemological states that fix on all and only what-is where true- *logon* beliefs are not mixed with other beliefs that are less true and less *logon*.

In the cases of both beauty and knowledge, it seems, the pure form is a goal. It is an aspiration that leads us to recognize that there is a stairway to climb (it frees us from double ignorance) and helps us maintain our motivation to continue to climb it—no matter how arduous it proves to be—as we recognize the advantages of being less ignorant—being closer to having knowledge—despite the fact that we might never reach the top, and see beauty or have knowledge.

Conclusion

Plato has two different ways of talking about knowledge and ignorance in the dialogues. Sometimes he treats them as dichotomous, and at others he treats them as a continuum that progresses from double ignorance to simple ignorance through various kinds of *logon/alogon* and true/false beliefs and up to knowledge. At *Republic* 475-480, Socrates treats beauty and ugliness as pure and dichotomous, while allowing beautiful sights and sounds to be impure and form a continuum. At *Symposium* 202-212, Plato provides an analogy to knowledge and ignorance: in their pure form they are dichotomous, but as epistemic states that involve many interrelated beliefs, none of which constitutes pure knowledge or ignorance; even the person who is doubly ignorant can possess some true, and even some true and *logon*, beliefs.

Thus, there is no inconsistency between the continuous and dichotomous descriptions. The Forms themselves are dichotomous, while those objects or cognitive states that partake in them form a continuum, albeit not a clean one. As each object has many different properties, it would be impossible to form an objective continuum of all sights and sounds with respect to beauty and ugliness. While it would be correct to say that sticks and stones are never absolutely ugly but are always approaching ugliness by having their beauty reduced and their ugliness increased, Plato seems to prefer to focus on the positive end of the dichotomy, saying that everything that is not beauty itself can be measured against it in that it departs from it. Furthermore, Plato makes it clear that the difference between a beautiful object and beauty itself is a categorical one and not a matter of degree. Perhaps this is because he thinks—parsimoniously—that we only need one property, “beauty itself,” and everything that departs from it is the same in being Not-beautiful. Furthermore, he characterizes “beauty itself” as the goal of our pursuit, and ugliness as something to be left behind.

Likewise, in the *Symposium*, we see Plato treat knowledge and ignorance as dichotomous, and all cognitive states that partake in them as resting along a continuum. Again, the continuum might be able to be elucidated for individual kinds of beliefs (with *logon*-true beliefs at the top and *alogon*-false beliefs below them). As people never entertain individual, isolated beliefs, epistemic states cannot be placed on a clean continuum, because each will contain many beliefs of differing quality, simultaneously. As with beauty, Plato seems to characterize all epistemic states as falling short of knowledge, and containing more or less ignorance. Again, while this is not necessary to his view, it is understandable that he should, in wanting to treat knowledge as a goal to which we aspire, think of everything that is not-knowledge as a better or worse form of ignorance.

Impassioned by Passion: Knowledge and *Eros* in Plato and Spinoza

Marie-Élise Zovko

Education is never a purely intellectual affair: the "education of desire" forms an essential element of any attempt to perfect human nature, and is central to the theory of virtue in Plato and Spinoza. In the *Symposium*, "eros" is "the name for the impulse of desire in all its forms."¹ In Spinoza's *Ethics*, the multiple manifestations of desire are collectively signified by the term *conatus*. Both works present the aim of the philosopher as paradigmatic for the education and perfection of human desire. In Plato's *Symposium* naturalism and intellectualism are woven together by the single life force of Eros to unfurl before our eyes the uncut fabric, pattern and texture of our shared human condition and striving for its ultimate perfection. This same relationship of naturalism and intellectualism is mirrored more than 20 centuries later in the works of Baruch di Spinoza.² It is no secret that Spinoza was familiar with works of important Renaissance Platonists like Abraham Cohen Herrera (*Puerta del Cielo, Casa del Divinidad*, and *Epítome y Compendio de la Logica o Dialectica*) or Judah Abravanel's (Leone Ebreo) *Dialoghi d'amore*, as well as with older authors like Proclus. Through works of Augustinus, Aquinas and the Scholastics, Stoics like Epictet and Seneca and Neo-Stoics like Quevedo and Justus Lipsius Spinoza would have been exposed to a wide range of Platonic influences. The works of many of these authors, including a Spanish version of Abravanel's work, *Dialogos d'Amor*, counted among the holdings of Spinoza's personal library.³ Spinoza interpreters like Gebhardt, Dunin-Borkowski, and Wolfson from the first half of the 20th century traced individual aspects of the complex filiation of Platonic influences in Spinoza's work as transmitted through Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic sources from medieval to modern times.⁴ The philosophical significance of these influences remains, however, controversial. Recent Spinoza interpretation has tended to ignore Platonic influences as irrelevant to a proper understanding of Spinoza's "naturalism", or to reject the idea of a significant role of Platonic philosophy in Spinoza's thought out of hand. Yet a comparison of Plato's and Spinoza's understanding of the relationship of desire and virtue, knowledge and love throws light not only on Spinoza's doctrine of the affects and bondage to the affects, and the path to human freedom and blessedness, but also, in retrospect, on Plato's understanding of the stages of knowledge and their role in the education to virtue, as well as their relationship to the ascent of love to the vision of beauty as depicted in the *Symposium*. In fact, the exposition of the stages of knowledge and love in Spinoza's *Short Treatise*, and the corresponding relationships in the *Ethics*,⁵ culminating in the unity of *scientia intuitiva* and *Amor Dei intellectualis*, provides a near perfect imaging of the ascent of knowledge and Eros as depicted in Plato's *Republic* and in the *Symposium*. The ascent of knowledge portrayed by the Analogy of the Line in the *Republic*, seen from the perspective of the *Symposium*, turns out to be a journey motivated by *desire* and by love, i.e. by transformation of the natural desire of all living things for their own good by means of the passion of the intellect for knowledge and truth, and, ultimately, for the contemplation of beauty and the good promised to the philosopher as the reward of the ascent. The progress of the ascent is the advancement through ever clearer knowledge to an ever "greater Love", for, as Spinoza explains in the *Short Treatise*: "Love...arises from the perception and knowledge which we have of a thing, and as the thing shows itself to be greater and more magnificent, so also is our Love greater and greater." (ST II, 5; cf. II, 3f.) This is not, however, as one might expect, a path of ever greater abstraction from the singular beings of our experience by means of the "art of reasoning" and a resulting accrue of categorical knowledge – for we cannot love an abstraction. And love we must – for this is an absolute necessity and irrevocable condition of our continued existence and realisation of our proper excellence as just these human individuals.

¹ F.M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*," in: G. Vlastos, ed., *Plato II. A Collection of Critical Essays. Ethics, Politics and Philosophy of Art and Religion* (Univ. of Notre Dame, 1978), 119-131; 121.

² Cf. M.E. Zovko, "Naturalism and Intellectualism in Plato and Spinoza," in: A. Arndt, J. Zovko eds., *Freiheit und Determinismus. Studia philosophica laderensia*. (Erlangen: Wehrhahn 2012), 11-62.

³ Cf. Adri K. Offenber, "Spinoza's library. The story of a reconstruction," *Quaerendo*, Volume 3, Number 4, 1973, 309-321(13).

⁴ S. Dunin-Borkowski. *Der junge De Spinoza*. 2d ed. Münster: Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933. (in Alliso's view "The classic study of the influences on Spinoza", cf. Allison, Henry E. *Benedict de Spinoza. An Introduction*. Rev. ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1987) C. Gebhardt, "Spinoza und der Platonismus," in *Chronicon Spinozanum*, I (1921). Wolfson, H.A. (1934, 1962²) *The Philosophy of Spinoza. Tracing the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, Vols. I, II.

⁵ The thorny issue of the relationship between the *Ethics* and the *Short Treatise* cannot be dealt with here. It is assumed that the two are in agreement, despite differences of method and terminology, as regards the main points of comparison presented here.

True knowledge is about enjoyment. It is about union of the knower with the thing known, not as with something outside herself, but as with something within. (cf. *ST* II, 4) The vision of beauty and the good which is the aim of the philosopher in Plato is rooted in striving for the perfection of desire and harmonisation of the "three impulses which shape life" (Cornford), the reflective, passionate and concupiscent – just as in Spinoza the *conatus* or striving (to persevere in being) which comprises the characteristic life force of all things and of nature as a whole achieves perfection in the understanding of the true causes of things, in particular of the causes of the affects, which comprises the virtue of the intellect: the *scientia intuitiva* by whose realisation is attained the blessedness of *Amor Dei intellectualis*. This paper will consider the striking similarities – and some important differences – revealed by a comparison of the relationship of knowledge and love in Plato's *Symposium*, on the one hand, and in Spinoza's *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*, on the other.

Nature and virtue in Spinoza and Plato

Both Spinoza and Plato distinguish a conative and a cognitive element in the path to human excellence. True knowledge and true *love* are the condition of the philosopher's task. These two are at the root of the paradoxical unity in difference of beauty and goodness, naturalism and intellectualism in Plato and Spinoza. It is in the relationship of knowledge and eros that the close affinity of Spinoza and Plato becomes clearest and most luminous.

In the exchange between Socrates and Agathon which precedes Socrates' account of the conversation with Diotima, it was agreed that love is of good and beautiful things (201 a-b, c-d). The first point Diotima and Socrates are able to agree upon is that love desires what it lacks, and is therefore itself neither beautiful nor good (201e), nor a god (202d), but rather a great *daimon* (202e), halfway between gods and men the mortal and immortal (μεταξύ θνητοῦ καὶ ἀθανάτου 202e). Lacking good and beautiful things, this daimon is desirous of those things which it lacks, not only all that is beautiful and good (ἐπίβουλός ἐστι τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, 202d), but also wisdom: he is "desirous and competent of wisdom throughout life" (φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου 203d-e).

In his refutation of Agathon, Socrates obtained agreement for the proposition that "good things are beautiful" (τὰγαθὰ οὐ καὶ καλὰ δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι; 201c). This is not to say that the good and the beautiful are the same, nor that all beautiful things are also good, but only that whatever is (truly) good is also beautiful. Still it does not identify what the good is in itself, nor what the beautiful is in itself, nor what is the relationship of the two. A hint as to what direction Diotima is leading in is provided in the further characterisation of love to be love not only of good and beautiful things which one lacks, but also *love of wisdom*, which is possible only to one who "stands midway between wisdom and ignorance" (203e). Wisdom, moreover, "has to do with the fairest things" (ἔστιν γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἡ σοφία) Love, then, since it is a love of what is fair, "must be a philosopher" or lover of wisdom (Ἐρως δ' ἐστὶν ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλόν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι 203b; cf. 204 d).

To determine what love is in itself Diotima takes up the statement of Agathon and turns it into a question: "What is the love of the lover of beautiful things?", and "what will he have who gets beautiful things?" As so often in the dialogues, when the inquiry touches on the "highest things", a direct response to the question eludes us, and a more circuitous route needs to be taken. Leaving the first question unanswered, Diotima tells Socrates to imagine, instead of the beautiful, the inquiry is to be made about the good (ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις μεταβαλὼν ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ τῷ ἀγαθῷ χρώμενος πυνθάνοιτο: 204c). The question then becomes: "what is the love of the lover of good things?" Again, however, the good which is the object of love remains undefined, and the answer focuses on the character of the love of the good: the lover loves what he loves, scil. "good things", to be his (204e). The reason for desiring good things is obvious to both Diotima and Socrates: the lover desires good things in order to attain *happiness* (205a), which he attains by the acquisition of good things (ibid.) Thus a third term is introduced: happiness, while neither love itself, nor the good it desires, receives a definition. Happiness, on the other hand, is determined to be the possession of good things

This "love" is "common to all"; in other words: "everyone always wishes to have good things" (205a). Nevertheless, Diotima finds and Socrates agrees, the statement that "all men love the same things always" does not imply that "all men love", but rather, that "some people love and others do not." (205a) The distinction implied is that between a love which is common to all and (merely, unjustifiably) bears the name of love, and love which is properly called so. That this is the case emerges from the following attempt at clarification: the type of love defined as the "desire of good things and of being happy" (205c: τὸ κεφάλαιόν ἐστι πᾶσα ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμία καὶ τοῦ εὐδαιμονεῖν), which may be attributed to all human beings at all times, Diotima determines to be a

generic category of love which – correctly or incorrectly – ordinarily receives the "name of the whole" (τὸ τοῦ ὅλου ὄνομα).

Generally speaking, then, love is desire for the good, desire to possess it, and – as Diotima now adds, *desire to possess it always*, (ὁ ἔρως τοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀεί 206a). The latter introduces a new dimension to the desire to possess good things: something like the striving of human beings to ensure their own lasting satisfaction and happiness. *How* that may be attained, i remains an open question, as does the question: what *true* love is, that is: what distinguishes love in the ordinary sense of a natural striving for the good from the love by which human beings may be said to love in a proper sense. This appears from what follows to depend on the nature of the object, whether it is more or less worthy of pursuit. The answer to the first question, i.e. "what is the method of those who pursue [the good] and what practice is theirs who are eager for and strain to attain the good, and in what the effort of love is comprised" (τῶν τίνα τρόπον διωκόντων αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν τινι πράξει ἡ σπουδὴ καὶ ἡ σύντασις ἔρως ἂν καλοῖτο; τί τοῦτο τυγχάνει ὃν ἔργον;) puts forward an important new distinction: *love is not love of the beautiful*, but of the "begetting on a beautiful thing by means of both the body and the soul" (τῆς γεννήσεως καὶ τοῦ τόκου ἐν τῷ καλῷ 206b). This "engendering and begetting upon the beautiful" is not the same as what was previously implied to be "love of the beautiful". Diotima describes it rather as "a divine affair...an immortal element in the creature that is mortal", an effort which may only occur in the *presence* of the beautiful (206c). From the fact that "love loves good to be one's own for ever", Diotima concludes that, in its essence, "love is of immortality" (207a). For "mortal nature ever seeks, as best it can to be immortal" (207cd). It is for this reason that a creature "seeks to leave behind it a new creature in place of the old." In other words, mortal nature "ever strives to immortalize itself by leaving behind some new image of itself in place of the old." It does this, according to the speech of Diotima in one of three ways: either by begetting children, or by the attainment of worldly recognition through one's actions, or by the creation of works of art, good laws and institutions, and by the cultivation of virtue. This last, the cultivation of virtue, is the specific aim of the philosopher, but is not unconnected to the effort of love in its other forms, insofar as each embodies in a specific legitimate form the striving of human beings for immortality.

The desire to engender and to beget progeny is seen thereby as a universal activity that emerges at a certain stage of any creature's natural development, and in a specific way in human beings' process of maturation, whether of body or of mind. Its aim is to ensure one's continued existence, and it achieves this aim by procreation of something like oneself. Each expression of the desire of engendering and begetting, insofar as it is an expression of the "love of what is immortal" is praiseworthy, the more so in proportion to the excellence striven for (208e). The distinction drawn between the love "common to all" and love in a proper sense lies in the specific interest of the latter in "the most beautiful things" - which happen to be the particular concern of the philosopher or lover of wisdom. For "there are persons" who go about pregnant in their souls, and "who in their soul still more than in their bodies conceive those things which are proper for soul to conceive and bring forth. Prudence, and virtue in general" and "by far the highest and fairest part of prudence...that which concerns the regulation of cities...sobriety and justice" (208e-209a). One whose "soul is so far divine that it is made pregnant with these from his youth", desires when he has reached maturity "to bring forth and beget" virtue, and "goes about seeking the beautiful object whereon he may do his begetting". And "if he chances...on a soul that is fair and noble and well-endowed...in addressing such a person he is resourceful in discoursing of virtue and what should be the good man's character and what his pursuits; and so he takes in hand the other's education." (209b-c) The curious bond of beauty and goodness (*kalokagathia*) which embodies the characteristic expression of virtue and the ideal of being human in the mind of the Ancient Greeks –therefore the aim of any striving - is thus transformed in Diotima's speech from the *eudaimonia* of one possessed of physical goods, and the passing goods afforded by position, honours, long life, into the *eudaimonia* afforded by the society of friends whose common concern is for virtue and the cultivation of virtue, whose union brings forth children far "fairer and more deathless" than physical children (209d).

Love in the *Symposium* is thus in its aboriginal sense love of immortality, and intimately and inextricably tied to the striving to preserve one's being, both physical and intellectual. This striving proceeds in the same manner, whether it has to do with the body or with the soul: "Every mortal thing is preserved in this way; not by keeping it exactly the same for ever, like the divine, but by replacing what goes off or is antiquated with something fresh, in the semblance of the original" (208 a-b). Through this "mechanism", "a mortal thing partakes of immortality, both in its body and in other respects" and "by no other means can it be done". It is for this reason, furthermore, "since all are beset by this eagerness and this love with a view to immortality," that "everything naturally values its own

offshoot" (208b-c).

In their identification of love of one's own good with desire to preserve one's being, Plato and Spinoza are in complete agreement. In Spinoza, the essence of all things is *conatus*,⁶ more precisely *conatus sese conservare* or *conatus in suo esse perseverare*, the striving to persevere in one's own being.⁷ Striving to persevere in one's being is conceived of as a universal law of nature, encompassing all things and governing their behaviour, from the purely physical to that unity of mental and physical processes characteristic of human individuals. In human beings, *conatus* is accompanied by *consciousness* of one's striving to persevere in one's being, and is called *appetite* (cf. *Ethics* 1App.). Because of their consciousness of their own striving to persevere, in human beings, *conatus* manifests itself as a specific, characteristic relationship of body and mind, necessity and freedom, nature and virtue, by which is defined what it is to be human, as opposed to animals, plants, or inanimate things.

How the natural striving for one's own good is connected to virtue and moral perfection is a question that is central to a proper understanding of both Plato's and Spinoza's moral theory. Spinoza's "thoroughgoing naturalism" with regard to psychology and his doctrine of the affects forms the primary focus of discussions of Spinoza's philosophy today.⁸ This "naturalism", however, is of a particular kind, well-known in the history of Platonism, closely related, for example, to Plotinus' understanding of the One as source and principle of all things and the manner in which the levels of reality proceed from the One (cf. eg. *Ennead* VI, 8 *On Free Will and the Will of the One*). Grounded in a nature which differs absolutely with respect to its cause or source from the nature of individual things, this naturalism determines things to be and act with an absolute necessity which, paradoxically, is one with absolute freedom. The cause of causes, origin and ground of all reality, the *substantia infinita*, *causa sui*, *natura naturans*, exists and acts from the necessity of its nature alone (*ex sola suae naturae necessitate*) and compelled by no other thing. There is exactly one self-caused substance, which is in itself and is conceived through itself (1D1, D3), whereas everything else that is, is *in* substance, i.e. is caused by substance and conceived through substance (1A1, A2, D2, D5). The *substantia infinita* is thus the only thing that can properly be called *free* (1D7, 1P17 and C2) whereas everything else, insofar as it is caused by another, is and exists in another, is conceived through another – is *determined* or *compelled* by another to exist and act, and not by its nature alone. Thus, from the *substantia infinita* all things follow with necessity.⁹

Human beings, like other particular things („finite modes“), are part of nature and follow the order of nature according to which all things ensue, proceeding from the one *infinite substance* with the same necessity with which „from the nature of the triangle“ follows „that its three angles are equal two right angles“ (cf. *Ethics* 1D1,2,6; 1P17S). According to Spinoza, we perceive and deem to be *good* that which arouses our appetite and which we are stimulated to pursue as necessary or beneficial to our perseverance in being. Striving for what is "good" in this sense, and the associated ability to persist in one's being, is in itself of no moral consequence, although it forms the necessary condition both of our existence and of our moral behaviour. For „No one can desire to be blessed, to act well and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, to act, and to live, i.e. to actually exist.“ (4P21)¹⁰ *Conatus* alone, when taken in this sense, cannot explain what it is to be human; for human beings' nature includes intellect, and our striving to persevere is consequently a striving to benefit ourselves not only in our physical being, but also insofar as we are beings endowed with intellect.

Spinoza's naturalism with regard to the origin of the *affects* or human emotions is, accordingly, tied to an *intellectualist* theory of human virtue.¹¹ At the heart of Spinoza's ethical theory

⁶Spinoza's *Ethics* synthesizes a naturalist theory of motivation with an intellectualist theory of virtue. The specific relationship of naturalism and intellectualism in Spinoza's *Ethics* is characteristic of a type of virtue ethics and moral perfectionism whose roots can be traced to the Socratic paradoxes. Cf. "Naturalism and Intellectualism" in: *Freiheit und Determinismus. Studia philosophica Jaderensia* 2. ed. Andreas Arndt/Jure Zovko (Hannover: Wehrhahn-Verlag 2012); 3, 4.

⁷*Ethics* 3P6: „Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being [*in suo esse perseverare conatur*].“ Cf. *ibid.* P7: „The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing.“ It is important to note the universality of this striving, which is best understood – in order to avoid too narrow an interpretation of Spinoza's *conatus*, such as its identification with psychological egoism – as a physical force, analogous to Newton's law of inertia. Even the affections of the body strive to persevere in being, each affection receiving „from its cause the force to persevere in its being, which [...] can neither be restrained nor removed, except by a corporal cause [...] which affects the Body with an affection opposite to it [...] and stronger than it.“ (4P7) cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 6. In the following, Spinoza's *Ethics* and the *Short Treatise* are quoted according to the translation of E. Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* Vol. I (Princeton University Press 1985). The *Ethics* is cited by an Arabic number referring to the part, a letter standing for an abbreviation as follows: D=definition, A=axiom, P=proposition, S=scholium, C=corollary, App.=appendix, Pref.=preface.

⁸Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism" 1ff.

⁹*ibid.* 3-4

¹⁰Cf. *ibid.*, 10, 6.

¹¹Cf. *From Bondage to Freedom*, 19f.

lies, in this respect, the same conviction and the same insight into the character of human existence which formed the basis for the famed paradoxes of Socrates: no one does evil willingly or knowingly, i.e. everyone desires and only can desire that which appears to him to be good; and its corollary: "knowledge is virtue", insofar as to know the good implies to want and to do the good, and insofar as recognition of what is truly good and beneficial for us depends on knowledge. For it is *knowledge* (as opposed to instinct, or any other physical force alone) which ensures that human beings pursue what is truly to their benefit, as this particular sort of being and according to their true essence, and not just what appears to satisfy a particular need or want at any given moment.¹² In the first statement, striving to persevere is considered in its significance as a natural desire and striving of living beings for their own good, which they may, depending on circumstances, or may not identify correctly; the second affirms the specifically human means of ensuring they actually achieve their true end and purpose.

The *Ethics* operates, like the Socratic paradoxes, on two plains: on the one hand, it provides an exposition of the psychological motivation of human action, dealt with from a naturalistic perspective, on the other, it elaborates the life of virtue and freedom that is constituted by adequate knowledge of the true causes of things.¹³ To simply follow our affects results in bondage to the „pleasures of the moment“ (App XXX). Human "power" or virtue, insofar as we are forced to follow the common order of nature, is „very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes“. Yet if we follow „the better part of us“, i.e. „that part of us which is defined by understanding“, we will be satisfied that „we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow“, wanting „nothing except what is necessary“, and at the same time will ultimately find satisfaction with nothing absolutely „except what is true“, i.e. with adequate knowledge of everything which follows from the *substantia infinita*. In this attitude, the greatest possible harmony of our nature with the whole of nature is achieved, so that „the striving of the better part of us agrees with the whole order of nature.“ (4App.XXXII)

The dual character of human existence demands, furthermore, a dual aim of our conscious striving: on the one hand, the harmonisation of our being as part of nature with understanding under the guidance of the reason, on the other, the perfection of the intellect itself as the highest aim of human striving. The latter represents „the ultimate end of the man who is led by reason“, his „highest Desire, by which he strives to moderate all the others“: „to conceive adequately both himself and all things that can fall under his understanding“, i.e. to understand "God, his attributes, and his actions which follow from the necessity of his nature.“ By this knowledge and understanding, the perfection of intellect, and therewith our „blessedness“, i.e. our freedom and happiness, are achieved, which consist in "that satisfaction of mind that stems from the intuitive knowledge of God" (4AppIV).

It is Spinoza's express aim to lead us to knowledge of the human intellect and its highest virtue or *freedom*, which is constituted by true knowledge or *understanding*, and produces that "satisfaction of the mind" which is the equivalent of human happiness. The power of the intellect with regard to the affects or emotions is defined by adequate knowledge of things, in particular of the true causes of the affects, to which without such knowledge we live in bondage.¹⁴ Spinoza differentiates, namely, emotions which are actions, from emotions which are passions.¹⁵ A person can be said to *act*,

¹² Cf. Gerasimos Santas, „The Socratic Paradoxes“, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Apr. 1964), 147–164; 147 and n., cf. 157. *Meno* 77b–78b, *Prot.* 345e; 358c, 360d3, *Gorg.* 468c5–7; 460b–d, 509ge5–7; "indirect statements of the doctrine occur in *Meno* 87, 89; *Laches* i98; *Charm.* 173."

¹³ This is why Spinoza can say both that the first and only foundation of virtue is striving to persevere in one's being and that it is striving for understanding (4P26, P22).

¹⁴ After laying the ontological groundwork for the treatment of his topic in Part I, *De Deo*, with his explanation of God's nature and properties and the dependence of all things on him, Spinoza proceeds in Part II to the explanation of „those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God“ or the *substantia infinita*, not, however, all things, since from the *substantia infinita* „infinitely many things must follow [...] in infinitely many ways“, but rather „only those that can lead us [...] to the knowledge of the human Mind and its highest blessedness.“ (2Pref.) Cf. "Naturalism and Intellectualism", 6.

¹⁵ Spinoza thus differentiates, in the Appendix to Part IV, between strivings or desires (i.e. striving together with consciousness of striving or appetite) which „follow from the necessity of our nature in such a way that they can be understood“ through our nature alone „as through their proximate cause“, and strivings which follow from the necessity of our nature „insofar as we are a part of nature, which cannot be conceived adequately through itself without other individuals.“ (4App.I) The former „follow from our nature in such a way that they can be understood through it alone“ and are consequently „related to the Mind insofar as it is conceived to consist of adequate ideas.“ The latter „are not related to the Mind except insofar as it conceives things inadequately“ and are „defined not by human power, but by the power of things that are outside us.“ The former are therefore „rightly called actions“, the latter „passions“, the former „indicate our power“, the latter „our lack of power and mutilated knowledge“. (4AppII) Good and evil relate to each of these levels in a specific way, good being, on the one hand „whatever there is in nature that we judge [...] to be useful for preserving our being and enjoying a rational life“, on the other, in reference to our specific nature, that which aids us „to enjoy the life of the Mind“ as defined by understanding; while evil, on the one hand, is equated with „whatever there is in nature that we

i.e. to be virtuous, in the truest sense only insofar as he *understands*, where understanding is equivalent to doing „something which is perceived through his essence alone“ (4P23): „[A]cting from the laws of one's own nature“ and doing something which is perceived through one's essence alone are the definition of *freedom* (1Def6). „To attain freedom,“ then, „on Spinoza's account...requires knowledge“¹⁶: self-knowledge, knowledge of things, knowledge of God (cf. 4App.IV). The human mind attains knowledge and freedom through the formation of „adequate ideas“. Lack of knowledge, or „inadequate ideas“ are the cause of human bondage.¹⁷ While „striving to preserve oneself“, then, is „the first and only foundation of virtue“ (4P22 & C), to act from virtue is nothing else but „*acting, living, and preserving our being [...] by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's own advantage.*“ (4P24) Thus, while striving to preserve one's being, on the surface of it, may appear to be an expression of egoistic self-interest, our true advantage, i.e. that advantage in which consists the preservation of our being in the truest sense, is nothing but living according to the guidance of reason, something which is equally beneficial to ourselves and to others. Living according to the guidance of reason is the same as striving for understanding (4P26), and „striving for understanding“ is for human beings the same as „striving to preserve oneself“. Like this, striving for understanding, then may be called „the first and only foundation of virtue“ (P26), and while, at a physical level, our essence is defined by a necessary striving to persevere, that being which we strive to preserve is ultimately defined by *virtue* or human excellence, the perfection of our being which is knowledge or *understanding*.¹⁸

The emergence of virtue from natural structures of motivation and the question of its relationship to judgment, intentionality and freedom – also forms the basis for Plato's investigation of virtue and the question whether virtue can be learned or taught.¹⁹ Unable to answer Socrates' question of what virtue, i.e. what its definition or *eidos*, is, Meno brings into focus the distribution of virtue according to the variety of functions which human beings perform with respect to their characteristic activity, age, gender or societal role: man or woman, slave or free, old person or child (72a). When Socrates insists on determining that which is common to the variety of human virtues, they are able only to conclude that human beings, while performing a variety of functions, are good in the same way – by temperance, justice, courage, wisdom – and in striving to obtain what appears to them to be good (73b–c; 74b). What is the specific identifying characteristic of human virtue in general escapes them. The investigation comes full circle when Meno proposes that virtue is *desire for beautiful things and being able to attain them*. Socrates quickly equates this with the proposition that virtue is the desire for good,²⁰ a desire, however, shared by all, which therefore cannot serve as the differentiating mark of excellence in the virtuous man (78b).²¹

In Plato, the realization of the virtue proper to human beings requires appropriate nurture and education of the emotive, volitional and intellectual parts of the soul.²² In the opening lines of the *Meno*, three possible routes by which virtue may be attained are distinguished: 1) instruction 2) practice and 3) nature (70 a). The path of the philosopher follows an ascent through these three, beginning with our natural inclination for the good, advancing by means of good practice instilled in youth, and perfected by proper instruction. In the *Republic*, justice, the pinnacle of virtue in which all

judge to be [...] able to prevent us from being able to exist,“ on the other, with whatever may prevent a human being „from being able to perfect his reason and enjoy the rational life.“ (4App.V, VIII) Of these two: the power to persevere in one's being and the power to perfect our intellect or reason and to achieve understanding, *understanding* ultimately takes priority, leading ultimately to the enjoyment of the life of the Mind. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 17.

¹⁶ *From Bondage to Freedom*, 20.

¹⁷ „The power of the mind is defined solely by knowledge; its lack of power is measured, however, solely from the privation of knowledge, or passion, that is solely by that through which ideas are called inadequate“ (5P20). In the *Ethics*, Spinoza differentiates affects or emotions which are *actions*, i.e. follow from us as their adequate cause by reason of our forming adequate ideas of their true causes, from emotions which are *passions*, i.e. to which we are in "bondage" on account of our being ignorant of their true causes.

¹⁸ Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 12.

¹⁹ Cf. EN 1098b, 1099b. In answer to the question whether happiness should be regarded as „the result of one's own exertions“, „won by virtue and by some kind of study or practice“, or rather as a „gift of fortune“ Aristotle opts for the former „inasmuch as in the world of nature things have a natural tendency to be ordered in the best possible way, and the same is true of art, and of causation of any kind, and especially the highest.“ To leave „the greatest and noblest of all things“, happiness, to chance „would be contrary to the fitness of things.“

²⁰ *Men.* 77b. The expression *ta kala* refers to the outer form which makes the good man admirable, and might be translated with „fine“ or behaviour suitable to a gentleman. The term *kalakagathos*, used to designate the conventional ideal of the „perfect“ or noble gentleman (cf. EN 1124a 4; cf. Platon *Ap.* 21d), shows how closely related in the Greek mind the beautiful and the good, the outward form and the inward character are.

²¹ Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 9–10.

²² The *epithumetikon*, *thumoeides* and the *logistikon*, cultivated respectively by the appropriate form of *mousike*, *gymnastike* and the various arts and sciences *tehnai* and *epistemai*, along with proficiency in abstract reasoning cf. *Rep.* 521e ff., cf. 525b ff.

virtues are united, is achieved by each part of the soul fulfilling its proper function and all cooperating together,²³ something made possible by appropriate education of each. The highest object of instruction (*megisthon mathema*), by which the ruler acquires the virtue of the philosopher-king and the ability to realize justice in his own soul and in the state is *knowledge of the good* culminating in the vision of the Idea of the Good. This is illustrated in the three central Analogies of the *Republic*, devoted respectively to the Idea of the Good (Analogy of the Sun), the stages or capacities of human knowledge by which to ascend to knowledge of the Good (Analogy of the Line), and (in the Analogy of the Cave) to *paideia* or education of the philosopher who ascends through the stages of knowledge to the vision of wisdom, virtue and truth and descends again in order to assist those who have yet to discover the true order of things, free them from their preoccupation with the weak reflection of reality which is the phenomenal world, and lead them upwards on the path to true knowledge.²⁴

Transforming passion into action, inadequate into adequate knowledge, accidental associations among images and memories of bodily affections into adequate ideas of their true causation is the decisive factor in the attainment of our virtue, freedom and happiness in Spinoza.²⁵ The possibility of forming a conception of an affect, and thereby transforming a passion into an action, is rooted both in the nature of affects and in the nature of human reason itself. For „an affect is an idea of an affection of the body“. In other words, an affect as such already involves „some clear and distinct concept.“ (5P4C) The same affect can thus be a passion or an action, depending on our ability to form a clear and distinct idea of it. It is in a human being's power „to understand himself and his affects and thus to bring it about that he is less acted on by them.“ (5P4C) Nevertheless, it is one and the same „appetite by which a man is said to act, and [...] to be acted on“ (ibid.)²⁶

Affects in Spinoza are related to both Mind and Body. An affect, or emotion, is an expression of both a physical and a mental state. Its basis is an „affection“ of the Body, but it is what it is as the „idea of the Body's affection“, „[I]nsofar as it is related to the Mind,“ an affect „is an idea by which the Mind affirms of its body a greater or lesser force of existing than before.“ This means, however, that an affect, „insofar as it is related to the Mind, can neither be restrained nor taken away except by the idea of an opposite affection of the body stronger than the affection through which it is acted upon.“²⁷ (4P7C)

One consequence of our being not just intellectual beings, but part of the "common order of nature", is that affects cannot be mastered by reason alone. Rather, „an affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained.“ (4P7). For example, Joy and Sadness are *ideas of affections of the Body*, namely those which increase or diminish, aid or restrain our power of acting; in other words, we experience *joy* when something happens to our body which increases our power of acting, and *sadness* when something happens to our body which decreases our power of acting, whereby the affect itself is the idea we form of that affection.²⁸ What we call good or evil, according to Spinoza, is „nothing but an affect of Joy or

²³ Cf. *Rep.* 554 e.

²⁴ *Rep.* 504a ff.

²⁵ „Adequacy“ is in the *Ethics* the primary criterium of truth, insofar as an idea is considered in itself, and refers to the intrinsic or self-consistency of an idea. „Adequate“ is „an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself without relation to an object, has all the properties or intrinsic denominations of a true idea.“ The term „intrinsic“ is used „to exclude what is extrinsic“, i.e. correspondence or „agreement of the idea with its object,“ which for Spinoza is a secondary criterium of truth. *Ethics* II, Def. 4. In a letter to Tschirnhaus, Spinoza differentiates „true“ from „adequate“ as follows: „the word 'true' refers only to the agreement of the idea with that of which it is the idea, while the word 'adequate' refers to the nature of the idea itself; so that there is really no difference between a true and an adequate idea except this extrinsic relation.“ Cf. *Epistola* 60, cited by Wolfson II, 101. As Wolfson explains, „internal criteria“ of truth, including the Cartesian criteria of clearness and distinctness, „are used by Spinoza as something independent of correspondence“, to avoid the impression that a true idea „must be a copy of something which actually happens to exist outside the mind.“ On the contrary, the idea „must agree with the reality of its ideate“, but „the reality with which a true idea must agree is not necessarily an external object; it may be its ideal nature conceived by the mind as something necessary in itself, or as something which follows by necessity from that which is conceived as necessary by itself, or as something which follows necessarily from its own nature and definition.“ (ibid. 104)

²⁶ Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 21-22.

²⁷ Cf. ibid., 27. My italics.

²⁸ The natural mechanism which drives us to pursue what is beneficial and avoid what is harmful is in Aristotle the experience of pleasure and pain (*EN* 1172a 20–26). In Spinoza, the opposition of pleasure and pain is reflected in the opposition between the affects of Joy and Sadness, which are themselves an expression of the success or inhibition of the fundamental striving to persevere, and by the associated *appetite* for things which increase our ability to act, and repulsion from things which diminish the same ability (cf. 3P9S, 3P11S; cf. 4P19). Joy, which is the „passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection“ (perfection being a measure of our ability to act or be the cause of our actions), when „related to the Mind and Body at once“ is called *Pleasure* or *Cheerfulness*. Sadness is the passion by which the Mind „passes to a lesser perfection“, and when related to Mind and Body is called „Pain“ or „Melancholy“ (3P11S). Other than these three: *desire*, defined as "appetite together with consciousness of the appetite", *joy* and *sadness*, Spinoza admits no other primary

Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it.“ As expressed in the *Short Treatise*, good and evil are not "real beings", that is, they are nothing in nature, neither things nor actions, but only "beings of reason", corresponding to a "universal idea",²⁹ though as "relations, which have reference to different things" of our intellect, they "help us to understand things more distinctly" (*ST* I, 10; Curley *CWI*, 92) In the language of the *Ethics*, our knowledge of good or of evil is thus an *idea of an idea of an affection* of the Body, an idea which „follows necessarily from the affect of Joy or Sadness itself“ (4P7; cf. Part 2, Gen. Def. of the Affects). The idea of an affect (the idea of an idea of an affection) is „united to the affect in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body“. ³⁰ Nevertheless, it is not the idea as knowledge which is capable of restraining an affect, but only such knowledge „considered as an affect.“ (4P14, 15)

Only by a stronger affect, then – what Spinoza calls a "greater love" – can an affect be overcome. This *greater love*, however, is not achieved by abstraction from the individual, nor is it aroused by or directed toward a universal idea or category. To be sure, it is only when an emotion or affect has been transformed from a passion to an action, that is, when we have formed a clear idea of its true causes, that we are set free from our bondage to it. For only when we live according to the guidance of reason, may we properly be said to *act*. This is because, for human beings to act freely, they must be the proper cause of their actions, through which alone those actions are understood, and „whatever follows from human nature, insofar as it is defined by reason [...] must be understood through human nature alone.“ (5P35, cf. 3P3, 3D2) It is when human beings act according to reason, moreover, that they act according to the laws of their nature, desiring what they judge to be good, and striving to avoid what they judge to be evil „because what we judge to be good or evil, when we follow the dictate of reason, must *be* good or evil“, and not merely appear to us to be so.³¹

Affects which arise from the affections which singular things produce in our bodies, if they are not understood with respect to their true causes, exclude and replace each other in succession over time, remaining present only through associations with other affections, images and ideas in our memory (cf. 5P7). Affects which arise from reason, on the other hand, are „necessarily related to the common properties of things“³²; and so always regarded by us as present. Since „there can be nothing which excludes their present existence [...] we always imagine them in the same way“ (5P7) As related to „a number of causes concurring together“, such an affect is more powerful than those related to fewer causes (5P8).³³

In keeping with the transformation of the striving which we share with things as they follow according to the "common order of nature" into a striving according to the "order of intellect" which constitutes human virtue or excellence, Spinoza differentiates levels of awareness of the affections of the Body. These correspond to levels or forms of knowledge outlined in Part 2 of the *Ethics* and in chs. 1-4 and 21-22 of the *Short Treatise*. Affects which are no longer passions, but which are not yet actions, Spinoza connects with the activity of imagination, defined as „an idea by which the Mind considers a thing as present“ (4P9; Cf. 2P17S). Imaginations indicate „the constitution of the human Body more than the nature of the external thing“ (4P9; cf. 2P16C2), and do not represent true knowledge of the causes of things which affect the body(4P9).³⁴

The human mind conceives „things as actual“, according to Spinoza, in one of two ways, either „in relation to a certain time and place“, or as „contained in God“ and as they „follow from the necessity of the divine nature.“ Things known in the first manner are known only confusedly and fragmentarily. Only things conceived of in the second manner: „under a species of eternity“ – *sub*

affects (3P11S, cf. 3P9S)

²⁹ From these Spinoza differentiates "particular ideas", eg. the idea of Peter and Judas. Only this type of essence, whether of things or of actions, exist in nature. Things "must agree with their particular Ideas, whose being must be a perfect essence and not with universal ones", because only particular ideas exist. Cf. *ST* I, 10. In Spinoza's understanding, the idea or essence of an individual being extends to and includes the idea of his or her particular body, for "To produce in substantial thought an Idea, knowledge or mode of thinking, such as [this soul of] ours now is, not just any body whatever is required...but one which has this proportion of motion and rest and no other." *ST* II, 1.

³⁰ Nevertheless, the idea of an affect is only „conceptually distinguished“ from the affect itself, i.e. the idea of a Body's affection. Spinoza eliminates herewith the logical consequence of an infinite regress which the relationship of idea to ideatum would otherwise entail (4P8). 28

³¹ Ibid. (my emphasis). Cf. 2P41.

³² Nevertheless, the common properties of things are nothing in themselves, but only in relation to "real beings", i.e. really existing beings or actions in nature (cf. FN 26, *ST* I, 10)

³³ Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 32.

³⁴ When we imagine something future or past, „we are affected by the same affect as if we were imagining something present“ (3P18), but the intensity of the imagination depends on whether or not other things are imagined at the same time which exclude „the present existence of the external thing“ which we perceive as cause of the bodily affection“ whose idea the affect is (cf. P9S & C). Neither the image nor the affect nonetheless conveys the *nature* of the external thing which we perceive as the cause of the affection.

specie aeternitatis, in other words: „through God's essence, as real beings [...] insofar as through God's essence they involve existence,“ are known *adequately*, as they truly or really are.³⁵ The *essence of the human mind* „consists in knowledge ... which involves knowledge of God“ (4P37). Ultimately, the human mind is defined and perfected by its capacity „to have an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence.“ (5P36, cf. 22P47): „the greatest good of those who seek virtue is to know God“ (5P36)³⁶

Stages of knowledge in Spinoza and Plato

The hierarchy of the stages of knowledge described by Spinoza in the 2nd part of the *Ethics* and in chs. 1-4 of Part 2 of the *Short Treatise* belongs to a long tradition descended from Plato's Analogy of the Line. Spinoza distinguishes three or four or stages of knowledge respectively, depending on whether the first two types are counted as one or as two individual stages.³⁷ In Part II of the *Ethics* three or four types or levels of knowledge are differentiated:

1. *imaginatio*
2. *opinio*
3. *ratio*
4. *scientia intuitiva*

In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza describes human beings as consisting of modes of thinking substance, divided into into "opinion" (which arises either from "experience" or "hearsay"³⁸), "true belief", and "science" or "clear and distinct knowledge." This division, and the corresponding one in the *Ethics*, reproduces the main division of Plato's Line into the realm of appearances and opinion (δόξα), and the realm of reality and ideas or true knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), along with their subdivision, with *imagination* and *opinion* corresponding to the individual cuts of the lower segment into the lower intellectual capacities of εἰκασία and πίστις, and *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* corresponding to the higher segment and the higher functions of intellect, διάνοια and νόησις. The manner in which our notions or concepts are formed with respect to this hierarchy determines whether our notions of things will be adequate and our knowledge clear, distinct, and true.³⁹

In order to illustrate by a „single example“ the specific relationships of the three (four) stages of knowledge, Spinoza employs, in both the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*, an *analogy* – one that, in its key characteristics, corresponds precisely to the analogy of Plato's Line. For not only does Spinoza deem analogy the appropriate method for elaborating the ascending scale of the stages of knowledge; as his primary analogue and point of departure for his comparison he explicitly chooses the "rule of three", i.e. the law of proportion,⁴⁰ the same rule which forms the basis for Plato's Analogy of the Line.⁴¹ Spinoza compares the different approaches of applying the rule of three to solving a proportion to the individual levels of knowledge: one who has "merely heard someone else say that if...you multiply the second and third numbers, and divide the product by the first, you then find the

³⁵ *Ethics* V, 29, Schol.

³⁶ Cf. "Naturalism and Intellectualism" 32f.

³⁷ Wolfson relates Spinoza's stages of knowledge to the division of types of knowledge in Plato's Line (133 and note 1, with text references: Rep VI 511 D, VII, 533 E: νόησις (νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη), διάνοια, πίστις, εἰκασία; and the various classifications in Aristotle (ibid. and note 2: *Analytica Posteriora*, II, 19, 100b, 7-8: δόξα, λογισμός, ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς; *De Anima* III, 3, 428, 4-5 αἴσθησις, δόξα, ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς; *Metaphys.* XII, 9, 1074b, 35-36 ἐπιστήμη, αἴσθησις, δόξα, διάνοια; *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 3, 1139b, 16-17: τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, νοῦς, ὑπόληψις, δόξα. Wolfson notes (II, 131f.) the apparent inconsistency of Spinoza's numbering of the „stages of knowledge“: „In the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* Spinoza explicitly states that the modes of perception (modos percipiendi) are four. In the *Ethics* he ...divides knowledge (cognitio) into four kinds (genera), but by treating the first and the second...as two modes of regarding things (utrumque contemplandi modum) under one kind of knowledge designated by a single term, he refers to the first three of his original four kinds of knowledge as 'these two kinds of knowledge,' thus making altogether a threefold classification. In the *Short Treatise* he first enumerates only three, but by dividing the first into two parts he really has a fourfold classification.“ In fact, the division into three or four is a result of Spinoza's close association of the first two stages, because of their dependency on the senses, and their relative unreliability and subordinate position with respect to the attainment of true knowledge.

³⁸ For clarification of terminological inconsistencies with regard to Spinoza's use of the words belief (*geloof*) and opinion (*waan*) in this passage cf. Curley, *CWI*, 97 FN b.

³⁹ "Naturalism & Intellectualism", 33.

⁴⁰ given three numbers, of which the first two form a specific ratio, obtaining the value of a fourth, unknown term by the multiplication of the means and extremes. For an interpretation of the division of Plato's Line according to the image of a geometrical proportion, which provides the original basis for the use of the word *analogy* (in its original meaning as "rule or three" or law of proportion according to which to obtain the value of an unknown "fourth" term), cf. the excursus by M.E. Zovko in J. Zovko, M.E. Zovko, "The Metaphysical Character of Philosophy", in (book chapter) in: Mark Pestana (ed.) *Metaphysics*, Rijeka: InTech ISBN 979-953-307-115-1 (2012) 9-44.

⁴¹ On the central role of the law of proportion to interpretation of Plato's Line cf. M.E. Zovko, „The Way Up and the Way Back“, 326-336, and "The Metaphysical Character", (cf. above FN 39)

fourth number, which has the same proportion to the third as the second has to the first", will perform this action "without having ...any more knowledge of the rule of three than a blind man has of color", and "whatever he may have been able to say about it" he repeats, "as a parrot repeats what it has been taught." (ST II, 1). Another, acting on the basis of *opinio*, an acquired but unproven habit of mind, "tests it with some particular calculations, and finding that these agree with it...gives his 'belief' to the rule. He thus confirms it by "the experience of some particular [cases]", but cannot be sure that this is a rule for all. A third person, "consults true reason" which "tells him that because of the property of proportionality in these numbers" the rule necessarily applies. A fourth, however, "has the clearest knowledge of all", for having "no need either of report, or of experience, or of the art of reasoning", "through his penetration he immediately sees the proportionality [and] all the calculations."⁴²

From the individual stages of knowledge arise as from their "proximate cause" all the "passions" or "emotions" of the soul, from each according to its type: from the first, those "which are contrary to good reason"; from the second, "the good Desires"; and from the third "true and genuine Love". The last form of knowledge, namely, is a "clear knowledge" which "goes far beyond the others". For it "comes not from being convinced by reasons, but from being aware of and *enjoying* the thing itself". It is a knowledge, which is itself enjoyment. (ST II, 2)⁴³

It is only when the Mind is determined „internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions,“ that it „regards things clearly and distinctly“ (2P29S). This may occur in two stages, through *ratio* and through *scientia intuitiva*, which correspond to the two upper divisions of Plato's line, *dianoia* and *noesis*, and their production of true knowledge, *episteme*. The second (or third, if we count imagination and *opinio* as two separate stages of knowledge) type of knowledge, called *ratio* (2P38, C; P39 and C., P40), is the approximate equivalent of *dianoia* in Plato's Line. Formed first on the basis of „notions common to all men“ and „adequate ideas of the properties of things,“ *ratio* comprises ultimately „knowledge of how things are constituted [...] in God, insofar as he has ideas of all of them.“⁴⁴

⁴² Cf. the corresponding passage from the *Ethics*: "Suppose there are three numbers, and the problem is to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first. Merchants do not hesitate to multiply the second by the third, and divide the product by the first; because they have not yet forgotten what they heard from their teacher without any demonstration, or because they have often found this in the simplest numbers, or from the force of the Demonstration of P[7]⁴² in book VII of Euclid, viz. from the common property of proportionals.

But in the simplest numbers none of this is necessary. Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, no one fails to see that the fourth proportional number is 6 – and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have to the second." (2P40S2)

⁴³ Herein, as Sigwart notes, Spinoza appears to oppose Descartes *Passions de l'ame* I, 27 who sees "motions of the animal spirits" as causes of the passions (cf. Curley CWI, 99 fn 2)

In the corresponding passage from the *Ethics*, the merchants' approach to solving the proportion corresponds to knowledge of the first and second type respectively, using either a kind of trial and error „with simple numbers“ physically representable by things of sense (as per *imaginatio*, *eikasia*), or application of rote learning without genuine understanding of the rule „received from a master“ (*opinio*, *pistis*). If the merchant, on the other hand, arrives at the solution by „force of the Demonstration of Proposition 19 in book VII of Euclid“, that is, by means of the general property of proportionals, then his knowledge is gained deductively or analytically, i.e. by the second (third) type of knowledge (*ratio*, *dianoia*) *ex eo, quod notiones communes rerumque proprietatum ideas adequatas habemus*. The final example corresponds to the higher form of perception called *noesis* in Plato. Given a ratio of simple numbers, namely, one to two, and a third number: three, Spinoza explains, „everyone can see that the fourth proportional is six.“ This immediate grasp of the proportion and the analogous relationship of the third term to the missing fourth, provides us, in Spinoza's understanding with a much clearer grasp of the solution, „because we infer the fourth number from the ratio“ which we „see the first number to have to the second.“ This intuitive grasp of the rule is an expression of a type of thought which forms the necessary complement and presupposition of discursive thought. The third (fourth) kind of knowledge, like *noesis*, enables us to see the *whole* which forms the foundation for diachronical reasoning, and so to formulate hypotheses, gain insight into complex interrelationships among concepts and their logical derivation, and overarching solutions of problems

Spinoza views the „faculty of imagining“, despite the apparent devaluation implied by the analogy, as a virtue or strength of our nature. At the same time, he emphasizes how much more of a virtue imagination would be if „the Mind's faculty of imagining were free“, that is: if its functioning „depended only on its own nature“, instead of on the changing affections which the unending succession of the singular things of our experience produces in our Body. This idea corresponds to a type of freedom attributable only the *substantia infinita* (cf. *Ethics* ID7), a point which is remarkable in the context of what might otherwise be called Spinoza's necessitarianism. The suggestion of the participation of human beings in this sort of freedom may perhaps have been influential in Kant's conception of „intellectual intuition“, which is impossible to human beings but might hypothetically be attributed to a Creator God, and his concept of „productive“ or „spontaneous“ imagination, an expression of the analogous human ability. Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason* B 68, 72; Cf. B 103, 151; *Critique of Judgment* 240–244. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism" FN 72.

⁴⁴ Similarly, in Plato's Line, *dianoia* refers to the capacity by which „the soul is compelled to investigate by treating as images the things imitated in the former division“ (i.e. the „things“ taken by *pistis*, belief or *opinio*, to be the source of the *eikones*, the shadows and reflections produced from sense impressions by *eikasia* or imagination), „and by means of assumptions from which it proceeds not up [i.e. by the method of hypothesis] to a first principle but down [deductively or

The third or fourth kind of knowledge, *scientia intuitiva* „proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.“⁴⁵ This recalls the Line's highest segment, which describes that part of knowledge where reason without recourse to images lays hold of by

the other section of the intelligible [...] by the power of dialectics, treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses, underpinnings, footings, and springboards so to speak, to enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting-point of all, and after attaining to that again taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion, making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas and ending with ideas. (*Rep.* 511c)

By which Socrates according to Glaucon means to distinguish

The aspect of reality and the intelligible, which is contemplated by the power of dialectic, as something truer and more exact than the object of the so-called arts and sciences whose assumptions are arbitrary starting-points (*Rep.* 511c)

Knowledge and Eros in Plato and Spinoza

Both Spinoza and Plato distinguish a proportionality in the stages of knowledge whose objects are closely tied to the objects of desire, as the ascent of knowledge is to the perfection of human nature. The question remains, however: what is the final aim of that ascent, what is the love of the lover and how is it attained? We have seen that in Spinoza the striving which defines the essence of being human is ultimately a striving for *understanding* whose goal is virtue, and hence freedom, and happiness. In Plato, too, love is fundamentally love of virtue. But is virtue, as the adage goes, and as Spinoza seems to confirm, its own reward?

A striking difference between the speech of Diotima and Spinoza's account of love in Part V of the *Ethics* is the apparent absence in Spinoza of any explicit mention of concept of beauty or the desire for procreation, and its related manifestations in art, human forms of life and nature. Spinoza will have been familiar with the treatment of the topic of love popular in Italian literary circles in the period of the Italian Renaissance and the Florentine Academy, including Marsilio Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium* (1474-75).⁴⁶ Judah Abravanel's (Leone Ebreo) *Dialoghi d'amore*, both of which served as important sources of the Platonic doctrine of love in later tradition. The *Dialoghi d'amore* (1501-02, published 1535) were present in Spinoza's library in a Spanish version *Dialogos d'amor*⁴⁷ at the time of his death. Though Wolfson played down the importance of Leone Ebreo for Spinoza's thought, the obvious parallels still speak for the plausibility of the hypothesis that Spinoza may have "derived from it his doctrine of the Intellectual Love of God" (C. Roth *ibid* xv)⁴⁸

analytically] to a conclusion". The next and highest section of the line represents *noesis*, the capacity by which the mind „advances from its assumption to a beginning or principle that transcends assumption [...] which it makes no use of the images employed by the other section, relying on ideas only and progressing systematically through ideas.“ (*Rep.* 510b–511c)

⁴⁵ Cf. *Ethics* 5P25 ; P36S.: *scientia intuitiva* is knowledge which follows „from the divine nature and continuously depends upon God.“ Cf. also *Ethics* 2P47S.: „From this we see that God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all. And since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P40S2“. Wolfson (II, 141f) distinguishes 4 characteristics of *scientia intuitiva*: 1) „it is a knowledge which is deduced from 'an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God' or from 'the divine nature' or from 'the infinite essence and the eternity of God.'; 2) „it arises 'when a thing is perceived through its essence alone';; 3) „it arises when a thing is perceived 'through the knowledge of its proximate cause';; 4) „it is the 'result of clear and distinct conception.'“

⁴⁶ Plato's and Plotinus' theory of beauty comprise "the historical and substantial presupposition" for the conception of a unity of eros and beauty in the Renaissance, particularly in Marsilio Ficino (Beierwaltes "Marsilio Ficinos Theorie des Schönen im Kontext des Platonismus" 9)

⁴⁷ Regarding the question whether the *Dialogues of Love* were written originally in Italian or Hebrew, or perhaps Ladino "Castilian indited in Hebrew characters", cf. Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love (Dialoghi d'Amore)* Trnal. by F. Friedeberg-Seeley and Jean H. Barnes, with an introd. by Cecil Roth (London: Soncino Press 1937) xii, xiii. Cf. xv: "The *Dialoghi* was among the most popular philosophical works of its age. In the space of twenty years it went through at least five editions in the Italian original. It was twice translated into French...and no less than three times into Spanish, as well as into Latin and Hebrew." The *Dialoghi d'amore* present three dialogues between Philo and Sophia, the lover and the beloved, on the subject of Love. After distinguishing between Love and Desire and various kinds of love in the first dialogue, the second goes on to show how love is the principle of all which exists, and how it is also at work in human affairs. This is very close to Spinoza's treatment of *conatus* according to the order of nature and as the basis of the emotions or affects.

⁴⁸ The pairing of Love of God and knowledge of God , in which true happiness consists, in the first dialogue, parallels Spinoza's pairing of *scientia intuitiva* and *Amor Dei intellectualis* in the V. part of the *Ethics*. Abravanel, like Plato, distinguishes objects of love and desire: the useful, the pleasant and the good. With regard to the true ends of human beings,

While Beauty is central to the treatment of love in the *Symposium* and also to Abravanel's *Dialoghi*, it is not explicitly treated in the *Ethics*. In Abravanel's 3rd dialogue, beauty is differentiated from goodness, and made a condition of human love, as a "grace which brings pleasure to the mind which perceives it" and so moves it to love (195) [207a] From what has been admitted, we must yearn for immortality no less than for good, since love loves good to be one's own for ever. And hence it necessarily follows that love is of immortality.'

If we turn to the definition of Love in the *Short Treatise*, and compare it to the exposition of the stages of love in the speech of Diotima, the genuine parallels to the concept of beauty in Spinoza are brought to light. "Love," according to the *Short Treatise*, "is nothing but enjoying a thing and being united to a thing" (II, 5; Curley CWI 105). The stages of love are divided "according to the qualities of the object man seeks to enjoy and unite with". Thus, love "arises from the perception and knowledge which we have of a thing, and as the thing shows itself to be greater and more magnificent, so also is our Love greater and greater." (II, 5; Curley CWI 104) The quality of the love we have toward a thing depends accordingly on the type of knowledge from which it arises. The objects of love are divided into three categories: those which "are corruptible in themselves", those, which "through their cause, are not corruptible", and a third kind "which, solely through its own power and capacity, is eternal and incorruptible". By "corruptible" objects, Spinoza means "singular things, which have not existed from all time, or have had a beginning. By objects which are incorruptible by virtue of their cause, he means "all those modes which... are the causes of the singular modes"; and by the third kind he means "God, or what we take to be one and the same thing, the Truth" (ibid. 105). The first type of love-objects are those perceived by the the first kind of knowledge or opinion. From this type of knowledge and its objects (undifferentiated experience of particular things) arise the emotions which are passions, which displace each other in succession, since "whenever someone sees something good, or thinks he does, he is always inclined to unite himself with it." This displacement of competing objects of desire is subject to the perception of whatever one perceives to be better at any given moment, for whenever one "comes to know something better than this good he now knows, then his love turns immediately from the first to the second" (ibid. 100). The same type of displacement may occur under the influence of the opinions or prejudices of others or from "mere report", as Spinoza calls it.

The second type of knowledge or *true belief*, refers to the causes of the singular modes, but "teaches us only what it belongs to the thing to be, not what it is", i.e. its general characteristics. This type of knowledge "can never unite us with the thing we believe", because it sees its object as a thing external to itself. It is nevertheless "good" insofar as it leads to true knowledge and "makes us perceive intellectually those things which are not in us, but outside us", "awakening us to things that are truly worthy of love", and propelling us toward "a clear understanding, through which we love God", (ST II 3, Curley CWI 102f.; 4, 104). True belief (in the *Ethics*, *ratio*) thus "provides us with the knowledge of good and evil, and shows us all the passions that are to be destroyed". In other words, "the passions which come from opinion" "are sifted by this second kind of knowledge, to see what is good and what is evil in them", i.e. what is beneficial and detrimental to our perseverance in our being. "[I]n Nature there is no good and no evil"; rather, "whatever we require of man", the standard by which we measure human actions, relates only "only to his genus", to an "Idea" we have conceived "of a perfect man in our intellect." Standards of good and evil are thus only "beings of reason" or "modes of thinking". "Whatever helps us to attain that perfection", we call *good*, and "whatever hinders our attaining it, or does not assist it", we call *evil*. General questions regarding "man's good and evil" must in any case be carefully distinguished from the "good and evil of, say, Adam". In forming such judgements, a true philosopher must "scrupulously avoid" confusing "a real being with a being of reason". (II, 4, Curley CW 103f.)

Love, then, cannot be aroused by reason in the form of discursive rationality. "[O]ur nature", however, "requires us to love something and to unite ourselves with it, in order to exist." On the basis of true belief and clear understanding we strive to free ourselves of "the passions which come from opinion." However, "we never strive to free ourselves" from *love* as we do from the passions. For this, Spinoza provides two reasons "1) because it is impossible; 2) because it is necessary that we not be free of it" (ST I, 5; Curley 104f.) The reason it is impossible is because we do not decided whether or

love and desire of the good, "whence spring virtue and wisdom", no limit is enjoined as with respect to objects of pleasure and usefulness. The universality of love, i.e. that it is common to all things animate and inanimate, as well as its differentiation into three kinds, natural (in inanimate things), sensitive (in animals) and voluntary and rational in human beings in the second dialogue is perfectly in accord with Spinoza's concept of *conatus* and its expression according to the order of nature and the order of the intellect. Spinoza departs from Ebreo in his strict rejection of any will or intellect in relation to God and of any attribution to God of love toward the *modi*.

not to love; rather, it is the object of our love which arouses in us the love we feel toward it, because of "the good or advantage we find in the object". Our response to the object is automatic; as we know the object, so we must also love it, and we cannot *not* know, at some level or another, as long as we *are*. It is *necessary*, furthermore, that we love the object, because "we could not exist if we did not enjoy something to which we were united, and by which we were strengthened" (ibid. 105). Our striving to persevere and our love for the objects which enable us is the basis of our very existence. Nonetheless, loving particular things and uniting ourselves with them "does not strengthen our nature at all", and is even harmful to us. "True love comes always from knowledge that the thing [scil. the object of our love] is splendid and good":

Love is a union with an object that our intellect judges to be good and magnificent...a union such that the lover and the loved come to be one and the same thing, or to form a whole together (*STI*, 5; Curley *CWI* 105f.)

Of the three types of love-objects mentioned above, the third is the only one which provides true and lasting satisfaction. He "who unites with corruptible things is always miserable", since the things he unites himself with are "outside his power and subject to many accidents." Particular things, nonetheless, "at least have some essence"; far more miserable are they "who love honour, wealth and sensual pleasure, which have no essence." The "second kind of objects", though "eternal and incorruptible", are "not such through their own power"; they are "nothing but modes which depend immediately on God." Thus, we cannot conceive them "unless we have at the same time a concept of God." In God, however, "[b]ecause he is perfect", "our love must necessarily rest". Indeed, "it will be impossible for us, if we use our intellect well, not to love God." This is because "when we who love something come to know something better than what we love, we always fall on it at once, and leave the first thing." God, however, "has all perfection in himself alone"; therefore, "we must love him." Furthermore, "if we use our intellect well in the knowledge of things," we will come "to know them in their causes." Nevertheless, "since God is a first cause of all other things," the knowledge of God is "prior, according to the nature of things, to the knowledge of all other things," while "the knowledge of all other things must follow from the knowledge of the first cause." What else can follow from this "but that love will be able to pour forth more powerfully on the lord our God than on anyone else? For he alone is magnificent, and a perfect Good" (*STI*, Curley *CWI*, 106-107).

Discursive reasoning, although it enables to recognize standards of moral behaviour, does not have the power "to bring us to our well-being" (*STII*, 22; Curley *CWI*, 138). The reason we can see the good and fail to find in ourselves the power "to do the good, or omit the bad," is that reason (the second type of knowledge) does not provide us with direct experience of the thing, but only a conclusion arrived as a result of logical derivation. Spinoza explains this by reference to the rule of three, "for we have more power if we understand the proportion itself than if we understand the rule of of proportion." (*STII*, 21; Curley *CWI*, 138). The kind of knowledge that produces love (as opposed to "the desire which proceeds from reasoning") "is not a consequence of anything else, but an immediate manifestation of the object itself to the intellect". It is "clear understanding", not arrived at "as a result of a second thing", and not coming "from outside". Reasoning has only the power of controverting the opinion of others or "report" and "can be a cause of the destruction of those opinions which we have only from report...but not of those which we have through experience." The love which arises from the experience of particular things can only be destroyed by another love that is greater, and this is possible only through the direct experience of "the proportion itself" which may be gained through "clear understanding" of: "For the power the thing itself gives us is always greater than that we get as a result of a second thing". (*STII*, 21; Curley *CWI*, 138)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Spinoza's position in the *Ethics* appears to contradict this view of reason, when he says that "an affect that arises from reason" and which "is necessarily related to the common properties of things", since we "always regard [such properties] as present" is "more powerful than those related to singular things which we regard as absent" (5P7), whereby "Things we understand clearly and distinctly are either common properties of things or deduced from them" (5p12D, cf. 2P40 S2) "Nevertheless a man "does not know himself except through affections of his Body and their ideas" (3P53; cf. 2P19 and P23) and since "No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect" (5P14), it is through the knowledge of God considered as an affect that we are liberated from bondage to affects or emotions which are passions, i.e. by which we are made to suffer instead of to act. Desires which arise from affects "by which we are torn", whose "force and growth" are "defined by the power of external causes" "can be more violent" than desire which arises from the second kind of knowledge (4P16). "Love toward God" alone is able to engage the mind in a manner that liberates it completely from bondage to affects which arise from external causes. This is possible precisely because "this Love is joined to all the affections of the Body" (5P16) through a knowledge which by which the "Mind knows itself and the Body under a species of eternity", by which knowledge "it necessarily has knowledge of God and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God" (5P30). From this kind of knowledge arises "the greatest satisfaction of Mind there can be...Joy...accompanied by the idea of oneself, and also accompanied by the idea of God as a cause" (5P32), in other words "Love of God, not insofar as we imagine him as present, but insofar as we understand him to be

This immediate experience of proportionality provides an image and analogy of the direct experience which the intellect has of the "immediate manifestation" of the sole object which is in itself "magnificent and good". Through true knowledge and clear understanding "the soul necessarily becomes united" with its object, just as the body necessarily united itself with objects according to the manifestation and experience of their goodness, and this despite the fact that we may not "know him as he is," just as we do not know particular things as they are, but only according to the affections they produce in our bodies. That this "greater love" is not a negation of, nor a mere abstraction from, the love we have for particular things, but its consummation, is made clear by comparison of direct experience of the most magnificent object with our experience of individual things:

For even in the knowledge we have of the body we do not know it as it is, or perfectly. And yet, what a union! what a love! (ST II, 22; Curley CWI, 139)

This is the equivalent of the vision of beauty, the union of the lover with the object of his love, which corresponds to the culmination of the ascent of love in Diotima's speech: the clear understanding of the proportion, the direct experience of the object which is "most magnificent and best of all" (heerlijkst, gloriosissimus/optimus). This third or fourth kind of knowledge, "which is the knowledge of God, is not the consequence of anything else, but immediate" – and furthermore, "*is the cause of all knowledge which is known through itself alone, and not through any other thing.*" That is, in an ontological sense, there is a direct connection between the fourth type of knowledge and the love which arises from it and the knowledge of particular things which arises through experience. It is a knowledge from within, as is "evident from the fact that by Nature we are so united with him that without him we can neither be nor be understood." It is "because there is so close a union between God and us" that "we can only understand him immediately" and not "as a result of a second thing", as a consequence of reasoning (ST II, 22; Curley CWI, 138f.).

The Ascent of Love in Plato and in Spinoza

According to Diotima "human nature can find no better helper than love" (212b) Diotima portrays what appears to be a hierarchical ordering of love, based on its objects and leading to an ultimate object, beauty itself, which is the principle of all other objects and determines their place on the ladder.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the vision of ultimate beauty is the consummation of striving for beauty present at all levels of human striving is the love and desire for immortality. To attain the ultimate goal of love as desire of beauty and immortality the lover progresses from love of physical beauty in an individual object to love of physical beauty in all its instances, from thence to love of beautiful laws, institutions, sciences and finally to the science whose object is beauty itself.⁵¹

Vlastos disparages Plato's account of love in the *Symposium* as "egocentric".⁵² As desire to possess what is beautiful, it is, in his view, centered on the satisfaction of one's own desires. Any love of persons as individuals is, in Vlastos' view, made subordinate to love of beauty in itself. It is only the "image" of the Idea which we love, when we love an individual. Thus, Vlastos finds Plato's theory, which views this "lesser love" only as a stepping stone (211c) to the attainment of the vision of beauty itself, and "does not provide for love of whole persons, but only for love of that abstract version of persons which consists of the complex of their best qualities" (31), lacking in comparison with Aristotle's definition: "Love is wishing good things for someone for that person's sake."⁵³

As we have seen above, Spinoza's understanding of love and its foundation in the *conatus suo esse conservare* provides the basis for a proper understanding of what to Vlastos appears to be the egocentrism of Plato's account – by illuminating *conatus* as the necessary condition of *any* kind of love, and *virtue* as *conatus*' ultimate aim. What appears to be egocentrism in Plato's and Spinoza's theory of love is nothing but the factual basis and necessary condition of our existence and identity as individual beings. The final aim of that striving, which consists in virtue and true knowledge, cannot help but include love for the particular things of our experience, which are not negated by a categorical abstraction, but consummated in the singular vision and direct experience of their source and cause. The object of love in the *Symposium*, beauty itself, is intimately tied to the good, as in the Greek concept of *kalokagathia*, and to the attainment of one's own virtue (*Symposium* 204e). As Levy

eternal." This is what Spinoza calls "intellectual Love of God" (ibid.), a love by which we partake of the same "infinite intellectual love" with which God loves himself (5P35, cf. 5P36)

⁵⁰D. Levy, "The Definition of Love in Plato's *Symposium*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 40, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1979), 285-291; 285.

⁵¹cf. ibid. 286.

⁵²"The Individual as Object of Love in Plato", *Platonic Studies*, Princeton 1973, 30

⁵³ ibid. 30, 31, 32.

argues, if "the good one desires for oneself" is to possess virtue, then "At least some of the time, desiring to possess virtue for oneself *consists* in wishing good things for someone for that person's sake." In fact, union with the true love-object entails without exception desiring the same good for others we desire for ourselves.⁵⁴ According to Spinoza, the object of the "Love toward God", the equivalent of Love toward Beauty and the Good in Plato and in Spinoza "the highest good which we can want from the dictate of reason," "is common to all men." Therefore "we desire that all should enjoy it", i.e. it "cannot be tainted by an affect of Envy or Jealousy". Rather, "the more men we imagine to enjoy it", "the more it is encouraged" (5P18).

The union we have with God "by Nature and by love" is grounded in the union which the whole of nature has with God, for "there can be nothing in Nature of which there is not an idea in the soul of the same thing", and "since the whole of Nature is one unique substance, whose essence is infinite, all things are united through Nature, and united into one... viz. God." According to Spinoza "there can be nothing in Nature whose Idea does not exist in the thinking thing". Thus there is an idea of the body, "the very first thing our soul becomes aware of". But the idea "cannot find any rest in the knowledge of the body, without passing over into knowledge of that without which neither the body nor the Idea itself can either exist or be understood", and "as soon as it knows that being, it will be united with it by love" (ST II, 22; Curley CW I, 140). By the union with the body, and "by knowledge of and passions toward corporal things," "all those effects which we are constantly aware of in our body arise." When however "our knowledge and love come to fall on that without which we can neither exist nor be understood, and which is not at all corporal," we are necessarily united with that object, and effects arise from that union which are "incomparably greater and more magnificent". When this occurs "we can truly say that we have been born again" and have achieved *immortality*, for the Soul can be united either with the body of which it is the idea, or with God, without whom it can neither exist nor be understood":

For our first birth was when we were united with the body. From this union have arisen the effects and motions of the [animal] spirits. But our other, or second, birth will occur when we become aware in ourselves of the completely different effects of love produced by knowledge of this incorporeal.

Insofar as the soul is united with the idea or with God it remains immutable or immortal. The "third kind of knowledge (2P47S) whose foundation is the knowledge of God itself" "begets a Love toward a thing immutable and eternal... which we really fully possess ..." (5P20S) Imagination and memory cease, according to Spinoza, when the duration of the body comes to an end (5P21). Nevertheless, "in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence" of each individual body and each individual mind, "under a species of eternity", and "which is necessarily eternal" (5P22, 23). And although "it is impossible that we should recollect that we existed before the body – since there cannot be any traces of this in the body ...still we feel and know by experience that we are eternal" (5P23). It is due to the presence in God of an idea of every particular thing that Spinoza can assert that "The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (5P24). By the third (fourth) kind of knowledge we proceed "from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things" and vice versa, from ever greater understanding of things in this way to an ever greater understanding of God. From this type of knowledge arises "the greatest satisfaction of Mind" and the greatest pleasure, "accompanied by the idea of God as a cause", that is the *greatest love*.

The "three aims" of *eros* according to the speech of Diotima are: "knowledge of beauty, beauty itself, and immortality". The three forms in which human beings strive to achieve immortality are physical procreation (207a6-208b6), the achievement of lasting fame (208c1-209e4), and the realization of true virtue based on the knowledge of beauty and the good (210a1- 212 a7). In the progress from one to the next, each of the stages of striving, in Chen's view, "are mingled with the steps of cognitive striving until the last step."⁵⁵ As Chen sees it, the lover of beauty perceives beauty first in the individual instances of beautiful bodies, whereby he comes to recognize the *kinship* of beauty in individual instances, gradually achieving a "de-individualized" view of such beauty which leads him to love the beauty in beautiful bodies indifferently, though not separately from these bodies (i.e. not as "beauty-in-all-bodies as such"), but beauty in each instance as kindred to that in every other instance. Next in the ascent of love is love for beautiful, that is virtuous, souls, for whom the lover creates discourses to improve their virtue. This love according to Chen's interpretation is still

⁵⁴ Cf. M.E. Zovko, "Involved in humankind: Nature, virtue and the good we desire for ourselves and for others." In: *Knowledge Cultures* 1(2), 2013 (Addleton Academic Publishers ISSN 2327-5731) 264-300.

⁵⁵ L. C. H. Chen, "Knowledge of Beauty in Plato's Symposium," *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1983), 66-74.

directed toward individual instances, that is individual souls (and not "beauty-in-all-souls as such") Hence

when the lover advances to love beautiful institutions and laws he still grasps only their συγγένεια (210c3-5) and not the γένος; being συγγενές is not the same as being one and the same genus.⁵⁶

This progress of love is according to Chen, who adopts the term from Gould,⁵⁷ one of "deindividuation". The same thing occurs on the level of "beautiful institutions and laws", that is the lover "sees that the beauty of them is of one family (*syggenes*), but he does not grasp the genus itself."⁵⁸ Chen rejects the idea that the "horizontal expansion" of the recognition of the kinship of beauty, from the kinship of beauty in beautiful bodies, to the kinship of beautiful souls, and finally to that of beautiful sciences and institutions, is a process of "abstraction and generalization" like that which takes place in "empirical logic". There something "common" is discovered: "Generalization in empirical logic produces a concept." In the recognition of beauty, however, it is the *kinship* of beautiful individuals, even though "deindividuated", that is recognized. In other words, "for Plato the apprehending is of an Idea – in the *Symposium*, the Idea of beauty, a being, an entity, not a concept."⁵⁹ This interpretation of the ascent of love appears to be in keeping with the characterisation of the ascent of love in Spinoza given above, and its implications for the ascent of love in Plato's *Symposium*. As Spinoza put it, it is not a "being of reason" or "mode of thinking" which arouses love, not an abstraction or generalization, but a really existing singular thing.

If Chen is right, the ascent of love in the speech of Diotima is a single upward movement that "has only one step and no more, i.e. the step from beautiful instances to the Idea of beauty." In other words, "there is no ascent until the final step in the whole movement is taken. All the other steps in the process are steps of horizontal expansion preparing for the ascent."⁶⁰ Spinoza's depiction of the advancement through the stages of knowledge and love appears to confirm this interpretation, for it is only in the last step that a transformation of affect occurs, although the advancement from imagination and opinion, to ratio represents a "horizontal expansion" from instances to beings of reason. Here, too, "there are only two tiers, the level of Ideas and the level of particulars"⁶¹ and no "generic hierarchy", no ascent by means of abstraction and generalisation, from species to genus. There are no "unities" at the different "levels" of beauty, no identity of the beautiful in the many beautiful instances, and no species or kinds.⁶² Chen considers in this connection the possibility, suggested to him by an "anonymous scholar" of an ascent in value and points to evidence in the text which supports this point of view, for example where it is "explicitly stated...that beautiful souls are *timioteron* than beautiful bodies," and beautiful bodies are characterised as "as *smikron ti* in comparison with beautiful souls (and with beautiful institutions and laws, too." Chen concludes, that "the same process from beautiful bodies to beautiful souls, or to beautiful institutions" is "from the ontic viewpoint...a horizontal expansion and from the viewpoint of value...an ascent." Yet he finds that the "value-relation" does not apply for the ascent from beautiful souls to beautiful laws and institutions, nor from these to beautiful sciences, rather "The text knows no-value-relation either between the first two groups or between the second two groups." There is namely no motivation for the "ascent" from one category of beautiful things to the other. In striving for the knowledge of beauty, the lover "cognitively touches the beautiful itself, gains direct intellectual contact with it or a vision of it." The question is "what is the content of his vision, or what does he apprehend of the beautiful itself." Chen identifies "four positive predications" which correspond to a preceding series of "negations predicated of beauty": "itself by itself, with itself, uniform, and always being." Beauty shares these predications with other ideas, and it is not possible to distinguish the nature of beauty on the basis of them. To define beauty, however, "is not the purpose of the *Symposium*," and indeed something like the "common nature" of beauty eludes us. It is only "the peculiar nature of beauty as a moral and/or aesthetic value" as it reveals itself to us in individual, kindred instances that is the object of the lover's love.⁶³

As Chen notes, whereas in the *Phaedo logiszeisthai* and *dianoesthai* are not distinguished from *theasthai* and *kathoran* in describing the "pursuit of the knowledge of Ideas", in the *Symposium* "two distinct cognitions" are recognized: "first the vision of the beautiful itself, and then a sort of *dianoia*

⁵⁶ *ibid.* 67

⁵⁷ 67, FN12.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* 67f.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 69.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* 70.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² cf. *ibid.* FN 23.

⁶³ *ibid.* 71.

expressed as a general description of it."⁶⁴ A similar situation exists with respect the relationship of knowledge and love in Spinoza. At first, beauty appears to be absent from Spinoza's treatment of love, and we might be inclined to view the ascent to the Love of God along the lines of the kind of hierarchical ascent by means of abstraction and generalization which Chen rejects with regard to the interpretation of the ascent of Love in the *Symposium*. The highest form of knowledge, however, the *scientia intuitiva*, which inspires the intellectual love of God, rests in "*the very Love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human Mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity...*" (5P36) This Love is related to the Mind's actions, and is "an action by which the mind contemplates itself, with the accompanying idea of God as its cause." By this Love, the Mind "is part of the infinite love by which God loves himself." The "constant and eternal Love of God", in which lies our blessedness, or Freedom, Spinoza identifies with what in his conviction justifiably called "*Glory*" (*heerlijkheit, gloria*) in Sacred Scripture, for "whether related to God or to the Mind, it can rightly be called satisfaction of mind, which is really not distinguished from Glory." He compares this with two definitions from his catalogue of the affects at the end of part III of the *Ethics*: Def. XXV, "Self-esteem", as "a Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting," and Def. XXX, "Love of esteem", understood as "a Joy accompanied by the idea of some action of ours which we imagine that others praise." These he implies to refer analogously to the Love of God, as being, in a metaphorical sense, "Joy...accompanied by the idea of himself ...And similarly as it is related to the Mind."

Spinoza, then – and also Plato – is very clear on the priority of the kind of knowledge called "intuitive" or "knowledge of the third kind" with respect to the "universal knowledge" called "the second kind", and emphasizes "how much more powerful" the former is than the latter. He even takes his own exposition in Part I of the *Ethics* to task in this respect, for although he there showed "generally...that all things (and consequently the human Mind also) depend on God both for their essence and their existence, nevertheless, that demonstration, though legitimate and put beyond all chance of doubt, *still does not affect our Mind as much as when this is inferred from the very essence of any singular thing which we say depends on God.*" (5P37 my italics) That which affects the mind causing it to love God and its own immortality by uniting itself with the object of its knowledge is *the beauty of the proportion* as recognized in direct intuition, not the logical consequences of the rule of proportionality. It is the beauty of the mathematical proportion which converts us, not the wearisome proof: "For there is more power in us from the recognition of the proportion itself than from the knowledge of the rule of proportion" (*ST* II, 9; Curley *CWI*, 113) Even though the word beauty is not used by Spinoza, the analogous condition for the object of knowledge being able to inspire us to *a greater love* is contained in the object itself: "if the object is glorious and good, then the soul will necessarily be unified with it", for "it is knowledge that causes love."

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

The Corybantic Effect of Arguments

Antony Hatzistavrou

“(T1) If I were to describe for you what an extraordinary effect his words have always had on me (I can feel it this moment even as I am speaking), you might actually suspect that I’m drunk! Still I swear to you, the moment he starts to speak, I am beside myself: my heart starts leaping in my chest, the tears come streaming down my face, even the frenzied Corybantes seem sane compared to me-and, let me tell you, I am not alone. I have heard Pericles and many other great orators, and I have admired their speeches. But nothing like this ever happened to me: they never upset me so deeply that my very own soul started protesting that my life -*my* life!- was no better than the most miserable slave’s. And yet that is exactly how this Marsyas here at my side makes me feel all the time: he makes it seem that my life isn’t worth living! You can’t say that isn’t true, Socrates. I know very well that you could make me feel that way this very moment if I gave you half a chance. He always traps me, you see, and he makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time, while all that matters is just what I most neglect: my personal shortcomings, which cry out for the closest attention. So I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him, for, like the Sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die.

(T2) Socrates is the only man in the world who makes me feel shame - ah, you didn’t think I had it in me, did you? Yes, he makes me feel ashamed: I know perfectly well that I can’t prove he’s wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways: I cave in to my desire to please the crowd. My whole life has become one constant effort to escape from him and keep away, but when I see him, I feel deeply ashamed, because I’m doing nothing about my way of life, though I have already agreed with him that I should. Sometimes, believe me, I think I would be happier if he were dead. And yet I know that if he dies I’ll be even more miserable. I can’t live with him, and I can’t live without him! What *can* I do about him?

That’s the effect of this satyr’s music – on me and many others.” (*Symposium* 215d6-216c5; translated by Nehamas and Woodruff)

This is how Alcibiades describes the effect of Socrates’ arguments on him. In T1 he describes his mental condition as psychological turmoil comparable to the frenzy experienced by those participating in the Corybantic rites. In T2 he identifies shame as the predominant emotion conversations with Socrates make him feel. In this paper I argue for three theses concerning T1 and T2. The first is that shame is the proximate cause of the Corybantic frenzy Alcibiades experiences. The second is that the generation of shame and a state of psychological turmoil is an expected outcome of the elenchus and has some beneficial effects on those Socrates cross-examines. The third is that the generation of shame also limits the efficiency of the elenchus as a means of moral reform: because of the presence of shame in his soul the examined party in an elenchus is less likely to remain hold of the elenctically tested beliefs.

1. *Corybantic frenzy and shame*

The Corybantic rite was considered a cure for what we may nowadays describe as cases of mania. Those who engaged in it were trying to get rid of their mental disorder by reliving a manic state induced by a frenzy of dancing to the deafening sounds of drums and flutes. Thus, the Corybantes while engaging in the rite lacked self-control and their body simply reacted to deafening music.

By comparing his mental state to the mental state of the Corybantes Alcibiades indicates that Socrates’ arguments make him lose his self-control. He clearly loses control of his body: he starts having palpitations and bursts into tears. This lack of control of his bodily reactions has a psychological counterpart. His self-esteem has been ruined. The beliefs about his moral worth which have been guiding his whole life have been turned upside down. While he believed that he was living a valuable life, Socrates makes him believe that his life is worthless: it is less worthy than the life of a slave. So, Alcibiades can be considered to experience not only lack of control of his bodily reactions but also a deeper, psychological instability. What he describes in T1 amounts to an experience of unbearable stress which is associated with the collapse of one’s self-image. He feels that he is no longer in control of himself. It is the arguments of Socrates which are hold of him and to which he bodily and emotionally reacts in the way in which the Corybantes are controlled by and react only to

the music of the flutes and drums.

This is the image of psychological distress and disorder which the analogy with the Corybantes conveys in T1. But how can the arguments of Socrates have such an effect on Alcibiades? They must be triggering a powerful emotion in Alcibiades' soul. Insults or arrogant behaviour (*hubris*) may cause one great distress because they trigger anger in one's soul. I suggest that in a similar manner Socrates' arguments are responsible for Alcibiades' psychological turmoil because they trigger shame as described in T2. I would like to stress two important features of Alcibiades' account of his shame in T2. First, he refers to shame in a way which suggests that he had not felt shame before he encountered Socrates. Since it is a newly felt emotion, he does not have the experience to psychologically cope with it. This might account for the intensity of his mental breakdown. Second, as I explain in the next section, his shame is an important sense *personal*: he does not only feel shame for his beliefs and in general his way of life but also feels shame only *before Socrates* (216b2-3).

There are implicit references to shame in T1 which support the interpretation that it is because of the shame triggered by Socrates' arguments that Alcibiades reaches the Corybantic state of psychological turmoil. On the one hand, Alcibiades claims that Socrates makes him realize that his life as a politician is even worse than the life of a slave. In the eyes of an Athenian aristocrat there could be hardly anything more shameful than the life of a slave. On the other hand, he stresses that Socrates makes him admit that he has failed to address his many personal shortcomings. These shortcomings are reasons for feeling shame and are sharply contrasted with the self-assurance his political life used to generate.

2. *Shame, Corybantic frenzy and the elenchus*

On the interpretation I have advanced the elenchus causes shame in Alcibiades which in turn throws him into a state of mental instability. Should we regard the generation of shame and Corybantic frenzy a normal and possibly intended outcome of the elenchus? Or should we consider Alcibiades' mental condition an exceptional case which is to be explained by reference to pathological features of his personality?

Based primarily on the use of the Corybantic metaphor in the *Crito* Harte (1999) and Weiss (1999) have argued that we should regard both (a) an argument which has Corybantic effects and (b) the Corybantic effect of arguments as un-Socratic. (a) is difficult to accept in the face of the evidence of the *Symposium*. Though Alcibiades clearly reaches a state of mental instability because of arguments there is no suggestion that the arguments Socrates has presented to him are anything else than proper elenctic arguments. Two main considerations appear to support (b). The first is that elenctic arguments do not cause Socrates any emotional disturbance, let alone driving him to a state of mania, despite the fact that a great number of them lead to a state of *aporia* or perplexity. The second relates to the nature of Socratic rationalism. A defining feature of the latter is that Socrates wants to convince his interlocutors through dispassionate, critical reasoning and not through rhetoric which targets primarily one's emotions. On this account of Socratic rationalism, Socrates would disapprove rather than intend that his elenchus affect his interlocutors' emotions especially if it leads them to a state of mania in which they are unable to reason properly.

The first consideration can be easily countered. There is a significant difference between being perplexed or puzzled and losing your self-esteem or having your self-image destroyed. Socrates' perplexity may do nothing more than foster his determination to engage in further elenchi and may even give him some intellectual pleasure or satisfaction. But emotional disturbance in the face of a powerful challenge to one's self-esteem is all too human a reaction. Indeed one might think that emotional detachment in this case is rather a sign of a disturbed personality.

A proper discussion of Socrates' rationalism is beyond the scope of this paper. I will only refer to some evidence which indicates that the traditional account of it needs to be modified. First, in the *Apology* Socrates claims that he intends through the use of the elenchus to make his interlocutors feel shame about their whole way of life: 'I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care for not give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?' (29d4-e3; translation by Grube) Second, Socrates repeatedly tries to show in his elenchi that the original false beliefs of his interlocutors have shameful implications or consequences and thus should be abandoned. As Moss (2005) has argued shame plays a crucial role in Socrates' arguments with Polus and Callicles in the *Gorgias*.

Shame is a powerful human emotion and may have devastating effects on one's life, as

Sophocles' *Ajax* tragically illustrates. Furthermore, the shame Socrates' elenchus intends to produce is not simply shame for isolated actions or beliefs his interlocutors have but rather for their whole life. So, this shame, if genuinely felt, is bound to erode their self-esteem and produce deep existential angst. The agent will lose confidence on his basic principles of life and will be at loss. The image of emotional turmoil Alcibiades creates in T1 can be easily understood as a poetic reconstruction of the psychological devastation one might experience in the face of deep shame for one's whole life.

Despite its unpleasantness this deep and extensive shame has an important function. If the souls of Socrates' interlocutors are going to change their way of life they need some powerful psychological experience which will shake their self-esteem. Given that through the elenchus Socrates seeks a moral reform of the agent which is initiated by the agent himself (as opposed to, for example, a programme of moral indoctrination coercively imposed by the state), the experience of shame is the first, necessary step in this process. By relying on shame Socrates is able to trigger a process of moral reform using elements of the agent's psychological apparatus and in fact an emotion which paradigmatically focuses on the agent's self-image.

This is not however the only function of shame. In T2 Alcibiades singles out a dimension of the shame he experiences: his shame is not only shame *for* something, namely, his whole life, but also *before* someone, namely, Socrates. The elenchus has not only exposed Alcibiades' personal inadequacies which destroy his self-image but at the same time revealed to him a model of life he can follow. This is the life of philosophy which Socrates leads. Alcibiades' shame before Socrates may be understood to be similar to the kind of shame one may experience in front of his peers for lack of achievement. Alcibiades' shame is thus doubly focused: it looks both backwards towards his political life before he met Socrates and forward towards his inability to follow Socrates' path.

To sum up, Socrates intends the elenchus to generate shame in the souls of his interlocutors. This shame has wide scope and depth. It concerns the whole life of Socrates' interlocutors and their self-image. When genuinely felt it is bound to bring them to a state of emotional instability and turmoil. The latter is a necessary step in the process of moral reform.

3. *Shame and the instability of true beliefs*

Shame, however, and the state of emotional turmoil it generates pose a threat to the moral reform attempted by the elenchus. The feeling of shame and the Corrybantic frenzy are unpleasant experiences. The agent wants to get rid of them. As Alcibiades claims in T1 he finds the displeasure unbearable and feels that he can regain his mental stability only by ceasing to listen to Socratic arguments and running away from Socrates. That is, on the one hand he tries to overcome his backwards-looking shame for his life as a whole by not thinking about it. And on the other hand, he tries to overcome his forward-looking shame before Socrates by not being in Socrates' presence. The result is that the system of values of the many takes over his soul and replaces the Socratic values which were causing Alcibiades great distress.

Alcibiades' predicament illustrates a central theme of Socratic philosophy: the instability of true beliefs. Though the elenchus appears to reveal to Socrates' interlocutors moral truths (for example, that one should value virtue more than money or the approval of the many), the relevant true beliefs are epistemically unstable. In the *Meno* Socrates compares them to Daedalus' statues. In order for them to remain in the soul, they need to be tied down by explanatory reasoning. But the elenchus falls short of providing the required epistemic stability.

As a result, the true beliefs established in the elenchi are always in danger of being lost. In the *Crito*, Crito's beliefs about the value of the views of the many and the importance of justice which were established in previous elenchi depart from his soul. What causes Crito to lose his true electically established beliefs is the anxiety he experiences at the prospect of Socrates' death (I defend this interpretation of Crito's predicament in Hatzistavrou 2013). He tries to overcome this anxiety by reverting to the system of values of the many. In a similar manner Alcibiades tries to overcome the emotional distress he experiences as a result of shame for his whole life by abandoning Socrates' principles and reverting to his old habits. Both Crito's and Alcibiades' cases illustrate the limits of the elenchus as a means of moral reform. The beliefs the elenchus establishes are epistemically fragile: emotional distress can cause them to depart from the souls of Socrates' interlocutors. In order for them to be restored, Socrates needs to open a new round of elenctic arguments.

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The Ethics of *Eros*: Life and Practice

Chair: Franco Trabattoni

¿Propone el *Banquete* una ciencia del amor?

Francisco Bravo

I. EL PROBLEMA

Varios indicios sugieren esta pregunta en el *Banquete*. Al llegar a casa de Agatón, Sócrates desea que *sophía* fluya naturalmente de lo que se halla pleno de ella (*ek tou plêrestêrou*) a lo que se encuentra más vacío (*eis tò kenôteron*) (175d6). Sugiere así que el amor, que es el mayor de los placeres (196c6) y que él describe¹ y define² como una especie de delirio (*manía*), se aborde en un plano “cognitivo” o, en todo caso, no al margen de la ciencia, que se encuentra entre las cosas más bellas (204b2-3), ni a tenor de quienes no lo conocen (*tois mê gignôskousin*: 199a1). Este anhelo se traducirá luego en exigencia de “decir la verdad (*tauthê légein*)” sobre aquello que se elogia (198d3) y de elegir con tal propósito las afirmaciones más bellas, disponerlas de la manera más adecuada y contar con un método para ello (198d). Él, por su parte, ha aceptado pronunciar un elogio del amor creyendo que poseía dicho método (198d6-7); y no aceptará cumplir su promesa si no es ateniéndose a sus procedimientos y diciendo sobre *érôs* “cosas verdaderas” (*tauthê legόμενα*: 199b3). El médico Erixímaco se refiere, por su parte, a varias ciencias del amor ya en ejercicio: la medicina, “*epistêmê* del amor en el cuerpo con respecto a la repleción y la vacuidad”³, es decir, al placer y al dolor⁴; la música, “*epistêmê* del amor en lo tocante a la armonía y el ritmo”⁵; la astronomía, ciencia del amor en el ordenamiento de las estaciones y los astros (188a-b); en fin, la adivinación (*mantikê*), técnica de la amistad entre los dioses y los hombres” (188c7). Refiérese, como se ve, a ciencias “particulares”, con respecto a dominios y aspectos parciales de *érôs*. Situándose en un plano más amplio, Diótima promete mostrar “la vía para acceder adecuadamente” a una “concepción correcta del amor” (211c1), y sostiene, en contraste con Erixímaco, que hay sobre él “una ciencia única” (*tinà epistêmên mían toiaútên*: 210d7), centrada en un objeto único, que es lo bello en tanto bello (*hò esti kalón*: 211c9). En fin, el mismo Sócrates, explicando lo dicho al comienzo, sugiere que *érôs* es enseñable (*didaktôn*) y postula maestros (*didaskálôn*: 207c6) que lo enseñen. Diótima es una de ellos, y él, admirador de su sapiencia (206b5), ha buscado su enseñanza (206b6; cf. 201d5), pese a que él mismo “nada sabe si se exceptúa lo relativo al amor (*oudén állo epístasthai ê tà erôtika*): 177d7-8). No lo habría hecho si maestra y discípulo no hubieran dado por sentado lo que también Agatón considera evidente, a saber, que “lo que no se conoce no se puede enseñar a otro”⁶.

A estos indicios textuales podemos añadir la frecuencia, en el *Banquete*, de términos y temas epistemológicos⁷. Todos parecen sugerir que este diálogo está efectivamente buscando una ciencia cuyo objeto, *érôs*, es definido como *manía*, y cuyo sujeto, *noûs*, es la facultad cognitiva por excelencia. ¿Qué tipo de ciencia es la que tiene un objeto y un sujeto de esta índole? ¿Qué método se emplea en su construcción? ¿Cuáles son sus resultados?

II. EL TIPO DE CIENCIA QUE SE BUSCA

Dijimos ya que el *Banquete*, en conformidad con *República* VI⁸, distingue entre las ciencias “particulares” y una ciencia única y universal de *érôs*⁹. Las primeras son mencionadas por Erixímaco, por Sócrates, quien las sitúa entre los estados de alma sujetos al olvido (cf. 208a), y por Diótima, quien las integra en la *scala Amoris*, por encima de las ocupaciones (*epidêumata*)¹⁰ en general. Del contexto se sigue que tales ciencias tienen, en este diálogo, el mismo *status* que las matemáticas en *República* VI-VII¹¹, y toman este nombre tan ilegítimamente como aquéllas: “Muchas veces les hemos dado el nombre de ciencias (*epistêmas*) -dice Sócrates- obedeciendo a la costumbre; pero

¹ Cf. *Banq.*, 218b3: *tês philosophou manías*.

² Cf. *Fedr.* 265b-c, 249c-d.

³ *Banq.* 186c6: *Esti gár iatrikê epistêmê tôn tou sômatos erôtikôn pròs plêsmônên kai kênôsin*.

⁴ Cf. *Gorgias* 496d-2, *Filebo* 31d; Bravo (2003) 56 ss.

⁵ *Banq.* 187c5: “*perì haronían kai rhithmón, erôtikôn epistêmê*.”

⁶ *Banq.* 197a1. -Según *Menón* 87c1-2, *ouden állo didásketai ánthrôpos ê episteme*.

⁷ El término ‘*epistêmê*’ se repite unas 13 veces, 10 de ellas en el discurso de Sócrates; ‘*máthêma*’ 4 veces y ‘*prhónêsis*’ 6, 4 de ellas en ese mismo discurso. Entre los temas, ver en particular 202a-b,

⁸ Cf. *Rep.* 511 c 4-5. Cabe recordar que en el *Fedro* (257a8) se habla explícitamente de *erôtikên téchnên* o ciencia del amor.

⁹ Es una distinción conforme a la del *Filebo* (61d-e).

¹⁰ *Banq.* 210c6-7: *Metà dè tà epidêumata epì tās epistêmas agagein*.

¹¹ Cf. *Rep.* 522c ss.

deberían llevar un nombre que connote más claridad que ‘opinión’ y más oscuridad que ‘ciencia’¹². Y sugiere a veces el de ‘*diánoia*’¹³ y otras el de ‘*téchnai*’¹⁴. Ellas están sujetas al olvido (*lêthê*) (208a). Les sigue, en la *scala amoris*, la ciencia *stricto sensu*, que Diotima describe como “cierto conocimiento único (*tinà epistêmên mían*) que tiene como objeto lo bello en sí (*hê esti kaloû toioûde*)”¹⁵. Ya no está ella entre los objetos del amor, como las ciencias particulares, sino que es sujeto de un objeto único y universal y que, como tal, “no es una ciencia particular (*oûde episteme tis*: 211a8)”, si bien se alcanza “a partir de las ciencias particulares (*apò tôn matheamátôn*)” (211c6), cuya razón de ser es el objeto de la ciencia del amor en sentido estricto (210e6). Su adquisición presupone, pues, el ejercicio de las ciencias particulares, como lo sugiere también el riguroso orden de sucesión entre los niveles de la escala erótica (cf. 210e3). Aquí, lo mismo que en *República* VI-VII, la ciencia única se injerta en las ciencias múltiples y las presupone, aunque, al mismo tiempo, se diferencia de ellas y las trasciende¹⁶. La ciencia en cuestión no es otra que la *dialektikê epistêmê*¹⁷, considerada por *República* 534e3 como “la cima y el coronamiento de las ciencias particulares (*ôesper thrinkòs toîs mathêmásin hê dialektikê*)”¹⁸. La *scala amoris* del *Banquete* permite ver que es ésta la que finalmente se persigue, y no tal o cual ciencia particular como las señaladas por Eirixímaco. *República* VII señala, por otra parte, que el único que puede alcanzarla es quien es “capaz de una visión de conjunto”¹⁹, la cual sólo se logra por la reducción de cierta multiplicidad²⁰. ¿Cuál es la multiplicidad que el *Banquete* intenta reducir para construir la ciencia dialéctica del amor?

III. LA MULTIPLICIDAD QUE HAY QUE REDUCIR

Tal parece ser, no la de ciertas cosas (rasgos, virtudes, etc.), sino la de las representaciones del amor expuestas en el *Banquete*. Doy por supuesto que todas son partes de un solo discurso filosófico²¹ y asumo, con varios intérpretes recientes, que ninguna es “*simply non philosophical*”²², sino partes de un todo filosófico *in fieri*. Hablando en general, los discursos no-socráticos señalan aspectos parciales del amor, mientras que el socrático se esfuerza por integrarlos, adoptándolos al todo que se busca, expandiéndolos hacia dominios más abarcantes que el que a cada uno ocupa y adaptándolos a la visión de conjunto (*sinopsis*)²³ que se halla *in fieri*²⁴. Todos aspiran a “ver”. Pero mientras que el ver de las visiones no-socráticas es un *ideîn*²⁵ parcial y restringido, el de la dialéctica del amor es, además²⁶, un *katideîn*²⁷, una visión de lo alto que logra integrar la de las múltiples cosas bellas con la de “lo bello divino en la unicidad de su forma (*autò tò theîon kalón ... monoeidês*: 211e3)”.

¿En qué se funda la segunda para ir de lo parcial a lo total y de lo múltiple a lo uno? Desde el punto de vista ontológico, en la TF, que es el recurso esencial para adoptar, expandir y adaptar las diferentes representaciones a una visión de conjunto²⁸. Desde el punto de vista lógico, en la superación de dos falacias que afectan a los discursos “pre-socráticos” y podrían afectar al “socrático”. La primera es la llamada “falacia mereológica”, consistente en atribuir al todo lo que sólo conviene a una de sus partes. “Hemos empezado por poner aparte cierta forma del amor (*toû erôtós tí eîdos*) –objeta Diotima– y luego le hemos aplicado el nombre del todo (*toû hólou epitithéntes ónoma*)” (205b4-5)²⁹. Agatón, por ejemplo, exaltando el arte que le es propio (cf. 196d9), pretende que el dios amor es un “hábil poeta” (*poiêtês ho théos sophós*: 196e1). Pero Diotima le recuerda que ‘*poiêsis*

¹² *Rep.* 533d4-6: *hàs epistêmas mén pollákis proseípomen dià tò êthos, déontai dè onómatos álloû, enargestérou mèn hê doxês, amidrotérou dè hê epistêmês.*

¹³ Cf. *Rep.* 533d6.

¹⁴ Cf. *Rep.* 511b1-2, 533b4. La ambigüedad en esta materia se acentúa cuando el *Fedro* (276e5) se refiere a la *dialektikê* ¾ tšnh.

¹⁵ *Banq.* 210 d 7.

¹⁶ Cf. V. di Benedetto, (2004: 7) y J. McGuirk, (2008).

¹⁷ *Sof.* 253d2. Cf. *Rep.* 533c9 y *Fedr.* 276e5.

¹⁸ *Rep.* 534e3.

¹⁹ *Rep.* 537c6: *ho mèn gâr synoptikòs dialektikós, ho dè mê ou.* Cf. *Sof.* 253c.

²⁰ Ver también *Sof.* 253d3 y *Fedro* 266b3-7.

²¹ Adhiero, en este punto, a la perspectiva de tres obras recientes reseñadas por F. González, “Interrupted Dialogue: Recent Readings of the Symposium”, *Plato* 8 (2008), On line. Según González, todas se abocan a mostrar “*how the dialogue as a whole is a work of philosophy*” (O.c., p. 2) y no una amalgama de visiones inconexas.

²² González (2008: 1). Como dice Patrick Miller, (31.10.2000, On line) el *Banquete* en su conjunto es, contrariamente a lo que algunos creen, “*a serious work of philosophy*” (p.2).

²³ Cf. *Rep.* 537c7.

²⁴ Esta visión se completa en los diálogos medios, como lo ha mostrado G. Vlastos en (1973: 3-42).

²⁵ Cf. *Banq.* 210c4 y Di Benedetto (2004) 52-53.

²⁶ Sin dejar de ser un „dein: cf. *Banq.* 211e1.

²⁷ *Banq.* 211e4; cf. 210e4, donde emplea el futuro *katôpsetai*..

²⁸ Cf. Miller (2000) 6-7.

²⁹ Sobre la mereología o teoría de la composición, cf. Harte (2002: 13, 49-50, 122-123).

denota toda actividad creadora (cf. 205b-c), de modo que el amor es, no sólo un “hábil poeta”, sino un “hábil creador” en todos los dominios (cf. 206b-e). Aristófanes pretende, por su lado, que “amantes son quienes buscan la mitad de sí mismos (*tò hêmisu heautôn zêtôsin*: 205e1) y del todo (*toû hólou*) que los hombres eran en sus orígenes. La Extranjera de Mantinea acepta que el amor es búsqueda, pero no de una mitad ni de un todo, sino de lo que es bueno (*agathôn ón*: 205e3). El amor no se identifica, pues, con “una forma particular (*hén ti eídos*: 205d6)” de sí mismo que lleva el nombre del todo (*tò toû hólou ónoma*), sino “hablando en general, toda aspiración hacia las cosas buenas y hacia la felicidad” (*hê tôn agathôn epithymía kai toû eûdaimoneîn*: 205d2). Víctimas de la falacia mereológica, los oradores no-socráticos han identificado el amor como un todo (*hólon*) con lo que es sólo una de sus partes (*méros ti*)³⁰. P. Miller los ha comparado con cinco ciegos a quienes un vidente pide que describan un elefante³¹. Sirviéndose del tacto, que es su único recurso perceptivo, uno de ellos lo describe tocando su trompa, otro tocando su oreja, otro su cola, el cuarto sus colmillos y el quinto una de sus extremidades. ¿Qué hará de estas descripciones parciales quien ve (*katideî*)³² al animal en su conjunto? ¿Las rechazará sin más, como despropósitos de la ignorancia? De hacerlo, incurriría en la falacia de desconocer los intermedios (*ti metaxý*: 202a2): de desconocer, por ejemplo, que entre la ciencia y la ignorancia hay el intermedio de la opinión verdadera (202a7; cf. *Rep.* 476e)³³; de ignorar, por consiguiente, que los enunciados doxásticos, propios de las ciencias particulares, son, con respecto a los epistémicos, no *contradictorios* (*antíphaseis*), negando lo que éstos afirman o a la inversa, sino *contrarios* (*enantíai*)³⁴, aseverando más o menos que lo que ellos aseveran. En la primera de estas falacias incurrían Fedro, Pausanias, Erixímaco, Aristófanes y Agatón: “cada una toma una parte del amor por el todo, y atribuye al amor como un todo lo que, con propiedad, sólo conviene a una de sus partes”³⁵. Sócrates incurriría en la segunda, si Diotima (¿Platón?) no viniera en su ayuda (cf. 202a-d).

IV. LA CUESTIÓN DEL MÉTODO

¿Cómo las integra Platón entre ellas y con su propia visión? Se está comúnmente de acuerdo en que no privilegia aquí el método analítico, predominante en los diálogos medios y presente, en el *Banquete*, sólo en la discusión entre Sócrates y Agatón (199b-201c) y en algunos momentos de la que Sócrates dice haber sostenido con Diotima. Algunos creen que el método en obra es el “endoxástico”³⁶, pues, según ellos, Platón parte de lo que Aristóteles llamará las *éndoxa*³⁷, aunque las del *Banquete* parecen verse más bien como las *eúdoxa*, como las opiniones más famosas sobre *érôs* (cf. 189d3-5, 193e, 194a1-4, 199c). Sea como fuere, éstas sólo representan la multiplicidad que hay que reducir, es decir, el punto de partida de la unión. Una respuesta más plausible podría ser que el método en obra es el de la recolección (*synagôgê*)³⁸, considerado en el *Fedro* como apropiado para “conducir lo que se halla diseminado en mil lugares hacia una forma única (*eis mían te idéan*)”, mediante una visión de conjunto (*synorônta*: (265d3-4). Es significativo que Sócrates reconozca, en el *Fedro*, que éste procedimiento, característico del dialéctico³⁹, es “el que [acaban] de aplicar, a propósito del amor (*hôsper tà nûn dê peri êrôtos*)” (265d5). Sería plausible creer que lo mismo se ha hecho en el *Banquete*. De ser así, Platón habría avanzado, en este diálogo, la primera parte del Método de la Reunión y la División (MRD), desarrollado luego en el *Fedro*⁴⁰. Y ello explicaría que retome en registro “diarético” (*diairetikôs*)⁴¹ los discursos sobre *érôs* que el *Banquete* ha desarrollado sólo en registro “synagógico”⁴², dejándolos, por tanto, inconclusos⁴³. La *synagôgê* de las opiniones sobre el amor, por reunir discursos y no cosas, adopta en nuestro diálogo, la forma de una síntesis

³⁰ Ello no impide que Erixímaco sea consciente de las limitaciones de su discurso y pida a Aristófanes “colmar sus lagunas”: cf. 188e.

³¹ Cf. P. Miller (2000) 16.

³² P. Miller (2000) 16.

³³ Cf. *Rep.* 476e-477b, especialmente 477a7.

³⁴ Cf. *Gorg.* 501c6. Para la distinción entre las oposiciones *antipháticos* y *enantíais* en Aristóteles, cf. *De Interpr.* 17b18 y 20, 17a33. Según *Cat.* VI, 6a18, son contrarios dos conceptos que pertenecen al mismo género, pero difieren entre sí en el más alto grado.

³⁵ Miller (2000) 15.

³⁶ G. Richardson Lear, “Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato’s *Symposium*”, CHS Publications Template.

³⁷ Cf. *Top.* 101b1, 104a9, 105b2, 159a38.

³⁸ *Fedro* 266b4. Cf. *synágein* en *Fedr.* 256c3, *Rep.* 537c2, *Sof.* 267b1, *Pol.* 267b7, 308c6 y *Fil.* 23e5.

³⁹ Cf. *Rep.* 537c y *Leyes* 965b.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Fedr.* 265c-266c y mi *Teoría platónica de la definición*, Caracas, 2a, 2002, pp. 168 ss.

⁴¹ Cf. *Arist., An. Post.* 91b40.

⁴² Cf. En *Banq.* 191d2 Aristófanes resalta además el carácter “synagógico” (*synagôgeýs*) del amor con respecto a las mitades que buscan su retorno a la unidad original.

⁴³ Según L. Robin, en el *Fedro* hay “un *aprofondissement* et un *elargissement* de la conception même de l’amour”.

(*synthesis*⁴⁴), que constituiría, según algunos autores, la clave del éxito filosófico del *Banquete*⁴⁵. Tal como se desarrolla aquí, éste método parece comprender los siguientes momentos: (1) registra las representaciones más famosas (*eúdoxas*) de *érôs*, a guisa de multiplicidad; (2) busca las eventuales semejanzas que hay entre ellas; (3) recurre al acuerdo de los tertulianos y⁴⁶: (a) adopta, extiende y adapta las representaciones originales a la luz de un principio superior, que, en nuestro diálogo, es fundamentalmente la TF; (b) elabora, mediante la unión de todas, “una explicación del todo a partir de varias explicaciones limitadas de las partes”⁴⁷.

V. LA SÍNTESIS EN OBRA

El recurso clave para la síntesis en proceso es el acuerdo (*homología*: 187b4) entre los tertulianos. Erixímaco define la *homología* como una consonancia (*synphônía*) y ésta como una armonía (*harmonía*) (187b3); y aunque el acuerdo no descarta sino que más bien exige la crítica y la auto-crítica (cf. 189b-c, 201b), advierte, contra Heráclito⁴⁸, que el acuerdo no puede producirse mientras se mantenga la oposición de los opuestos. Sócrates lo busca ante todo con Agatón (cf. 199c1), invocándolo -comenta Robin⁴⁹- “como condición del progreso dialéctico”. Luego se sirve del esquema de este acuerdo (cf. 201d6) para relatar el logrado con Diótima (207c9). Asegura, en efecto, que su conversación con ella ha sido, vista proyectivamente, una “fiel réplica” de la sostenida con Agatón (cf. 201d-e). Los tres coinciden en tres puntos esenciales: (1) el carácter relativo del amor (199d-e), (2) su objeto, que es lo bello (200a-e, 201a9, 207c9), es decir, lo bueno, (3) el sujeto que lo desea, quien, por desearlo, se muestra carente del mismo (200b4). La Extranjera de Mantinea⁵⁰ habría advertido, sin embargo, que no todos los acuerdos son dialécticamente fecundos, sino sólo los concertados entre quienes saben (*tôn eidôtôn*: 202b7). Según ella, carece de importancia que “todo el mundo (*pará pântôn*) convenga en que el amor es un gran dios” (202b5), y sería, en cambio, muy importante que al menos dos de quienes saben (Sócrates y su maestra) coincidan en que ni siquiera es un dios (202b-c)⁵¹. La clave para el acuerdo que se busca son las semejanzas entre los discursos. Algunas de ellas conciernen al método, otras al contenido. En cuanto al contenido, unas tienen que ver con la naturaleza de *érôs* y otras con sus efectos. Ha sido Agatón quien ha señalado esta doble vertiente evaluativa del amor (195a), aunque también la han insinuado Pausanias (cf. 180c-d) y Aristófanes (189d). Sócrates no sólo la aplaude (199c), sino que la hace suya (201d9-10) y la desarrolla *in extenso* (201d9-207a)⁵². Más aún, cree que todos los tertulianos se han esforzado por exaltar “la excelencia de su naturaleza y la grandeza de sus efectos” (198e5-6). En lo que sigue, esbozaré, a guisa de ejemplo de la lectura que propongo, las grandes líneas de la síntesis platónica de la naturaleza del amor.

El primero en insinuar este problema específico es Pausanias⁵³, quien empieza criticando la consigna de “elogiar al Amor” (cf. 177d2) sin más, como si éste fuera único (180c5-6)⁵⁴. Pero no es único (*nyn dê ou eîs*: 180c6), sino doble (180d), y precisa explicar previamente “cuál es el tipo que se ha de” elogiar (180c-d). Erixímaco acepta esta distinción (187e ss) y la califica de excelente (*kalôs*: 186a3), pero reprocha que el amor sea circunscrito al ámbito de lo humano, siendo así que se extiende “a todos los seres” (*pâsi toîs ôusin*: 186a7, *epi pân*: 186b2). La síntesis que Sócrates construye a partir de las visiones parciales que le preceden comprende los siguientes momentos: (1) acepta la distinción en cuestión, aplicándola a la que existe entre el amor del cuerpo y el amor del alma (cf. 210a-b); (2) la extiende a otros tipos de amor que los míticos señalados por Pausanias, incluyendo el de los animales (cf. 207a-b), aunque sin llegar al pan-erotismo propugnado por Erixímaco (cf. 186a7); (3) ordena todos éstos en una escala ascendente, tomando como criterio el que gira en torno al objeto más perfecto, que es la Forma de lo Bello (cf. 210a-d). Tres nuevos elementos, acordados entre Sócrates y Diótima y parcialmente aceptados por Agatón, hacen posible esta extensión jerarquizada de las

⁴⁴ Cf. *Fed.* 92e6, *Crat.* 431c1, *Rep.* 611b6, *Sof.* 263d2.

⁴⁵ Cf. Miller (2002) 2, 12, 17, 21-22.

⁴⁶ *Homología* en sus diferentes formas nominales y verbales se repite unas 28 veces, en el *Banquete*.

⁴⁷ Miller (2002) 22. Este autor observa que tal ha llegado a ser el método de la ciencia moderna, y concluye que “*the Symposium is therefore the first document of genuine science*”.

⁴⁸ Cf. Heráclito, frg. B51.

⁴⁹ Ed. Budé, *ad locum*.

⁵⁰ Cf. 211d2.

⁵¹ Agatón recordará, en la misma línea, que, “a los ojos de un hombre de buen sentido, un pequeño grupo de gentes inteligentes es más temible que una turba de imbéciles” (194b). Según esto, los acuerdos pueden ser dialécticos (cf. 187b1, 187b5, 195b6, 196c2, 199d9, 199e5, 200b4, 200d6, 201a9, 201b1, 201d6, 202b8, 202d1, 207a1, 207c9, 223d3) y no-dialécticos (178c1, 2, 186b7, 196c4, 202b5, 215b7).

⁵² Cree, en realidad, que todos y no sólo Agatón, han “exaltado su naturaleza y la grandeza de sus efectos” (198e6).

⁵³ Aristófanes lo enmarca en el problema de la naturaleza del hombre, aunque en un plano puramente biológico: cf. 189d.

⁵⁴ Lo mismo hará Protarco en el *Filebo* (12c ss), a propósito del placer.

distinciones propuestas: (a) El metafísico de la TF, clave ontológico-epistemológica de la síntesis en proceso; (b) El principio lógico-ontológico, acordado entre Agatón y Sócrates (199c-e), de que “el amor es amor de algo (*tinos ho Êrôs êrôs*: 199d2, cf. e6)”, es decir, un término relativo, como ‘padre’, ‘madre’ y ‘hermano’ (191d-e). De este principio se sigue que el amor-sujeto (*erôn*) tiene necesariamente un objeto, como lo han sostenido confusamente Pausanias (181b-c), Erixímaco (186a-b) y Aristófanes (cf. 191d1). Agatón señala que será el examen de este objeto el que permitirá determinar “lo que es el amor en sí mismo (*tis estin ho Êrôs*)” y cuáles son sus atributos (*kai poiôs tis*)” (201d9). Es un examen que se hará en la misma línea que *República* 477d1, según la cual, una facultad (*dýnamis*) se define por su objeto y sus efectos (*eph’ hô te ésti kai hô ergázetai*). (c) La distinción entre el objeto y el sujeto de *êrôs*, analizada por Diotima. Es una distinción que da lugar a una corrección crucial para la síntesis en marcha. Sócrates y quienes le han precedido han llegado a identificar a “*êrôs*, el amor, con el objeto amado (*tò erômenon*: 204c2) y han dejado por fuera de este estado al sujeto amante (*tò erôn*) (204c3). Esta reducción mereológica les ha hecho creer que *êrôs* como un todo está dotado “de una belleza sin límites (*pánkalos*: 204c3)”. Si es verdad que este predicado conviene al objeto del amor (*tò erastôn*: 204c4), “que es realmente bello, delicado y perfecto” (204c4), no conviene al sujeto del mismo, quien lo desea y lo busca precisamente porque no lo posee. No es, pues, verdad que el amor como un todo sea ilimitadamente bello (*pánkalos*: 204c3), como Sócrates ha sostenido; o una gran divinidad (*mégas théos*: 178a6), como lo han pregonado Fedro (178a6), Erixímaco (186b2), Agatón (195a-b, 201e) y aquéllos que no saben (202b6).

¿Cuál es, pues, el objeto del amor? La respuesta va a constituir el punto ontológico de convergencia de las representaciones en proceso de síntesis. Según Diotima, “el objeto del que el amante está por naturaleza enamorado (*phýsei erastês*) es la belleza (*tò kalón*)” (203c3-4)⁵⁵. Ésta ha sido barruntada de una u otra manera en todos los discursos⁵⁶, aunque sólo Agatón la ha señalado explícitamente (197b6). Ahora bien, el hecho de que sea ésta el objeto que desea y persigue todo amante, implica que éste no la posee (201b2), pues de otra manera, no lo desearía (cf. 200e) ni lo buscaría. Agatón acepta esta enmienda capital en su discurso (cf. 201b), y el acuerdo de Sócrates con él le permite asociarlo a la respuesta que él ha dado a Diotima. Esta le ha preguntado, en efecto, “qué es el amor de lo bello (*ti tôn kalôn estin ho êrôs*: 204d4)” o, con más claridad, “qué ama quien ama las cosas bellas (*erâi ho êrôn tôn kalôn: tí erâi*: 204d5)”. La respuesta del discípulo ha sido que éstas “lleguen a ser suyas (*genésthai hautôi*: 204d6)”, aunque –lo confiesa– sin saber aún lo que esto aporta al amante. La clave para saberlo es, según su maestra, reemplazar “bello” por “bueno” (*antí tou kaloû tõi agathôi*) (204e2). Recordemos que en la ontología axiológica de Platón, “todo lo bueno es bello (*pân dê tò agathón kalón*) y no hay belleza sin medida”⁵⁷, e.d., sin bondad⁵⁸. La correlatividad de *tò kalón* y *tò agathón* permite, pues, a Diotima adoptar y luego adaptar, expandiéndolo, el punto de vista de Aristófanes (cf. 191d-193c), para quien el objeto buscado es la mitad de uno mismo. Sea entero o sólo la mitad –replica la Extranjera– “para los hombres, nada es objeto de amor fuera de lo bueno” (206a1). ¿Pero qué aman quienes aman lo bueno? Su respuesta es que: (a) lo bueno sea suyo (*eînai tò agathón autoîs*: 206a5) y (b) lo sea para siempre (*eînai aei*: 206a6). ¿Qué conseguirá, empero, el amante “cuando las cosas buenas sean suyas” para siempre (204e4)? Esta vez la respuesta de Sócrates está llena de confianza: “será feliz (*eudáimôn éstai*: 205a1)”. Y su maestra asiente, confirmando que “por la posesión de las cosas buenas son felices quienes son felices (*agathôn hoi eudáimones eudáimones*: 205a2)”. Adopta así y adapta, extendiéndolo, lo que han sostenido, todavía vagamente, los otros tertulianos. En efecto, Fedro ha destacado la eficacia del amor para conducir a los hombres a la virtud y la felicidad (*eis aretês kai eudaimonías*: 180b7). Situándose en la misma línea, Pausanias ha sugerido una ética y una pedagogía del amor (182d-185c). Erixímaco ha reconocido, por su lado, que es al amor “a quien debemos toda nuestra felicidad (*pâsan hemîn eudaimonían*: 188d7); según Aristófanes, el amor cura de esos males cuya sanación constituye “la más grande de las felicidades” (189d2) de la especie humana; para él, *êrôs* es “la condición para que nuestra especie sea dichosa (*eúdaimôn*)” (193c3; cf. 193d6). Concuerda, pues, con todos ellos Agatón cuando define el amor como “el deseo de las cosas buenas y de la felicidad” (*hê tôn agathôn epithymía kai tou eudaimoneîn*: 205d2). Tras este común acuerdo: (1) sobre el objeto del amor, (2) sobre la condición de indigencia del sujeto frente al mismo, (3) sobre el nexo ontológico entre belleza y bondad y (4) sobre el vínculo ético entre amor y felicidad, Diotima cree que ya no hace falta averiguar “para qué desea ser feliz quien desea ser feliz (*hína ti bouletai eudáimôn eînai ho boulómenos*: 205a3), pues ser feliz es el fin de todos los fines. Con todo ello, hemos llegado a la respuesta final (*télos dokei échein he apókrisis*:

⁵⁵ Cf. también *Banq.* 201a5, 202d, 204b3, 208a8-10, 206b.

⁵⁶ Particularmente en los de Pausanias (181a2, 4, 182b3, d3, 9, 183d4, 6, 184d2, e3, 185a5, b4) y Erixímaco (186b9, c2).

⁵⁷ *Tim.* 86c4.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Fil.* 64e5-7.

205a3) de los personajes del *Banquete* con respecto a la causa –causa final, no eficiente- del amor (*aition ... tou érotos*: 207a6; cf. 207c1).

Pero quedan por determinar los medios para alcanzarlo: ¿cómo conseguirá el *erastês* que el bien beatificante sea efectivamente suyo y haga de él un *eudaímôn*? ¿Con qué tipo de actividad (*en tini práxei*: 206b2) podrá alcanzarlo? Diotima señala la que ha estado insinuándose en todas las mentes⁵⁹, a saber, “la procreación en la belleza (*tókos en kalôi*) según el cuerpo y según el alma (*kai katà tò sôma kai katà tèn psychên*)” (206b2). Es un medio tan esencial, que algunos lo consideran como una especificación del objeto del amor⁶⁰. Se halla, en todo caso, asociado con él ontológicamente, y Diotima, enmendando en cierto modo su formulación anterior del objeto, sostiene que, en realidad, éste no es lo bello separado del amante (*ou tou kaloû ho éros*), sino unido a él en su necesidad congénita y en su acción de “generar y alumbrar en lo bello (*tês genêseôs kai tou tókou en tõi kalôi*)” (206e2-4). Retomando, en cierto modo, la exigencia de Aristófanes de definir “la naturaleza del hombre”⁶¹ antes de determinar la naturaleza del amor, sostiene que, por su propia naturaleza, “todos (los hombres) conciben (*khoûsi*: 206c1)”, de modo que, llegada a una edad determinada, “nuestra naturaleza desea alumbrar (*tíktein epithymeî hêmôn hê phýsis*: 20c4)”. Todo indica que Platón se refiere aquí, no a una necesidad puramente biológica, sino a una exigencia ontológica –a un spinozista *connatus essendi*- pues, gracias a ella, “la naturaleza mortal busca perpetuarse y ser inmortal (*aei te eînai kai athánatos*)” (207d2)”. Es, pues, plausible decir que el objeto del amor puede formularse de dos maneras: visto hacia fuera del sujeto (*éxô*), es la belleza en sí; visto hacia dentro del mismo (*entós*), “el objeto del amor es la inmortalidad” (*tês athanasías tôn érôta eînai*: 207a4) y que la única manera de lograrlo -de lograr ser eterno (*aeigenês*: 207a1)- es procrear en lo bello (cf. 206e5-6): un acto en que se juntan el aspecto objetivo y el aspecto subjetivo del objeto del amor; un acto que, como tal, es la primera condición de posibilidad de la vida buena.

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⁵⁹ Cf., por ej., 197a3 y 197a3, b6 con respecto a Agatón

⁶⁰ Cf. Robin (1966: 60, nota 2).

⁶¹ *Banq.* 189d6-7: *Deî dè prôton hímas matheîn tèn anthrôpinên phýsin kai tà pathêmata autês.*

La bellezza dell'amante: la strada più lunga che Alcibiade non vide e i grandi misteri che finì per profanare

Matteo Nucci

“Mi sembra che tu sia l'unico” dissi io “degno di diventare il mio amante, ma mi pare che esiti a parlarne. Io sto messo così: credo che sia assolutamente stupido non concedermi a te e non concederti anche qualunque altra cosa di cui tu avessi bisogno, come le mie sostanze o i miei amici. Per me infatti nulla è più prezioso del diventare migliore quanto più è possibile, e credo che per questo non esista collaboratore più potente di te. Io mi vergognerei molto di più nel non concedermi a un uomo come te di fronte ai saggi che nel concedermi a te di fronte ai molti e stolti”.

E lui, dopo avermi ascoltato, in quella maniera assolutamente ironica che è tutta sua e abituale, disse: “Caro Alcibiade, rischi davvero di non essere uno stupido se quel che dici per caso è vero e c'è dentro di me una potenza per mezzo della quale tu possa diventare migliore. Una bellezza invincibile vedresti in me e completamente diversa dalla tua bellezza di forme. E se scorgendola cerchi di metterti insieme a me e di scambiare bellezza con bellezza, be' hai in mente di prevaricare a mie spese non di poco, perché cerchi di acquistare, al posto dell'apparenza, la verità di ciò che è bello, e davvero “oro con rame” pensi di barattare. Ma, o beato, guarda meglio che non ti sfugga che io sono nulla. La vista del pensiero comincia a vedere con acutezza quando quella degli occhi inizia a declinare dal suo culmine. Ma tu ne sei ancora lontano” (218 c 7-219 a 5)¹.

La risposta che Socrate avrebbe dato a Alcibiade e che questi rievoca con tanta cura nonostante l'ubriachezza, è il centro dello straordinario discorso che Platone ha voluto ricreare per il politico in auge al momento del banchetto. Che si tratti del cuore dell'encomio di Alcibiade non è in discussione². Le parole di quel Socrate in cui s'incarna Eros, o meglio: l'amante per eccellenza³, sono introdotte da una cesura misterica che Alcibiade dichiara senza allusioni: “Fino a questo punto del discorso, starebbe bene raccontare anche di fronte a chiunque. Ma da qui in poi non mi sentireste parlare se non fosse che, innanzitutto, come si dice, il vino – sia senza fanciulli, sia con i fanciulli – è veritiero, eppoi perché mi sembra ingiusto, per chi si dedica a un elogio, passare sotto silenzio una superba azione di Socrate” (217 e 1-6). Ho l'impressione che dal punto di vista platonico quella cesura rievochi, nel suo sguardo di scrittore/creatore onnisciente, il passaggio da Piccoli a Grandi Misteri e che in essa si possa vedere lo snodo del passaggio da una fase paideutica a un'altra, come cioè Socrate mette in atto gli insegnamenti di Diotima⁴. Comunque sia di ciò, quel che è evidente e appunto indiscutibile è che la scena raccontata da Alcibiade rappresenti il centro del suo discorso e che soprattutto le parole di Socrate in risposta alle *avances* di Alcibiade rappresentino la spiegazione massima dell'*atopia* socratica, così come la intende, pervasivamente nel suo encomio, Alcibiade⁵. Ricordiamoci del resto che a Socrate è stato chiesto di intervenire se qualcosa di evidentemente falso viene raccontato su di lui⁶ e il suo silenzio sarebbe dunque una conferma che quelle parole vanno prese per buone. Platone, insomma, il creatore del discorso e dei punti di vista presenti nel dialogo, vuole spingere il lettore alla massima attenzione su quanto ha risposto Socrate a Alcibiade.

Tuttavia, la premessa di Alcibiade sull'ironia socratica ha spinto molto spesso gli interpreti a leggere queste parole seguendo un filtro ermeneutico del tutto fuorviante. Socrate dice il contrario di quel che pensa? Socrate prende in giro Alcibiade? Se l'ironia viene letta in maniera schematica, le parole che Platone mette in bocca a Socrate attraverso Alcibiade perdono tutta la loro importanza. Ma il comportamento ironico di Socrate non può essere oggetto di alcuna interpretazione che lo riduca

¹ Le traduzioni del *Simposio* sono mie: Platone, *Il Simposio*, a cura di B. Centrone e M. Nucci, Einaudi, Torino 2009.

² Cfr. E. Belfiore 1984, p. 147, A.W. Nightingale 1993, p. 126, T. Szlezák 1988, pp. 348-9.

³ Eros è amante, soggetto di desiderio ardente verso ciò che non possiede, secondo la definizione di Socrate/Diotima, cfr. soprattutto *symp.* 204 c 2-6 dove è rigettata l'ipotesi comune (sostenuta paradigmaticamente da Agatone) che attribuendo a Eros la perfezione finisce per relegarlo in posizione passiva e priva di energia desiderativa.

⁴ Che qui risuoni il passaggio dai Piccoli ai Grandi Misteri (cfr. 209 e 5-210 a 1) viene confermato dalla formula orfica che chiude l'intermezzo (“Voi invece, servi, e se c'è qualcun altro non iniziato e rozzo, chiudetevi le orecchie con enormi porte” cfr. *Frammenti Orfici*, 13; 245, 1; 247, 1 Kern. Cfr. anche Colli, *La sapienza greca*, 4 - A 39).

⁵ La questione è posta fin dall'inizio del discorso a mo' d'introduzione: “non è facile raccontare precisamente, con abbondanza di risorse e in ordine la tua stranezza” (215 a2-3). Si vedano anche *apol.* 34 e-35 a, *Alc. I*, 106 a, *Gorg.* 494 d, *Theat.* 149 a, su cui P. Hadot 1988, p. 101.

⁶ Si tratta dell'altra metà della premessa metodologica: “E tu fa così: se dico qualcosa che non è vero, interrompimi subito, quando vuoi, e di che sto mentendo; io, volontariamente, non mentirò. Piuttosto, se parlo ricordando alcune cose da una parte, altre da un'altra, non ti meravigliare” (214 e 9- 12).

analiticamente entro contenitori preconfezionati⁷. Ogni situazione è a se stante e ogni circostanza richiede un'interpretazione adeguata e, in generale, se si vuole trovare un aspetto comune del suo 'strano' comportamento, si deve guardare piuttosto all'arte del travestimento, al gioco dell'allusione e dell'omissione, a un'apparente leggerezza che cala nelle profondità dell'interlocutore, un nascondersi e svelarsi che spinge al sovvertimento. In questo caso, del resto, è evidente che Socrate con una reazione apparentemente scanzonata e leggera mira a spogliare, denudare, svestire totalmente Alcibiade. Le sue parole dunque non vanno lette come false o vere, seguendo schemi analitici che le possano ridurre a formule matematiche. Si tratta di parole allusive, che omettono e nascondono e che dicono moltissimo, nel momento in cui le si lasci scorrere per quello che sono e per tutto quel che si portano appresso.

D'altronde questo è quel che dobbiamo fare quando leggiamo il discorso di Alcibiade nel *Simposio*. Dobbiamo ricordarci innanzitutto che è stato Platone a inventare ogni cosa e che, però, diversamente dagli altri casi, stavolta chi parla è ubriaco. Come non dobbiamo, traducendo Platone, ricomporre in una precisione sintattica, frasi che sono volutamente lasciate in sospeso, principali che non finiscono, coordinate che s'intrecciano, racconti che se ne vanno di qua e di là senza che si segua apparentemente un filo preciso⁸, così non possiamo ricondurre a uno schematismo assolutamente freddo e improprio l'ironia che Alcibiade vede in Socrate e tutte quelle caratteristiche che il giovane politico bellissimo e seducente ammira nel suo maestro amante e amato⁹. Se insomma, nei discorsi precedenti si ha l'impressione che Platone abbia voluto calcare la mano sui punti deboli degli oratori per spingere il lettore a cercare in quei punti nevralgici il lavoro che il filosofo deve compiere¹⁰, in questo caso sembra invece che verità e falsità s'intreccino costantemente e che sia in questo intreccio che noi possiamo trovare davvero l'educazione erotica in atto.

Ma cosa dice Socrate a Alcibiade? Dopo aver sottolineato ironicamente di non essere quel che Alcibiade crede, e di non possedere quella bellezza suprema che il giovane gli attribuisce, Socrate sostiene che se però le cose stanno come le mette Alcibiade, allora il suo atteggiamento prevaricatore è chiaro. Il *pleonektein* di cui Alcibiade è un esemplare portatore nei suoi affari politici¹¹, si rivela chiaro nello scambio erotico che il ragazzo sta meditando. Apparenza di bellezza per bellezza vera, "oro con rame". Ora, lo scambio fra oro e rame rappresenta il culmine – anticamente ben noto a tutti – di uno dei più straordinari episodi raccontati nell'*Iliade*. È necessario tenerlo a mente se si vuole capire davvero la risposta socratica. Si tratta dell'incontro fra Glauco e Diomede nel momento in cui Ettore ha lasciato il campo di battaglia per tornare in città. Una parentesi, mentre il poeta sta seguendo Ettore che va a casa a salutare per l'ultima volta i genitori, la moglie e il figlio. Una parentesi di grande potenza emotiva perché Diomede, quando si trova di fronte un uomo apparentemente privo di timore, un uomo pronto a sfidarlo a viso aperto, viene preso dalla curiosità e vuole a tutti i costi sapere chi sia e quali siano i suoi avi. E la risposta di Glauco – lunga, articolata, complessa, meticolosa e del tutto letteraria – finisce per spingerlo al riconoscimento di un vincolo decisivo di ospitalità. "Perché mi chiedi la stirpe?" dice Glauco "Tal e quale la stirpe delle foglie è la stirpe degli uomini. / Le foglie il vento ne sparge molte a terra, ma rigogliosa la selva / altre ne germina, e torna l'ora della primavera: / così anche la stirpe degli uomini, una sboccia e l'altra sfiorisce" (Il. VI, 145-9, trad. Cerri). Premessa che richiama la stagione dei fiori, la *hora*, di cortissima durata, un cenno di disincanto, subito superato dai valori che tendono a sottrarsi alla contingenza, i valori antichi del nonno di Glauco, "Bellerofonte perfetto: / a lui bellezza gli dei e fascino amabile / dettero in dono" (VI, 155-7, Cerri). Segue la storia sfortunata dell'uomo onesto che non si lascia persuadere, né sedurre dalla moglie di Preto, Antea. Rettitudine (buona *phronesis*) e bellezza profonda (*kallos*) è ciò che caratterizza Bellerofonte. E Diomede non può che compiacersi del racconto perché sa bene che suo nonno Oineo aveva ospitato Bellerofonte per venti giorni, dandogli come pegno della vicendevo-

⁷ Fuorviante a mio avviso la lettura, già classica, di G. Vlastos 1998.

⁸ Platone riproduce una sintassi ubriaca che più volte, a torto, è stata regolarizzata nelle traduzioni. Alcibiade, peraltro, come racconta Plutarco, s'interrompeva spesso a metà discorso, mormorava, balbettava (*Vita di Alcibiade*, X 4). L'encomio è percorso da parentesi aperte che spesso non vengono richiuse, principali lasciate a metà, ripetizioni, esitazioni. Lo stile risulta in conclusione conciso, ellittico e allusivo, dunque perfettamente letterario (cfr. 215 a 4-5, 215 b 8, 216 d 1, e 4, 220 c 1, 221 c 8, 222 b 4-5).

⁹ È del resto quel che Alcibiade stesso preannuncia introducendo l'encomio: "se parlo ricordando alcune cose da una parte, altre da un'altra" (215 a 1-2).

¹⁰ Evidente il caso di Aristofane (l'unica citazione esplicita del discorso di Socrate-Diotima – 205 d 10-206 a 1 – chiama la risposta del commediografo alla fine dell'elogio socratico: 212 c 5) ma, senza che sia detto manifestamente, è il caso di tutti gli oratori raccontati dal dialogo. Cfr. Nucci 2008.

¹¹ Ricordato per mezzo di un raffinato gioco di assonanze da Platone quando fa dire a Alcibiade: "A capo della bevuta, quindi, eleggo, finché voi abbiate bevuto a sufficienza, me stesso" (213 e 9-10). Il greco ἄρχων τῆς πόσεως "capo della bevuta" richiama con una sorta di lapsus scongiurato ἄρχων τῆς πόλεως "capo della città" (cfr. S.L. Schein 1974, p. 159). Sul πλεονεκτεῖν cfr. anche A.W. Nightingale 1993, pp. 123-7.

philia una “cintura splendente di porpora” e ricevendo indietro “una coppa d’oro a due manici”. Diomede e Glauco dunque si stringono la mano, si promettono reciproca ospitalità dovunque in futuro potranno incontrarsi, che sia Argo o Licia, e si scambiano le armi. È qui che capita ciò che Platone fa evocare a Socrate nella sua risposta. Nel momento dello scambio “tolse allora il senno Zeus Cronide a Glauco, / che con Diomede Tidide scambiava le armi d’oro per quelle di bronzo / quelle del prezzo di cento buoi per quelle da nove” (VI, 234-5). Non è semplice capire quest’ultimo fatto: Zeus toglie il senno a Glauco. Perché? Cos’è successo? Quale il fine della squilibrata conclusione? In realtà, se guardiamo attentamente a quel che accade, non c’è molto da dire. Cosa importa, infatti, il valore delle armi in guerra? Certo le armi di Diomede non sono fragili o incapaci di uccidere. Quel che davvero importa in questo siparietto mentre Ettore sta correndo a casa è l’istituzione della *xenia*, e il rapporto di *philia* che la sostiene. Quel che importa, più che l’oro delle armi di Glauco è la rettitudine e la bellezza di suo nonno, tanto consistenti e durature da vincere la brevità delle stagioni umane, la veloce fioritura di una generazione che cresce passa e va.

Non è affatto strano ritrovare tutti questi concetti dietro alle parole che Socrate indirizza al cuore di Alcibiade. Parole alate, *epea pteroenta* calibrate a colpire l’anima del suo interlocutore e vivere e crescere in essa¹². Quanto pensiero e quanta verità e quanti enigmi si portano appresso queste parole? Pensiero e verità sono abbastanza evidenti e è probabile che non siano sfuggiti a Alcibiade. La bellezza di Socrate è *kallos*, quella di Alcibiade è *eumorphia*, bellezza di forme casuali alla nascita che oltre a questa contingenza s’inverano nel momento perfetto e fuggevole della giovinezza, ossia la fioritura del ragazzo, quella che infatti Alcibiade stesso chiama “la mia *hora*”¹³. Vera bellezza, insomma, contro l’apparenza della bellezza. Verità contro *doxa*. Tutto chiaro? Non completamente. Se Socrate possiede una bellezza, per Alcibiade essa è interiore, soltanto interiore. Socrate esteriormente è brutto. Tutto il discorso del giovane ubriaco ruota attorno alla discrepanza interiorità-esteriorità e Alcibiade non manca di sottolinearlo anche rispetto alla bellezza di Socrate: si tratta di qualcosa di invisibile e nascosto, una ricchezza che cala nelle profondità del Sileno. Occhi sporgenti, naso schiacciato, pancia debordante: Socrate esteriormente sarà sempre brutto. Tutti su questo convengono e così pensa anche Alcibiade. Ma pensa male. Poiché proprio lì è il cuore del problema. Ossia la questione su cui Socrate lancia il suo enigma conclusivo: “Ma, o beato, guarda meglio che non ti sfugga che io sono nulla. La vista del pensiero comincia a vedere con acutezza quando quella degli occhi inizia a declinare dal suo culmine” (219 a 4-5). Il problema della giovane promessa di Atene sta nel non cogliere anche la bellezza esteriore di Socrate, una bellezza molto particolare, che non ha a che fare con le forme fisiche ma con forme di diverso tipo, quelle che altrove Platone richiamerà con il termine *euschemosyne*, bellezza dello *schema*, della forma non casuale alla nascita ma costruita durante gli anni vissuti. Quella profondità o armonia che può manifestarsi nello sguardo, nell’incedere, nell’esprimersi e in generale mostrarsi nel mondo¹⁴. Il punto allora sta in come questa bellezza interiore di cui Alcibiade dice di sapere l’esistenza, traspaia anche attraverso i gesti e il portamento dell’uomo che ha brutte forme casualmente alla nascita e che da un pezzo ha perso la bellezza della stagione dei fiori. Come questa bellezza tenda a diventare altro, qualcosa che non è più neppure incarnato e individuato e tenda a superare i confini della finitezza umana. Su quell’ascesa dovrebbe mettersi ora Alcibiade. Ma non può farlo. Gli manca la risolutezza necessaria. Gli manca la vera spinta. Quella capacità che Socrate offre a tutti i suoi prescelti. La possibilità di farsi amante.

Ecco come noi dobbiamo svelare l’enigma socratico. Alcibiade dice di non vergognarsi a accettare le *avances* di Socrate, ribadendo la sua arretratezza sul cammino della vergogna (che egli prova in una particolare forma di solitudine, ossia soltanto quando Socrate è presente)¹⁵, e sull’individuazione di una bellezza assoluta verso cui tendere e su cui far progredire la propria bellezza d’animo. Ma Socrate un’arma ce l’ha. E quell’arma sta nel non rispettare le regole del gioco, nel sottrarsi dal ruolo prestabilito di amante¹⁶. In questa mossa sta il completamento dell’educazione erotica riplasmata da Platone, i segni, le spinte che l’educatore offre al giovane nella sua ascesa finale

¹² Sull’espressione omerica si vedano Onians 1998, pp. 115-6, Thomson 1936 e Laspia 2002. Sulla connessione fra l’idea arcaica e quella platonica (soprattutto il primato della parola viva, della dimensione orale, nella metafora dei giardini di Adone di *phaedr.* 276 b-277 a cfr. Nucci 2013, pp. 159-162).

¹³ Cfr. 217 a 3, e per allusione a 219 e 3. Ho tradotto il termine “splendore della giovinezza”.

¹⁴ Il brano esemplare è in *resp.* 400 c-403 c su cui Nucci 2000.

¹⁵ “E solo di fronte a quest’uomo ho provato quel che nessuno crederebbe che sia presente in me: la vergogna. Solo con lui io mi vergogno. Sono conscio fin dentro me stesso che non sarei capace di contraddirlo dicendo che non bisogna fare quel che lui ordina, però, appena me ne allontano, resto soggiogato dagli onori delle folle” (216 b 3-6). La socratica “cura dell’anima” (il manifesto in *apol.* 29 c-30 e) funziona in Alcibiade solo in presenza del maestro. Lontano da lui prevale il desiderio di onori: egli è, agli occhi di Platone (ormai lontano dalle storie in cui il ragazzo s’invischiò), l’esempio perfetto dell’uomo φιλότιμος. Si veda su ciò anche Plutarco, *Vita di Alcibiade*, II 1, VI 4.

¹⁶ Il ribaltamento dei ruoli è il cuore dell’ironia erotica, secondo Hadot 1988, p. 103.

dei Grandi Misteri.

Il sovvertimento dei ruoli di amante e amato del resto era stato già ampiamente discusso in ambiente socratico. È evidente a tutti che il ruolo passivo dell'amato non potesse essere accettabile nell'ottica della *paideia* di cui Socrate si fece a suo modo maestro. L'autonomia morale che tutti i testimoni riconoscono come il cardine principale dell'insegnamento socratico è agli antipodi rispetto alla passività dell'amato. Il ragazzo, in questo caso, diventa una sorta di contenitore vuoto che dev'essere semplicemente riempito dalle conoscenze che gli trasmette l'amante, adulto e presumibilmente più esperto. Anche solo a uno sguardo superficiale, questo ragazzo che ascolta e che viene educato e informato e metaforicamente, ma non solo, riempito, non è il soggetto morale che Socrate desidera. Non è l'uomo che guarda in se stesso, che indaga i confini della propria anima, che si domanda il perché di ciò che ascolta e vede, che si chiede continuamente il motivo e mette in discussione le certezze e tende a rivalutarle dopo un attento esame condotto sulla base delle sue, e solo delle sue esperienze. Che poi il giovane, scegliendo in autonomia, sbagli o meno non importa. Quel che importa a Socrate è che il ragazzo scelga in prima persona, semmai sbagli da sé e possa così migliorare e guardare oltre, sempre un po' più in là, sempre un po' più giù, nell'interiorità, o su, verso gli obiettivi cui conduce la crescita spirituale. Sbagliare, migliorare e cambiare con la propria testa, la propria anima. Solo così si ha la possibilità di crescere. Lo spirito critico, in una parola. Ciò che spingeva Gabriele Giannantoni a considerare Socrate il primo filosofo della storia del pensiero occidentale¹⁷.

A prescindere da valutazioni di massima che peraltro, da sé, basterebbero a confermare l'ipotesi di una problematizzazione, in ambiente socratico, dei ruoli canonici di amante e amato, c'è una serie di testimonianze a confermare l'ipotesi. Innanzitutto frammenti di opere di Antistene e Eschine. Eppoi un dialogo platonico in cui la questione è sfiorata – ma si tratta di uno sfiorare violento – affrontando il problema della *philia* più che di eros. Partiamo da Antistene e Eschine. I due socratici, detti ormai comunemente “minori”, sparsero cenni evidenti. Eschine, in due dialoghi dai titoli già di per sé significativi, *Alcibiade* e *Aspasia*, sottolineò la centralità dell'educazione erotica: Socrate, ignorante, non ha altro mezzo che il desiderio (l'*epithymia*) da risvegliare nel giovane per indirizzarlo alla virtù¹⁸. La partecipazione attiva dell'amato è evidente. Nell'educando dev'essere sollecitata la dimensione desiderativa, quella stessa dimensione che è in azione nell'educatore quando si dedica al ragazzo. È questa tensione erotica ciò che spingerà il giovane verso la virtù¹⁹. La sua tensione, però, e non quella del maestro/amante, che è accesa, sì, e porta l'amante verso il giovane e lo spinge a vivificare quella stessa parte affinché il giovane se ne serva come forza propulsiva del suo cammino educativo. Un cammino autonomo, dunque.

Molto diversa ma di radice comune la risposta di Antistene. Qui tutto è spostato sul polo opposto a quello desiderativo. Il suo tipico razionalismo lo spinge, infatti, al rifiuto dei sensi²⁰ e all'accettazione della sfera erotica solo per il sapiente. Ora, però, per Antistene solo il sapiente può amare perché solo il sapiente può riconoscere chi è degno di amore, ossia un giovane a sua volta sapiente²¹. Sia amante che amato, in una dimensione erotica lontanissima da qualsiasi manifestazione non nobile di eros²², sono caratterizzati dalla virtù e l'amore di sapienza. In questo senso, dunque, i ruoli di amante e amato vengono quasi a sovrapporsi e identificarsi²³.

Con i dovuti distinguo²⁴, insomma, sia Antistene che Eschine manifestano esplicitamente come il ruolo passivo dell'amato fosse stato ormai abbondantemente messo in questione. Che lo sfondo comune di queste riflessioni debba essere individuato nell'ambiente che i due filosofi frequentarono è chiaro e lo dimostra poi Platone. Sia un dialogo dubbio come l'*Alcibiade Primo*²⁵, sia soprattutto il *Liside*. Qui, all'interno di una delle più classiche argomentazioni del Socrate che Platone mise in scena nei suoi dialoghi giovanili e di passaggio verso la maturità²⁶, troviamo il maestro che discute di *philia* e, a un tratto, per mezzo di un espediente formale tendenzialmente capzioso e debole, si trova a delegittimare la distinzione dei ruoli attivo e passivo nella relazione erotico/paideutica. È la

¹⁷ Cfr. Giannantoni 1971.

¹⁸ Cfr. *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* (S.S.R.) VI A 53, VI A 70 su cui Giannantoni 1997, pp. 362-3

¹⁹ Cfr. Giannantoni 1990, IV, pp. 594-6

²⁰ Cfr. S.S.R. V A 123

²¹ “Degno di amore è il sapiente” S.S.R. V A 99 e 134.

²² S.S.R. V A 142-4.

²³ Cfr. Brancacci 1993, p. 48.

²⁴ Una sorta di opposizione secondo Brancacci 1990, pp. 169-71

²⁵ Che sia autentico o meno, il dialogo ci mostra esemplarmente l'attitudine erotica di Socrate nei confronti di Alcibiade. L'eros dell'amante si manifesta nello spingere l'amato alla cura della sua anima. Dunque a fare da sé, all'autonomia morale, perfetto contrario della passività istituzionalmente attribuita alla posizione dell'amato/educando.

²⁶ Si propende per datare il dialogo verso la fine del “primo periodo” e poco prima della redazione dei dialoghi centrali, cfr. Centrone 1997, pp. 157-8

famosa, complessa, divagazione sul *philos*, l'amico, che per la lingua greca può essere interpretato sia in senso attivo che in senso passivo, sia come aggettivo che come sostantivo²⁷. Il *philos* è amante e amato, amico che ama o amico che è amato, e Socrate, giocando sull'ambiguità del termine, mette in crisi il giovane interlocutore, Menesseno. L'aspetto che tutti i lettori hanno riconosciuto come tipicamente eristico nell'argomentazione socratica nasconde però questioni che a Platone interessano eccome. La principale, a mio avviso, sta nel paradosso a cui si giunge quando si considera *philos*, ossia amico e dunque anche amante, chi sia invece soltanto oggetto di amore/amicizia ma non la ricambi affatto. Se un ragazzo è amato ma non ama a sua volta chi lo ama, lo si può definire a pieno titolo amico/amante?²⁸ È abbastanza evidente che qui, aldilà dell'incedere argomentativo così fastidioso e per l'interlocutore più che catartico irritante, c'è un problema molto sentito nella Grecia che considera l'*eros paidikos* alla stregua di un'istituzione. Un ragazzo che è oggetto d'amore ma a sua volta non ama l'amante, che ruolo può avere nella relazione? Se il problema è osservato da un punto di vista paideutico, tutto esplode: chi non ama, chi non ha desiderio, chi non vuole e non sente bisogno, né mancanza, né nulla, come può avviarsi su un cammino di miglioramento personale? Il retroterra delle discussioni socratiche è evidente. L'amato deve a sua volta farsi amante se vuole utilizzare la sua immensa forza erotica/desiderativa per un cammino conoscitivo. L'amato totalmente passivo è inammissibile per Socrate. E i suoi discepoli approfondirono il problema, ciascuno seguendo la sua strada.

La strada platonica si definì in maniera esemplare nel discorso di Alcibiade del *Simposio*. Qui noi – l'ho già detto – abbiamo la possibilità di vedere in atto l'educazione erotica prospettata nel discorso di Diotima. Piccoli Misteri e Grandi Misteri. Sappiamo bene quale sia lo scarto. Esso ha a che fare principalmente con la parte che gioca nei due percorsi educativi la bellezza. Ricapitoliamo. La preliminare educazione dei Piccoli Misteri mira a individuare il giovane gravido, l'individuo che ha la capacità di procreare secondo l'anima e che ha bisogno di bellezza, bellezza armonica al divino, per generare (206 c-e). Ciò che si genera, in questa prima fase di crescita, è "saggezza e ogni altra virtù" (*phronesis*, 209 a 4) e la forma di saggezza più grande e bella riguarda l'ordinamento di città e case, dunque temperanza e giustizia (*sophrosyne* e *dikaiosyne*, 209 a 7-8). La bellezza in cui si genera, questa bellezza armonica al divino, quando è presente in un individuo, è corpo bello e anima bella e nobile, dunque un complesso di duplice bellezza (209 b 5-8)²⁹ che libera dalle doglie del parto. In questa prima fase, la bellezza è dunque ciò che permette la generazione. Nel cammino successivo, quello che, dopo lo scarto misterico, Diotima chiama dei Grandi Misteri, il bello diventa invece l'oggetto della contemplazione in una progressiva perdita di consistenza terrena via via che si sale sulla celeberrima *scala amoris*. L'educatore non offre più nulla se non cenni, non fa più discorsi, si limita a dare indicazioni, a guidare il giovane e aprirgli la vista del corpo e della mente verso quel bello che passa da un corpo a un altro eppoi diventa bello dell'anima eppoi diventa bellezza di comportamenti e leggi e conoscenze fino alla Bellezza in sé, la Forma del Bello.

Non è affatto difficile seguire Alcibiade mentre percorre questo cammino e tenta di progredire nella comprensione di se stesso, della sua bellezza e di quella altrui. Lo vediamo primeggiare, con sforzi moderati, nella preliminare educazione erotica, quella che trova in lui certamente l'anima dotata, gravida, capace di generare, capace di farlo in presenza del bello armonico al divino e portata dunque a generare virtù politica, virtù che s'invera nell'impegno verso la città. Lo scarto misterico, riprodotto nello stesso discorso di Alcibiade con la sapienza dello scrittore onnisciente Platone, ci mostra però dove il giovane non può che perdersi. Quando cioè viene definitivamente lasciato solo, abbandonato alla sua furia erotica, alla capacità mai realizzata di utilizzare quella forza³⁰ per seguire una bellezza che perde connessione col corpo finito e che si apre sempre più verso l'assolutezza della Forma. Alcibiade in questo cammino non riesce più a procedere. Quando Socrate lo lascia solo, lo abbandona al suo eros, gli dà la possibilità – non a parole, ma mediante cenni, e su tutti i cenni uno in particolare, violentissimo: il ritrarsi – di dare forza al suo eros e lasciarlo fluire per accompagnarlo

²⁷ Cfr. Glidden 1980.

²⁸ La domanda che introduce la questione non è affatto vuota e capziosa: "E dimmi: qualora uno ami un altro, chi dei due diventa amico di chi, chi ama di chi è amato o chi è amato di chi ama?" (212 a 8-b 2, trad. Centrone). Essa porta immediatamente a domandare "Entrambi diventano dunque amici l'uno dell'altro, se solo l'uno ama l'altro?" (212 b3-5, trad. Centrone)

²⁹ Si tratta di una bellezza complessa. Un'anticipazione della più profonda bellezza di Socrate. Cfr. Nucci 2000, p. 21.

³⁰ Alcibiade non vede o non vuole vedere la forza che già possiede. Il suo non farsi amante si manifesta proprio nella continua speranza che la forza gli arrivi da fuori, dall'uomo sapiente a cui ha deciso di affidarsi. "Per me infatti nulla è più prezioso del diventare migliore quanto più è possibile, e credo che per questo non esista collaboratore più potente di te" dice Alcibiade a 218 d 3-4. Il "collaboratore" rinvia a 212 b 4, dove Socrate in conclusione del suo discorso definisce Eros (e dunque la tensione erotica presente in noi) in maniera analoga.

verso le vette della contemplazione, Alcibiade si perde. Non si fa pienamente amante, non riesce a vedere che la bellezza interiore di Socrate è anche la sua bellezza esteriore e che dall'esteriorità di Socrate quella bellezza si apre verso tutti i corpi e le anime belle. Non riesce a andare avanti da solo. Cerca ancora conforto nel suo amante/amato, guarda a lui come si contempla una bellezza, ma è una, finita, perduta e contingente bellezza, che peraltro egli non può comprendere pienamente. Il suo farsi amante è un fallimento. Alcibiade non ne è capace. Guarda al ritrarsi di Socrate come a un'astuzia da seduttore, non come a un'astuzia da educatore. E dunque fallisce. Ma è nel suo fallimento che noi possiamo definitivamente leggere la potenza che Platone assegnava a eros quale forza paideutica.

Nel seguito del discorso di Alcibiade troveremo infatti lo sforzo di contemplazione in cui si getta la giovane promessa ubriaca di Atene. Uno sforzo che cerca di catturare le virtù di Socrate e spera forse di farle proprie senza fatica, proprio come il suo omologo Agatone (anch'egli amato che non si farà mai amante) aveva sognato di fare all'inizio della serata, immaginando di riempirsi passivamente della virtù di Socrate lasciandola fluire in lui per contatto come l'acqua nei vasi comunicanti attraverso un filo di lana (175 c-e). Anche Alcibiade resta tendenzialmente passivo. Osserva Socrate, lo contempla. Guarda ammirato alle sue virtù: il coraggio, la temperanza, la fermezza, la saggezza³¹. E non capisce che in quella bellezza esteriore che da solo non riesce a percepire sta l'enigma che gli era stato lanciato e la sfida a crescere che il maestro gli aveva offerto. Non capisce che in quella bellezza si apre il mistero di una bellezza disincarnata che spinge l'anima verso vette inaudite. Si ferma al corpo, si ferma all'interiorità come disgiunta dall'esteriorità, ammira Socrate e non la sua bellezza, guarda all'uomo, invece di scostare gli occhi dall'individuo finito e guardare oltre, verso quel mare di bellezza in cui tutto si confonde e tutto acquista un senso. Finisce così per non approfittare dell'occasione. L'occasione che Socrate dà a tutti i suoi prescelti: amati che devono diventare amanti. Quella che il filosofo aveva prospettato già a Aristodemo, proprio a inizio dialogo, lasciandolo solo (174d-175b)³². Spingendolo a far da sé. A curarsi della propria anima. A far fruttare il senso di vergogna. Ma Alcibiade non si vergogna in solitudine. Si vergogna solo in presenza di Socrate. Non fa quel passo necessario a diventare amante filosofico, amante di saggezza, amante di bellezza che è corpo, anima e oltre. Per lui Socrate resta corpo brutto e anima bella. Un corpo per cui è disposto a accettare le malelingue, perché "mi vergognerei molto di più nel non concedermi a un uomo come te di fronte ai saggi che nel concedermi a te di fronte ai molti e stolti" (218 d 3-6).

Poco dopo quella calda sera primaverile del 416 destinata a rimanere immortale grazie alla letteratura, Alcibiade, assieme a altri due degli invitati: Erissimaco e Fedro, avrebbe profanato i Misteri Eleusini in una messa nera da commedia. Erano i misteri su cui non aveva mai voluto né potuto ascendere: quelli che interessavano all'educatore del *Simposio*. Nei giorni seguenti sarebbe partito al comando dell'immensa spedizione con cui sognava di conquistare la Sicilia per essere invece chiamato indietro poco dopo, ad affrontare un processo cui non si presentò mai, abbandonando la città in favore della sua più acerrima nemica: Sparta. Da lì in poi, la sua sarebbe diventata una vita di tradimenti e riconciliazioni, mai più ripiegamento su se stesso e anzi, definitivamente e per sempre, lontano dall'uomo che gli aveva fatto conoscere la vergogna e che soprattutto si era ritratto, si era scostato pur di lasciarlo andare avanti da solo. Ma non andò mai più avanti, Alcibiade, su quella strada. Non vide la "strada più lunga" dell'amore di sapienza. O non volle vederla. Si fermò lì, in quella sera ebbra, nel portico della casa di Agatone, quando sorretto dalle flautiste odiate da Atena³³, se ne tornò a casa, certo di essere ormai sulla via ampia, breve e in discesa verso i più grandi successi terreni.

³¹ Questo il senso della parte conclusiva del discorso, perfettamente introdotto da Alcibiade stesso a 219 d-e e già descritto in termini fallimentari: "Ero privo di risorse allora, e ridotto in schiavitù da quest'uomo come nessuno da nessun altro, gli giravo intorno." (212 e 3-5)

³² In un gioco letterario circolare, Platone fa sì che due episodi si rispecchino. Le parole di Socrate con Aristodemo a inizio dialogo (174 d 2-3) echeggiano nell'ultima risposta che Socrate avrebbe dato a Alcibiade secondo la ricostruzione di quest'ultimo nel suo encomio: "Ma parli bene. In futuro ci consulteremo e faremo quel che a noi due sembrerà meglio, sia su questo che sulle altre questioni" (219 a 8-b 2)

³³ Atena gettò via lo strumento dopo aver visto, specchiandosi nell'acqua, il suo volto deformato. Su ciò cfr. Vernant 1987, pp. 63-72. La tradizione attribuisce allo stesso Alcibiade una sorta di disprezzo nei confronti dello strumento. La descrive Platone o chi per lui in *Alc. I*, 106 e 6-7 e Plutarco in *Vita di Alcibiade*, II 5-7. Da una parte è chiaro che la natura dionisiaca del flauto è ciò che Platone, forse con questa nota dissonante per gli ascoltatori/lettori del tempo, vuole sottolineare. Dall'altra è la bruttezza del volto, la bruttezza esteriore delle guance gonfiate nell'atto di suonare (il flauto, o meglio l'aulo, era più simile a una zampogna che al nostro flauto). Tema che costituisce l'ossatura delle riflessioni di Alcibiade nell'encomio del *Simposio*, nonché, come ho cercato di spiegare, il cuore del suo errore nel cammino paideutico.

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La *téchne* de la caza de hombres: la dimensión práctica del saber erótico de Sócrates en el *Banquete*

Lucas Soares

Ante la propuesta de Erixímaco de encomiar al dios Éros, Sócrates confiesa en el *Banquete* que él se encuentra en óptimas condiciones para hacerlo dado que, tras haber aprendido en su momento las lecciones de Diótima, no sabe acerca de otra cosa que de asuntos eróticos (*tà erotiká*, *Smp.* 177d6-e3).¹ Esta declaración no debería llamarnos la atención si no viniera de alguien que justamente encontró en la profesión de ignorancia su tono filosófico, tal como, entre otros pasajes del corpus platónico, se lee en la *Apología*, donde Sócrates interpreta el célebre mensaje oracular relativo a su sabiduría, señalando que él es el más sabio de entre todos los hombres, por cuanto advierte que en lo que toca a la sabiduría no vale en verdad nada (*Ap.* 23a3-b4); y asimismo en el testimonio que nos brinda Aristóteles en *Refutaciones sofísticas*, según el cual Sócrates siempre adoptaba el papel del que pregunta, jamás del que contesta, pues confesaba que no sabía nada (*SE* 183b7-8).

La pregunta que naturalmente surge ante dicha confesión socrática sería entonces: ¿qué es lo que puntualmente *sabe* Sócrates acerca del amor, y qué dimensiones se hallan implicadas en tal tipo de saber? ¿Cómo se presenta a sí mismo en relación con el amor alguien que no sólo admite quedar estupefacto ante los jóvenes bellos, sino también ejercitarse (*askein*) especialmente en los asuntos amorosos e incitar a otros a hacerlo (*Smp.* 194d1-4, 211d3-8, 212b5-7)? Partiendo de tales interrogantes, me interesa en este trabajo examinar, *en primer lugar*, la dimensión práctica (*áskesis*) comprometida en el saber erótico socrático, la cual, basándome, además del *Banquete*, en algunos pasajes de diálogos platónicos tempranos y de transición, y de la *Memorabilia* y el *Banquete* de Jenofonte, podría definirse -tomando en préstamo terminología del *Sofista* 222d3-e3- como una *téchne* de la persuasión erótica o de la caza de hombres (*théra anthrópon*), cuyo despliegue presupone en el *Banquete* tres rasgos característicos: *i*) cierta facilidad de conocer al que ama y al que es amado; *ii*) capacidad de resistencia frente al “tiránico” encanto de los jóvenes bellos; y *iii*) la ironía (*eironeía*), cuya potencia se expresa en términos eróticos mediante la *simulación* de enamoramiento con vistas a invertir la posición de *erastés* por la de *erómenos* de los jóvenes bellos, para hacer nacer así en éstos la máxima del cuidado del alma y una firme disposición hacia el saber. *En segundo lugar*, me propongo analizar qué relación guarda tal *áskesis* erótica socrática con el saber de carácter teórico-eidético que corona el ascenso erótico establecido por Diótima.

La atracción de Sócrates, asiduo visitante de los gimnasios de Atenas,² por los muchachos y el magnetismo erótico que, a pesar de su silénica fealdad, el filósofo despertaba en ellos es un tópico reiterado en los diálogos platónicos tempranos, una de cuyas escenas más repetidas nos lo muestra declarando su amor por alguno de los jóvenes que despuntara socialmente por su *kalokagathía* (como, por ejemplo, Alcibíades, Cármides, etc.).³ Recordemos al respecto las elocuentes palabras del joven Fedro en el *Banquete*:

Querido Agatón, si respondes a Sócrates, ya no le importará nada de qué manera se realice cualquiera de nuestros proyectos actuales, con tal que tenga sólo a uno con quien pueda dialogar, especialmente si es bello (*Smp.* 194d1-4).⁴

Un indicio del saber erótico que Sócrates reconoce tener al comienzo del *Banquete* se deja entrever en el *Lisis*, donde el filósofo afirma ante Hipotales, un enamorado del joven que da título a este diálogo de juventud, que por gracia divina detenta una cierta facilidad de conocer al que ama y al que es amado (*Ly.* 204b8-c2).

Por su parte Jenofonte también da cuenta en su *Banquete* de la disposición erótica que Sócrates pone en escena a la hora de vincularse con los jóvenes bellos, disposición que justifica en dicha obra la necesidad de encomiar a Éros:

Por mi parte, no podría decir momento alguno en el que no esté enamorado de alguien, y Cármides, aquí presente, se que ha tenido muchos amantes y que él mismo se ha apasionado por alguno de ellos

¹ Véase en la misma línea Jenofonte, *Mem.* II, 6, 28, donde Sócrates reconoce ser un entendido en cosas de amor.

² Dover (1978: 54-55) señala que el gimnasio y la palestra ofrecían muchas oportunidades de ver desnudos a los jóvenes y funcionaban como centros sociales en los que era posible establecer algún contacto. Para una caracterización general de la *paidierastía* en la Grecia arcaica y clásica, cf. especialmente Brisson (2006: 230-235).

³ Sobre el tema de la presencia de la homosexualidad masculina en los textos platónicos, cf. especialmente Menissier (1996: 71-74).

⁴ Para los pasajes platónicos citados seguimos la edición de Burnet (1900-1907). Del *Banquete* tuvimos en cuenta las siguientes ediciones: Bury (1932), Dover (1980) y Rowe (1998).

(*Smp.* VIII 2 1-4).

Esta disposición erótica del Sócrates de Jenofonte encuentra su correlato exacto en el Sócrates de Platón, quien en el *Cármides* le hace decir al filósofo: “En relación con bellos adolescentes soy un “cordel blanco”, porque casi todos, en esta edad, me parecen hermosos” (*Chrm.* 154b8-10). Al inicio de este diálogo temprano leemos asimismo uno de los pasajes más audaces que atenta contra la supuesta continencia socrática en materia erótica. Allí Platón describe con precisión el impacto que le produjo a Sócrates el encuentro con Cármides, adolescente ante cuya belleza los jóvenes y hombres maduros quedaban extasiados como si estuvieran frente a la imagen de un dios:

Entonces ocurrió, querido amigo, que me encontré como sin salida, tambaleándose mi antigua audacia (*thrasýtes*); esa audacia que, en otra ocasión, me habría llevado a hacerle hablar fácilmente. Pero después de que me miró con ojos que no sé qué querían decir y se lanzaba ya a preguntarme, y todos los que estaban en la palestra nos cerraban en círculo, entonces, noble amigo, intuí lo que había dentro del manto y me sentí arder y estaba como fuera de mí, y pensé que Cidias sabía mucho en cosas del amor, cuando, refiriéndose a un joven hermoso, aconseja a otro que “si un cervatillo llega frente a un león, ha de cuidar de no ser hecho pedazos”. Como si fuera yo mismo el que estuvo en las garras de esa fiera, cuando me preguntó si sabía el remedio para la cabeza, a duras penas le pude responder que lo sabía (*Chrm.* 155c5-e3).

Tanto en el *Menéxeno* de Platón como en el *Banquete* de Jenofonte encontramos otras dos muestras similares de pérdida socrática del aplomo erótico. En el primer diálogo, requerido por Menéxeno, un joven de dieciocho años interesado por la oratoria, Sócrates afirma:

Pero tal vez te burles de mí, si, viejo como soy, te produzco la impresión de que aún juego como un niño (*òn éti paízein*). (...) Pues bien, sin duda debo complacerte; hasta el punto de que incluso si me pidieras que me quitase el manto y danzara, casi te haría el gusto, puesto que estamos solos (*Mx.* 236c8-d2).

En la segunda obra, ante la extraña propuesta socrática de abstenerse de besar a los muchachos en la flor de la edad, el filósofo es desenmascarado por un Cármides ya maduro, así como en el *Banquete* platónico lo será por un Alcibíades también ya maduro:

Pero en realidad, Sócrates, ¿por qué agitas así ante tus amigos tales espantajos para alejarnos de los muchachos bellos, cuando yo te vi a ti mismo, por Apolo, un día que en la escuela ambos andaban buscando algo en el mismo libro, con tu cabeza apoyada en su cabeza y tu hombro desnudo en el hombro desnudo de Critobulo? (*Smp.* IV 27-28).

Ya sea en el *Cármides* como cervatillo, ya sea en el *Menéxeno* como niño, lo que se desprende de estos pasajes es que Sócrates siempre busca jugar (*paízein*) con los jóvenes haciéndoles creer que son ellos los que, cual leones, lo cercan con su belleza y mandan sobre él en términos eróticos y dialógicos, controlando desde el inicio la situación. Es que en el fondo, como ya lo había percibido Nietzsche en el siglo XIX, Sócrates era un gran *erotikós*, que fascinaba en la medida en que removía el instinto agonal de los adolescentes y jóvenes pertenecientes a los círculos aristocráticos de Atenas.⁵ Un caso paradigmático de esta clase de *agón* erótico, en el que Sócrates invierte la relación haciéndose pasar por esclavo de la tiranía ejercida por la belleza de un joven, se observa en el *Menón*. Más puntualmente, en la respuesta que da Sócrates tras la segunda definición de la *areté* brindada por el joven protagonista, discípulo del sofista Gorgias:

¡Eres un desconsiderado, Menón! Sometes a un anciano a que te conteste estas cuestiones y tú no quieres recordar y decir qué afirmó Gorgias que es la virtud. Aun con los ojos vendados, Menón, cualquiera sabría, al dialogar contigo, que eres bello y que también tienes tus enamorados. Porque cuando hablas no haces otra cosa que mandar, como los niños consentidos, que proceden cual tiranos mientras les dura su encanto; y al mismo tiempo, habrás notado seguramente en mí que no resisto a los guapos. Te daré, pues, ese gusto y te contestaré (*Men.* 76a9-c2).

La paradoja que introduce este pasaje es que la dinámica de las conversaciones que Sócrates suele entablar con los jóvenes allegados a su círculo revela justamente lo contrario: que toda la potencia del supuesto saber erótico de Sócrates reside en su capacidad de resistencia frente a la “tiránica” seducción que sobre él ejercen los jóvenes bellos. Por allí discurre uno de los nervios centrales de su *askēsis* erótica.

Esta capacidad de resistencia alcanza su clímax en *Banquete*, al punto de que Platón introduce allí al personaje de Alcibíades para, entre otras cosas, desenmascarar dicha capacidad y el sistema de poses que Sócrates suele adoptar cuando está frente a un joven bello:

Veis, en efecto, que Sócrates está en disposición amorosa con los jóvenes bellos (*erotikōs diákeitai tōn kalōn*), que siempre está en torno suyo y se queda extasiado, y que, por otra parte, ignora

⁵ Nietzsche (1973 [1888]: 47).

todo y nada sabe, al menos por su apariencia. (...) Pasa toda su vida ironizando y bromeando (*eironeuómenos kai paízon*) con la gente (*Smp.* 216d2-4, e4-5).⁶

Aquí hallamos otro de los nervios centrales de la *áskeſis* erótica socrática, a saber: el recurso de la ironía (*eironeía*), entendida como “simulación” o “fingimiento”, y cuya potencia se expresa sobre todo en los terrenos dialéctico y erótico; de aquí que algunos intérpretes lleguen a distinguir dos tipos de ironía: dialéctica y erótica. La primera se manifiesta mediante una tendencia discursiva que lleva a Sócrates a simular, a través del juego de preguntas y respuestas, la adopción del punto de vista del interlocutor, haciéndole creer así que le otorga la razón respecto del tema objeto de discusión. De modo análogo a la de tipo dialéctico (o discursivo), la ironía erótica revela la tendencia socrática de fingir enamoramiento con vistas a *invertir* su posición de amante (*erastés*) por la del objeto amado (*erómenos*) de los jóvenes (*Smp.* 222b3-4). Esta inversión erótica también se halla testimoniada en las palabras que Jenofonte pone en boca de Antístenes, quien hace referencia a las *mastropéia* socrática como un “prostituirse a sí mismo” (*mastropè sautoû*): “¡Con qué claridad haces siempre el mismo juego, prostituyéndote a ti mismo!, pues unas veces te niegas a conversar conmigo poniendo como pretexto a tu genio divino y otras alegando que estás ocupado en otro asunto” (*Smp.* VIII 3-7).

Más allá de esta distinción de planos, ambos tipos de ironía comprometen la puesta en escena de un fingir autodespreciativo, es decir, de una actitud psicológica según la cual Sócrates procura a toda costa parecer inferior de lo que es, enmascarando lúdicamente las intenciones últimas que orientan su práctica dialógica con el fin de invertir los valores en juego en la discusión y en la relación erótica que mantiene con los jóvenes bellos.⁷ Tal es justamente la autodesvalorización erótica que Alcibiades viene a *desenmascarar* -porque justamente uno de los rasgos característicos de la ironía pasa por el enmascaramiento- en algunos de los tramos centrales de su elogio de Sócrates (*Smp.* 222a7-b7), y la que -si tenemos en cuenta las semejanzas estructurales entre la figura socrática y el *éros daímon*, hijo de Póros y Penía- termina por expresar Diotima en su discurso:

Pero, por otra parte, de acuerdo con la naturaleza de su padre, está al acecho de lo bello y de lo bueno; es valiente, audaz y activo, hábil cazador, siempre urdiendo alguna trama, ávido de sabiduría y rico en recursos, un amante del conocimiento a lo largo de toda su vida, un formidable mago, hechicero y sofista (*thereutès deinós, aei tinas plékon mekhanás, kai phronéseos epithymetés kai pórimos, philosophôn diá pantòs toû bíou, deinòs gòes kai pharmakeùs kai sophistés*, *Smp.* 203d4-8)

Para el momento dramático del *Banquete*, sabemos que Alcibiades y la filosofía son -si tenemos en cuenta el diálogo que mantiene con el personaje de Calicles en el *Gorgias*- los dos grandes amores opuestos que Sócrates confiesa tener (*Grg.* 481d1-5). En efecto, Platón contrasta en este diálogo de transición la impulsividad característica de su amado Alcibiades, quien cada vez dice algo distinto, con la pasividad y previsibilidad propias de la filosofía, que sostiene siempre lo mismo. No es casual en este sentido que en el *Banquete* Platón elija dar cuenta del amor de Sócrates por Alcibiades justo en el marco de las amenazas que éste impulsivamente le dirige al reconocerlo entre los asistentes del simposio (*Smp.* 213c6-d6). A partir del discurso de Alcibiades puede verse cómo, ante uno de los jóvenes más reputados de la época en términos de belleza, Sócrates, comportándose como un hábil cazador que siempre está urdiendo alguna trama, seduce y a la vez se encarga de frustrar la seducción que él mismo despliega a través de su *áskeſis* erótica;⁸ y asimismo cómo -dicho en términos nietzscheanos- en Sócrates “todo es a la vez oculto, lleno de segundas intenciones, subterráneo”.⁹ Porque una parte importante del saber práctico que el filósofo detenta en materia amorosa se asienta justamente en su capacidad de resistencia frente a la seducción de los jóvenes

⁶ Véase, entre otros, Hadot (2008: 26-33, 49-54).

⁷ Otros testimonios sobre la ironía socrática pueden verse, entre otros, en Platón, *Ap.* 38a1 (“no me creerán pensando que hablo irónicamente [*ou peisesthé moi hōs eironeuoménōi*]”), *R.* I 337a4-7 (“¡Oh, Heracles! Aquí está Sócrates con su acostumbrada ironía [*eiōthyia eironeia*]; ya les había yo dicho a éstos que tú no querías contestar, sino que fingirías [*eironeúsoio*] y acudirías a todo antes que responder, si alguno te preguntaba”); Jenofonte, *Mem.* II, 6, 28-30; y Aristóteles, *EN* II 7, 1108a19-23 (“Pues bien, respecto de la verdad, al intermedio llamémosle veraz y veracidad a la disposición intermedia, y en cuanto a la pretensión, la exagerada, fanfarronería y el que la tiene, fanfarrón, y la que se empequeñece, disimulo, y disimulador [*eironeia kai eiron*] el que lo tiene”), IV 7, 1127a22-23 (“el irónico niega lo que le pertenece o le quita importancia”). Para un análisis exhaustivo del testimonio platónico sobre la ironía socrática, así como también del de Aristófanes y Jenofonte, cf. especialmente Vlastos (1991: 23-42). Sobre la dimensión pedagógica de la ironía socrática, véase Hegel (1955 [1833]: 52-56); y Kierkegaard (2000 [1841]: 113), según el cual Sócrates fue el primero en introducir la ironía y en consagrarse a su práctica hasta el punto de sucumbir a ella.

⁸ Tal es la doble vertiente (positiva y negativa; atractiva y repulsiva; cómica y trágica) que exhibe la ironía socrática según Kierkegaard: “Pero precisamente porque es esencial a la ironía no desenmascarse jamás, y porque por otro lado le es igualmente esencial cambiar de máscara a la manera de Proteo, por eso debía necesariamente acarrear tanto dolor al mancebo enamorado. El ironista eleva al individuo por encima de su existencia inmediata, eso es lo liberador; pero luego le deja suspendido, como el sarcófago de Mahoma según la leyenda, entre dos imanes: lo atractivo y lo repulsivo. Si la ironía, por tanto, tiene algo de horroroso, tiene también algo de extraordinariamente seductor y encantador” (2000 [1841]: 113).

⁹ Cf. Nietzsche (1973 [1888]: 39); y Hadot (2008: 52).

bellos.¹⁰ Digamos que si en el marco de su iniciación erótica ante Sócrates, Alcibíades está dispuesto a conquistarlo dándose, Sócrates emprende siempre el camino contrario: lo termina por conquistar sin darse. Quizá esta estrategia del “conquistar sin darse” tenga que ver con aquello que Sócrates, haciendo gala de su saber erótico, le explica a su amigo Hipotales cuando éste acude a consultarle sobre sus fallidos cortejos al joven Lisis:

El que entiende de amores, querido, no ensalza al amado hasta que lo consigue, temiendo lo que pudiera resultar. Y, al mismo tiempo, los más bellos, cuando alguien los ensalza y alaba, se hinchan de orgullo y arrogancia. ¿No te parece? (*Ly.* 206a1-4).

Tales palabras encuentra su paralelo en los consejos eróticos que el Sócrates de Jenofonte le brinda a la *hetaira* Teodeta, los cuales implican el servirse de ingenios (*mechanai*) y trampas (*thératra*) con el fin de procurarse amantes; hacerse “la esquivia, hasta que ellos estén lo más ansiosos posible” (*Mem.* III, 11, 5-8, 14). Cuando Teodeta, persuadida por el consejo socrático, le pide que le preste su “sortilegio” (*iugx*) para seducirlo a él antes que a nadie, Sócrates le revela en una frase la esencia de su estrategia erótico-filosófica: “Pero, ¡por Zeus!, es que yo no quiero que me atraigas, sino que tú vengas hacia mí” (*Mem.* III, 11, 16-18). A partir, pues, del despliegue de su *áskesis* erótica, Sócrates es consciente de que si él conquistara dándose, los bellos jóvenes que son objeto de su búsqueda se hincharían de orgullo y de arrogancia, sin llegar a ser atrapados en su efectivo cortejo erótico-dialógico.

Pero así como Sócrates no encaja completamente en el modelo del racionalista griego a causa de su inclinación a tomar en serio los mensajes provenientes de los sueños, los oráculos y la voz interior del *daímon*,¹¹ a la luz de las tensiones eróticas motivadas por la belleza de los jóvenes podemos ver que tampoco termina por ajustarse al perfil ascético por el que el filósofo es conocido en la historia de la filosofía. Aun cuando no deje de sorprender el hecho de que se haya podido enamorar de un personaje tan arrogante, ambicioso y pasional como Alcibíades, es justamente este amor (y también el profesado hacia otros jóvenes bellos) el que nos devuelve una imagen más rica y humana de Sócrates: la de alguien que puede llegar a sucumbir en su momento ante aquello que cree despreciar. Es interesante recordar al respecto un pasaje del *Alcibíades* I, donde pueden leerse los antecedentes de la relación erótica entre Sócrates y el joven político, y cuyo desenlace relata Alcibíades en el *Banquete* bajo la figura del célebre rechazo socrático (“oro por bronce”):

Hijo de Clinias, creo que te sorprende que, después de haber sido yo el primero en enamorarme de ti, sea el único en no abandonarte cuando los demás lo han hecho, a pesar de que, mientras ellos te estuvieron importunando con su conversación, yo a lo largo de tantos años ni siquiera te dirigí la palabra. (...) Es por eso, estoy seguro, por lo que te preguntas sorprendido con qué idea no renuncio a mi amor y con qué esperanza me mantengo, cuando los demás ya han abandonado (*Alc.* I 103a1-c6).

Llegados hasta aquí, podemos concluir dos puntos. Por un lado, que el saber acerca del amor que Sócrates reconoce poseer en algunos de los pasajes platónicos y de Jenofonte traídos a colación, no se limita sólo a una vertiente teórica -ya sea en pos de que los jóvenes bellos se orienten hacia el cuidado del alma y la búsqueda de la *areté*, como en el caso de los diálogos tempranos y de transición; ya sea en pos de la Idea de belleza como en la fase madura del *Banquete* y el *Fedro*-, sino que presupone una importante *áskesis* o dimensión práctica que podría definirse, tomando en préstamo una terminología del *Sofista*, como una técnica de la persuasión erótica (*erotiké téchne*) o de la caza de hombres (*théra anthrópon*), llevada a cabo por los amantes de forma privada (*Sph.* 222d3-e3), y cuya meta apunta, como vimos, a hacerse desear por lo jóvenes (“que tú vengas hacia mí”, *Mem.* III, 11, 16-18). Técnica, por lo demás, atribuida también a Sócrates por Jenofonte, donde vemos al filósofo aconsejar al bello Critobulo, quien se muestra ansioso por aprender todo lo relativo a la *téchne* de la caza de hombres de bien:

¡Ánimo, pues, Critobulo! Intenta ser bueno, y, cuando lo hayas conseguido, trata de cazar a los hombres de bien. Tal vez yo también podría ayudarte un poco en esta cacería por el hecho de que soy entendido en cosas de amor. Porque, cuando yo deseo a alguien, me lanzo todo entero con vehemencia, a fuerza de quererlos, a hacerme querer de ellos, a añorarles para ser añorado por ellos, a desear su compañía para que ellos deseen la mía. Veo que también tú necesitas tales artes cuando desees hacer amistad con alguien. Por ello, no me ocultes de quién querías llegar a ser amigo, pues

¹⁰ Véase en esta línea Foucault (1984: 221): “Pero lo que no saben, y lo que Alcibíades descubre en el transcurso de la famosa ‘prueba’, es que Sócrates no es amado por ellos más que en la medida misma en que es capaz de resistir a su seducción, lo que no quiere decir que no sienta por ellos amor ni deseo, sino que se ve llevado por la fuerza del verdadero amor y que sabe verdaderamente amar a lo verdadero que hay que amar”.

¹¹ Cf. al respecto Dodds (1980: 176, 204). Para la aparición e influencia de esa señal demoníaca o voz divina que suele aparecerse a Sócrates en diferentes fases de su vida y que siempre se le opone cuando está a punto de hacer algo incorrecto, cf., entre otros pasajes, *Ap.* 31c8-d4, *R.* VI 496c3-5, *Tht.* 151a3-5; Jenofonte, *Mem.* IV 8.

con el interés de agradar a quien me agrada creo que tengo experiencia para la caza de hombres. (*Mem.* II, 6, 28-30).

A partir de su experiencia en la caza erótica de jóvenes bellos, Sócrates sabe -y por tanto puede aconsejar, como lo hace con Hipotales en el *Lisis*- sobre lo que hay que decir o hacer para volverse grato y deseable a los ojos del amado.¹² La práctica del cortejo (o del éros cazador) que supone la *téchne* erótica hace que Sócrates, tras invertir la relación pederástica al presentarse como amante y devenir objeto amado, logre en un primer momento narcotizar (*narkân*, *Men.* 80a7) dialógicamente, como un “formidable mago, hechicero y sofista” (*Smp.* 203d8), a los jóvenes bellos en torno a su sistema orbital -así es como Menón, tras su fallida serie de definiciones sobre la *areté*, se siente una madeja de confusiones, hechizado y embrujado (*goeteúeis kai pharmátteis*, *Men.* 80a2-3) por ese pez torpedo que representa Sócrates¹³; y, en una segunda instancia, remover el instinto agonal de tales jóvenes mediante una serie de problematizaciones y “bellos discursos”, a fin de hacer nacer en ellos la máxima del cuidado del alma y una comprometida disposición hacia el saber:

Así pues, es el alma lo primero que hay que cuidar al máximo, si es que se quiere tener bien a la cabeza y a todo el cuerpo. El alma se trata, mi bendito amigo, con ciertos ensalmos y estos ensalmos son los buenos discursos, y de tales buenos discursos, nace en ella la sensatez” (*Chrm.* 157a4-5).¹⁴

Por otro lado, a la luz de lo examinado, cabe preguntarse qué relación guarda la dimensión práctica de la *téchne* de la caza erótica de jóvenes bellos, esbozada en los pasajes platónicos y de Jenofonte relevados, con el saber de carácter teorético (o de tipo eidético-trascendente) que corona el recto amor de los jóvenes, pautado en la iniciación erótica de Diótima en el *Banquete*. A fin de compaginar ambas vertientes del saber erótico de Sócrates, puede suponerse que la *téchne* de la caza erótica de jóvenes bellos constituye el cimiento sobre el que se levanta aquella *paideía* del deseo erótico sistematizada en el discurso de Diótima, en la medida en que el primer grado de la iniciación erótica (relativo al amor por la belleza de un solo cuerpo a fin de engendrar en él bellos razonamientos, *Smp.* 210a4-8), implica la *áske̐sis* de dicha técnica.¹⁵ Si pensamos, en efecto, en el primer grado del ascenso marcado por Diótima, para llegar a engendrar en el amado bellos razonamientos, es necesario antes hacerlo entrar en la práctica del cortejo a fin de hacerse desear por el joven a fuerza de quererlo,¹⁶ y ello puede lograrse a través de la técnica persuasiva de la caza erótica, por cuyo medio el joven amado se ve magnetizado por la figura socrática que atrae no tanto por sus dotes físicos como por su capacidad dialógica de resistencia frente al encanto de los jóvenes bellos. Platón es así consecuente con un motivo recurrente en su plataforma conceptual, a saber: que para alcanzar el saber eidético-trascendente lo sensible-inmanente opera como un primer estímulo necesario -pensemos al respecto en la teoría de la reminiscencia desarrollada en *Menón* y *Fedón*-, que, en el caso puntual del ascenso establecido por Diótima, se traduce en una *áske̐sis* erótica en pos de la belleza sensible de un joven (o cuerpo bello), para desde allí despegarse gradualmente hacia la aprehensión de la Idea de belleza. La dimensión práctica del saber comprometido en la *téchne* de la caza erótica vendría a representar entonces la antesala necesaria de la dimensión teorética implicada en el saber erótico de tipo eidético-trascendente ubicado en el sexto y último grado de la iniciación erótica. Tal compaginación permitiría iluminar y dar cuenta de la doble vertiente (práctica y teorética) del saber erótico que Sócrates confiesa tener al comienzo del *Banquete*.

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¹² Véase asimismo Jenofonte, *Smp.* IV 56-64, donde se define al buen *mastropós* como aquel que dignifica a un individuo a fin de hacerlo agradable a muchas otras personas.

¹³ *Men.* 79e7-80d4. Recordemos al respecto las palabras de Agatón, quien en la antesala de su encomio a Éros desenmascara -como más tarde lo hará Alcibiades- la estrategia erótica socrática: “Pretendes hechizarme (*pharmáttein*), Sócrates, para que me desconcierte, haciéndome creer que domina a la audiencia una gran expectativa ante la idea de que voy a pronunciar un bello discurso” (*Smp.* 194a5-7).

¹⁴ Véase en la misma línea Jenofonte, *Mem.* II, 6, 10-13. Sobre esta atmósfera erótica montada por Sócrates, cf. Rodríguez Adrados (1995: 44-51); y Hadot (2008: 63), quien resume al respecto: “En Sócrates los jóvenes encuentran, por tanto, el camino hacia su propia perfección”.

¹⁵ Para la relación entre el deseo sexual y el deseo de saber, cf. especialmente Dover (1978: 12); Vlastos (1973: 40); Nussbaum (1995: 258); y Cajthaml (2007: 121), quien se ocupa de relevar de manera detallada las diferencias y semejanzas entre el amor pederástico y la teoría filosófica del amor platónico.

¹⁶ Cf. Jenofonte, *Mem.* II, 6, 28-30.

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**“*Philosophôn dià pantòs toû biou*”:
un tratto particolare di Eros nel *Simposio* platonico (203d7)**

Linda M. Napolitano Valditara

I tratti che Diotima ascrive ad Eros son tutti giocati sull’ereditarietà dai genitori: Penia, insolita dea della povertà che, per la sua strutturale indigenza, per prima vuole concepirlo, e Pòros, un padre raffigurante non il possesso, opposto netto della mancanza, ma la più originaria acquisibilità di qualcosa. Figlio di tali genitori, Eros «è povero sempre, tutt’altro che tenero e bello come si crede, anzi duro, aspro, scalzo e senza tetto, uso a dormir scoperto e sotto il cielo, presso le porte e per strada: avendo la natura della madre, sta di casa, infatti, dal bisogno. Ma, per la natura paterna, fa la posta ai belli e buoni, è coraggioso, risoluto, tenace, cacciatore provetto, preparatore di trappole, voglioso d’intendere e pieno di risorse, *amante di sapienza per l’intera vita (philosophôn dià pantòs toû biou)*, stregone potente, inventore di pozioni e sofista; né immortale né mortale, poiché nello stesso giorno un po’ vive e prospera se gli va bene, un po’ muore, ma poi rivive per la natura del padre; e quanto acquista sempre gli sfugge: così non è mai del tutto povero o ricco e sta a mezzo fra sapienza e ignoranza» (*Symp.* 203c5-e5).

Ogni tratto di questa suggestiva descrizione va chiarito, se la sacerdotessa precisa poi a Socrate, suo allievo nelle cose d’amore: «questa volontà <di possesso> e quest’amore sono comuni a tutti gli uomini» (205a5-6). Dunque Eros è icona significativa dell’antropologia di Platone e questo suo essere, per nascita e sempre, *borderline* fra indigenza e possesso, tra pena dell’assenza e gioia dell’acquisto, fra sapere e ignorare, è metafora dell’essere stesso di ognuno di noi uomini: *demonici ed erotici*.

Fra tali tratti scelgo quel *philosophôn dià pantòs toû biou* della linea Stephanus 203d7: a verificare perché, fra le doti ereditate, Eros sia – e noi con lui – anche «amante di sapienza», filosofo quindi; e perché, soprattutto, lo sia non per un po’ o in un’età della vita, ma per un tempo che il *dià* più genitivo dell’aggettivo *pâs* (*dià pantòs*) estende *all’intero della vita stessa*, dalla nascita alla morte, come forse *ai momenti – ognuno e tutti* - intervallanti l’inizio dalla fine.

Tratto già studiato è l’esser filosofo di Eros, alla lettera «amante di sapienza». Specifica infatti la descrizione che nessun dio o sapiente pratici la filosofia o desideri esser sapiente, poiché già lo è. Né sono gli ignoranti a filosofare o a desiderare di divenir sapienti: perché brutto del non sapere è proprio che chi non è bello né buono creda invece d’esserlo. E «*ovviamente chi non reputa di aver difetto non desidera ciò di cui non crede di mancare*» (*oûkoun epithymèi hò mè oiòmenos endeès èinai hòu àn mè oietai epidèisthai*, *Symp.* 204a1-7).

Il filosofare è allora stretta conseguenza dello stare a mezzo di Eros fra sapere e ignorare, ricaduta del suo duplice corredo genetico fra carenza e acquisibilità.

Nessun dubbio che questa sapienza miri alle idee, paradigmi eterni di ogni cosa, e soprattutto a quel Bello-Bene, intravvisto nel volo prenatale iperuranico (*Phaedr.* 247d-e; 249d-e; 250b) e oggetto costante dell’amore, di rado soddisfatto, che le copie terrene di esso inducono in noi.

Ma il primo, originario stare a mezzo fra sapere e non sapere è la coscienza intima della nostra stessa insipienza, questo sì sapere propriamente umano (*anthropine sophia*, *Apol.* 20d8). Quello che spinge Socrate a interrogarsi sull’investitura di sapienza conferitagli dal Dio di Delfi: «Che mai vuol dire il Dio, a che alluderà? Perché *son cosciente nel mio intimo di non esser sapiente né molto né poco*» (*synoïda emautôi òute mèga òute smikròn sophòs ôn*, *Apol.* 21b3-5). Il primo sapere è quindi del proprio sé ed è di segno negativo, pura mortificante presa d’atto della carenza d’ogni nostra nozione, marchio a fuoco sempre ribadito della nostra povertà strutturale.

Ma anche prerequisito indispensabile d’ogni ricerca, d’ogni nostro proiettarci su una nuova nozione. Perché, come sanciva l’*Alcibiade I* - dialogo sulla direttività dell’anima e sull’autoconoscenza ch’essa mostra come primo passo della cura che di sé, foucaultianamente, deve avere - come sanciva quel dialogo, può sì scoprire (*heurèin*) chi cerchi (*zetèin*), ma può poi cercare a patto «di credere di non sapere» (*ei oièthèies ghe mè eidènai*, *Alc. I* 109e7).

Chi creda di sapere mai cercherà: lo farà chi sappia quest’unica cosa, che, appunto, non sa, perché solo chi – come ora letto nel *Simposio* - creda d’ «aver difetto» (*endeès èinai*) può *desiderare* ciò di cui pensa di mancare, amarlo tanto, nel prender atto stesso di non averlo, da porsi a cercarlo.

Benché la massa non sia per Platone filosofa (*Resp.* 496 a-b), quest’apertura alla ricerca riguarda ancora tutti gli uomini se perfino uno schiavo come quello di Menone, messo dall’interrogazione socratica dinnanzi alla propria insipienza, «ora che non sa cercherà volentieri» (*nûn mèn gàr kài zetèiesen hedèos ouk eidòs*, *Men.* 84b10-11) e se, interrogato sugli stessi temi, «finirà per averne scienza esatta non meno di chiunque altro» (85c10-11).

Non è però detto che, sapendo di non sapere, ognuno maturi il *desiderio di sapere* e stia poi fermo in esso: non lo fa p.es. il sofista simulatore, creatore d'immagini, del dialogo omonimo. Anche lui come Socrate sa di non sapere: ma il suo stato affettivo *non è poi, per questo, il desiderio di sapere*, il sopportare, con formula del Teeteto, le «doglie della verità» (148e7-8). Egli è preso invece «da molta sospettosa apprensione e paura, poiché ignora ciò che davanti agli altri fa mostra di sapere» (*hos agnoëi tàuta hà pròs tous àllous hos eschemàtistai*, *Soph.* 268a2-4). Prevale in lui la paura d'esser scoperto ignorante, di perdere, con la fama di sapere, anche lo status di maestro a pagamento: *un altro* desiderio, *un altro* amore, assai meno originario, vela e smorza dunque il suo congenito amor di sapienza.

Il dato cognitivo, sapere di non sapere, è allora sì necessario *ma non sufficiente* al cercare: occorre anche *amare ciò che si sa di non sapere*, stare, per quanto faccia soffrire, nel desiderio indotto dalla coscienza della propria povertà cognitiva.

Riconoscendosi e dichiarandosi figli di Eros, poveri come lui, amanti come lui di sapienza.

Perché, però, quest'amor di sapienza, si dispiegherebbe *per la vita intera* e, come vorrei mostrare, *in ogni suo momento ed in tutti*? Che Eros filosofo spinga a non abbassare neppure per un attimo la guardia del saper d'ignorare-amare-cercare-conoscere consegue forse al legame strutturale emerso fra tali atti: ma occorre confermarlo sui testi.

Questi, anzitutto, forniscono dati ambigui su chi, in quale età, sia filosofo: da un lato, il giovane non sarebbe ancora pronto per la ricerca, ma, dall'altro, sarebbe in essa particolarmente versato; e, ancora, da un lato sarebbe l'anziano a non esser più adatto al dialogo filosofico, ma, dall'altro, sarebbe lui soprattutto a doverlo praticare.

Da giovani, dice Callicle, è anche concesso "cinguettare" in gruppo di filosofia; ma, a differenza del ridicolo Socrate, intento ancora a praticarla da vecchio, ci si dovrà poi occupar d'altro per apparire adulti seri (*Gorg.* 484b-e). Socrate precisa, all'opposto, che la dialettica non vada insegnata a un giovane, che la userà non per cercare il vero, ma per confutare tutto e, come un cucciolo ringhioso, per strascinare e fare a pezzi i discorsi (*Resp.* 539b-d). Sono però poi dei giovani (un giovane Socrate e un giovane Aristotele nel *Parmenide*, un giovane Teeteto nel dialogo omonimo), non gli esperti, gli interlocutori di celebrati maestri per la ricerca su temi difficili (*Parm.* 127c-d; 130e; *Theaet.* 145b-c) ed è perfino a ragazzi che Socrate si rivolge per questioni morali basilari come l'amicizia (*Lys.* 204e) o la saggezza (*Charm.* 154b). Che ciò non abbia solo il fine pedagogico a cui tutti pensiamo è confermato dall'*Apologia*, dove Socrate profetizza ai giudici che saranno i suoi allievi, proprio perché giovani, a chieder loro radicale conto delle ingiustizie commesse, come la presente condanna di un innocente (*Apol.* 39d). E d'altronde il giovane Alcibiade si dice sia nell'età giusta per scoprire la sua ignoranza, perché a cinquant'anni non avrebbe potuto rimediarsi (*Alc.* I 127e).

Varie uscite di scena di anziani, Cefalo nella *Repubblica* (331d), Lisimaco nel *Lachete* (189c-d), suggeriscono in effetti un'inadeguatezza anche della tarda età alla filosofia: ma poi è un vecchio Parmenide a guidar la complessa trama del dialogo omonimo (*Parm.* 127b) e sono tre anziani, l'Ateniese, Clinia e Megillo, ad ascendere il monte di Creta sostenendo il fluviale dibattito delle *Leggi* (625a7-b1). E non pare un caso, se proprio quel *Lachete* che pure esclude il vecchio Lisimaco echeggia poi Solone (fr. 28 Gentili-Prato) nel dire «doveroso imparare *finché si vive*, non credendo che sia la vecchiaia a recar senno» (*axiôûnta manthànein hêosper an zêi, kài mè oiômenon autôî tò ghêras nouîn êchon prosiênai*, *Lach.* 188b3-4).

Dunque sarebbe il giovane a dover filosofare ma anche ad aver problemi a farlo, e sarebbe l'anziano a non reggere più il dibattito filosofico eppure a doversene assumere l'onere. A meno che – come avviene forse per altri temi – tali contraddizioni rilevabili nel corpus sull'età adatta alla ricerca filosofica non mostrino che *non è questo il problema* di Platone.

Non è il giovane o il vecchio a dover filosofare: è *l'essere umano* a doverlo fare, giovane o vecchio che sia, ma per altri tratti strutturalmente appartenentigli.

Per prima quest'idea del *Lachete* che non sia una vita lunga a render saggi, ma solo quella dove, fino alla fine, abbia avuto pregio «l'imparare»; dove sia stato accolto l'impegno quasi religioso, come Socrate, a «vivere filosofando e interrogando se stessi e gli altri» (*philosophoûnta me dêîn zên kài exetázonta emautôn kài tous àllous*, *Apol.* 28e5-6): sapendo, al fondo, che «una vita senza ricerca non è degna d'esser vissuta dall'uomo» (*hò dê anexétastos bios ou biotòs anthrôpoi*, *Apol.* 38a5-6).

Se non c'è un'età per filosofare, questo deve prendere, come prescrive il *Simposio*, *la vita intera*. Non perché, banalmente, un momento qualsiasi sia buono: ma perché ognuno e tutti i momenti devono esser buoni per la filosofia, *per stare nell'amor di sapienza*, in una prospettiva di continuità e pertinacia.

Eros, che pure è amore di ciò che non si ha, non tace però né cessa davanti al bene già

posseduto: perché è orientamento proiettivo ad avere *anche dopo* ciò che *ora* già si ha (*Symp.* 200c-e). Dunque deve *continuare a volere e cercare* quel bene in ognuno dei momenti che separano quest'ora da quel dopo. Il *Filebo*, con la triade sensazione-memoria-anticipazione (33c-35d) fornirà la struttura cognitivo-affettiva utile a supportare tale costante proiezione dinamica «verso il tempo futuro» (*eis tòn èpeita chrònon*, *Symp.* 200d2, e 9-10).

Ma è il *Fedone*, in rapporto all'impegnativa figura della filosofia stessa quale «esercizio di morte» (*melète thanàtou*) a confermarci che la ricerca va protratta – proprio come una *melète*, un esercizio, una pratica o *epitèdeuma*, una sorta di training sportivo o *àskesis* - *ogni momento della vita*. Se la filosofia è canto-incantesimo della morte fatto al bambino spaventato di essa che sta in ognuno di noi, allora la serenità di Socrate nell'ultimo suo giorno non s'improvvisa: allo spauracchio della morte bisogna invece, finché non si sarà placato, «far l'incantesimo *ogni giorno*» (*epàidein autôi hekàstes hemèras*, *Phaed.* 77e8-9).

L'esercizio del filosofare, sulle tracce del bello da sapere e praticare, è allora davvero da ripetersi *ogni giorno*: nulla di meglio si può fare «fino al tramonto del sole» (*Phaed.* 61e4), ora della morte di Socrate, fine di ogni uomo. Perché ognuno di noi, con Eros, figlio di Penia e Pòros, è, *dià pantòs tou biou*, dal primo all'ultimo attimo della vita, per sorte *filosofo*. O forse, meglio, potrebbe e dovrebbe essere tale.

From tolerance to condemnation: Plato on *paederastia* and nature *qua* productive *

Thomas M. Robinson

In this paper¹ I shall be looking at three dialogues, the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Laws*, and the apparent shift, on Plato's part, across this time from a relative tolerance of homosexuality to a dramatic intolerance. Let us begin with the *Symposium*.

The two significant places to look in the dialogue for any sort of enlightenment on how Plato might have felt about boy-love (*paederastia*) when he wrote the dialogue (possibly in his early thirties) are the speech of Pausanias and the speech of Diotima.

What is interesting about the speech of Pausanias is its strong affirmation of the soundness of Athenian law on the matter. As Pausanias reads it, the law is driven by a good understanding of which forms of boy-love are morally and socially acceptable and which are not. The acceptable form is one in which the *paidika* yields to an *erastes* 'for the sake of virtue', which is spelled out as 'in the belief that through him - the *erastes* - he will gain an 'increase of wisdom or of any other virtue' and 'a liberal education' (184e). As far as the *erastes* is concerned, he acts acceptably when he possesses a 'wealth of wisdom and virtue' (184de) and 'shares' it with his beloved. The unacceptable version of boy-love is one in which the *paidika* 'indulges a vicious *erastes* viciously', and/or the *erastes* is more interested in the *paidika*'s body than his soul, and to this degree is more interested in the mutable than the permanent (183de). Boy-love as such, says Pausanias, is in itself morally colourless, only taking on moral colour insofar as it leads to good or bad behaviour (183d).

How much this is Pausanias' interpretation of what lies behind Athenian law of the day is not easy to know, but it may well represent the view of thinking Athenians of the period, and possibly even of Plato too. Certainly, the argument's stress on virtue, and the greater importance of mind than body, would not have sounded strange had it been put into the mouth of Socrates himself. And the same could well be said for the claim that *paederastia* is in itself morally neutral, taking on moral colour only insofar as it leads to good or bad behaviour. This too sounds like the talk of thinking people, and it may well have included the younger Plato among its number.

As for the speech of Diotima, it gives all appearances of reflecting a young Plato flexing his philosophical muscles with his new Theory of Forms. And also repeating the thoughts of Pausanias with a metaphor of his own, that of spiritual procreancy and partition, along with the contention that the most appropriate environment in which these will take place is, minimally, one in which the boy is handsome, and ideally, one in which the boy has beauty and agreeableness of soul to go with it. The whole passage is too familiar to rehearse to this audience. All I wish to stress at the moment is that there is nothing in Diotima's speech to suggest she would have done anything other than agree with Pausanias that a homosexual relationship is in itself morally neutral, its 'moral colour' as acceptable or unacceptable depending on the harm or good done to the soul of *erastes* and *paidika* alike by the way they conduct themselves. As Pausanias had spelled it out, an *erastes* will harm his soul if he fails to be *constant* to his *paidika*, and a *paidika* will harm *his* soul if he engages in a love relationship with an *erastes* with financial or political gain as his objective (184b). What is not said (yet) is that there might anything morally problematic about homosexual intercourse *as such*.

A hint of change in this regard is found in the *Republic* (403a-c), where Plato has Socrates say that the appropriate relationship between lover and *paidika* must be something like father to son, 'with honorable intent', any suspicion that anything more than that is involved leading to 'the suspicion of being thought ill-bred and without any delicacy of feeling'. The phrase takes us immediately back to the *Symposium*, and Alcibiades' chagrined remark there, that a night with Socrates had been one that might have been spent, not with an *erastes*, but with 'a father or elder brother' (219c). But again there is nothing to suggest that Socrates/Plato felt there was a moral problem with boy-love as such; if either or both of them are uncomfortable with such a relationship, it is in terms of a physical expression of it which betrays 'dishonorable intent' and suggests 'ill-breeding' and 'indelicacy of feeling'.

With that we can turn to the *Phaedrus*, which (*pace* the shade of Schleiermacher) I think was composed at some time around the beginning of the so-called 'late' dialogues. Here Socrates offers us a famous, and very dramatic description of the beginnings of homosexual passion in an *erastes*. And for the first time he uses language which has suggested to some that, moving beyond talk of the 'ill-breeding' and 'indelicacy of feeling' that particular manifestations of *paederastia* might evince, he has

* Reading version only.

now begun to adopt a - very particular - *moral* stance on such things. Two passages in particular seem to me worth attention in this regard. At 250e, employing the famous metaphor for soul of a charioteer in a chariot drawn by two horses of different temperament, he talks of the soul's black steed as 'showing no respect', but 'surrendering to pleasure', 'and attempting to do things the way four-footed beasts do, and sow <physical> offspring' (*paidosporein*), and 'consorting with wantonness (*hybris*, tr. Hackforth), and having no fear no shame in pursuing pleasure in a way contrary to nature'. The translation is important here. It is easy to fall into the trap of understanding the last phrase - '*para physin hedonen diokon*' - as 'pursuing pleasure unnaturally', and see in it a claim on Socrates' part that the pleasure involved in homosexual intercourse is unnatural. But this, I think, stems from a major misunderstanding of the Greek. '*Para physin*' is an adverbial phrase, and is never to my knowledge used adjectivally. What Socrates is talking about is the unnatural *way* in which this particular pleasure is being pursued, not about its supposedly unnatural *nature*. But what about the talk of a 'four-footed beast', it might be asked? Isn't that a clear reference to anal intercourse? Well, not really. While the intercourse of what Socrates calls 'four-footed beasts' is indeed *a tergo*, it is not 'anal intercourse', which is what it is in terms of choices in the matter open humans but not animals (or any rate not the animals Socrates was ever likely to have seen). What Socrates is talking about is the way in which, in the animal kingdom, male animals, at the time a female is in heat, give themselves over to the immediate satisfaction of the instinct to copulate, an act which will no doubt, in the case of four-footed animals be *a tergo* but will, unlike anal intercourse among humans, have as its goal *paidosporein*.

But surely such animal intercourse is *pre-eminently* 'natural', it might be objected? Is Socrates really saying here that it is *unnatural*? I think not. What is at issue is immediate gratification of the sexual drive when other possibilities are available. In the case of animals, driven simply by instinct, there seems to be no such possibility; in our own case, there is. The whole point of the description of functionality at *Republic* 352e ff. is to show that what humans, by contrast with animals, do 'uniquely or best' is exercise intelligence and take responsibility for action. Not to do so is to act contrary to their *nature as humans*; and a good example of this would be the instant gratification of the drive towards sexual pleasure (*hedonei paradous*) (250e). As Socrates goes on to point out, virtuous lovers are able to *resist* this drive, and they are the ones who finish up in a state of self-mastery and inner peace (256b), and will win the highest rewards in heaven.

But before we conclude that the Socrates of the *Phaedrus* would probably agree with the Pausanias of the *Symposium* that homosexual intercourse takes on moral colour depending on whether it leads to good or bad behaviour, we need to look at another passage, at 254b1, where the act is described as doing 'things terrible and contrary to *nomos*' (*deina kai paranoma*). But contrary to the *nomos* of whom, or the *nomos* of what? Socrates does not spell this out. Hardly contrary to *nomos* in the sense of contrary to law, which seems to have tolerated it, at least in a number of Greek *poleis*, including Athens, under the sort of conditions which Pausanias had eloquently described in the *Symposium*. And hardly contrary to *nomos* in the sense of custom, since it was very much 'customary' (among certain groups) in several Greek states.

In view of this it is tempting to say that Socrates has in mind some universal Law of Nature which is being infringed, but this seems to me premature. Three pages earlier on he had talked about acting *para physin* in what seemed the clear sense of acting contrary to one's nature as a human being, not contrary to 'Nature' in some universal sense of the word nature. So we should probably be looking elsewhere for an understanding of what he is after.

My own inclination is to think that, in talking of *nomos* here Socrates has in mind something analogous to what he had in mind to talking of *physis* in the earlier passage. As a rational and moral agent, the *erastes* is aware that it is *nomos* (in the sense of custom, or self-imposed law) *among* rational and moral agents to act along the lines of what their *physis* *as* rational and moral agents *dictates*. And a prime example of an act *contrary* to such *nomos* will be what happens when the two horses in an *erastes*' soul eventually 'give in' (*eixante*, 254b3), after a period of time during which the *aidos* (or sense of restraint) of the white horse had held it back from 'leaping upon' (254a2-3, *epipedan*) the other. The language here is important. As in the earlier passage, Socrates is suggesting that part of what distinguishes us as humans is our sense of restraint (*aidos*), and 'giving in' (to passion) runs counter to this, consisting as it does of activity which is both *para physin* in the way it is *performed* and *para nomon* as the activity which it *is*.

But we are still some distance, it seems to me, from the idea that homosexual intercourse might be thought something which is of its nature a social evil, and deserving of punishment. On the contrary, at the end of the long passage we have been looking at, Socrates makes it clear that a pair of homosexual lovers who never make it to the level of that purely spiritual love which he most admires

and which will bring them the highest reward in heaven, but who never set their minds *totally* on physical sex and do establish a strong and lasting bond together (256cd), will also achieve a major reward in heaven. What places them on the same spectrum as the homosexual pairs who have attained a purely spiritual love is the mutual *philia* which they too manifest (256c7), as shown by the fact that their love, too, like that characterizing the first group, is stable not fleeting. And with that, all-important point, first brought up, as we saw, by Pausanias in the *Symposium*, Socrates brings his speech in the *Phaedrus* to a close.

Let us turn now to the *Laws*, where drastic and unexpected things happen. In his description of his new society, Magnesia, the Athenian (whom I take to be the dialogic voice of the old Plato) points out how women (other than slave-women, of course) will be educated in exactly the same way as men, and how part of their upbringing will involve exercising together with males and having public meals together with them, Spartan-style. In this context he addresses a concern about what might happen when so many young people of the same sex are placed in such constant proximity he has been talking about. And what he has to say is remarkable. The possible result, he says, is homosexual practices, of both the male and the female variety, whose “myriad effects”, he says, we are aware of “in the life of private persons and whole societies” (836b). These can be summed up as the destruction of virtues central to the life of the good citizen, such as self-control and the courage to put up a fight against passion (836e). A good citizen, he says, will “treat carnal appetite <for someone of the same sex> as out of the question” (836c). He will “put contemplation before passion”; his desire will be of “soul for soul”, and enjoyment of the flesh he will look on as “wantonness” (*hybris*) (*ibid.*).

The basis for Plato’s attack on homosexuality is now very clearly said to be its unnatural nature (a point, according to some, which he may perhaps have been touching on in the *Phaedrus*, as we saw, though I myself argued against that interpretation). The ‘Nature’ in question is what we might describe as ‘Nature *qua* productive’ (rather than, say, ‘Nature red in tooth and claw’ [William Blake]), and the argument has gone on to have a long history and a long and continuing influence. The language he uses could well, if quoted without its source, be imagined to have come from a contemporary papal encyclical letter. Sexual congress with someone of one’s own sex, says Plato, is “deliberate murder of the human race” (838e7-8), and equally pernicious is *heterosexual* intercourse with no desire for producing children (*ibid.*). The model for acceptable sexual activity, i. e., heterosexual activity with a view to the production for children, he says, must be the animal kingdom. Animals he says, “until the age of procreation...live in continence and unspotted virginity; when they have reached that age, they pair together...the male with the female and the female with the male their preference dictates, and they live together in piety and justice, steadfastly true to their first love” (840d).

Given these views, Plato does not surprise us when he goes on to talk about instituting drastic laws to stem the tide of practices where he thinks lust has taken over. These would be, specifically, a law forbidding any freeborn citizen to touch anyone but his own wedded wife; a law forbidding such a citizen to have full (unprotected) intercourse with a concubine; and a law forbidding such a citizen to have “sterile and unnatural intercourse” with another male (841d). Alternatively, laws could be introduced, he says, to suppress *all* “<sexual> relations between males entirely” (i.e., not simply relationships involving ‘sterile and unnatural intercourse’), as well as any sexual relationships with women outside of the marriage bond (*ibid.*). He is not sure whether this should constitute one set of laws or two (841e), but he is very clear on what the punishment for non-compliance should be – deprivation of civic rights (*atimia*, *ibid.*)!

How his first readers would have re-acted to these new ideas on Plato’s part we can only speculate. While it is true that he has always been wary of the sex drive in any of its manifestations, he has never to this date said that a particular one of these manifestations might be a social evil that is contrary to Nature, and deserving of punishment as such. But his idea of the demands of a good society such as he is constructing in the *Laws* have led him into terrain where, as we shall see, he will be saying precisely that, and we can be sure that many of even his greatest friends admirers would have found it disturbing. Why had he, in advanced old age, chosen Nature as his norm of moral activity, they might well have asked, when he had spent much of his life maintaining that it was the world of *Forms* which played this role? And if Nature *was* to be chosen, why Nature *qua* productive rather than Nature as seen from some other viewpoint? At a more personal level, had he considered, when setting out his new laws on sexual behavior, that many of his own *students* in the Academy would also, were they to live in his Magnesia, be doomed to the drastic punishment he mentions for non-compliance with such laws? That he himself – during the time of his relationship with Dion for so many years – would also very likely have fallen victim to it? And that, in the eyes of some people,

even a Socrates might well have become entangled in its net?

I set out the questions in this way to emphasize how shocking Plato's views were likely to have appeared to Greeks to whom the living of life as a free citizen was – other than the life of the gods themselves – the highest form of existence they could imagine. To be deprived of one's civic rights (*atimia*) was to be deprived of life itself. And this is what Plato was suggesting as punishment for sexual relationships with one another which many Greeks had since time immemorial taken to be perfectly respectable.

What could Plato have replied to such questions? We have no way of knowing, but it seems to me a high possibility that he would have returned to his fundamental principles. The goal of a good society is the production of a virtuous citizenry. In such a society, a citizen who *really* loves a younger man will, as he has put it a little earlier in the dialogue, repeating views he had enunciated many years earlier in the *Symposium*, have *goodness* as his object, "the desire to make a young man as *good* as he can possibly be" (837d). But he whose love for another is simply a physical passion, as he had also said earlier in the dialogue, again repeating a view enunciated in the *Symposium*, "gives not a thought to his minion's state of *soul*" (837c). And in failing to perform this duty he fails in his central duty as a citizen. So why should he not be punished in a way commensurate with this – that is, with the deprivation of his civic rights?

The writing of the *Timaeus* might also have led him in the direction of re-valuing Nature as a model for human activity. If Nature as we observe it is directly fashioned by a Demiurge whose own prime characteristic is goodness, it will itself be good (he goes much further than this, one might add, saying it is the best the Demiurge could possibly have made). Add to this the fact that, by the time Plato came to write the *Laws*, the transcendental Forms could well have vanished from the scene as paradigms for moral behaviour. If this is the case (and I think it is – though that is another paper) the Natural world fashioned by the Demiurge would be a very plausible substitute. And not just the natural world in some universal sense. If Magnesia is to continue, it will be the natural world *qua* *productive*; so productive, indeed, as to guarantee its own everlastingness, and in that regard to serve as the most perfect paradigm imaginable for Plato's new society.

A third reason which Plato might very well have offered has to do with his ongoing commitment to functionalism. As is well known, in the closing pages of *Republic* One he defines the *telos* of anything in nature, analogously to the *telos* of any human artefact, as what it does 'uniquely or best'. But it is only in the *Laws* that he gets round to the specific question of the *telos* of sexual organs. And there it seems to him self-evident that what *they* do uniquely or best is produce offspring; so that is *their* function. And the rest of his argument, he might then have said, about the *unnatural* nature of *homosexual* practices, follows quite straightforwardly from this.

In this summary of Plato's putative reply I have deliberately omitted mention of punishment for female homosexual practices, since Plato himself does likewise. In his new society, as in the Athens of his day, only adult males are citizens, so they tend to be the object of the greater part of his concern. And in terms of the rationale *underlying* his criticism of homosexuality – that is, its failure to abide by the norm of nature *qua* productive – female homosexual practice is less of a problem to him, in that it does not actively do anything to *divert* nature from a given path in the way that male sexual intercourse does (839a). Since female sexual contact could never produce a child anyway, semen not being involved, its putative unnaturalness can never be of the same order for him as the unnaturalness of an act of male intercourse in which semen *is* involved.

I should also like to emphasize that Plato's views, in the *Laws*, on what he takes to be the social evil of homosexual intercourse *per se* are matched with views on what he takes to be the social evil of various heterosexual practices too, as we saw, though not of heterosexual intercourse in itself. It would be interesting to know how many of those who mount pulpits to day to proclaim both doctrines with very loud noise are aware of who first articulated them in such detail.

Plato on the Pangs of Love

Mehmet Erginel

ABSTRACT

At the heart of Plato's theory of *erōs* is his 'ladder of love', which describes the 'ascent' of love for an individual body, through several stages, to love of Beauty itself (*Symposium* 210a-212b). But the psychology of this transformation is hard to spell out since the text is very terse on this subject. Various aspects of this 'ascent' have been discussed in the literature (Sheffield, 2006), and illuminating parallels between the moral psychologies of the *Symposium* and the *Republic* have been noted (Price 1989, Irwin 1995, Nehamas 2007, Santas 1979). Yet the relevance of Plato's views on pleasure and pain to his account of *erōs* has not been sufficiently appreciated.

I believe that our understanding of Plato's conception of *erōs* would benefit especially from bringing in Plato's views on pain from elsewhere. For *erōs* is presented in the *Symposium* as including sexual desire (207b) as well as love of wisdom (210d). But the *Republic* takes the former to be a painful desire, whereas the latter is apparently treated as painless. Indeed, this contrast between sexual desire – as a paradigmatic appetitive desire – and the desire to know constitutes a cornerstone of Plato's crucial third proof in *Republic* IX that the just man is happier than the unjust. (Erginel 2011) Such a contrast between the two kinds of desire makes it especially challenging to explain the psychology of the 'ascent' of love, since it seems to involve the transformation of a painful desire into a painless one.

Yet Plato's position about the love of wisdom in the *Republic* is not entirely clear: other passages in the *Republic* have led some scholars (Obdrzalek, forthcoming) to take the philosopher's love of wisdom to involve pain and to be psychologically akin to tyrannical *erōs*, which is characterized by its overwhelming intensity. If this is right, the transformation of sexual love to love of wisdom would be significantly less dramatic. We therefore face two related questions: (i) does Plato have a consistent view of the love of wisdom in the *Republic*, and if so (ii) can this view be fruitfully incorporated into the *Symposium*'s account of *erōs*, especially the 'ladder of love'? In this paper I will defend, and elaborate on, positive answers to both questions.

**Reading the *Symposium*:
Themes and Literary Tradition**

Chair: Samuel Scolnicov

El *Banquete* como agón literario

María Isabel Santa Cruz

El *Banquete* es la única obra de Platón que presenta a Sócrates en un contexto festivo, pero a un Sócrates que está tanto adentro como afuera de la fiesta: participa de ella, pero está desubicado (*átopos* 175a10).¹ Se ha lavado, vestido y calzado de acuerdo con la circunstancia, pero, después de haber logrado evitar la fiesta del día anterior, llega a casa de Agatón prácticamente en medio de la cena, cuando ya ha acabado el banquete propiamente dicho y comienza la circulación del vino (174a-175c). Para comprender esa ubicación-desubicación de Sócrates, así como buena parte de los discursos del *Banquete*, es preciso tener en cuenta ciertos rasgos propios del simposio como institución social y contrastarlos con la pintura que Platón hace de esa reunión convivial en su diálogo.

Entre los griegos el simposio es una suerte de “sociedad alternativa” conducida por sus propias reglas y rituales, que reflejan al tiempo que invierten las convenciones de la sociedad común, y en tal sentido puede hablarse de una alteridad del espacio simposíaco.² En los simposios el entretenimiento habitual incluía música, danza y muchachas, pero los convidados también se entretenían entre ellos, recurriendo, a menudo, al juego de comparaciones³ y a cantos o versos, muchas veces improvisados, que podían intercambiar o bien componer para hacer de contrapunto al de algún otro participante. En efecto, el *lógos sympotikós*, en cierto punto de la reunión, llega a asumir el papel de un agón, de una competencia, de una demostración que se espera que haga cada miembro de su capacidad y de su dominio técnico y de ejecución, grande o pequeño, tanto en una actuación personal como en canto coral.⁴

Platón conserva el rasgo de alteridad del espacio simposíaco, pero la reunión convivial, tal como la presenta en el diálogo, aparece como una forma muy corregida de los banquetes y simposios habituales.⁵ En efecto, en el *Banquete* está implícitamente planteada una cuestión teorizada por Sócrates en el *Protágoras* (347c3-348a6),⁶ donde se contraponen las *synousíai* de los hombres *kaloí kai agathoí* con los simposios de los hombres vulgares.⁷ Las preocupaciones humanas en general, privadas o públicas, no son las que interesan al filósofo, que se aparta de ellas, tal como se ve en la *Apología* y es confirmado por pasaje de *Teeteto* (172c2-176a2), en el cual se añaden los banquetes a las actividades públicas o políticas que los sabios rechazan (173c6-d6).⁸ En esos simposios de gentes cultivadas, tal como lo es el del *Banquete*, no hay flautistas, ni bailarinas ni citaristas, pues los convidados pueden conversar entre sí (*syneînai*), hablar y escucharse *kosmíos*, aun cuando beban mucho vino, usando su propia voz en lugar de deleitarse prestando oídos a voces ajenas. Ahora bien, un banquete sin voz ajena no parece corresponder a ninguna práctica convivial de la que se tenga testimonio antes de Platón, sino exactamente a lo que Platón ilustra en su *Banquete*.⁹

Platón presenta el banquete filosófico como exclusivamente “discursivo” y nada “espectacular”. Es un banquete de palabras, un banquete de nobles, un banquete de ideas y de intercambios recíprocos que enriquecen las ideas progresivamente. No habla sobre el banquete propiamente dicho: nada dice sobre los alimentos ni sobre el desarrollo de la reunión. Los discursos tienen lugar en la segunda parte de la reunión, es decir en el simposio propiamente dicho, cuando se ha acabado de comer, se levantan las mesas y comienza a circular el vino. Circulan el vino (cuya ingesta debe vigilarse) y la palabra, pero ésta es la preponderante.¹⁰ El *Banquete* se inscribe, sin duda, dentro de un género literario ya establecido, la “literatura simposíaca”, que tiene un amplio precedente en la poesía. Sin embargo, dados los huecos en nuestros testimonios, y la enorme influencia que tuvo

¹ Sobre la atopia como característica de Sócrates, cf. 215a2-3, 221d2.

² Muchas de las restricciones convencionales podían relajarse y dar rienda suelta a las licencias festivas. Cf. Hunter (2004: 6). Pero Sócrates es presentado como una suerte de modelo del sabio que, aun implicado en la situación de la bebida, no pierde su medida y permanece siempre con una misma disposición, sea cual fuere la circunstancia en la que se halla, tal como lo señala el mismo Alcibiades (220a1-6).

³ Platón también rescata este rasgo de los simposios. Por ejemplo, Alcibiades compara a Sócrates con un sileno.

⁴ Así, las habilidades de cada uno o del grupo se exponen a la sanción general. Cf. Pellizer (1990: 179); Collins (2004: 68-9).

⁵ Cf. Matthey (2009: 75).

⁶ Cf. Romeri (2002: 57-59).

⁷ Por lo demás, nunca en el diálogo Platón se refiere a la reunión en casa de Agatón como un *symposion*. Tampoco aparece la palabra en ningún momento del diálogo, sino que siempre se emplean términos de la familia de *synousía* (172a7, 173a4, 176e2). Cf. Tecusan (1990: 241-242).

⁸ Cf. Matthey (2009: 75).

⁹ Para Romeri (2002: 61, n. 109) Platón es el inventor de un género literario *simposíaco* nuevo, aun cuando Jenofonte hubiera escrito antes de Platón su *Banquete*.

¹⁰ Cf. Romeri (2002: 57-60).

el *Banquete* de Platón, es difícil establecer qué rasgos eran ya prominentes en la literatura simposíaca de principios del siglo IV y en qué medida el propio Platón contribuyó a ella. Parece probable que ya había algunos elementos canónicos tanto en los motivos literarios como en las prácticas corrientes de los simposios.¹¹

Temas característicos del *lógos sympotikós*, tanto en su expresión poética como en la discusión filosófica que tipificó el simposio literario de Platón y Jenofonte en más, son la virtud, el bien, la lealtad, Eros y los placeres del amor. En el *Banquete* Platón elige, pues, el marco más adecuado: un simposio de gente cultivada. Los personajes se ajustan a las normas usuales de un simposio: vestimenta adecuada, búsqueda de recreación y gratificación, elección de un “director de simposio”¹² –escogido por los convivios y encargado de ordenar las intervenciones y de fijar el modo de beber–, elaborado sistema de comunicación, demostración competitiva por parte de cada orador de sus capacidades técnicas y ejecutivas para proteger y mejorar su imagen y temor a perderla,¹³ despliegue disciplinado de pasiones individuales y colectivas.

El agón es un elemento central en los simposios habituales. En las descripciones literarias de simposios, como las de Jenofonte, Platón, Ateneo, Plutarco y otros, hay también una estructura claramente competitiva.¹⁴ El elemento agonístico resulta evidente cuando los discursos se hacen por turnos: la rivalidad parece ser común en el simposio, en el que seriedad y comedia se combinan,¹⁵ y aunque la atmósfera tiende a ser amable, se producen tensiones.¹⁶ El intercambio intelectual a nivel del discurso y del diálogo –el *lógos sympotikós*– es consistentemente concebido en las fuentes en términos de toma de turnos y de competición.¹⁷

En el *Banquete* Platón compromete a sus personajes en una suerte de certamen o de duelo oratorio, lo que permite abordar el diálogo como un ejemplo de *agón* literario (cf. *egónisai*: 194a1),¹⁸ género de debate en el que, con diversos grados de formalización, los participantes se enfrentan entre sí con concepciones opuestas. Aunque la escena inicial da pie para pensar que los discursos son sólo un prelude para el de Sócrates, que contiene la verdad del diálogo acerca del amor, la acción principal puede encararse, más que como una serie de cinco contribuciones individuales, que asumen el carácter de “encomios epidícticos”,¹⁹ cuyo solo propósito sería presentar tipos de individuos y de estilos para enfrentarlos a Sócrates, como tres agones (Fedro vs. Pausanias, Erixímaco vs. Aristófanes y Agatón vs. Sócrates), separados por dos interludios cómicos.²⁰

¹¹ Cf. Rutherford (1995:179-80). También Hunter (2004: 6) sostiene que el *Banquete* debe ser visto dentro de una tradición en evolución del siglo IV de prosa simposíaca, que desarrolló los temas de la poesía simposíaca del temprano período arcaico; pero añade que la tradición de un “simposio de los Siete Sabios”, mejor conocida por la obra de Plutarco, no puede rastrearse antes de Platón. El punto es discutible, pero, en todo caso, la literatura simposíaca posterior trata la obra de Platón como el texto clásico fundador del género; si ha habido algún predecesor, Platón sin duda lo eclipsó (Hunter 2004: 15). Para Romeri (2002:89) el *Banquete* de Platón se sitúa en el origen de ese género literario que puede llamarse *simposíaco* y que a partir de Platón en más tendrá gran difusión. La autora sostiene (2002:93, n. 174) que hay ausencia de literatura simposíaca de tipo platónico antes de Platón, con lo cual se verifica una ruptura y no una continuidad, como quiere Rutherford, en ese género literario.

¹² *Symposiarkhos*. El elegido por los convivios es Erixímaco, hasta la irrupción de Alcibiades, quien se erige a sí mismo en simposiarca (213e9) y marca, así, un nuevo comienzo para el simposio. Cf. Hunter, (2004: 5).

¹³ Cf. *Leyes* 652a: los simposios permiten discernir cómo son realmente nuestras naturalezas (*tò katideîn pòs ékhomen tās phýseis*). En los simposios hay confrontación con el grupo y, en consecuencia, riesgo y temor de perder la autorepresentación que cada uno se ha construido como participante en la vida social, precisamente en el momento en que está esforzándose por proteger y mejorar su imagen. Cf. Pellizer (1990: 183).

¹⁴ Un importante estudio sobre las variantes en la representación del debate y la tematización del disenso en diferentes géneros y autores es el que ofrece Barker (2009).

¹⁵ Para Platón, de modo más general (ej. *Leyes* 666b y 671e, pero en sentido negativo en 673e) –y lo mismo puede decirse de sus imitadores–, la actividad simposíaca como un todo se presenta bajo la rúbrica de juego (*paidíā*) que es fundamentalmente competitivo. Cf. Pellizer (1990: 179) y Collins (2004: 68-9). Debe haber un balance entre seriedad y risa (*spoudogéloion*, Aristófanes, *Ranas* 389-93, *Banquete* 197e, Jenofonte, *Banquete* 4.28), así como debe lograrse un equilibrio con el vino, pues cuanto más vino se consume mayor es el riesgo de *parresía*, con el peligro de caer en burlas e insultos.

¹⁶ La rivalidad entre participantes puede ser agravada por la bebida y a veces tiene motivaciones eróticas. Pueden decirse algunas cosas, hacerse bromas y hasta llegar a una injuria, que probablemente no se dirían a plena luz.

¹⁷ Cf. *Leyes* 671c, *Prot.* 347d. Cf. Collins (2004: 68).

¹⁸ Después del discurso de Erixímaco, Sócrates señala *kalòs gàr autòs egónisai*, “has competido bien”. Este comentario se refiere a su contribución al discurso simpótico, pero podría aplicarse igualmente bien a la *performance* poética.

¹⁹ El encomio epidíctico era una importante manifestación de la creciente profesionalización y educación en técnicas retóricas propia de la Atenas clásica. Sobre el encomio véase Nightingale (1995: 93-106).

²⁰ Bury (1973: lii-liii), cuando se ocupa del orden y conexión de los discursos, sostiene que el diálogo puede ser visto casi como una obra en tres actos: el primero está constituido por los cinco primeros discursos, el segundo es la intervención de Sócrates y el tercero es el encomio de Sócrates por parte de Alcibiades. Para Bury está claro que Platón quiere que veamos los cinco discursos en un mismo plano, en tanto tienen en común apuntar a las apariencias y no a la verdad. Señala su desacuerdo con dos estudiosos, Steinhart y Deinhardt, que ordenan los discursos en pares, distinguiendo cada par de los otros en función de las diferentes esferas de actividad de Eros con las que ellos tratan. Si Fedro y Pausanias se mueven en la esfera ética, Erixímaco y Aristófanes en la física y Agatón y Sócrates en la esfera espiritual más elevada. Para Bury, si bien esto

Como en todo agón literario, el disenso entre los antagonistas se expresa de diferentes modos y en tal sentido mi interés principal no está en el complejo contenido de cada uno de los discursos sino en el modo en que se van enlazando uno a otro, retomando cada uno al anterior o a los anteriores, en diferente registro según el personaje que los pronuncia.

El primer agón es entre Fedro y Pausanias. Fedro plantea la cuestión del papel del amor en la educación moral y sostiene que la relación amorosa tiene su mayor poder cuando lleva a la adquisición de la *areté* y la felicidad –tal como él las entiende (180b)– y hace un elogio desmesurado del amor. Fedro parte de nociones convencionales no sólo acerca de esto, sino también de cosas como “vergonzoso” y “honorable” y no se esfuerza por argumentar que eros ayudaría al amante a distinguir entre vergonzoso y honorable. Es importante advertir que en este punto anticipa un elemento central y una deficiencia del discurso de Pausanias, quien sostendrá que las acciones no son en sí mismas vergonzosas ni honorables, sino “neutras”, y que todo depende del modo en que se las lleve a cabo. Con su discurso rival Pausanias pretende hacer un claro contrapunto de lo que Fedro ha sostenido. Construye sobre la idea de Fedro de que la buena relación amorosa lleva a la adquisición de algún tipo de *areté* (185b), pero subraya que el planteo no hay sido correcto (*ou kalôs*: c4) y que él buscará *corregir* (*epanorthósasthai*: d2) a Fedro (180c4-d2) y apela a un criterio y a la medida (182a). Si Fedro ha partido del supuesto de que todos sabemos lo que eros es, Pausanias lo rebate, en claro contrapunto, distinguiendo dos tipos de eros, bueno y malo. Tal distinción va de la mano con una distinción de carácter moral acerca de acciones buenas o malas y de la pederastia como práctica (183d4-8), y es un punto que también aparece en el subsiguiente discurso de Erixímaco (aunque ya no en los discursos siguientes, que toman al amor siempre como bueno).

El segundo agón, en el que rivalizan seriedad y comedia, es quizás el más logrado literariamente. Tras el episodio del hipo de Aristófanes (185c4-e5), presenta un par de rivales diferentes: Erixímaco y Aristófanes. Ambos hacen exhibición de sus respectivas artes y ambos presentan modelos rivales universalmente aplicables de cómo el eros funciona en el universo (185e6-193d5). Habla primero Erixímaco, a quien le cuadra perfectamente el curar el hipo, y hace ostentosa gala de su ciencia, la medicina, con un discurso de tono serio, más bien solemne y pomposo, en el que recuerda también a Heráclito (185e6-188e4). El segundo agón se enhebra con el primero. Erixímaco enlaza su discurso con el de Pausanias, señalando que éste ha comenzado bien al trazar la diferencia entre dos eros, pero no ha llevado a término su presentación (*hormésas epì tòu lógon kalôs ous hikanôs apetélese*), por lo cual él intentará *completarlo* (185e7-186a2). Toma de Pausanias la dualidad del eros, pero la extiende a todo el mundo tanto divino como humano. Su encomio resulta en realidad un encomio de la medicina y de quienes, como él, la practican, que saben cómo usar e implantar el eros (186c7, d4). Cuando acaba su largo discurso se declara temeroso de haber omitido muchos puntos, y acaba dando el pie a Aristófanes, quien deberá *llenar las lagunas* (*anaplerôsaí*) (188e2-3). Más aun, apenas Aristófanes, con sorna, ha comenzado a hablar acerca de su hipo curado, Erixímaco le reprocha que bromea (*gelotopoieís*) cuando está a punto de hablar y que lo obliga entonces a vigilar que su contrincante no diga algo risible (*geloíon*). Aristófanes le replica: espera que sus palabras, aunque risibles (*geloíā*), no sean ridículas (*katagélasta*) (189b5-7) y, al hacer tal sutil distinción, está usando *geloíon* con un significado diferente al que le otorgó Erixímaco. Esa referencia inicial de Aristófanes pone en evidencia que ha tomado como ridículas las teorías médicas de Erixímaco, que en realidad reproducen las teorías médicas corrientes.²¹ Aristófanes, poeta famoso por hacer añicos toda solemnidad y pomposidad, no quiere caer en el ridículo como su oponente, pero es esperable que lo que diga se ajuste a su profesión de hacer reír. Sus primeras palabras, con su referencia al buen orden del cuerpo (*tò kósmion toû sómatos*: 189a3) desafían y parodian el discurso y el modo de pensar de los médicos. Y es éste un punto importante para caracterizar el agón Erixímaco-Aristófanes: el discurso de Aristófanes, en efecto, es un contrapunto del de Erixímaco. Intentará *hablar en un sentido diferente* (*állei*) a quienes lo precedieron (189c2-3), como lo recuerda también al finalizar (193d7).²² Sostiene que los hombres no son conscientes del poder de eros y que él tratará pues de explicarlo (189c2-d4), para lo cual deberá primero hablar de la naturaleza humana y de lo que a ella le ha

tiene ciertos visos de verdad, no es adecuado, porque el discurso de Sócrates se distingue completamente de los demás. Otro argumento de Bury, que no resulta convincente, reposa sobre la cantidad páginas que ocupa cada discurso (lvi). Para Romeri (2002:86), en el *Banquete* hay una serie de discursos sobre Eros que no implican ninguna relación dialógica entre los personajes. Desde su punto de vista, se trata de discursos yuxtapuestos, una suerte de serie de mini-conferencias, dirigidas a los asistentes con propósitos y modalidades diferentes según las características de quien lo pronuncia. Los discursos se suceden y yuxtaponen sin relación recíproca. “Más precisamente, el *Banquete* aparece como un *agón*, pero menos un *agón* entre los convivios que un *agón* entre la palabra filosófica de los convivios y todo lo que debería constituir un *symposion* – comida, vino, entretenimiento, música”.

²¹ Cf. Bury (1973: xxxiii).

²² Es importante reparar en el uso intencionado del dual.

ocurrido. Introduce allí la “historia” de los primeros seres humanos, el andrógino primitivo, el ser humano desunido y el amor como la búsqueda de la mitad perdida. El propio Aristófanes subraya que su discurso ha enfrentado agonísticamente al de Erixímaco: el suyo ha sido, como lo había dicho al inicio y lo recuerda al final, un discurso diferente del de Erixímaco (*alloîos è ho sós*) (193d6-7), un discurso con tintes cómicos y trágicos a la vez, que rivaliza con la pomposa seriedad de su contrincante.

Tras un interludio dialogado (193d6-194e3), que intencionadamente introduce la forma dialógica como opuesta a la epidíctica y anticipa y anuncia el diálogo que Sócrates mantendrá con Agatón cuando este acabe su encomio, se inicia el tercer y último agón –Agatón vs. Sócrates– y el par elegido es nuevamente del todo apropiado. En este tercer contrapunto Platón ofrece un retrato exquisitamente satírico del narcisismo y del estilo florido del poeta Agatón, con quien rivaliza un Sócrates medido, que habla sin alambiques y en otro registro. El contrapunto entre Agatón y Sócrates enfrenta no sólo dos personajes y sus posiciones, sino que pone en escena como rivales en duelo oratorio a la retórica (gorgiana) y la dialéctica. Platón enhebra magistralmente este tercer agón con los anteriores. En efecto, Agatón comienza *reprochando* a quienes lo precedieron: ellos no han hecho un verdadero encomio del dios, sino que felicitaron a los hombres por los bienes cuya causa es Eros; pero nadie ha hablado a propósito de los caracteres de Eros (*hopoîos dé tis autòs ón*) gracias a los cuales él es causa de esos bienes. Esa es la razón por la cual antes de iniciar su propio encomio debe explicitar cómo tiene que hablar. El solo modo correcto de hacer un elogio sobre el tema que fuere es explicar (*lógoi dieltheîn*) cuáles son los caracteres (*hoîos estin*) en este caso de Eros, y luego sus dones (194e4-195a5): Eros es el más joven, el más delicado, el más flexible y sus virtudes son la justicia, la templanza, la valentía y la sabiduría.²³ Al fin, Agatón pretende que su encendido elogio ha sido una mezcla proporcionada de juego y seriedad, de *paidiá* y de *spoudé* (197e6-8). Esta observación es importante porque subraya la coexistencia (aun interdependencia) entre lo *spoudaîon* y lo *geloîon*. Lo serio-cómico (*spoudaïogeloîon*), en efecto, era reconocido como el modo más apropiado del simposio en general y de las contribuciones individuales en él.²⁴

Cuando Agatón acaba, Sócrates interviene y parodia su estilo afectado. Subraya que su discurso ha sido todo estilo, atractivo porque de corte gorgiano, pero carente de sustancia (198a4-199b7). Somete a un diálogo a Agatón, quien acaba reaccionando airadamente y *no quiere entrar en controversia* (199b8-201c9), lo cual da el pie a Sócrates quien, por confesarse ignorante, recurre al relato sobre Eros que le fuera transmitido en una supuesta conversación con Diotima (201d1-212c2) y que hará partiendo de lo que *han acordado* Agatón y él (201d5-7). Sócrates se apoya sobre la observación final de Agatón y también recurre a la modalidad seriocómica de una manera particular, llevando a cabo, como remedo de lo que antes hicieron sus predecesores, en especial Erixímaco y Agatón, una actuación en la que ofrece una construcción exagerada de sí mismo: el diálogo entre Sócrates y Diotima es una clara autoparodia, como si invitara a hallar lo serio tras lo risible. Sócrates contrapone la ampulosidad en el elogio con lo que él cree que debe hacerse: decir la *verdad* a propósito de lo que se elogia (198a-d). Declara, irónicamente, que *no quiere rivalizar* (199b1), sino *hablar a su manera*, pero su discurso oficia de claro contrapunto al de Agatón tanto por el contenido como por la forma. Sócrates construye su intervención sobre las ruinas del discurso de Agatón, pues rescata alguna de sus partes pero las transforma en algo del todo nuevo. Un punto importante marca tanto la continuidad como la contraposición entre el discurso de Agatón y el de Sócrates: Agatón incidentalmente introduce un aspecto que será crucial: el amor es siempre amor *de algo*. Al decir que es obvio que el amor es de la belleza, pues no puede haber amor de la fealdad (197b4-5), acierta y yerra a la vez. Por lo demás, la caracterización de lo bello como bueno por parte de Sócrates es un elemento de novedad que opera también como contrapunto a la presentación de Agatón.

He dejado de lado adrede la aparición final de Alcibiades, cuya irrupción puede leerse como el quiebre y la negación del juego agonístico. Con su entrada en escena el simposio filosófico deja de ser tal y se vuelve una suerte de antisimposio, esto es, paradójicamente, un verdadero simposio, simposio de hombres vulgares, con exceso de bebida y embriaguez, de la que sólo Sócrates escapa. En lo anterior he tratado de mostrar en qué sentido el *Banquete* puede leerse como un ejemplo de agón literario, en la medida en que en él rivalizan diferentes personajes y, tras ellos, diferentes géneros: poesía, retórica, medicina, comedia, tragedia y filosofía. Cada discurso responde al carácter y gustos de quien lo ofrece, los personajes compiten entre sí de a pares y no parecen tener la intención de cooperar para lograr entre todos, al final, una imagen acertada de eros. Sin embargo, Platón construye el diálogo de modo tal que los diferentes discursos, a pesar de sus propios autores, cooperan

²³ Agatón atribuye a Eros rasgos que Aristófanes, por boca de Eurípides, atribuye a Agatón en las *Tesmoforias* (vv.191-92): *euprósopos, leukós, exureménos, gunaikóphonos, hapalós, euprepès ideîn*.

²⁴ Cf. la introducción de Alcibiades en 215a5-6.

para presentar, en última instancia, lo que es para él el gran agón: el agón entre la filosofía y otras artes o habilidades. Platón enfrenta así a los personajes de a pares, pero ese enfrentamiento no tiene por fin presentar a uno como vencedor y a otro como perdedor, sino que es precisamente el resorte para cumplir un cometido gracias a la cooperación de todos los personajes: la defensa de la superioridad de la filosofía frente a otros géneros y de la mesura ante la transgresión. El diálogo es, pues, persuasivo y disuasivo: invita a la filosofía sobre el modelo socrático y procura disuadir, a los lectores si no a los personajes, de seguir por las sendas erradas de los rivales de la filosofía.

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Il *Simposio* come agone letterario

María Isabel Santa Cruz

Il *Simposio* è l'unica opera di Platone che presenta Socrate in un contesto festivo, ma si tratta di un Socrate che è sia all'interno della festa che fuori: ne fa parte, ma in un certo senso è fuori luogo, *átopos* (175a10).¹ Si è lavato, si è vestito, ha infilato le scarpe come occorreva, eppure, dopo essere riuscito a eludere la festa del giorno prima, arriva alla casa di Agatone praticamente a metà della cena, quando il convivio vero e proprio è ormai finito e incomincia a circolare il vino (174a-175c). Per capire questa sua ambiguità di essere nel posto ed essere fuori, così come per capire gran parte dei discorsi di questo dialogo, bisogna considerare certe caratteristiche del simposio come istituzione sociale e confrontarle con il quadro che vi fa Platone di quel raduno conviviale.

Fra i greci il simposio è una specie di "società alternativa" retta dalle proprie regole e rituali che rispecchiano, ma allo stesso tempo capovolgono, le convenzioni della società comune. In questo senso si può parlare di un'alterità dello spazio simposiaco.² Come si sa, nei simposi il solito svago includeva musica, ballo e presenza di ragazze. Però gli ospiti s'intrattenevano fra loro appellando spesso al gioco di paragoni, a dei canti e a dei versi che molte volte s'improvvisavano e che potevano scambiare oppure comporre per fungere da contrappunto a quello di qualche altro ospite. In effetti, il *lógos sympotikós*, a un certo punto della riunione, assume il ruolo di un agone, di una competizione, cioè di una dimostrazione della propria capacità che ci si aspetta da ogni membro il quale deve provare la sua padronanza tecnica, grande o piccola, sia in una recitazione individuale che nel canto corale.³

Platone conserva la nota di alterità dello spazio simposiaco, ma la riunione conviviale, così come la presenta in questo dialogo, appare sotto una veste diversa dai convivi e simposi comuni.⁴ Infatti, nel *Simposio* si pone implicitamente una questione su cui Socrate teorizza nel *Protagora* (347c3-348a6),⁵ dove si oppongono le *synousíai* degli uomini *kaloí kai agathoí* e i simposi degli uomini volgari.⁶ Le preoccupazioni umane in genere, private o pubbliche, non interessano al filosofo che se ne sta alla larga, come si legge nell'*Apologia* e viene confermato dal brano del *Teeteto* (172c2-176a2), in cui si aggiungono i simposi alle attività pubbliche o politiche che l'uomo saggio rifiuta (173c6-d6).⁷ Nelle riunioni di gente colta, come quella del *Simposio*, non ci sono flautisti né ballerine né citaristi, affinché gli ospiti possano conversare tra loro (*syneînai*), parlare e sentirsi a vicenda *kosmíos*, anche se bevono assai, usando la propria voce invece di dilettersi stando sentendo le voci altrui. Ora, un convivio senza la voce degli altri non sembra una pratica di cui si abbia notizia prima di Platone, ma è esattamente ciò che egli accenna nel suo *Simposio*.⁸

Platone presenta il convivio filosofico come esclusivamente "discorsivo" e non "spettacolare". È un simposio di parole, di gente nobile, d'idee e di scambi reciproci che arricchiscono le idee in modo progressivo. Non parla sul simposio vero e proprio, nessun accenno si fa ai cibi né sullo sviluppo del convivio. I discorsi hanno luogo nella seconda parte della riunione, cioè nel simposio propriamente detto, quando il mangiare è finito, si è sparecchiato e s'incomincia a servire il vino. Circolano dunque il vino, la cui ingestione va controllata, e la parola. Ma quest'ultima è preponderante.⁹ Il *Simposio* s'inserisce, senz'altro, all'interno di un genere letterario ormai stabilito, quello della "letteratura simposiaca", che ha un vasto precedente nella poesia. Ciò non ostante, dal momento che ci sono dei vuoti nelle nostre testimonianze e data l'enorme influenza che ebbe il

¹ Sull'*atopia* come caratteristica di Socrate, cf. 215a2-3, 221d2.

² Nel simposio, si potevano saltare molte convenzioni per abbandonarsi alla sfrenatezza festiva. Cf. Hunter (2004: 6). Comunque Socrate si presenta come una specie di esempio del savio che, pure coinvolto nella situazione di bere, non perde la sua misura e rimane sempre nella stessa disposizione, in qualsiasi circostanza, come osserva lo stesso Alcibiade (220a1-6).

³ Così, le capacità di ognuno e del gruppo si sottomettono alla sanzione generale. Cf. Pellizer (1990: 179); Collins (2004: 68-9).

⁴ Cf. Matthey (2009: 75).

⁵ Cf. Romeri (2002: 57-59).

⁶ Del resto, nel dialogo Platone non allude mai alla riunione nella casa di Agatone come un *symposion*. Neanche la parola appare nel dialogo dove invece vengono usati termini della famiglia di *synousía* (172a7, 173a4, 176e2). Cf. Tecusan (1990: 241-242).

⁷ Cf. Matthey (2009: 75).

⁸ Secondo Romeri (2002: 61, n. 109) Platone è l'inventore di un genere letterario *simposiaco* nuovo, quantunque Senofonte avesse scritto il suo *Simposio* prima di quello di Platone.

⁹ Cf. Romeri (2002: 57-60).

dialogo al centro del nostro interesse, è difficile stabilire quali note erano ormai rilevanti nella letteratura simposiaca all'inizio del IV secolo e in quale misura lo stesso Platone contribuì ad accrescerla. Sembra probabile che ormai ci fossero degli elementi canonici sia nei motivi letterari che nella pratica corrente dei simposi.¹⁰

Motivi caratteristici del *lógos sympotikós*, sia nella sua espressione poetica che nella discussione filosofica che tipificò il simposio letterario da Platone e Senofonte in poi, sono la virtù, il bene, la lealtà, Eros e i piaceri dell'amore. Nel *Simposio* Platone sceglie dunque la cornice più adeguata: un simposio di gente colta. I personaggi si confanno alle norme consuete di un simposio: abiti adatti, ricerca di ricreazione e soddisfazioni, elezione di un "direttore del simposio",¹¹ cioè un maestro di cerimonie scelto dai convenuti, il cui dovere era quello di stabilire l'ordine degli interventi e fissare il modo di bere. Oltre a tutto ciò va considerato anche il complesso sistema di comunicazione, la dimostrazione competitiva che faceva ogni oratore delle sue capacità tecniche e di esecuzione per proteggere e migliorare la sua immagine, il che si aggiungeva al timore di perderla,¹² e lo spiegarsi anche se con disciplina delle passioni individuali e collettive.

L'agone è un elemento centrale nei simposi abituali. Nelle descrizioni letterarie al riguardo, come quelle di Senofonte, Platone, Ateneo, Plutarco e altri, c'è anche una struttura chiaramente competitiva.¹³ L'elemento agonistico risulta evidente quando i discorsi vengono fatti a turno: la rivalità sembra comune nel simposio in cui serietà e commedia si abbinano.¹⁴ Anche se il clima è piuttosto cordiale, ci sono però delle tensioni.¹⁵ In modo coerente, lo scambio intellettuale nel discorso e nel dialogo – il *lógos sympotikós* – viene concepito nelle fonti in termini di turni e competizione.¹⁶ Nel *Simposio* Platone coinvolge i suoi personaggi in una specie di gara o di duello oratorio, il che permette affrontare il dialogo come esempio di *agone* letterario (cf. *egónisai*: 194a1),¹⁷ genere di dibattito in cui, con diversi gradi di formalizzazione, i partecipanti confrontano tra loro con delle concezioni opposte. Anche se la scena iniziale fa pensare che i discorsi siano soltanto un preludio per quello che pronuncerà Socrate, il quale contiene la verità del dialogo sull'amore, fatto sta che l'azione principale si può affrontare come tre agoni (Fedro vs. Pausania, Erissimaco vs. Aristofane e Agatone vs. Socrate), separati da due interludi comici, anziché una serie di cinque contributi individuali che assumono il carattere di "encomi epidittici",¹⁸ il cui solo proposito sarebbe di presentare tipi d'individui e di stili per affrontare Socrate.¹⁹

¹⁰ Cf. Rutherford (1995:179-80). Anche Hunter (2004: 6) sostiene che il *Simposio* va considerato all'interno di una tradizione nell'evoluzione del IV secolo di prosa simposiaca. Questa sviluppò gli argomenti della poesia simposiaca del primo periodo arcaico, ma Rutherford aggiunge che la tradizione di un "simposio dei Sette Savi", meglio conosciuta dall'opera di Plutarco, non si può rintracciare prima di Platone. Il punto è discutibile, ma fatto sta che la letteratura simposiaca successiva tratta l'opera di Platone come il testo classico capostipite del genere. Caso che ce ne sia stato un predecessore, indubbiamente venne eclissato da Platone (Hunter 2004: 15). Secondo Romeri (2002:89) il *Simposio* di Platone si situa nell'origine di quel genere letterario che si può chiamare *simposiaco* e che da Platone in poi avrà grande diffusione. L'autrice sostiene (2002:93, n. 174) che c'è assenza di letteratura simposiaca di tipo platonico prima di Platone, e con ciò si avvera una frattura e non una continuità, come invece vuole Rutherford, in quel genere letterario.

¹¹ *Symposiarkhos*. Il personaggio scelto dagli altri è Erissimaco, sino all'interruzione di Alcibiade, il quale si erige a simposiarca (213e9), segnando così un nuovo inizio per il simposio. Cf. Hunter (2004: 5).

¹² Cf. *Leggi* 652a: i simposi permettono discernere come sono veramente le nostre nature (*tò katideîn pòs ékhomen tās phýseis*). In quella situazione si dà un confrontarsi con il gruppo, quindi, c'è il rischio e il timore di perdere l'autorappresentazione che ognuno si è costruito nella vita sociale, appunto nel momento in cui si sforza per proteggere e migliorare la sua immagine. Cf. Pellizer (1990: 183).

¹³ Un importante saggio sulle variazioni nella rappresentazione del dibattito e la teorizzazione del dissenso nei diversi generi e autori è quello proposto da Barker (2009).

¹⁴ Per Platone, in modo più generale (per es. *Leggi* 666b y 671e, ma in senso negativo in 673e) – e lo stesso si può dire degli imitatori – l'attività simposiaca nel suo insieme si presenta in veste di gioco (*paidiá*) fondamentalmente competitivo. Cf. Pellizer (1990: 179) e Collins (2004: 68-9). Ci dev'essere un equilibrio tra serietà e riso (*spoudogéloion*, *Simposio* 197e, Aristofane, *Rane* 389-93, Senofonte, *Simposio* 4.28), così come va raggiunto un equilibrio anche col vino, poiché quanto più vino si beve maggiore è il rischio di *parresia*, che implica il pericolo di precipitare in beffe e insulti.

¹⁵ Il vino può inasprire la rivalità tra gli ospiti, la quale a volte ha persino motivazioni erotiche. Si possono fare delle osservazioni, delle beffe e arrivare all'insulto, tutte cose queste che probabilmente non si direbbero in una condizione pienamente lucida.

¹⁶ Cf. *Leggi* 671c, *Prot.* 347d. Cf. Collins (2004: 68).

¹⁷ Dopo il discorso di Erissimaco, Socrate osserva *kalôs gàr autòs egónisai*, "hai gareggiato bene". Questo commento accenna il suo contributo al discorso simpotico, ma si potrebbe riferire benissimo alla *performance* poetica.

¹⁸ L'encomio epidittico era un'importante manifestazione della professionalizzazione ed educazione in tecniche retoriche dell'Atene classica. Sull'encomio si veda Nightingale (1995: 93-106).

¹⁹ Bury (1973: lii-liii), quando affronta l'argomento dell'ordine e la connessione dei discorsi, sostiene che il dialogo può essere visto quasi come un'opera in tre atti: il primo viene dato dai cinque primi discorsi, il secondo è l'intervento di Socrate e il terzo è l'encomio che Alcibiade fa di Socrate. Secondo Bury è chiaro che Platone vuole far vedere i cinque discorsi nello stesso piano, poiché hanno in comune accennare le apparenze e non la verità. Bury sottolinea il suo disaccordo con due studiosi, Steinhart e Deinhardt, che sistemano i discorsi a pari, distinguendo ogni paio dagli altri secondo le diverse sfere di attività di Eros che essi trattano. Fedro e Pausania si muovono nella sfera etica, Erissimaco e Aristofane nella fisica, e

Come in ogni agone letterario, il dissenso tra gli antagonisti si esprime in modi diversi. In questo senso, il centro del mio interesse non poggia sul complesso contenuto di ogni discorso bensì nel modo in cui essi collegano l'un dopo l'altro, riprendendo ognuno il precedente o i precedenti in diverso registro secondo il personaggio che li pronuncia.

Il primo agone si dà tra Fedro e Pausania. Fedro pone la questione del ruolo dell'amore nell'educazione morale e sostiene che il rapporto amoroso acquista il suo potere più forte quando porta a raggiungere l'*areté* e la felicità –così come lui le intende (180b)– e fa un elogio smisurato dell'amore. Fedro parte da nozioni convenzionali non soltanto su questo punto ma anche su cose come “vergognoso” e “onorevole”, senza sforzarsi di argomentare che Eros aiuterebbe l'amante a distinguere tra vergognoso e onorevole. È importante notare che in questo punto anticipa un elemento centrale e una mancanza del discorso di Pausania, il quale affermerà che un'azione non è in sé stessa vergognosa né onorevole bensì “neutra”; tutto dipende quindi dal modo in cui si eseguano.

Col suo discorso rivale Pausania pretende fare un chiaro contrappunto riguardo a ciò che Fedro ha sostenuto. Costruisce sull'idea di questi sul fatto che il buon rapporto amoroso porta all'acquisto di qualche tipo di *areté* (185b). Sottolinea però che il modo di porre la questione non è stato giusto (*ou kalôs*: 180c4) e che egli stesso cercherà di *rettificare* (*epanorthósasthai*: d2) Fedro (180c4-d2). A questo scopo fa appello a un criterio di misura, per così dire (182a). Se Fedro è partito dal supposto che tutti sappiamo cos'è eros, Pausania lo ribatte, in palese contrappunto, col distinguere di due tipi di eros, buono e cattivo. Questa distinzione va di pari passo con una differenza di carattere morale sulle azioni buone e cattive e della pederastia come pratica (183d4-8). È un punto che appare anche nel susseguente discorso di Erissimaco (non più nei discorsi successivi che assumono sempre l'amore come buono).

Il secondo agone, in cui c'è concorrenza tra serietà e commedia, è forse il più riuscito dal punto di vista letterario. Dopo l'episodio del singhiozzo di Aristofane (185c4-e5), presenta due rivali diversi: Erissimaco e lo stesso Aristofane. Ambedue sfoggiano la loro arte e tutti i due presentano modelli concorrenti, universalmente applicabili, sul modo come eros funziona nel mondo (185e6-193d5). Prima parla Erissimaco, cui incombe perfettamente la cura del singhiozzo, sfoggia quindi la sua scienza, la medicina, con un discorso di tono serio, piuttosto solenne e sfarzoso, dove ricorda persino Eraclito (185e6-188e4). Questo secondo agone segue il primo. Erissimaco collega il suo discorso con quello di Pausania, osservando che questi ha iniziato bene nel tracciare la differenza tra due eros, ma non ha portato a termine la sua presentazione (*hormésas epì tòn lógon kalôs ous hikanôs apetélese*), per cui egli tenterà di *completarla* (185e7-186a2). Da Pausania assume la dualità dell'eros, ma la allarga a tutto il mondo sia divino che umano. Il suo encomio risulta in fondo un encomio della medicina e di chi, come lui, la esercita, di chi insomma sa usare e introdurre l'eros (186c7, d4). Quando finisce il suo lungo discorso confessa che teme di avere omesso molti punti. Con questo dà adito ad Aristofane il quale dovrà *colmare le lacune* (*anaplerôsai*) (188e2-3). C'è di più: non appena Aristofane incomincia a parlare, con un certo sarcasmo, sul suo singhiozzo ormai curato, Erissimaco gli rimprovera di fare degli scherzi (*gelotopoieís*) quando sta per parlare e allora lo costringe a controllare il suo avversario perché non dica qualcosa di risibile (*geloíon*). Aristofane replica: spera che le sue parole, sebbene risibili (*geloíā*), non siano ridicole (*katagélasta*) (189b5-7). Nel fare questa distinzione, sta usando *geloíon* con un significato diverso da quello che gli attribuì Erissimaco. Quell'allusione iniziale di Aristofane mette in rilievo che ha preso come ridicole le teorie mediche di Erissimaco, che in realtà riproducono le teorie mediche correnti.²⁰ Aristofane, poeta famoso per la sua abilità nel distruggere ogni solennità e prosopopea, non vuole precipitare nel ridicolo come il suo avversario, ma ben si può aspettare che ciò che sta per dire si adegui al suo mestiere di far ridere. Le sue prime parole, in riferimento al buon ordine del corpo (*tò kósmion toû sómatos*: 189a3) sfidano e allo stesso tempo parodiano il discorso e il modo di pensare dei medici. Questo è un punto importante per caratterizzare l'agone Erissimaco-Aristofane: infatti, il discorso di Aristofane diventa un contrappunto di quello di Erissimaco. Aristofane cercherà di parlare *in un senso diverso* (*állei*) da quello dei suoi predecessori (189c2-3), e lo rammenta anche sulla fine (193d7).²¹ Sostiene che gli

Agatone e Socrate nella sfera spirituale più elevata. Secondo Bury invece, anche se questo sembra in qualche modo veritiero, non è giusto, perché il discorso di Socrate è completamente diverso dagli altri. Un'altra argomentazione di Bury, che però non convince, poggia sull'estensione di ogni discorso (lvi). Dal canto suo, Romeri sostiene (2002:86) che nel *Simposio* c'è una serie di discorsi su Eros che non implicano nessun rapporto dialogico tra i personaggi. Dal suo punto di vista, si tratta di discorsi accostati, come se costituissero una serie di mini-conferenze rivolte alle persone presenti con degli scopi e modalità diverse a seconda delle caratteristiche di chi lo pronuncia. I discorsi si succedono e si accostano senza rapporto reciproco. “Per la precisione, il *Simposio* appare come un *agone*, ma non si tratta tanto di un *agone* tra gli assistenti quanto di un *agone* tra la parola filosofica degli ospiti e tutto ciò che dovrebbe costituire un *symposion* –cibo, vino, ricreazione, musica”.

²⁰ Cf. Bury (1973: xxxiii).

²¹ È da notare l'uso intenzionale del duale.

uomini non sono affatto consapevoli del potere di eros, quindi egli cercherà di spiegarlo (189c2-d4). Per riuscirci, dovrà parlare prima della natura umana e di ciò che le è successo. Vi introduce dunque la “storia” dei primi essere umani, l’androgino primitivo, l’essere smembrato e l’amore in quanto ricerca della metà perduta. Lo stesso Aristofane sottolinea che il suo discorso si oppone agonisticamente a quello di Erissimaco: il suo è stato, come lo aveva detto all’inizio e lo ricorda sulla fine, un discorso diverso dal discorso del suo predecessore (*alloíōs è ho sós*) (193d6-7), un discorso con delle sfumature comiche e tragiche allo stesso tempo, che rivaleggia con la sfarzosa serietà del suo avversario.

Dopo un dialogo che s’inserisce a mo’ d’intermezzo (193d6-194e3), che introduce apposta la forma dialogica come opposta all’epidittica e che anticipa e annunzia il dialogo che Socrate mantiene con Agatone quando quest’ultimo finirà il suo encomio, incomincia il terzo e ultimo agone, Agatone vs. Socrate. Ancora una volta ambedue si scelgono in modo assolutamente adatto. In questo terzo contrappunto Platone presenta un ritratto squisitamente satirico del narcisismo e dello stile sfarzoso del poeta Agatone, con cui gareggia un Socrate moderato nel suo discorso, un Socrate che parla senza leziosaggine e in un altro registro.

Il contrappunto tra Agatone e Socrate oppone non soltanto due personaggi e le loro rispettive posizioni ma anche mette in scena, da rivali in duello oratorio, la retorica (gorgiana) e la dialettica. Platone collega magistralmente questo terzo agone con i precedenti. In effetti, Agatone incomincia col *rimproverare* tutti quanti l’hanno preceduto: loro non hanno fatto un vero encomio del dio, anzi si congratularono con gli uomini per i beni la cui causa è Eros; nessuno ha parlato però sui caratteri di Eros (*hopoíos dé tis autòs ón*) grazie ai quali egli è causa di quei beni. Perciò, prima d’incominciare il proprio encomio deve spiegare come parlare. E il solo modo adatto di fare l’elogio su qualsiasi argomento è spiegare (*lógoi dieltheîn*) quali sono i suoi caratteri (*hoíós estin*), in questo caso, quelli di Eros, e poi i suoi doni (194e4-195a5): Eros è il più giovane, il più delicato, il più duttile, e le sue virtù sono la giustizia, la temperanza, il coraggio e la saggezza.²² Infine, Agatone pretende che il suo appassionato elogio sia stato una sintesi proporzionata di gioco e serietà, di *paidiá* e di *spoudé* (197e6-8). Occorre notare quest’osservazione poiché sottolinea il coesistere, persino l’interdipendenza tra quello che è *spoudaíōn* e quello che è *geloíōn*. Infatti, il serio-comico (*spoudaiogeloíōn*) era ammesso come il modo più adatto del simposio in genere e dei contributi individuali che ne facevano parte.²³

Quando Agatone finisce, interviene Socrate e parodia il suo stile lezioso. Sottolinea che il suo discorso è stato tutto stile, attraente perché gorgiano, ma privo di sostanza (198a4-199b7). Sottopone Agatone a un dialogo e il suo interlocutore finisce per infastidirsi e *non vuole venire in controversia* (199b8-201c9). Quest’atteggiamento da adito a Socrate per confessarsi ignorante e rincorrere al racconto che su Eros gli era stato trasmesso in una supposta conversazione con Diotima (201d1-212c2). Lo farà partendo da quello che *ha convenuto* con Agatone (201d5-7). Infatti, Socrate poggia sull’osservazione finale di Agatone e fa appello anche alla modalità serio-comica in un modo particolare: a mo’ di caricatura di ciò che prima fecero i suoi predecessori, particolarmente Erissimaco e Agatone, fa una recitazione nel cui trascorso offre una costruzione esagerata di sé stesso. Il dialogo fra Socrate e Diotima è chiaramente una parodia, come se incitasse a trovare il serio dietro il risibile. Socrate contrappone la gonfiezza di stile nell’elogio a ciò che egli crede che vada fatto, cioè dichiarare la *verità* riguardo a quello che si elogia (198a-d). Dichiarò ironicamente di *non volere gareggiare* (199b1), bensì *parlare a modo suo*, però di fatto il suo discorso funge da chiaro contrappunto a quello di Agatone sia per il contenuto sia per la forma. Socrate costruisce dunque il suo intervento sulle rovine del discorso di Agatone, poiché ne recupera alcuni brani, ma li converte in qualcosa di completamente nuovo. Un punto importante segna sia la continuità come la contrapposizione tra il discorso di Agatone e quello di Socrate. In effetti, il primo incidentalmente introduce un aspetto che diventerà decisivo, l’amore è sempre amore *di qualcosa*. Quando dice che è ovvio che l’amore è della bellezza poiché non può esserci amore del brutto (197b4-5), colpisce nel segno e sbaglia allo stesso tempo. Del resto, la caratterizzazione del bello in quanto buono da parte di Socrate è un elemento di novità che funge anche da contrappunto alla presentazione di Agatone.

Ho lasciato da parte di proposito la comparsa di Alcibiade, la cui irruzione si può leggere come la frattura e la negazione del gioco agonistico. Con la sua entrata in scena il simposio filosofico smette di essere tale e diventa una specie di antisimposio, vale a dire, paradossalmente, un vero simposio, un simposio di uomini volgari, con eccesso di vino e ubriachezza, situazione che solo Socrate riesce a evadere.

Nelle pagine precedenti ho cercato di far vedere in quale senso il *Simposio* si può leggere

²² Agatone attribuisce a Eros delle note che Aristofane, per bocca di Euripide, attribuisce a Agatone nelle *Tesmoforie* (vv.191-92): *euprósopos, leukós, exureménos, gunaikóphonos, hapalós, euprepès ideîn*.

²³ Cf. l’introduzione di Alcibiade in 215a5-6.

come un esempio di agone letterario, nella misura in cui vi rivaleggiano diversi personaggi e, di dietro, diversi generi: poesia, retorica, medicina, commedia, tragedia e filosofia. Ogni discorso si addice al carattere e ai gusti di chi lo pronuncia, i personaggi gareggiano a due e non sembrano avere l'intenzione di collaborare per abbozzare fra tutti un'immagine adeguata di eros. Nonostante, Platone costruisce il dialogo in modo tale che i diversi discorsi, malgrado i propri autori, collaborino per presentare infine ciò che a suo parere è il grande agone, cioè, l'agone tra la filosofia e le altre arti o capacità. Platone affronta così i personaggi a coppia, ma quel confronto non ha il proposito di presentarne uno come il vincitore e l'altro come il vinto; al contrario, è appunto un ricorso per raggiungere uno scopo grazie alla cooperazione di tutti i personaggi: la difesa della superiorità della filosofia nei confronti di altri generi, e del contegno riguardo alla trasgressione.

Il dialogo è dunque persuasivo e al tempo stesso dissuasivo: invita alla filosofia sul modello socratico e cerca di dissuadere i lettori, se non i personaggi, di percorrere le vie sbagliate dei rivali della filosofia.

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Is Agathon's Speech in Plato's *Symposium* recycling the views of Empedocles?

Catherine Rowett

I That the competition between tragic poetry and philosophy is at the heart of the dialogue.

I would like to suggest that the *Symposium* is a mock dramatic contest. Agathon and Socrates lie next to each other on the same couch as the representatives of poetry and philosophy respectively. It is to crown both of them for their achievements that Alcibiades enters and plants himself between them, for they are the two rival stars of the show, with whom Alcibiades himself must then compete, to become the centre of attention.

The exact mid-point of the *Symposium* is in Agathon's speech, at 197c, the bit when he gets carried away and speaks in verse. Agathon is the party's host and centre of attention. He is the prizewinner for literary achievement, the beautiful boy, the gifted poet, the star of the whole evening. After an immense build up of expectation before he speaks, his speech reaches its climax with his proclamation that Eros is the first and most beautiful and best of all the gods and the cause of all that is most excellent and beautiful in the whole world.¹

I do not think that this is accidental. Surely Agathon's beautiful speech is the climax, presenting in high literary style a key philosophical motif, against which Socrates targets his reductionist account of Love.

So the competition between poetry and philosophy lies at the heart of the dialogue. It is enacted on the central couch at the party, between two figures impersonating Eros in their own image and likeness: on the one hand the beautiful and talented Agathon, poet and dramatist, wizard with words, winner in the recent public theatre contest, partner in a long term mutual homosexual relationship; on the other hand Socrates, ignorant, ugly, aporetic, a mere beginner, devoid of beauty, seeking beauty and wisdom in others, needy, barefoot, an outsider, destined to be condemned by the public, not win their favour, and never satisfied in love.² Which one is the true figure of Eros, the one who genuinely inspires love, unity, good will, desire and creative productivity?

II A reading of Agathon's speech in the light of Empedocles.

We suffer from a certain blindness concerning Empedocles' fame and distinction as a poet. He was, for the ancient world, the exemplar of a poet with a philosophical theory of Love, in which (as in Agathon's account) love is the cause of goodness, virtue and peace and unity. His reputation as the supreme poet philosopher clearly survived into the Roman world, where imitations of Empedocles turn up not only in cosmological poems (e.g. Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*)³, but also—at least as much—in political epic and the poetry of love, wherever Venus serves as a cosmological, political or social force for unity.⁴ Empedocles' prestige as a model for the Roman poets reflects his prestige in his own day, in Aristotle's day, and throughout the Hellenistic period.⁵ My hypothesis is that

¹ 197c1-3.

² See 175e5-6, where Socrates remarks on the public reception of Agathon's brilliance, before a jury—literally “witnesses”—of over 30,000 Greeks; we can readily feel the comparison with Socrates' performance at his trial, before a jury of no more than about 500.

³ See David Sedley, 'The proems of Empedocles and Lucretius', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 30 (1989), 269-96, David Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Myrto Garani, *Empedocles Redivivus: Poetry and analogy in Lucretius* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴ Philip Hardie, 'The speech of Pythagoras in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15: Empedoclean epos', *Classical Quarterly*, 45 (1995), 204-14 18-22, Damien Nelis, 'Georgics 2. 458-542: Virgil, Aratus and Empedocles', *Dictynna [En ligne]*, (2004), <<http://dictynna.revues.org/161>>, Philip Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Philip Hardie, 'The Janus Episode in Ovid's *Fasti*', *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, 26 (1991), 47-6, Philip Hardie, *Lucretian Receptions: History, the Sublime, Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), G Pfligersdorffer, 'Ovidius Empedocleus: zu Ovids Janus-Deutung', *Grazer Beiträge*, 1 (1973), 177-20, Lucienne Deschamps, 'Victrix Venus': Varron et la cosmologie empédocléenne' in Ruth Althelm-Stiehl and Manfred Rosenbach (eds.), *Beiträge zur altitalischen Geistesgeschichte* (Fontes et Commentationes Suppl.; Münster/Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1986), 51-72

⁵ On Aristotle's admiration for Empedocles, and the reasons why it has been so badly misunderstood in recent discussions, see my analysis in Catherine Rowett, 'Literary genres and judgements of taste: some remarks on Aristotle's remarks about the poetry of Empedocles' in Michael Erler (ed.), *Literarische Form und Argument in antiker Philosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

Empedocles was the first and greatest name that would have come to mind, if anyone had asked a poet to discourse on the subject of love.

Agathon's speech is clearly supposed to look like a philosophical contribution, not just a poetic one. His opening gambit sets a philosophical tone, while also making a literary point about the genre of encomium. A speech of praise, he observes, should not congratulate the recipients of the benefits that have been distributed, but rather should praise the donor or agent responsible for them. In the case of Love, one should describe the god whose effects are so beneficial, and explain what gifts he is responsible for.⁶

II.i *The arguments of Agathon's speech*

Agathon's thesis is that Love is causally responsible for some particularly fine effects, and that one can deduce some truths about the donor, on the basis of the gifts, and who receives them. One can work out what love must be like, because one can work out what properties the cause must have by seeing that it is the cause of these things.

Such a deductive strategy requires a thesis about the relation between a cause and its effects. What kind of cause can generate what kind of effect? Is a cause *like* its effects, or unlike them, for instance? Agathon needs a theory of causation in order to pursue his strategy.

The first such theory, which forms a premise for his argument at 195b5, is not so much a theory of causation as of association: it suggests that we can deduce what Love is like from the company that he keeps. Let us call this General Principle A:

GP A: Similar things always associate with similar things.⁷

Starting from this general principle, and with some further minor premises based on observation, Agathon deduces the following results:

Given that (MP 1) Love associates with the young not the old (195b4)

Therefore (C1) Love is the very youngest (195a4).

Given that (MP2) Love associates with softies, such as souls, minds, hearts and avoids the hard-hearted (195e4)

Therefore (C2) Love is a great softy.

Given that (MP3) Love does not associate with the ugly but is drawn to flowery and fragrant places (196a-b)

Therefore (C3) Love is himself beautiful.

But not all Agathon's conclusions about the nature of love are based on General Principle A. From 196b, Agathon tries inferring from Love's effects to the nature of the cause, using a second General Principle: that no one can give something to someone else or teach someone something if he does not have the things himself. This is stated at 196ce5-6:

GP B One cannot impart to others what one does not have oneself.

GP B seems to be a version of the "like engenders like" causal principle that was so influential in the history of science throughout antiquity and the middle ages. Agathon uses it to deduce that Love is wise and a good poet:

Given that (MP4) Love makes people poetic (196e1-2)

Therefore (C4) Love must be endowed with the poetic wisdom he imparts.

Thirdly, we find some analysis of Love's relation to virtue, which draws on two other general principles. First Agathon deduces that Love must be *just*, because he can neither do injustice to anyone else nor suffer it at the hands of anyone else, and because he neither suffers violence nor inflicts it (196b). Everything done in love is done voluntarily (ἐκὼν), he says, and (as they say) what's done between consenting partners can't be wrong.⁸ The reasoning (however sophisticated it may sound) is implicitly based on the idea that something that is immune to, unaffected by, and incapable of inflicting, injustice must be supremely just, on the basis of a kind of incompatibility of opposites. The principle is rather like the one that Socrates uses in the final argument of the *Phaedo*, where he suggests that the presence or arrival of one opposite repels the other, so that the second must either retreat or be destroyed, if the incompatible opposite is to be admitted.⁹ Here in Agathon's version, the presence of love effectively guarantees the presence of justice and provides immunity from abuse or violence, in much the same way as the presence of the soul is incompatible with death in the final

⁶ 195a2, 4-5.

⁷ 195b5. This is said to be an ancient theory, but is not otherwise supported by argument.

⁸ 196c1.

⁹ *Phaedo* 102d-e.

argument of the *Phaedo*.¹⁰ The general principle is something like

GP C If x has Fness as an inalienable property, then x is immune to the opposite of Fness and incapable of inflicting the opposite of Fness.

Second, Agathon tries to show that Love partakes of the virtue of *sophrosune*. To do this he first defines the virtue, as “mastery over pleasures and desires”¹¹ and then observes that no pleasure is more powerful than “love”, or perhaps “sex” (*eros*). So, given that all (other) pleasure is inferior to love, it would evidently be mastered by love. This means that love is in the position of mastery over pleasures and desires. But this is how we defined *sophrosune*.¹²

This argument is fallacious, because it trades on an equivocation in the notions of mastery and inferiority, and probably also a confusion of Love the god with the pleasure that he gives in the form of sex. Doubtless this is intended to be funny. But Agathon is employing a method which, if done properly, would yield a valid argument, on the basis that once you have agreed on a general definition of some quality F, if you then find an object of enquiry (x) whose properties or characteristics fit the specified definition of Fness, you can validly infer that x has the relevant quality Fness:

GP D If some property, feature or effect of x fits the definition of Fness, then x is correctly said to participate in the property F.

It may be worth noticing Agathon’s use of the term ‘participate’ (μετέχει) to describe what it is to have the property, at 196c4. This should alert us to the fact that this is an account of property-sharing that any normal Socrates could happily endorse. Only the humorous equivocation concerning the superiority of erotic pleasure over other pleasures is faulty in this argument.

II.ii *The mythological strand.*

Besides these arguments from general principles and premises, there is a second strand to Agathon’s argument which is more mythological. At 195b-c, Agathon disputes Phaedrus’s claim that Eros was older than Cronus. His reason for doubting Phaedrus’s claim is that, had Eros been around, the disputes and violence characteristic of that period would not have occurred. For, according to Agathon, love brings harmony and intimacy, not strife. So it follows, he suggests, that Eros is the most recent of the gods, and is in fact always new, or always young.¹³

Clearly this claim requires some support, for there is much in the poets that conflicts with it. How come, for instance, that Hesiod and Parmenides both make love the first god?¹⁴ Agathon responds by suggesting that Hesiod and Parmenides cannot have meant this. If they tell the truth at all, he suggests, they must mean that these events took place not under love but under “necessity” (or perhaps “not by love but by necessity”).¹⁵

What does Agathon mean? Clearly he means that there was a period of the cosmos, or of the story of the gods, that preceded the influence of love. In this period, he suggests, things happened by necessity, not being subject to the benign influence of love. We should probably understand “necessity” here as something like the “necessity” that precedes or underpins the work of the demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus*, though there may also be an allusion to the Necessity whose decree governs the sequence of regime changes in Empedocles.¹⁶ In the *Timaeus* this is the term for what is arbitrary, undirected by any goal-oriented planning or reason. In Empedocles it is a force that stands outside the two cosmic tendencies, love and strife, that instil harmony or dissention respectively. So Agathon’s thought might be that, before love came on the scene, there was no direction or motivation governing the behaviour of the gods; motivations at that time were automatic and irrational (governed by necessity), not governed by a cooperative impulse such as Eros.

It is at this point that we should begin to recognise Empedocles as a role model for the thoughts being developed (albeit in an entertaining and rather mischievous way) by Agathon. Granted, Agathon is talking about a young male god, Eros, not the female divinity (Philia or Philotes) that figures in Empedocles: but that is just as we should expect. For all the speeches in the symposium are devoted to defending the superiority of homoerotic and paedophile love over heterosexual love, which is the preserve of Aphrodite. Agathon represents the permanently youthful, permanently desirable, permanently beloved partner of Pausanias. Even the very name of his lover makes us think of

¹⁰ *Phaedo* 105d.

¹¹ 196c5

¹² 196c7.

¹³ 195c1.

¹⁴ 195c2, doubtless referring to Hesiod *Theogony* 121 and Parmenides B13.

¹⁵ 195c3. The construction is with the dative.

¹⁶ Plato *Timaeus* 47e-48a. Empedocles B115.1.

Empedocles.

I suggest that the replacement of *Philia*, the goddess of asexual and heterosexual relationships, with the youthful god Eros, whom Agathon associates with homosexual attraction, is all part of an elaborate joke on Agathon's part, or perhaps rather on Plato's part.¹⁷ As the speech continues, the Empedoclean elements become more pronounced. The speech becomes more obviously poetic and cosmological. At 196d, Agathon suddenly compares the power of Eros with that of another god, Ares, the god of strife and war. On the basis of a blatantly twisted argument, he claims that Eros is more powerful than Ares, because sexual desire (eros) —that is Ares' desire for Aphrodite, or her desire for him —was sufficient to conquer Ares, and this shows that love (Eros) is stronger than war (Ares) (196d1-2). And then, with yet more distorted logic, at 196d3-4, he shows that Eros is the boldest of all the gods, because Ares is bolder than the rest, and yet is worsted by Eros.

Although this reasoning about love and war is not explicitly about the Empedoclean forces of love and strife, Agathon is effectively suggesting that love is the stronger of those two, because it can overwhelm the most aggressive and war-loving men, by way of sexual desire (eros).

II. iii *Love and the power of creativity*

After the interlude mentioned above, in which Agathon proves that Love is causally responsible for all creative poetic activity (a proof which now seems to be highly apposite, in a speech that turns out to be a tribute to the cosmic power of Love, and to Empedocles, the poetic master of this genre), Agathon turns to another kind of *poiesis*, namely zoogony, or the making of living creatures (*zoa*). He says

And who would contest that it is Eros's wisdom that is the making of living creatures (*zoa*)—of all living things (*zoa*) as they are born and as they grow.

197a1-3

Coming as it does after the treatment of *poiesis* in the sense of poetic creativity, arguably this allusion to the *poiesis* of animals (*zoa*) may not be merely about creation, reproduction and sexual procreation, but also to making works of art, including painting (ζωγραφεῖν). Eros is envisaged as the source of creativity artistry, who imparts the gift of making living creatures, as well as the poetic representations of them.¹⁸ We are reminded of Empedocles' famous simile of the mixing of the paints:

As when artists decorate votive plaques,
men gifted and well skilled around their craft,
mixing proportionately some more and some less,
and produce out of these things forms just like all things,
creating trees, and men and women,
beasts and birds, and sea-fed fish,
and long-lived gods supreme in honours.

Empedocles B23.

As Love is the artist of the world in Empedocles, so too for Agathon, Eros is the artistic creator, maker of living things and of works of art, who inspires people to compose poetry and to procreate by coming together.

II. iv *The poet breaks into verse*

The final part of Agathon's speech, from 197c to 197e, becomes ever more rhetorical and poetic. This is the exact centre of Plato's dialogue. Agathon summarises his conclusions: Eros is first, most beautiful, and best; he is also responsible for the presence of similar qualities in others.

At this point Agathon breaks into verse, uttering a hexameter couplet in Empedoclean style:

εἰρήνην μὲν ἐν ἀνθρώποις, πελάγει δὲ γαλήνην
νηνεμίαν, ἀνέμων κοίτην ὕπνον τ' ἐνὶ κήδει.

[producing] ...

Peace among men, a restful calm at sea,
the winds tucked up in bed, and sleep for those who fret.

197c5-6

¹⁷ Aphrodite appears in Empedocles' poem as a variant for Philotes, at fragments B17 line 24 (where this is mentioned as one of a number of names for *Philia*), 22 line 5, 71 line 4, and B86 & 87.

¹⁸ Cf the contrast between seeing the real thing and seeing an artistic likeness as part of a critique of poetry in the *Timaeus* (19??).

Whose is this couplet, and what is it about? The mention of putting the winds to bed should alert us. For Empedocles was known in the ancient world as the “wind-checker” (κωλυσανέμας)¹⁹, and was famous for having promised to teach his pupil, Pausanias, how to stop the winds. Pausanias was the addressee of some parts of Empedocles’ philosophical poem. Furthermore, the famous line in which Empedocles promises that Pausanias will have the power to stop the winds is framed by the name “Pausanias”:

παύσεις δ' ἀκαμάτων ἀνέμων μένος οἷ τ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν

Empedocles B111 line 3.

So not only Empedocles but also his beloved Pausanias gain their nick-names from their supposed capacity to put a stop to the winds.

Here in the *Symposium*, Agathon is attributing the capacity to stop the winds, not to himself, but to Love. However, since he is also describing himself, in describing what Love is like, he is also attributing that capacity to himself, insofar as he is himself the one who can make people fall in love, and create unity and stillness in the world. Agathon is himself Eros, the stiller of the winds, just as Empedocles was, and as Pausanias, Empedocles’ beloved, was also to become.

Arguably if the couplet that Agathon recites is in Empedocles’ own words, or is a close parody of some lines of Empedocles, Agathon’s reading of them is probably true to what Empedocles meant: that in the period of love’s supremacy the winds and storms would cease, rest would come upon the natural world, the sea would be calmed and there would be peace among men. Some fragments that we know that describe the age of love in Empedocles’ cosmology suggest this kind of picture.²⁰

The remainder of Agathon’s speech is a hymn of praise to Love, full of poetic vocabulary, much of it Empedoclean.²¹ But more than the vocabulary, the constant pairing of contrasting epithets (positive about what love does provide and negative about what it does not) is reminiscent of the structure of Empedocles’ thought. Empedocles constantly juxtaposes and contrasts the work of love with the opposite tendencies attributed to the influence of strife.

Agathon finishes by suggesting that one can learn to participate in the song that love sings to woo the minds of human beings. This song is arguably the one that Agathon has just sung for us. It is also the song that the dramatist Agathon sings in his tragedies, and that Empedocles sang, when he sang of a cosmic love who unifies the world and restores harmony among the elements.

III Are we supposed to be impressed by Socrates’ objections to Agathon?

Agathon finishes his speech and it is Socrates’ turn to speak. Instead of presenting his own speech at once, Socrates begins by challenging Agathon about the assumptions he was making. For all his assertions about praising the right object, Socrates, says, Agathon has failed to realise that love is relational— is a love of something— and that it must be lacking whatever it is that it desires, since otherwise it would not desire it.

Is this fair? Not as far as I can see. For, first of all, Agathon was treating Love as the donor, not as the gift or effect that he delivers. To generate his challenge, Socrates identifies the god Love with the desirous state that he causes, and makes out that it is by being himself needy that Love makes others needy. He seems to identify the cause or donor (Love) with its effect (desire).

Perhaps, we might say, this is just an application of Agathon’s principle that you cannot give or teach what you do not have (GP B, above). By that principle, in order to instil neediness you must have a great deal of neediness, so Love himself would be very needy, if he can make us needy and desirous. Paradoxically, Love may thus be amply supplied with what he gives, but what he gives is extreme neediness.

So far so good, but Socrates has not really accepted Agathon’s model of causation, in which we could infer from the effect to the presence of the same feature in the cause. By making desire the primary characteristic of love, Socrates pictures a quite different model of causation, in which one can infer from the desired quality in the object of desire to the absence (not the presence) of that quality in the one who desires it. So by examining the objects of desire, Socrates reckons that he can make

¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius 8.60; Suda sv. Empedocles.

²⁰ Examples at Empedocles B27, 27a, 28, 35.13, 130.

²¹ ἀλλοτριότητος is not found in Empedocles but for ἀλλότριος see B45; κενοί, cf B62; οἰκειότητος not found but cf B22.5; συνόδους cf B17.4 συνιέναι, cf B17.7, 35.5, 26.5, 36.1. θυσίασι cf B128.6; εὐμενείας cf. B110.2; δυσμενείας not found, but compare many other δυσ- words used by Empedocles of the world of strife; ὕλεως cf B40.1, 85.1; ἀγαθός cf B112.2; σοφοῖς cf B129.3; θεοῖς occurs throughout Empedocles; πόθου cf B64.1; ἐν πόνῳ, ἐν φόβῳ, ἐν πόθῳ, ἐν λόγῳ cf B115.3; παραστάτης cf B131.3; κόσμος cf B26.5.

inferences to the absence, not their presence, of those qualities in the lover, and in Love himself. Socrates' model of causation does not treat love as a mutual bond between people who are alike. He is not thinking, as Agathon was, of pairs of lovers who are equally beautiful, young and precious to each other. Socrates envisages instead a powerfully asymmetric relation, of seeking and trying to get hold of a commodity, be it wisdom or beauty.

Many have been troubled by the commodification of the object of love in this passage, and by the idea that the beloved is just a provider of those commodities and the lover just a self-seeking and needy consumer, with his desires maximised by the presence of love. One might wonder whether Socrates' causal model, which infers the absence of the commodity in the lover, from its presence in the beloved, is better or worse than Agathon's which infers from the presence of beautiful and attractive properties in the lover, to the presence of those properties in the one who gives or inspires that love. I suspect that Agathon probably means that we can infer from the presence of beauty in the beloved to the presence of beauty in the lover, who rejoices in the similarity and associates like with like or draws others to be like himself, as Love draws things to become more alike and harmonious in Empedocles' cosmology.

Agathon describes a love that mutually rejoices in the beautiful and is creative, poetic and inspirational. Socrates describes one that is acquisitive, one-sided and seeks to get all the good for itself, by preying upon the beloved just so long as he can provide the desired commodities. At best, it seems, such a love is supposed to lead one to exploit the beloved, so as to beget more commodities with more of the desired properties.

Most readers have somehow assumed that this consumerist picture of love must be Plato's own. And they have assumed that Socrates' complaints against Agathon are well-founded, and that therefore Agathon's speech is unworthy of attention. But no: here is poetry lying on the same couch as philosophy and each is presenting its model of the drives that make a person want to spend his life associating with someone else. Socrates portrays someone who is never satisfied, always hungry for something he cannot yet get—something which ultimately lies outside this world and against which all earthly loves pale into insignificance. Agathon describes someone who overflows with creativity and shares his love of the beautiful with others who are full of beauty themselves, bringing harmony, unity and concord to the world.

When Alcibiades comes in he takes the place between these two on the couch, and crowns both poetry and philosophy. What does Plato mean? He is presenting us with two rival accounts of the benefits of love, one from the poet, one from the philosopher. And the human effects of the philosophical one are clearly displayed in Alcibiades' later presentation. Are we to take this as an unproblematised hymn of praise to Socratic philosophy over Agathonic poetry? I think not.

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L'amour, drame de Socrate

Hugues-Olivier Ney

La mise en scène dramatique du *Banquet* ne le donne pas directement à lire comme un objet philosophique : il ne s'agit pas de chercher l'essence de l'amour, mais de s'amuser à louer Eros en lieu et place des « poètes » et des « sophistes » [177 b], même s'il apparaîtra progressivement de bonne méthode de faire précéder l'éloge d'une définition ; et, si la nature de l'amour s'y révèle philosophique, c'est à terme et largement par *surprise*. On doit résister à la tentation de lire le discours de Socrate (et en lui de Diotime) dans le *Banquet* comme un morceau d'anthologie (*philosophique*) qui ferait de tout le reste du dialogue le prétexte ornemental d'un exposé doctrinal ; ce serait ne plus avoir à lire le dialogue, c'est-à-dire envisager le rapport de *sens* que le passage entretient avec son contexte général. Or, si le contexte du *Banquet* ne le constitue pas directement comme un objet philosophique, il le constitue comme un objet *critique* : la succession des discours est ici une fête (du prix de tragédie remporté par Agathon), c'est un jeu (alternatif à l'ivresse), mais c'est aussi une *compétition, dont le résultat n'est pas déclaré* ; qui gagne ? et *qu'est-ce* ici que gagner ? est-ce gagner par le discours — et gagner quoi ?

La poésie, la philosophie, l'amour ? Tout en un ? ou faut-il choisir, et choisir exclusivement (donc compétitivement) ? voir en Socrate (ou Platon) dans le *Banquet* l'heureux rival des poètes, et expressément du poète tragique qu'est Agathon et du poète comique qu'est Aristophane (auxquels Socrate répond) ? Cette victoire est-elle elle-même poétique ou réfutative, et ouvrant au-delà des deux poètes la révélation de l'Idée, dans un autre discours, philosophique donc ? Ou revient-elle à susciter l'amour plutôt qu'à l'assouvir, victoire sur l'amour donc plutôt que victoire de l'amour, du côté d'Alcibiade déçu sinon d'Agathon silencieux ?

C'est que, dans cette atmosphère de compétition ouverte (et laissée dans un relatif suspens), les trois motifs du *Banquet*, l'amour, la poésie et la philosophie sont moins simplement identifiés ou unis qu'il n'y paraît, dans un texte qui joue de leurs relations, si l'on met bien le discours de Socrate, comme il y invite lui-même, en rapport avec l'ensemble du dialogue : on se propose en effet de relever d'abord que le contexte général de compétition se rejoue et se concentre au cœur de ce discours, autour des figures privilégiées et croisées d'Agathon et d'Aristophane, pour montrer ensuite que le prolongement de ce croisement jusqu'à la fin du *Banquet* invite à reconsidérer l'enjeu philosophique lui-même (la « leçon ») du discours de Socrate. A travers la question de savoir ce que gagne Socrate (si c'est bien lui, comme il semble, qui sort vainqueur du *Banquet*), la question est aussi de savoir ce que nous avons à gagner de lui — et de Platon (du plus célèbre des Platon).

Le *Banquet* (qui se tient en l'honneur du prix d'Agathon) est dominé d'un bout à l'autre par la tonalité de la compétition, même ludique, et d'une compétition de plus en plus nettement centrée sur la figure de Socrate, qui n'en est pas seulement le spectateur, mais bien l'acteur et même peut-être l'enjeu — compétition qui se signale par une série de *déplacements* et de remplacements, de trois points de vue.

D'abord, c'est bien en général d'une compétition qu'il s'agit dans le *Banquet*, compétition des discours qu'il s'agit de prononcer sur l'amour dès le début, sur la proposition d'Eryximaque, (à la place du vin,) *à la place des poètes* (et des sophistes) [177 a-b].

Plus précisément, quoique de manière plus large dans le texte (donc avec là encore un certain décalage), la joute des différents discours qui se succèdent, quoique non tranchée, est elle-même inscrite dans le cadre plus large d'une compétition annoncée où c'est Socrate qui gagne *à la place d'Agathon* : d'un côté, au début, avant même la proposition d'Eryximaque, quand Socrate vient se placer près d'Agathon, c'est pour affirmer un désir d'être instruit qu'Agathon lui *retourne* aussitôt, remettant à Dionysos le soin de trancher entre eux le débat de compétence [175 e] ; la suite du dialogue ne paraît pas tenir cette promesse mais invite à s'en souvenir à la fin, et sur le terrain même qu'elle ouvre sous l'autorité de Dionysos, c'est-à-dire celui de la compétence *théâtrale*, spécialement *tragique*.

D'un autre côté, dans la dernière partie du dialogue, après le discours de Socrate [et à la *place* de la réplique d'Aristophane], c'est Socrate qu'Alcibiade faisant irruption entend couronner *à la place d'Agathon*, et comme vainqueur général par le discours [213 d-e] : c'est le sens de son éloge de Socrate, qu'il prononce *à la place* de l'éloge convenu d'Eros (et précisément *comme* déjeu ou déception – et renversement – de l'attente érotique), selon la célèbre figure du Silène qui ne peut pas ne pas évoquer Dionysos et dont Alcibiade prend soin de récuser l'apparence comique et caricaturale (celle-là même que Socrate qualifiera de « drame satyrique », 222 d) ; en somme, après Socrate donné par Agathon lui-même vainqueur à sa place de la palme *tragique*, Socrate l'emporte comme *Dionysos*

substitué à Eros et dans une opposition déclarée à la tonalité *comique* (parodique). La compétition des discours n'est pas seulement un jeu de rôles : c'est un jeu de *genres*.

Ce qu'il faut noter en tout cas, et qui complique ou complète le jeu de genres, c'est que le motif du remplacement est aussi l'indication d'un *déplacement* : l'assaut de politesse ou de rivalité (qui n'est d'ailleurs pas dépourvu d'une teinte érotique) entre Socrate et Agathon laisse place, jusque dans son issue suspendue (et déjà dans le fait qu'il est antérieur et extérieur à la série des discours sur Eros), à la possibilité d'un écart, d'une divergence, voire d'un malentendu sur son objet (et son terrain) : ce que Socrate prétend apprendre d'Agathon en s'allongeant à côté de lui, certes en toute ironie, comme le souligne le modèle du vase qu'on remplit, est sans aucun doute quelque chose de la compétence tragique dont Agathon vient de recevoir le titre ; mais si Agathon, renversant les rôles, récuse son propre titre au profit d'un enseignement qu'il aurait à recevoir de Socrate, ce ne peut être dans le domaine de l'art tragique (ou tout au plus sous la forme de la récusation de la compétence tragique). Effet de *miroir* qui donne par avance à Agathon quelque chose de philosophique, ou du moins un air de familiarité avec Socrate ; effet de *défi* ensuite, qui en appelle à Dionysos pour arbitre, comme si la victoire de Socrate sur la tragédie devait être tragique ou ne pas être ; mais si l'on peut penser que par là Agathon prétend encore l'emporter, en ramenant le combat sur son propre terrain, le deuxième effet revient au premier avec un effet de *différence* entre le discours des poètes (et avec lui presque toute la compétition qui va s'ouvrir sur Eros) et le discours philosophique, ou la dialectique socratique dans sa résistance même au discours (de fait attribué par Socrate à une autre, à Diotime). Ce qui est érotique, c'est aussi et déjà la différence entre poésie et philosophie (qui va [se] partager le cas d'Eros).

Or, à l'autre extrémité du dialogue et dans la répétition du même remplacement, quand Alcibiade veut couronner Socrate à la place d'Agathon (et le couronner de la victoire du discours, réfutatif sinon réformateur —du désir), c'est précisément à la figure même de Dionysos (dans la référence au Silène) qu'il assimile Socrate *alternativement* à l'éloge convenu d'Eros : Socrate en vient ainsi à coïncider avec la figure de l'arbitre invoqué par Agathon, et d'un arbitre alors non pas poétiquement constitué (Alcibiade refuse que son portrait soit pris en part comique ; et, s'il est tragique, c'est dans les effets qu'il produit sur Alcibiade même, en suscitant un amour qu'il ne satisfait pas) mais philosophiquement constitué (et avec toutes les vertus), encore une fois en lieu et place de l'éloge d'Eros. A deux reprises, aux deux extrémités de la série des discours, si Socrate remplace Agathon, c'est aussi pour déplacer, dans l'ambiance érotique (ou sous couvert d'Eros), du discours poétique (et avec lui du discours sur Eros) au discours philosophique. La répétition même du remplacement, gouverné par la figure de Dionysos, fait prévaloir l'effet de différence sur l'effet de miroir et l'effet de défi initiaux.

Et c'est enfin par rapport à ce jeu général qu'il faut relire le discours de Socrate, puisqu'il s'y relie lui-même : c'est d'abord au discours d'Agathon qu'il répond, non seulement en vertu de l'ordre normal de succession des discours mais par un préalable réfutatif lui-même progressivement intégré au moment plus positif de la révélation diotimienne ; mais c'est aussi directement au discours d'Aristophane qu'il s'oppose (plus brièvement, mais d'autant plus incisivement) dans l'ascension vers cette révélation (205 c/e) ; et, loin d'être ponctuelle et aléatoire, cette double référence, quasi exclusive (si l'on met à part l'allusion au discours de Phèdre, qui donne Euripide et Homère comme exemples de la procréation psycho-poétique [208 d, 209 d]), cette double référence, donc, à Agathon et à Aristophane, dans sa singularité et sa distribution, structure le discours de Socrate et lui donne le sens d'une *double réplique* : à la fois reprise et récusation de l'un comme de l'autre, et *de l'un par l'autre*, puisque Socrate ne commence par reprendre le discours d'Agathon que pour récuser sa trop belle « nature » de l'amour, mais en prenant ensuite explicitement ses distances avec la conception aristophanienne de l'amour comme « moitié » au moment d'aborder l'ascension vers l'Idée du beau.

C'est donc bien finalement de l'intérieur du morceau d'anthologie, de la leçon de Socrate (ou de Diotime, ou de Platon), qu'il y a à repérer, sans détachement mais au contraire en lien avec l'ensemble du dialogue, *sur la nature même de l'Eros philosophique* par conséquent, quelque chose qui accroche et qui doit intriguer, qui est *visiblement* fait pour intriguer (ou pour attirer l'attention), et dans le moment où tout est fait aussi pour qu'il passe inaperçu.

Autant le contexte général de compétition poétique, lui-même débordé par le rapport privilégié entre Socrate et Agathon (auxquels se joint à la fin Aristophane), attire l'attention sur la focalisation du discours de Socrate sur les deux poètes, autant à l'inverse c'est le sens de ce discours même, jusque dans sa dimension de révélation philosophique, qui doit être réexaminé en fonction du dialogue tout entier, y compris dans ses indications périphériques ou allusives, si on ne les tient pas pour décoratives (elles-mêmes non dépourvues d'érotisme, comme le souligne jalousement Alcibiade).

De fait, quelque chose résiste et continue d'étonner dans le *Banquet* — si on ne s'en tient pas à la « révélation » de Diotime et à la *leçon* donnée à Socrate, et largement retenue par la postérité : celle de la philosophicisation de l'amour et de l'érotisation (« platonique ») de la philosophie. Et ce qui résiste à la belle union de l'amour et de la philosophie tient à la dimension poétique, sous deux formes et à deux endroits spécifiques du texte. L'un se trouve à la fin du *Banquet*, sous la forme d'une référence extérieure, théorique et énigmatique à l'art poétique : le *Banquet* s'achève, comme on sait, par la mention d'une ultime discussion de Socrate avec Agathon et Aristophane, seuls encore éveillés, où il est dit, sous forme ramassée (donc *résumée*), que Socrate *l'emporte*, et l'emporte (*contre* l'un et l'autre, donc, dans leur différence) sur la question de l'unité de *l'art poétique* et de *l'identité* de nature de l'auteur de tragédie et de l'auteur de comédie. Au moins formellement, et dans le style du dialogue philosophique, Socrate destitue le tragique et le comique de leur compétence spécifique pour les ramener au même — sinon à lui-même. Mais de cette fin connue on ne sait tout à fait que faire : fin allusive et ouverte, qu'on peut tenir pour ornementale ou qu'on peut croire indiquer l'horizon d'un autre dialogue (ou du moins le goût socratique inlassable pour la discussion), mais qui de toute évidence appelle l'interprétation. Et si, au lieu d'ouvrir une suite et de marquer un écart, il fallait la comprendre au contraire d'abord dans sa fonction de clôture : ni relance ni diversion mais première invitation à relire, et à comprendre que le *Banquet* est bien l'histoire d'une victoire de Socrate, et d'une victoire face à Aristophane et Agathon (quitte à ce qu'il s'agisse peut-être alors d'une victoire à la Pyrrhus).

Il se trouve que cette lecture rétroactive de cette référence finale à l'art poétique attire l'attention sur une autre référence aux genres poétiques, cette fois au sein même du discours de Socrate et avec un enjeu de contenu, selon la double référence critique (qu'on a relevée au titre de la compétition) à Agathon et à Aristophane, double référence qui n'est pas ponctuelle ou conjoncturelle mais bien structurelle et significative, en ce qu'elle rouvre et peut-être modifie l'enjeu de sens du *Banquet* (et en lui du sens de la philosophie face à la poésie).

L'analyse suppose donc ici de mesurer d'abord le rôle de la référence à Agathon, dans sa récusation suivie de sa reprise, puis face à lui le rôle de la référence à Aristophane, dans sa reprise suivie de sa récusation, pour aborder à partir de ce jeu le sens global du discours de Socrate, dans son unité, au-delà de la reprise et de la récusation mais par l'effet de leur croisement.

Le côté d'Agathon, d'abord, et dans un premier temps du discours, consiste en son remplacement par quelque chose d'aristophanien, alors même que Socrate commence par revendiquer l'héritage d'Agathon et s'inscrire dans sa continuité. Ce n'est en effet pas seulement la réponse et l'adresse à Agathon qui lance le discours de Socrate (avant d'ailleurs qu'il ne se constitue en discours à partir du moment où Socrate *prend la place d'Agathon* dans la réfutation préalable menée par Diotime) : c'est le principe même du discours d'Agathon dans sa déclaration de méthode auquel Socrate rend hommage et qu'il reprend (au-delà de la critique même) pour en faire la structure générale de son discours, structure qui, comme le préconisait Agathon (sur la *forme* donc), fait précéder l'examen de « l'utilité » de l'amour de la considération (essentielle) de sa « nature » (195 a et 199 c). Même si la distinction structurelle connaît quelques accrocs, elle est rigoureusement soulignée, à trois reprises : pour en faire l'éloge chez Agathon (même si c'est immédiatement pour critiquer la « nature », 199 c), pour introduire le discours Diotime comme en reprenant l'ordre (201 d-e) et, au sein de ce discours, pour marquer la grande coupure (204 c) entre le moment (réfutatif) de la « nature » et le passage au moment (plus « positif ») de l'« utilité » (et de la montée progressive vers la « révélation » ultime).

Sauf que si la « nature » préalablement distinguée de « l'utilité » est formellement reprise à Agathon, c'est pour une reprise critique, celle précisément du moment réfutatif, et qui, à la valeur d'un amour paré chez Agathon de toutes les beautés et de toutes les vertus, oppose la généalogie mixte d'un amour fait de manque et de pauvreté, dépourvu de la beauté qu'il désire (avec mille ressources il est vrai, héritées du côté paternel, mais sans ce savoir qui le met du côté de la philosophie parce qu'il en manque et le désire *par-dessus le marché*). Avant de passer trop vite à la philosophie et de s'attacher au côté intermédiaire du petit démon, il faut mesurer l'opposition à Agathon, qui n'est pas seulement théorique, mais poétique : l'amour n'est pas tragique (ou philosophique, si l'on veut, dans la référence aux valeurs de vertus), il est comique, voire farcesque, au moins dans sa naissance, invraisemblable, forcée dans le père ivre, dérobée par la mère mendicante. Ici on n'est pas très loin d'Aristophane, en écho au personnage de la Pauvreté dans *Ploutos* et non sans évoquer la figure débraillée et travestie, non d'Eros, mais de Dionysos dans les *Grenouilles* (là où il s'agit pour le dieu d'aller ressusciter un grand Tragique, et Eschyle de préférence à Euripide : la comédie se mêle aussi de tragédie...).

Mais, si l'on est fondé à reconnaître dans la généalogie d'Eros, sinon l'Aristophane du

Banquet lui-même, du moins une dimension franchement comique et même burlesque, comment comprendre alors la distance inattendue prise avec Aristophane dans le second moment ? — si ce n'est précisément qu'elle intervient dans le second moment, à *distance* du premier. Si, dans le cadre du discours d'Agathon et d'abord contre lui, Socrate « aristophanisait », c'est pour ensuite à l'inverse s'opposer à Aristophane, et contre lui « agathoniser ».

D'abord, si la critique d'Aristophane est rapide et glissée, elle n'en est pas moins radicale et significative : inattendue peut-être, mais d'une nécessité d'autant plus visible et qui s'étend à l'ensemble de la deuxième partie (c'est-à-dire de la révélation de Diotime), à un endroit stratégique de son ascension : c'est contre le « récit qui raconte que chercher la moitié de soi-même, c'est aimer » que l'amour est recompris comme recherche générale du « bon » qu'il s'agit de posséder (205 d – e) — opposition n'invoquant la possibilité de l'amputation que pour prendre bientôt ses distances avec la corporéité même de l'amour.

Ensuite, il semble bien que ce soit largement à Agathon que profite et fasse place cette récusation du discours d'Aristophane (du mythe de l'androgyné, cette fois), tant la description substitutive de (l'utilité, mais *non* de la nature de) l'amour emprunte ou reprend de traits, non plus seulement de méthode, mais du discours même d'Agathon sur (la *nature* de) l'amour : certes l'amour n'est pas, pour Socrate, dans sa « nature », « le plus beau et le meilleur » (195 a), comme l'annonçait Agathon ; certes, Socrate ne reprend pas non plus les dimensions d'une *areté* qui, chez Agathon, correspondait pourtant dans l'ordre aux quatre vertus de la *République* (justice, modération, courage et *sophia*, 196 b – e) ; et il est vrai que l'argumentation de ces vertus par Agathon est plus oratoire voire sophistique que philosophique et qu'elle s'éloigne pour sa part de la *République*, jusqu'à réserver la *sophia* directement à l'activité poétique — élargi à la production de poètes, à la fabrication de la vie, à la découverte des arts et jusqu'à la pratique du gouvernement (196 e – 197 b) — ; mais Socrate en retient bien quelque chose dans la seconde partie de son discours, et précisément, presque terme à terme, quelque chose de ce surinvestissement par l'amour de l'activité poétique : il reprend d'une part la catégorie générale de la *poiësis* pour la comparer à cette catégorie générale qu'est l'amour comme désir du bon(heur), spécifiquement réservée à l'usage amoureux [et alors *distingué* de la « philosophie »] comme la *poiësis* génératrice peut être réservée à l'art musical ; mais d'autre part le modèle de l'accouchement, dans ses deux aspects, reprend assez exactement, côté corps, le principe de la création de la vie (y compris animale) et, côté âme, comme enfantement de la « pensée » et de l'*areté*, le cas des « poètes », élargi à celui des « artisans », et celui de l'administration des maisons et des cités (caractérisé par les vertus de *sôphrosunê* et de *dikaïosunê*) [208 e], récapitulés avant l'ultime « initiation » (à l'Idée) par le double exemple d'Hésiode et d'Homère d'un côté et de Lycurgue et de Solon de l'autre [209 d – e]. Il n'est pas jusqu'à la tonalité sophistique (de quelque manière qu'on l'interprète) que les discours ne partagent, puisque si Socrate pointait le style « gorgien » de la péroraison d'Agathon (198 c) avant d'entreprendre de le réfuter, lui-même qualifie la réponse de Diotime sur la recherche d'immortalité dont témoigne le sacrifice héroïque de réponse digne d'un excellent « sophiste » (208 c), après qu'elle-même a donné au portrait renouvelé d'Eros dans son ingéniosité les traits de ce « sorcier » et de ce « magicien » que Platon par ailleurs associe plutôt au sophiste qu'au « philosophe » (cf. *Pol.*, 303 c, *Soph.*, 235 a).

Le rapport ambigu, pour le moins partagé, que le discours de Socrate entretient avec Agathon répète et révèle comme en écho le cas du rapport à Aristophane, jusqu'à mettre au jour une symétrie structurelle appuyée : c'est Aristophane contre Agathon sur la « nature » de l'amour, mais Agathon contre Aristophane sur l'utilité de l'amour ; la « nature » comique de l'amour séparée de son utilité idéale-philosophique, mais son utilité idéale-philosophique (et déjà la reprise de la « nature » d'Agathon) contre ou à distance de sa « nature ». Comment interpréter ce jeu, ce croisement, et son effet sur l'unité et le sens du discours de Socrate ? Et qu'implique-t-il sur les relations en jeu de la poésie et de la philosophie ? Le premier effet de la symétrie croisée est d'introduire du jeu, et même un hiatus, entre les deux moments méthodiques de l'analyse distingués (mais en fait liés, unifiés) par Agathon — ce qui est déjà le récuser en le reprenant —. Le deuxième effet de la symétrie est de juxtaposer, ou plutôt d'associer en croisant une tonalité comique et une tonalité 'tragique' — donc de donner comme une idée ou un échantillon de cet art poétique même et double dont Socrate arrache à Aristophane et à Agathon la concession à la fin du *Banquet*. Mais quelle « tragédie », et où au juste ? dans la seconde partie comme telle, au motif qu'elle récuse le discours comique d'Aristophane et reprend, d'ailleurs peut-être pas entièrement et jusqu'au bout, la position défendue par le vainqueur « tragique » du jour ? Et, de ce point de vue, aussi bien quelle « philosophie » dans le second moment, de « l'utilité » apposée à la « nature » (comique) ? si c'est dans le second moment qu'est la philosophie : philosophie d'Agathon, avec sa tonalité sophistique ? philosophie à partir d'Agathon, et gagnée sur lui par l'ultime révélation du « mystère » ? Philosophie à terme, donc, qu'on pourrait et

qu'il faudrait détacher du reste du discours, réduit à un jeu ? Mais pourquoi encore une fois le *Banquet* finit-il par là, par l'accent mis sur la compétence poétique, obligeant à y revenir ? Et si c'était dans le jeu, dans la totalité du jeu (et du discours) qu'était la philosophie, au risque de n'être qu'un jeu, essentiellement critique ?

Il importe pour cela de revenir encore une fois sur la structure (symétrique) pour y chercher le statut de la « partie » agathonienne dans le tout en déterminant (c'est son troisième effet) où se situe la tragédie, s'il est vrai que ne suffisent à la caractériser ni la seule opposition au discours comique d'Aristophane ni la qualification d'Agathon comme tragédien (ni même de la tonalité « héroïque » de son discours) et que l'accès « philosophique » à l'Idée, dans la sérénité lumineuse de l'éternité, tout « mystique » qu'il soit, peut difficilement être considéré comme tragique : Agathon après Aristophane est-il donc la tragédie après la comédie, et que faire de Socrate dans le croisement, que faire du croisement pour l'amour, et pour la philosophie ?

La question est plus complexe à énoncer qu'à résoudre : c'est un double et même enjeu de déterminer l'unité du discours de Socrate (à travers le croisement) et l'enjeu d'ensemble du *Banquet*, de déterminer la part tragique, le sens du rapport entre comédie et tragédie et le lieu ou la statut du philosophique ; c'est en même temps qu'il y a à envisager le sens de la « leçon » de Socrate (Diotime) sur l'amour, l'enjeu de l'affirmation finale par Socrate de l'identité de l'art de la comédie et de l'art de la tragédie (comme enjeu *réalisé*) et l'évaluation de la tonalité agathonienne de son discours entre tragédie, sophistique et philosophie. On n'a peut-être pas suffisamment prêté attention à la manière dont l'éloge par Socrate de la structuration méthodique du discours d'Agathon était *précédé* d'un éloge, généralement considéré pour sa part comme ironique, de la *péroration* de son discours en référence au pouvoir médusant de Gorgias [198 c] : par une sorte de *partage* présupposé, on a cru pouvoir distinguer critique de la sophistique et éloge du philosophique, là où au contraire il y a peut-être unité et continuité ; à l'inverse, dans la reprise de la structuration méthodique du discours en deux temps, c'est sans doute la discontinuité voire la fracture qui l'emporte sur l'unité et la continuité, en vertu d'un croisement dont les deux éloges initiaux de Socrate avertissaient en quelque sorte par avance, puisqu'ils commençaient par l'éloge ironique de la fin avant l'éloge apparent du début (avertissant donc aussi de prendre garde à la fin malgré la qualité possible du début, ce même début par lequel Socrate recommence). De fait, le contenu même des deux moments du discours apparaît, au moins à travers le *glissement* de la référence à Aristophane, comme divergent voire nettement contradictoire : la « nature » de l'amour, comique et non-agathonienne, ne coïncide pas avec son « utilité », largement agathonienne et ouvertement non-comique ; le moyen de sauver, et de sauver philosophiquement l'amour dans cette fracture ?

Or, de cette scission, ou en tout cas de cette discontinuité et non de cette unité d'un moment à l'autre du discours, le seul signe n'est pas dans la récusation d'Aristophane au profit d'une certaine reprise d'Agathon : il en est un autre, sans doute moins visible mais d'autant plus nettement marqué qu'il se situe au moment stratégique du passage de la « nature » à « l'utilité ». Ce passage, très progressif, est en effet caractérisé par une série de préalables et de déplacements, voire de ruptures entre le moment réfutatif (centré sur la « nature ») et le moment positif (de l'analyse de « l'utilité »). La transition d'Eros bâtard à la contemplation de l'Idée du beau, que permet pour sa part le développement de l'image de l'accouchement [elle-même développée en trois temps signalés, 207 a, 208 b, 209 e] suppose en effet un jeu avec la référence au beau, étrangement réintroduit puis étonnamment abandonné pour revenir sous une autre forme et à une autre place — là où précisément il commandera le modèle de l'accouchement, assez loin du modèle généalogique qui avait permis de décrire la « nature » d'Eros.

La transition même de la nature d'Eros à son « utilité » se fait par une opposition et un ajout étonnants, qui *mettent à part ce qu'on croyait lié* : au portrait d'Eros comme non beau (donc non aimé mais aimant), dans sa « nature » et son « origine », s'ajoute, au titre du passage à « l'utilité », l'objet de son amour comme « en outre amour de ce qui est beau » (204 d, *esti men toioutos... , esti de tôn kalôn*), pour introduire au type de relation qu'il entretient avec cet objet. Étrange ajout, dans la transition marquée de la nature à l'utilité, puisque c'est précisément l'amour du beau qui avait déterminé la nature d'Eros comme manque (200 e – 201 b) et recherche du beau (et surtout du savoir), donc comme intermédiaire ; il est certes assez naturel, s'agissant de l'examen de l'utilité, de mettre l'accent sur l'objet et la relation à l'objet, mais cela conduit à mettre le rapport au beau, pourtant à l'origine de la disqualification d'Eros comme beau, à l'écart de sa nature (non belle) pour introduire à ses effets : première différence dans l'unité même de la description dans l'articulation de ses deux parties.

Or, et peut-être surtout, à quoi conduit ce retour du beau dans l'examen de l'utilité ? A sa disparition immédiate, au moins préalable, et à sa substitution par la référence au « bon » (204 e), qui

permet d'introduire le motif de l'éternité (aussitôt ensuite réinjecté dans le modèle de l'accouchement, avec la fortune « spirituelle » que l'on sait) : ce motif de l'éternité suppose deux éléments nouveaux : d'une part, la référence générale au désir de « bonheur » comme possession des choses bonnes — permise par l'*abandon* et le 'remplacement' de « beau » par « bon » (et on ne saurait tabler sur l'identité du *kalos kagathos*, puisque c'est cette substitution qui seule permet à Socrate de trouver la réponse du bonheur ; et l'abandon du beau est non pas continuité mais distance d'autant plus prononcée avec le premier portrait d'Eros que le désir de bonheur, quoique général, est ici, dans l'amour, distingué de ce qu'il est dans la « philosophie » — ; et l'autre élément décisif est d'autre part l'insistance, présentée comme un ajout (*prostheteon*), sur le désir de permanence dans la possession qui débouche sur une véritable redéfinition de l'amour (quant à son objet) : *to agathon hautôi einai aei* (206 a). A la première et étrange distance avec le premier portrait d'Eros que laissait pressentir la dimension *supplémentaire* du beau s'ajoute la nouvelle distance immédiate et étonnante, avec le beau lui-même, que signalent la *substitution* du « bon » au « beau », et avec elle le nouveau *supplément* d'éternité (qui va permettre toute la bascule de l'accouchement du corps à l'âme). Comme si la distance n'était pas suffisamment visible, c'est précisément ici (et autrement de manière inopinée) qu'est marquée la distance avec le modèle aristophanien de l'androgyné (205 e – 206 a) : c'est au nom de l'amour du bon qu'est disqualifié l'amour de la moitié. Sans doute le discours du comique, dans le *Banquet*, n'est pas identique à la généalogie burlesque d'Eros dans la bouche de Diotime — sauf le genre — ; mais que reste-t-il du point de départ, visiblement en train de s'éloigner ? Est-ce bien du même Eros qu'il s'agit ?

On pourrait le croire, dans la troisième étape de ce jeu, avec l'introduction du motif de l'accouchement, d'autant qu'y revient le motif de la beauté (et le nom même de la déesse de la Beauté, *Kallônê*, présidant aux accouchements, 206 d). Mais la beauté y revient changée, et elle aussi, une fois encore, *déplacée* : si la 'manière d'être' et l'œuvre de l'amour consistent à accoucher, c'est à accoucher « dans le beau » et non « dans le laid » (*en tõi kalõi*, 206 c) et c'est « le beau » que cherche pour procréer celui qui est fécond selon l'âme (*to kalon*, 209 b). On peut hésiter sur la traduction : « le beau », est-ce bien l'objet du désir (sur le modèle corporel) ? est-ce un milieu, une condition (on trouve la traduction « dans de bonnes conditions », assez générale, mais qui supprime la référence au beau, comme la traduction « à terme », qui renvoie au développement normal de la grossesse mais qui en plus de faire disparaître le beau supprime la relation), est-ce une qualité (préparant l'Idée par la neutralisation de l'adjectif) ?

On peut d'autant plus hésiter sur la traduction, c'est-à-dire sur la représentation, que l'image de l'accouchement, quand elle se développe du côté de l'âme, ne paraît pas tout à fait clairement fixée, malgré le modèle pédagogique (qui accouche de quoi, l'amant ou l'aimé ? l'amour du beau dans l'autre âme — et à travers elle de l'Idée du beau — fait-elle produire soi-même pour celle-ci [des poèmes ou des lois] ou la rend-elle productrice elle-même ? et l'Idée du beau elle-même est-elle ce qui fait produire, « océan du beau » [210 e], ou ce qu'il s'agit de produire ou ce dont il s'agit de produire la contemplation [comme contact de la vertu véritable, 212 a] ?).

Mais ce qui est sûr, c'est que ce retour du beau, comme condition décisive de l'accouchement dans son caractère « érotique », et comme condition décisive de la *métaphorisation* de l'accouchement du corporel au spirituel, — qu'on le traduise en référence à l'objet aimé ou mieux encore aux conditions de production, sinon à l'objet même de la production —, ce retour du beau s'inscrit dans un éloignement désormais maximal mais indirect avec le premier portrait d'Eros et les conditions rocambolesques de sa naissance : beauté de l'objet aimé, Poros ? rien ne le dit (ce sont plutôt ses « ressources » que convoiterait la mendicante) ; beauté de l'objet de la production, Eros ? mais l'histoire est précisément faite pour *ne pas* attribuer la beauté à Eros ; beauté enfin et surtout des « conditions », du milieu et du moment ? c'est évidemment la fête de naissance d'Aphrodite, mais lors d'un moment volé à l'écart de la fête par une mendicante profitant d'un sommeil d'ivrogne : mythe, sans doute, et mythe utile (lui-même fécond), mais on accordera qu'on fait mieux comme relation amoureuse dans la vie, pour ne rien dire de l'amour qu'à partir du *Banquet* on dira « platonique ».

En somme, à y regarder de près (et dans les étapes même de la transition et de l'ascension), sous couvert de reprise de la distinction méthodologique d'Agathon entre « nature » et « utilité », la différence des deux moments ne se mesure pas seulement au partage entre Aristophane et Agathon (et l'un contre l'autre) : la scission structurelle se joue et se signale dans les premières étapes de la transition même entre nature et utilité qui construit le motif de l'accouchement spirituel en ouvrant à l'éternité.

Qu'est-ce à dire pour le sens, et le sens philosophique du beau ? Qu'est-ce à dire en même temps pour le sens du discours et de sa composition « poétique », jouant des poètes, l'un avec l'autre, l'un contre l'autre, réversiblement, contradictoirement ? En tout cas 1. La nature de l'amour n'est pas

conforme à son utilité, pas plus que son utilité à sa nature ; et 2. (pê) si le comique a raison sur la nature de l'amour, il a tort et ne peut rien dire sur son utilité ; si le 'tragique' a raison sur l'utilité de l'amour, il a tort et ne peut rien dire de sa nature. A moins que la distribution —poétique— ne se joue pas ainsi, et que le tragique, s'il existe, ne soit pas là.

Plutôt que négliger le hiatus (et l'effet de hiatus), il y a en effet à préciser entre quoi et quoi il se joue, et où il se joue, pour en dégager le sens général.

On peut certes contester le repérage, d'une partie à l'autre du discours de Socrate, d'un hiatus prononcé (puisque aussi bien il se montre autant qu'il se dissimule). Du point de vue des « genres poétiques » en jeu —et, à travers eux, de la réplique de Socrate aux discours antérieurs—, si le rôle critique du comique paraît incontestable (entre généalogie d'Eros et récusation d'Aristophane), la détermination parallèle du tragique en face de lui dans la référence à Agathon est moins évidente (alors que c'est largement à cette qualification « agathonienne » de la seconde partie du discours face à une première partie « aristophanesque » que se joue en grande partie l'interprétation du discours de Diotime, et à travers lui du *Banquet* tout entier). Et, du point de vue de la transition entre les deux parties du discours, on peut ne pas accorder d'importance décisive et ne pas reconnaître d'étrangeté particulière au retour du beau dans l'introduction de « l'utilité » de l'amour, à son délai ou son détour par la question du bonheur et de la possession durable de ce « bon », puis enfin à la relecture qu'il permet du modèle de l'accouchement, qui n'est naturalisé que pour parvenir à sa vérité spirituelle. On peut bien considérer, et avec quelque raison, au choix, qu'une telle méthode de digression et d'enveloppement, dans le texte, pour retravailler une image décisive est « typiquement platonicienne », que l'exigence de parfaite rigueur logique est négligeable, qu'elle reste aveugle à l'essentiel, et qu'elle relève de l'esprit chagrin des maîtres d'école fermés à l'enjeu d'*entraînement même* du beau désir, ouvert à l'inédite révélation. La beauté de l'Idée vaut bien quelques délais, quelques détours, et même quelques brumes.

Le problème, c'est alors néanmoins qu'il s'agit là de l'essentiel, et du plus haut objet de la philosophie à fonder, tout à la fois théoriquement (comme unicité suprême de l'intelligible) et pratiquement (comme horizon de l'existence), et qu'on voit mal comment un tel enjeu pourrait s'accommoder d'approximation, surtout sur la base d'une relecture inédite et paradoxale de l'expérience du désir. Et l'objection se précise si l'on considère encore deux choses : d'une part, comment, sinon par parti-pris, faire droit, dans le moment positif de la construction, à une forme de négligence ou d'approximation argumentative, quand le moment préalable de la réfutation d'Agathon (puis de Socrate lui-même face à Diotime) se caractérise au contraire par l'exigence logique la plus rigoureuse ? D'autre part, et plus largement, comment croire à la négligence ou surtout à l'*insignifiance* de construction dans la construction du dialogue, et d'un dialogue dont Platon donne tous les signes, dans et autour du discours de Socrate, qu'il y a à l'*interpréter* en fonction de la relation privilégiée avec Aristophane et Agathon ?

Il est vrai que s'ajoute alors encore un problème du problème, celui que rencontre une interprétation de type « dialogique », avec sa valeur de principe et ses ambiguïtés de résultat. Entre dogmatisme et scepticisme, si la « troisième voie » est bien une position de *lecture*, qui entend refuser de réduire les dialogues au statut ornemental (et « littéraire ») d'un prétexte à leçon et prétend au contraire faire droit à la considération du texte dans son intégralité en donnant sens à ses étapes, à ses péripéties, à ses interlocuteurs et à sa mise en scène, sans formalisme mais avec contenu, le risque en est dans l'indétermination voire dans la contre-détermination, qui réduit le sens au contexte de l'échange (toujours à recommencer) ou nie même le sens au nom du contexte (et de ses traces d'ironie ou de distance) : déception de la relativité ou contre-dogmatisme (à la manière extrême de V. Tejera ou, plus subtilement, de Léo Strauss sur la *République*), qui fait échapper l'*objet* du discours. L'Idée dans le *Banquet* ne serait pas le noyau de vérité philosophique, mais le renvoi par Socrate d'Aristophane et d'Agathon dos à dos, et dans l'écart de ce jeu la manifestation non d'une continuité mais d'une rupture entre Eros et philosophie.

C'est peut-être vrai, en partie, et positivement, en maintenant tous les termes. On voudrait indiquer en quel sens en proposant une interprétation du sens tragique et du sens philosophique de la lecture du *Banquet*, en tentant d'éviter le risque de déception « dialogique ».

L'idée est d'investir une dernière fois l'écart entre les deux parties du discours de Socrate, en posant qu'il est net et qu'en un sens il est même fait pour être visible, par l'effet de structure comme de progression, sans pour autant être ruineux et réducteur mais au contraire multiplicateur du sens. La récusation d'Aristophane dans la seconde partie (mais pas tout à fait dans la première) comme la réfutation d'Agathon dans la première (mais pas tout à fait dans la seconde) font qu'il y a *non pas un* mais deux Eros ou deux aspects d'Eros, répartis mais séparés dans sa « nature » et dans son « utilité », dans sa généalogie bâtarde (quoique très vite « philosophique ») et dans son élévation initiatique

(quoique inscrite jusque dans l'accouplement des bêtes). Il y a bien un Eros « philosophique », présent dans la seconde partie, agathonisante, du discours de Socrate, qui dit la valeur d'Eros mais *pas* sa nature ; et à côté de lui l'Eros commun, mythique, de sang mêlé, présent dans la première partie, aristophanisante, qui dit sa nature et *pas* tout à fait sa valeur (malgré sa rapide et formelle « philosophie ») ; mais, quoique dans le discours « nature » et « utilité » s'inscrivent dans une apparente continuité, *ce n'est pas le même Eros* : il n'est pas *du même genre* (poétique). Tout comme il n'est pas du même « genre » dans la leçon dialectique du *Phèdre*, dialogue consacré lui aussi à l'amour, consacré en même temps plus réflexivement encore au discours et précisant la différence entre rhétorique et philosophie non pas directement par le rapport à l'Idée mais par l'association du mouvement ascendant de « rassemblement » (*sunagôgê*) et d'un rapport descendant de « division » (*diairesis*, 265 c – 266 b) : autour de la palinodie, la succession du blâme et de l'éloge de l'amour relève bien de la *division* entre un amour « de gauche », apparenté à une « faim » tyrannique, « maladie humaine », et un amour « de droite », de nature divine [et relié à Aphrodite et Eros, 265 b] (265 d – e ; et, pour la négativité, voir 238 b, 241 c). Et c'est bien sur cette ligne que Plotin relit le *Banquet* dans la perspective des hypostases (Traité III 5 [50], *Sur l'amour*), distinguant une Aphrodite « ouranienne » (proche de l'Intellect) et une Aphrodite « pandémienne » (tournée vers le sensible), et conséquemment un Eros réellement divin d'un Eros « démonique », associé à l'histoire de Poros et Pénia.

Or, c'est aussi une constante flagrante du théâtre d'Euripide, cité en bonne place dans le discours de Socrate à côté d'Homère (l'immortalisation d'Alceste étant associée à celle d'Achille, 208 d), et critiqué par ailleurs par Aristophane (dans les *Thesmophories*) pour avoir médit de l'amour en général (et des femmes en particulier) — mais c'est en réalité que dans Euripide les ravages criminels du désir sont précisément confrontés à une mesure et à une valeur de l'amour, selon une scission que représente la dualité tendancielle d'Aphrodite (ou de Cypris) et d'Eros.

Dans *Hélène*, Hélène qui a retrouvé Ménélas adresse à Aphrodite une prière négative pour que réussisse la ruse qui leur permettra de rentrer ensemble, en faisant passer son mari pour mort : le charme de la déesse dépend d'une « mesure » dont il n'est pas sûr qu'elle soit capable et que dément le mal dont elle a été et reste cause : « Et toi qui as conquis, au prix de ma personne, le prix de la beauté, / Cypris fille de Dioné, veuille ne pas me perdre. / C'est bien assez du mal que tu m'as déjà fait / en livrant aux Barbares, sinon mon corps, ce qui du moins porta mon nom. / .../ Es-tu donc de souffrance insatiable, / toujours à préparer amours, pièges et tromperies, / philtres sanglants qui perdent les familles ? / Si tu gardais plus de mesure, nulle déesse / n'aurait pour les mortels autant de charme. » (1097-1106, trad. M. Delcourt-Curvers, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1962). Dans *Iphigénie à Aulis*, à l'inverse, dans le premier stasimon, qui rappelle l'amour coupable de Pâris à l'origine de la guerre de Troie, donc au départ du sacrifice d'Iphigénie en préparation, Aphrodite est tendanciellement dissociée d'Eros pour être valorisée : en tout cas, associée à lui, elle est source de « mesure » et de toute « vertu » (domestique pour les femmes, politique pour les hommes, 555-572), quand, dissocié d'elle, Eros au contraire n'apporte que le malheur ; c'est bien lui (plus qu'elle) qui paraît double : « Heureux ceux à qui la déesse accorde mesure et pudeur, / ceux que, sur le lit d'Aphrodite, / ses dards furieux laissent en repos, / à l'heure où le blond Eros / lance à la fois les *deux* traits du plaisir. / L'un donne la félicité. / Où frappe le second toute vie est détruite. / Belle Cypris, écarte-le de notre lit. / Accorde-moi de plaire avec pudeur, / de n'inspirer que des désirs permis, / et de connaître ta douceur / à l'abri de ta violence. » (543-554). Dans *Médée*, de même, Cypris est invoquée en contrepoint des ravages de la passion criminelle, pour sa « vertu » : le deuxième stasimon, après le renvoi de Médée, oppose sa « mesure » au poison du désir et de la trahison (cela vaut alors pour Jason plus que pour Médée), même si la déesse est aussi susceptible du pire : « Un amour qui fond sur un cœur surpris n'apporte avec soi ni honneur ni vertu. / mais que Cypris t'aborde avec mesure, / nulle divinité n'aura charme plus grand. / Veuille donc, ô déesse, / ne pas lancer de ton arc d'or sur moi / la flèche qu'on n'évite pas, / trempée au poison du désir. » (627-633) ; plus nettement encore, dans le troisième stasimon, quand il s'agit d'envisager l'accueil de Médée à Athènes après la résolution de vengeance qu'elle vient de prendre (et de l'en dissuader), Cypris est tout entière associée à une douce vertu, même si elle paraît sélectionner en cela les amours : « Près des flots du Céphise au beau cours, / on dit que Cypris vient puiser, pour souffler sur tout le pays / des brises parfumées, des vents modérés. / Mêlant sans cesse à ses cheveux des guirlandes de roses, / des fleurs odorantes, elle répand tout autour d'elle / ceux des Amours qui accompagnent la sagesse, / auxiliaires de toute vertu. » (832-838). Mais, dans *Hippolyte* au contraire (dont le héros il est vrai tout à la fois dédaigne l'amour et en subit le déchaînement), Cypris bascule presque tout entière du côté de la tyrannie d'Eros, et d'une tyrannie que Phèdre dans le premier stasimon (après son aveu) associe à travers Bacchos à la mort [fin, vers 560] : comme dans *Hélène*, c'est à peine si l'éventualité de la mesure conserve un charme à l'amour,

tenté par la faute ; mais, comme dans *Iphigénie à Aulis*, c'est à Eros que paraît bien revenir l'essentiel de la faute : « Eros, Eros, tu verses goutte à goutte / le désir dans les yeux, les délices dans l'âme / sur qui va fondre ton attaque. / Ne viens jamais vers moi / avec la faute pour compagne. / Garde toujours juste mesure. / Car ni le feu ni les étoiles / n'ont un trait si brûlant que celui d'Aphrodite / quand il est décoché / par Eros fils de Zeus. / .../ tyran des hommes / porte-clef de l'alcôve amoureuse / où règne Aphrodite, / Eros le ravageur qui n'apporte aux mortels / que des calamités où qu'il veuille paraître. » (525-546).

Aphrodite accusée de tous les maux dans *Hélène*, vertueuse au contraire et dissociée d'Eros double dans *Iphigénie à Aulis* (sur le même sujet), opposant de même dans *Médée* sa douce mesure aux crimes de l'amour, mais à nouveau réduite à un Eros essentiellement désastreux dans *Hippolyte* : certes sans référence à l'Idée, tout le théâtre d'Euripide est traversé d'une référence à l'amour du côté du bonheur et de la vertu, voire de la sagesse, par opposition à un amour ravageur, passionnel et coupable, opposition qui, selon les circonstances, partage ou traverse Aphrodite et Eros. De ce point de vue, chez Euripide spécifiquement, plus proche de Platon que d'Aristophane, la tragédie vient essentiellement d'Eros, et Eros est tragique (au grand dam d'Aristophane). Et la tragédie d'Eros tient directement à sa dualité, dans sa relation mouvante à Aphrodite, partagée entre désir criminel et possibilité heureuse de la vertu.

Comment ne pas voir dans ce *drame* de la valeur érotique, entre passion et vertu, une correspondance avec les deux côtés du discours de Socrate ? C'est en tout cas une voie (certes elle-même dramatisée) pour identifier le côté tragique qui nous échappait en face du côté ouvertement comique : ce n'est pas dans la référence à Agathon, dans la seconde partie du discours de Socrate, en opposition à Aristophane, que se trouve la tragédie ; mais c'est bien dans l'impossible continuité entre les deux parties du discours, entre Aristophane et Agathon, entre la « nature » de l'amour et son « utilité », entre farce et 'philosophie'.

Et c'est là un moyen de comprendre cette unité de l'art poétique dont il est dit que Socrate arrache la concession à Agathon et à Aristophane à la fin du *Banquet*, et dont son propre discours, structuré par la référence croisée aux deux poètes, serait bien la mise en œuvre ou l'indication : comédie et tragédie n'y sont pas présentes côte à côte, selon une juxtaposition des parties du discours et une dissociation critique de ses registres et de ses objets ; elle sont présentes *pli sur pli*, si l'on peut dire, l'une aux limites de l'autre, le tragique dans l'imperceptible césure qui sépare la nature comique de l'amour de son utilité philosophique, le tragique *du* comique même (parce que l'amour, aristophanien, ne suffit pas à sa propre grandeur ou à sa propre valeur), mais le comique quand même (là même où la grandeur de l'amour n'est pas vraiment dans sa nature, et où il est « philosophe » *pour rire*).

Que reste-t-il donc de la vérité philosophique ? Celle de la comédie, qui conduirait avec l'Idée du beau à (se) rire *de* la philosophie ? Celle de la tragédie, c'est-à-dire non pas de la continuité mais de la rupture entre la vérité du désir et le désir de vérité ? Ou bien celle du *drame*, c'est-à-dire réellement de l'unité de la comédie et de la tragédie, là où elle se joue, c'est-à-dire *pli sur pli*, comme par recouvrement, opérant dans le texte un changement de niveau qui est son épaisseur même et ouvrant alors à partir de là un autre espace que celui du théâtre (pour la révélation) : c'est parce que l'amour est à la fois tragique et comique qu'il a chance d'être philosophique.

Est philosophique le discours qui s'institue à partir du moment où il a réalisé, par son geste inaugural, poétique ou méta-poétique, l'unification de la comédie et de la tragédie, pour y ajouter le nouveau genre de la révélation.

En tout cas ce sens — ce *genre* philosophique — est aussi présent dans l'unité du discours à côté des autres et à travers leur jeu, qui est aussi le jeu de l'amour, et dont pourrait s'envisager ainsi une forme de règlement : le philosophique dans l'unification de la comédie et de la tragédie, qui est aussi différence et distance et autant de sens possibles ou partiels. Evidemment il est toujours un peu facile et décevant de conclure à la polysémie ; mais il est aussi facile et décevant de prétendre à un sens unique, surtout en privilégiant une partie du texte ; et, de cette polysémie, on aura tenté au moins, dans le texte, de repérer les niveaux et de fixer la *composition*. Car c'est bien ainsi que Platon pense la lecture, si l'on se souvient encore une fois du *Phèdre* et de ce qui fait la vérité d'un texte : non pas seulement la dialectique qui définit par rassemblement et division, mais le texte comme totalité organique et surtout la manière qu'il a de s'adresser différemment à chaque âme (271 c – 272 b, et surtout 276 a – 277 a), ce qui signifie inversement qu'il n'y a pas d'autre moyen de décider du sens que de le choisir et d'y mettre (de) son âme. Celle des peintres et des poètes qui, faisant « renaître » Platon, ont tâché d'élever le visible à l'invisible ; mais celle aussi bien des philosophes qui, parfois, ont pu se prendre à l'inverse au jeu et à la fascination de l'image — image de l'enfantement spirituel, image de l'initiation, image de l'Idée même en un sens, fascination suprême du texte, contre quoi par

son déjeu Platon n'aura cessé d'avertir – contre le risque pour le sens de mourir et, pour l'âme, de se perdre. Il y a donc toujours à relire le *Banquet* ; et ce n'est pas dans le sens (ou le contresens) décidé d'une ruine de la philosophie, d'une ruine de l'Idée et d'une ruine du désir, mais tout à l'inverse dans le sens toujours à venir de leur *reconstruction* dialectique, puisque enfin ce jeu (érotique, poétique et philosophique) du dit et du non dit, de la critique et de la création, du remplacement et du déplacement aura donné par lui-même la preuve par l'exemple de son objet : une preuve *par* l'immortalité.

Recollecting, Retelling and *Meletē* in Plato's *Symposium*. A New Reading of ἡ συνουσία τόκος ἐστίν (206C5-6)

Yahei Kanayama

1. Recollection, Procreation, Immortality and Chronology of Platonic Works

Plato presents “recollection as learning” in the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Phaedrus*, and something similar to it, i.e., mental procreation in the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus*. The *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* are all in common in touching the problem of the soul's immortality. As to the chronology of these dialogues the *Meno* is likely to have been written first, and the next group to consist of the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*, and the third of the *Phaedrus* and the *Theaetetus*¹.

However, Hackforth suggested the possibility of the *Symposium* being earlier than the *Meno*, on the basis of some seemingly different treatment of immortality between the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*. Socrates' statement in the *Phaedo* (107B), “If you [Simmi] analyse the first hypotheses of the demonstration of the soul's immortality sufficiently, you will, I think, follow the argument” suggested to Hackforth Plato's confidence about the soul's immortality beyond all question. However, in the *Symposium* the soul's immortality is not openly expressed, but rather implied in 208A-B as vicarious immortality. Even where it may seem to be openly expressed (211E5-212A7), it is not the immortality of any and every soul, but of the souls of people who have succeeded in reaching the apex of the great initiation. Besides, even they may not be able to become immortal themselves, for according to Hackforth, “in view of the whole tenor of the speech, and particularly of 209c and 210c, it is doubtless τόκος ἐν ἄλλῳ that P. has predominantly in mind”. He concludes that “consequently the philosopher can no more than the ordinary man become immortal ... save by vicarious self-perpetuation”².

This further led Hackforth to the idea that the *Symposium* may be earlier than the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*³. But in the final analysis he did not accept this chronology, being rather inclined to the view that “the *Symposium* was written when Plato had come to feel doubts about the validity of that final argument [of the *Phaedo*]”, and that “Plato has abandoned, albeit temporarily, both that interdependence of individual immortality and the doctrine of Ideas ... and the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις on which it is grounded”⁴. As to the abandonment of ἀνάμνησις, he says that the omission of any reference to ἀνάμνησις in Diotima's speech is, to all appearance, deliberate”.

However, is this view of Hackforth correct? To help answer this question, let us begin from the question of which to choose, ἐν ἄλλῳ or ἐν αὐτῷ.

2. Pregnancy and Procreation in the *Symposium*

The main text to be dealt with is the *Symposium* 206C-E. There Diotima says to Socrates as follows.

[A] All human beings (πάντες ἄνθρωποι) are pregnant (κυοῦσιν) ... both in body and in soul, (206C1-3)

[B] and on reaching a certain age our nature (ἡμῶν ἡ φύσις) desires to procreate (τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ). (C3-4)

[C] It cannot procreate (τίκτειν) in anything ugly, but only in the beautiful thing. (C4-5)

[D] For the being together (συνουσία) of man and woman is procreation (τόκος). (C5-6)

[E] It is a godly affair, and the pregnancy (κύησις) and the engendering (γέννησις) exist as an immortal aspect in the mortal living being. (C6-8)

[F] It cannot occur in anything that is out of harmony, ... what is beautiful is in harmony. Thus Beauty (Kallonē) is both Fate (Moirā) and Eileithyia for coming-into-being (γενέσει). (C8-D3)

[G] For these reasons whenever what is pregnant (τὸ κυοῦν) approaches something beautiful, it becomes gracious, melts with joy, and procreates and engenders⁵ (τίκτει τε καὶ γεννᾷ). ... (D3-7)

[H] This is why what is pregnant and already full to bursting has experienced the great excitement

¹ Cf. e.g. Vlastos (1991) 46-7; Kahn (1996) 47-8; Rowe (2003) 103.

² Hackforth (1950) 44 and n.2.

³ Gaye (1904) 23 and Morrison (1964) 44, 46 adopted this option.

⁴ Hackforth (1950) 45.

⁵ Or “tries to procreate and to engender” (Conative present). Cf. Smyth (1920) 421 [1878].

concerning what is beautiful, ... (D7-E1)

[I] For ... love is not ... of what is beautiful; ... it is of engendering (γεννήσεως) and procreation (τόκου) in what is beautiful. (E2-6)

Concerning this argument, especially concerning [A]-[D], Burnyeat drew attention to the following oddities⁶:

(1) “strange reversal: the pregnancy is the cause, not the consequence, of love”.

(2) “Although Diotima speaks of ‘our nature’, it is a male pregnancy she is describing, and the birth is the lover engendering offspring, at the physical level in bodily union with a woman, at the spiritual level ... especially in passionate communion with a beautiful boy”.⁷

(3) “In short, at either level pregnancy precedes intercourse, because birth and intercourse are imaginatively equated”.

Burnyeat dared to accept them all. Concerning (2), some interpreters even read there, for example, “an instance of male cultural imperialism, a typical attempt by men to colonize female “difference” in order to claim it for a universalizing male discourse”⁸.

But it seems strange that Socrates, starting to talk about “all human beings” (206C2) and “our nature”, should move at once to male pregnancy. In fact through the whole argument, Diotima keeps talking about love’s influence to “human beings” (ἄνθρωποι) (202E3, 4, 203A2, 3, 204C8, 205A6, B1, E4, 206A1, 4, 207B6, 208C2, 212A1, 7)⁹. She also refers to “mortal nature” (ἡ θνητὴ φύσις 207D1), to “everything mortal” (πάν τὸ θνητὸν 208A7), and to “human nature” (τῇ ἀνθρωπείᾳ φύσει 212B3). Besides, she includes Alcestis as an example of human beings whose love of fame made them vicariously immortal (208C-D)¹⁰.

There are some passages where Diotima uses ἀνὴρ as the subject of pregnancy: 206C5, 209E1, 212B5¹¹. But 206C5 refers to woman as well as man (the being together (συνουσία) of man and woman), and 212B5 (πάντα ἄνδρα) is an instance of “VI. Special usages, 5. *a man, any man*”, allowing for female pregnancy.

Then how about 209E1 (ἄνδρες, καὶ ἐν Ἑλληνσι καὶ ἐν βαρβάροις)? Diotima focuses on male pregnancy and procreation in 208E-211D. Is it to universalize male discourse? I think it is simply because when Diotima referred to the children in the area of poetry, craftsmanship and the affairs of cities (209A-E), it was difficult to find examples of children brought about through female procreation. If she could have found good examples, she would have been happy to include them, just as she included the example of Alcestis. Anyway after completing the whole explanation of erotics, she returns again to the locution of “human being” (ἄνθρωπος 212A1, 7) and “human nature” (ἀνθρωπεῖα φύσις 212B3), as if to correct her inevitable but unwilling restriction to male lovers.

However, the following question may be raised against including female pregnancy and procreation. How can women biologically procreate in the beautiful thing?¹² What we can think of as the procreation in the beautiful thing is only male ejaculation. But let us first note here that the preposition used with τόκος or τίκειν is ἐν and not εἰς. In Aristophanic comic image of original human beings procreating into the ground like cicadas, εἰς γῆν was the prototype image of procreation (τίκειν), and thus when Aristophanes said in 191C that Zeus brought in reproduction in each other (τὴν γένεσιν ἐν ἀλλήλοις C3), ἐν ἀλλήλοις was understood rather in the sense of εἰς ἀλλήλους (the incubator where the seeds are sown), and thus only the possibility of “in the female through the agency of the male” (διὰ τοῦ ἄρρενος ἐν τῷ θήλει C3-4) was allowed. But Diotima doesn’t use εἰς in the context of procreation. She employs only ἐν, and ἐν can cover a very wide range of meaning, covering εἰς as well as various types of surrounding. However, it may be claimed that because the idea of a woman as an incubator was such a prevalent idea in ancient Greece, with the male parent as the only generative agent, Plato also must have been under this influence. But we should note that in the late and fourth centuries there were theories that “insist that the female parent emits seed just as much as the male does”¹³.

Diotima uses τίκειν with ἐν in the form of τίκτη ... ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἀφθόνῳ at 210D5-6.

⁶ Burnyeat (1977) 8.

⁷ Also Morrison (1964) 52; Dover (1980) 147; Halperin (1990a) 262, (1990b) 117; Pender (1992) 73-4.

⁸ Halperin (1990a) 289; (1990b) 145. Cf. also (1990a) 278, 288-90, 296-7; (1990b) 138-9, 144-5, 150.

⁹ At 205A6 and B1 “all human beings”.

¹⁰ More generally when Diotima refers to the terrible state all kinds of animal get into when they want to engender (207A-B), this state is certainly applicable not only to male but also to female pregnancy and procreation. Especially, the example of the weakest fighting the strongest represents the case of mother-birds protecting their offspring (*Laws* 814B).

¹¹ At 209C1 too, ἄνδρα appears, but not as the subject of pregnancy.

¹² Pender (1992) 75.

¹³ Lloyd (1983) 91; cf. Halperin (1990a) 278-9; (1990b) 138-9.

φιλοσοφία ἄφθονος (ungrudging philosophy) is certainly something beautiful, even if φιλόσοφος as a mortal being is neither beautiful nor ugly. This suggests the possibility that “Α τίκτει ἐν Β” does not mean any sexual intercourse between A and B. In fact the role of Beauty (Kallōnē) is not that of incubator into which the seed is ejaculated. The deity plays the role of harmonious surrounding that helps pregnant people smoothly to procreate their children (206C8-D3).

3. ἡ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς συνουσία τόκος ἐστίν (206C5-6)¹⁴

“The being together (συνουσία) of man and woman is procreation (τόκος)” (in [D]) may seem to suggest that in the act of τίκτειν sexual intercourse is carried out¹⁵, especially because συνουσία can mean sexual intercourse. However, when we closely examine the use of συνουσία and the corresponding verb, συνεῖναι, in the *Symposium*, they rather represent “being together”, even though LSJ cites 192C and 206C as usages of συνουσία meaning “4. sexual intercourse”.

In 192C Aristophanes uses the expression ἡ τῶν ἀφροδισίων συνουσία to mean “sexual intercourse”, and this may seem to support its inclusion by LSJ under “4. sexual intercourse”. But the meaning of “sexual intercourse” comes from the addition of τῶν ἀφροδισίων (of sexual pleasures), and συνουσία itself means “being together”, as is clear from the following statement by Aristophanes that no one will think that it is for the sake of this “being together (συνουσία) of sexual pleasures” that one rejoices in “being together (συνὼν)” with another (192C4-7).

As to the use of συνουσία at 206C, taking this in the sense of “sexual intercourse” has led to what Burnyeat called “strange reversal”, which should make us more cautious against taking the word in this sense.

When we examine each occurrence of συνουσία and συνεῖναι in the *Symposium*, there is no use that clearly corresponds to sexual intercourse. To leave aside the ones LSJ cites, they all rather mean “being together” without any sexual connotation (172A7, B7, C1, 173A4, B3, 176E2, 8, 181D4, 191C7, 195B4, 211D6, 8, 212A2, 219D8).

Then, how should we understand [D]? What kind of thing did Diotima have in mind? Now, τόκος (206B7, C6, E5) is the noun form of the verb τίκτειν, but this verb is used in the *Symposium* both in the present (206C3, 4, D5, 209B2, C3, 210C1, D5, 212A3)¹⁶ and in the aorist (209A3¹⁷, 212A5), and they represent different aspects of the same verb, the aorist denoting the result¹⁸, and the present representing an action going on at the present time, or an action begun, attempted, or intended¹⁹. The noun τόκος, then correspondingly, can also represent either the result of procreating, or the action of procreating now going on, or just begun, attempted, or intended. And the environment of its use (206B7, C6, E5) suggests that it should be understood in the sense to do with the present tense (206C3, 4, D5, 209B2, C3, 210C1, D5, 212A3). The procreation in [D] is an action of procreating, going on, begun, attempted, or intended. The “being together” in [D] was simply “being together”, or to put it another way, “living together”, just as Pausanias said concerning those driven by heavenly love that they are ready to be together and live together (συνεσόμενοι καὶ κοινῇ συμβιωσόμενοι 181D). Then, the meaning of ἡ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς συνουσία τόκος ἐστίν becomes “the living together of man and woman is the attempt of procreating”.

This remark by Diotima is understandable enough. On reaching a certain age our nature desires to procreate. It is human nature or instinct to leave one’s parents, driven by some inner desire for a beautiful partner and a beautiful home to engender one’s own children. Diotima sees in this natural inclination of ours the desire to procreate what we are unknowingly pregnant with.

We can find instances of this kind of approaching beautiful persons or things in the *Symposium*. Penia, driven by her desire to procreate, approached the beautiful feast of gods, and then found beautiful Poros (203B); Diotima approached Socrates, who was inwardly beautiful, and Socrates approached Diotima, who must have been also beautiful in soul; Alcibiades approached Socrates, believing that he might be able to hear what Socrates knew (217A), which means that he was attracted by something beautiful he found in Socrates, and also that he had something to procreate with the help of Socrates, even if he was not aware of his own pregnancy.

But although the being together of Diotima and Socrates was successful, that of Alcibiades and Socrates did not succeed. What made the difference? One crucial difference lies in the fact that

¹⁴ Although many editors excise this sentence, Dover (1980) and Rowe (1998) keep it in their text.

¹⁵ Burnyeat (1977) 8.

¹⁶ At 191C1 it is used in the imperfect, but because this is in the myth of Aristophanes, I leave it aside.

¹⁷ Bury (1932), Dover (1980) and Rowe (1998) etc. adopt τεκεῖν, following the papyrus text, while Burnet adopts κυεῖν.

¹⁸ Resultative aorist (Cf. Smyth (1920) 430 [1926]).

¹⁹ Conative present (cf. Smyth (1920) 421 [1878]).

Socrates and Diotima repeatedly met each other and engaged in friendly conversation (207A), whereas Alcibiades tried to run away from Socrates, stopping his ears (216A-B).

What does it mean to stop one's ears? Alcibiades describes how he felt after he listened to Socrates. His soul was confused and vexed at the thought that his condition was that of a slave (215E6-7). This means that he not only runs away from Socrates but also tries to shut out the memory of Socrates' words. When one loves another and engages in the child-birth, there sometimes occurs a situation in which they cannot spend their time together. On such an occasion, they have recourse to memory (μνημόνεος 209C4). And thus making good use of "being together" as well as memory, one nurtures one's child together (συνεκτρέφει C4) with another. In this joint-nurturing how does the child grow up?

There is an interesting remark in the *Symposium*, which has to do with memory (207D-208A):

Mortal nature always leaves behind something else that is new in place of the old, for even during the time in which each creature is said to be alive and to be the same --- as for instance someone is said to be the same from when he is a child until he becomes an old man --- he does not have the same things inside himself ... but is continually becoming a new person, ... This is not limited to body. In soul too, its traits, habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears --- none of these things is ever the same in any individual, but some are coming into existence, others passing away. ... what we call exercising (μελετᾶν) exists because knowledge is leaving us: forgetting is departure of knowledge, while exercise (μελέτη) saves the knowledge by putting back a new memory in place of the memory that went away, so that the knowledge seems to be the same.

In the joint-nurture by lovers, the child is continually becoming a new person, and this means that it does not matter much who first procreated the child, because every moment is the time of new procreation. Therefore, when they nurture the child, they come to have their children in common (παίδων κεκοινωκότες 209C7).

According to our interpretation the message of 206C-E was that two persons are naturally attracted to each other at a certain age, and by being and living together in love they come to have their child, bodily or spiritual. When they nurture this child, the nurturing of it in their love relationship makes them regard it more and more as their common treasure (209C). Thus I cannot agree with Vlastos, when he says, "It is not said or implied or so much as hinted at that 'birth in beauty' should be motivated by love of persons --- that the ultimate purpose of the creative act should be to enrich the lives of persons who are themselves worthy of love for their own sake"²⁰.

4. Recollection

Alcibiades tried to stop his ears, which means that he decided to remain in the same place, without moving forward. He thus decided to refuse to grow up.

If we regard remembering or recollecting as a kind of regrasping of pieces of knowledge stored in the mind, just like the reading of wax block impressions or the catching of birds in a cage of the soul (cf. the *Theaetetus*), then the remembering of a previous conversation will be just like listening to the same music again and again. But according to Diotima's remark above, it is impossible to remember something as if it is the same music that can be automatically repeated, for there is no such identical thing permanently stored in the soul. Each act of remembering is a creation of new network.

Although there can be some controversy concerning recollection in Plato's middle dialogues, I think the following points explicitly stated in the *Meno* constitute the kernel of recollection.

The slave boy's true opinions have now just been stirred up in the boy as if in a dream, and if someone asks him repeatedly these same things in many ways, in the end he will know about these things as exactly as anyone else does (85C9-D1).

By being asked repeatedly, the slave boy will be led to try to recollect the same things, but because what appears to be the same may not really be the same, he will be made to connect various concepts anew. This will certainly lead to an attempt to bind true opinions through the calculation of the cause, which is recollection (*Meno* 98A). I take it that although recollection is not explicitly mentioned in the *Symposium*, the attempt to bind true opinions through the calculation of the cause is certainly carried out in the joint-nurturing of the common child by the lovers, and this can be called recollection in its sense in the *Meno*.

²⁰ Vlastos (1973) 31.

5. *The Soul's Immortality*

This process of συνεῖν and τίκτειν (in the present) finally leads to τεκεῖν (in the aorist) of true virtue (212A5). This true virtue is the child the lovers can have in common, although even on one's own one will be able to attain it, just by remembering the time one spent together with the lover or the beloved. Then how does this procreation bring about immortality? It is to be noted that it is not merely by touching the true beauty that one is allowed to become immortal by gods. Diotima says by having procreated and nurtured true virtue (τεκόντι ... ἀρετὴν ἀληθὴ καὶ θρεψαμένῳ 212A5-6) one comes to be loved by gods, and then finally one is allowed to become immortal if any human being is allowed.

Is this immortality compatible or incompatible with that in the *Phaedo*? I cannot enter this problem here, but there were some hypotheses left to be further examined in the *Phaedo*, and one of them was “whatever is ἀθάνατος is indestructible”, or to put it another way, “such souls as bring up life into this world are immortal”²¹. And the souls of the couple who nurture true virtue will certainly be regarded as bringing up true life into this world.

6. *Retelling and μελέτη*

When the lovers engage in conversation again and again, just as Diotima and Socrates did so, the same things will be retold, and in this course of retelling, what one takes to be the same memory will certainly become a new memory, with new connections established. To be noted in this respect is the fact that the *Symposium* is full of retellings, the process that needs the act of recalling and μελέτη. The dialogue as a whole is a retelling, well exercised by Apollodorus (οὐκ ἀμελέτητος 172A1, 173C1), of the story of what happened at Agathon's house, which he relates to unknown friends, himself having got it retold by Aristodemus. His μελέτη was helped by retelling it to Glaucon, who had previously learnt its ambiguous version through another route of retelling.

In this large framework of retelling we observe a series of retelling by the characters in the dialogue concerning the identity of love. What comes as the culmination of this process is Socrates' own retelling, which itself is a retelling of Diotima's story. What happens after Socrates' speech is again a retelling, this time by Alcibiades, of the identity of Socrates, which he recollects from his experiences with Socrates.

What is the effect of retelling? Neither Aristodemus nor Apollodorus remembers every detail of what they heard; Apollodorus retells his friends what Aristodemus remembered best and what it seemed to himself to be worth to be remembered (ἀξιομνημόνευτον 178A). Retelling by these philosophically enthusiastic people certainly helps philosophically important things to form a stable network of true beliefs, which can be established by the binding down of true beliefs through the calculation of the cause (recollection).

The structure of the *Symposium*, where readers are told the stories together with Apollodorus' friends, suggests Plato's intention to make us readers into hearers of the stories of love and further into retellers of our own version of the story of love, so that through this μελέτη we may be able better to recollect what love and its target beauty are.

And finally, the *Symposium* itself was the child which was for Plato common to both Socrates and himself, because what made Plato nurture it was his memory of Socrates, renewed on each occasion of remembering him (209C). This memory of the loving and beloved master must have helped Plato to explore the great sea of beauty, to discover new routes in the quest for the Beautiful or the Good itself, and to procreate many beautiful words and thoughts, in the form of Platonic dialogues with Socrates, in ungrudging philosophy together with him (210D).

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**Ὅρθῃ δόξᾳ ed ἐπιτηδεύματα:
gli scritti isocratei sulla condotta di vita
e il grado intermedio di ἐπιτηδεύματα e νόμοι nel *Simposio*
(con una nota su una variante inferiore a *Symp.* 202a5)**

Mariella Menchelli

ABSTRACT

All'inizio del suo discorso a Socrate sull'amore, Diotima evoca la possibilità, nella sfera propriamente conoscitiva, dello stadio, intermedio, della retta opinione, che si trova a metà strada tra l'ignoranza e la conoscenza (*Symp.* 202 a). Il tema, che nel *Simposio* resta solo un inciso, è ampiamente sviluppato in altri dialoghi. D'altro canto nella rappresentazione dell'ascesa verso il bello in sé, al bello legato alla bellezza dei corpi succede il bello ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ τοῖς νόμοις (210c), al quale seguirà il bello nelle scienze (μετὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἀγαγεῖν). Se si guarda alla fine del *Simposio* l'esempio di virtù etica e politica in primo luogo è Socrate stesso, nell'elogio di Alcibiade della temperanza di Socrate e di Socrate cittadino a Potidea (ma anche di Socrate sapiente e assorto come all'inizio del *Simposio*), che si riassume a 221c πολλὰ μὲν οὖν ἂν τις καὶ ἄλλα ἔχοι Σωκράτη ἐπαινέσαι καὶ θαυμάσια, ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων τάχ' ἂν τις καὶ περὶ ἄλλου τοιαῦτα εἴποι, τὸ δὲ μηδενὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅμοιον εἶναι, μήτε τῶν παλαιῶν μήτε τῶν νῦν ὄντων, τοῦτο ἄξιον παντὸς θαύματος. Altri possono essere elogiati, ma lo stesso elogio di Socrate si muove sul piano della condotta di vita, anche se di Socrate viene posta in rilievo l'eccezionalità. In anni vicini (373-368) al *Simposio* si collocano gli scritti di Isocrate qualificati espressamente περὶ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων, sulla condotta di vita, per i quali si intende fondare il genere letterario prosastico (con l'*A Nicocle*) corrispondente, in prosa, alle massime edificatorie di Esiodo (citato anche da Platone nel *Simposio*) e più specificamente dei poeti gnomici; nel più complesso *Nicocle* lo stesso autoelogio di Nicocle presenta alcuni temi, come l'esercizio della virtù, e in particolare della temperanza, che rientrano negli scopi del genere stesso. Scopo del presente contributo è il confronto con le analisi contemporanee e/o assai vicine nel tempo di Isocrate, per gettare luce sul tema platonico della vita etica e civile che precede la scienza e che è per Platone un grado intermedio verso il bello in sé (come la *doxa* verso la scienza, al contrario dello spunto polemico isocrateo di *Contro i sofisti* 8): il richiamo agli *epitedeumata* è costante nella trattazione del tema del bello, comparando già nel *Gorgia*, oltre che nell'*Ippia maggiore* (entrambi più ricchi di elementi, come ha osservato Dodds, p. 250), e appare organizzato gerarchicamente nel *Simposio*.

Nota testuale. Una variante inferiore si è introdotta nella tradizione di Platone a 202 a 5: in luogo della buona lezione ὁρθὰ δοξάζειν parte della tradizione reca ὁρθοδοξάζειν. La buona lezione appare presupposta anche da Syn. *Dio*, cap. 10. Negli studi neoplatonici il tema è legato alla preparazione etica e politica del primo gradino per la quale vengono utilizzati gli scritti sulla condotta di vita.

Plato and Laughter in the *Symposium*

Pierre Destrée

ABSTRACT

Le but de ma communication est de tenter de montrer, contre la tradition interprétative qui l'a généralement considéré comme une pièce peu rattachée à ce qui précède, en quoi le discours d'Alcibiade est une pièce fondamentale dans l'articulation du Banquet (cf. en autres 172a où l'ami anonyme d'Apollodore présente le dialogue comme "la rencontre entre Agathon, Socrate, Alcibiade et d'autres convives", où il faut comprendre: la rencontre de Socrate et d'Alcibiade chez Apollodore) et quels en sont les enjeux dans l'économie du dialogue tout entier, et dans l'oeuvre de Platon. En particulier, je voudrais montrer en quoi ce discours répond à celui de Socrate/Diotime et le revisite (pour reprendre l'expression de Sheffield), - étant comme un drame satyrique par rapport à une tragédie (le discours de Socrate/Diotime étant *spoudaios* et *semnos* comme l'est une tragédie). Dans une première partie, je montrerai dans le détail comment on peut faire correspondre terme à terme les deux discours, notamment en proposant une division des deux discours selon le schéma (qu'on trouve notamment chez Clément d'Alexandrie) des trois niveaux des mystères (purification préparatoire, petits mystères et grands mystères). Dans une seconde partie, j'interprète la fameuse scène de séduction et la description que donne Alcibiade de ses rencontres précédentes avec Socrate en montrant comment on peut l'articuler en contre-miroir avec le discours de Socrate/Diotime. Enfin, je m'interrogerai sur la fonction du rire dans ce discours, en montrant que Platon entend ainsi à la fois, et en fait un peu paradoxalement, défendre son maître (contre entre autres, peut-on supposer, le pamphlet de Polycrate où Alcibiade jouait sûrement un rôle important) et proposer 'contre' lui une nouvelle manière de philosopher, où en effet la théorie des Formes prend le pas sur l'*elenchos* socratique, et où, surtout, une politique de l'éducation des parties irrationnelles de l'âme (qui sera développée dans la *République*) joue un rôle majeur. Dans ce cadre, j'analyserai comment la description qu'Alcibiade donne de son éloignement progressif de Socrate peut être analysée comme un cas d'*acrasie* (pace Sheffield), ce que seule une telle politique éducative pourrait (ou aurait pu) permettre de guérir.

The Language of Mysteries

Chair: Angelo Casanova

The Curious Absence of the Immortality of the Soul from Diotima's Speech

Jason Rheins

ABSTRACT

In the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*, Plato presents the doctrine of the soul's immortality and reincarnation, on the one hand, and the theory of Forms and/or recollection, on the other hand, as intimately connected – perhaps even mutually dependent. Nevertheless, Plato does not always choose to develop them in such close-conjunction.¹ Thus Diotima's speech, which describes the ascent to the Form of Beauty but omits consideration of the immortality and transmigration of human souls, is not entirely without parallel. What makes this omission genuinely perplexing is the fact that *immortality* is a key theme of her speech. So it is at least worthy of note that in the midst of discussing how every lover seeks immortality (after a fashion), no mention is given to the fact that each of these lovers is in part already immortal. How are we to account for the absence of the soul's immortality from Diotima's account of Eros – an omission all the more curious given the principal role this doctrine plays in Socrates' "Great Speech" in the *Phaedrus*?

Furthermore, psychic immortality is not *merely absent* from Diotima's account; several points that she makes seem to be in tension with the view as formulated in other dialogues such as the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, et al.:

- Eros, as a daimon, is described as being neither mortal nor immortal. This is because he is perpetually dying and being reborn. While the soul itself is deathless, its cycle of reincarnations makes it, like Eros, routinely in transition between life, death, and rebirth (203E).
- The soul, like the body, is described as being the subject of constant change. While there may be a hint at the doctrine of recollection in this passage, it characterizes the kind of immortality that bodies and souls have a share in as reproductive (207D-208B).
- Diotima concludes her speech by stating that if any mortal could ever become immortal, it would only be the lover of beauty itself, the philosopher, who lives in contemplation with it and the Forms (212A).

What are we to make of the view of the soul presented here? One suggestion has been that *only* species immortality, not personal immortality, is countenanced in the *Symposium*, but that this view was one that Plato toyed with or at least explored elsewhere, specifically at *Laws* 721B-C.² This explanation is not fully satisfactory given the treatment of the soul in *Laws* X. At 896A-B the soul is identified as the ἀρχὴ κινήσεως³, the same finding that is the cornerstone of the proof immortality in the closely related argument at *Phaedrus* 245C-246A. In the eschatological μῦθος supplementing the second argument, body and soul, though generated, are guaranteed *indestructibility*, though not eternity, by the supervisor of the universe. If they were not indestructible, all life would come to an end (904A-B). Thus, in the *Laws*, species immortality is shown to depend on the indestructibility of souls and bodies (or at least their elementary components).

Using an idea originally introduced by W.K.C. Guthrie,⁴ I develop the following alternative explanation: Plato has two ways of speaking of immortality. The first focuses on the indestructibility of the soul (or the part of it that is νοῦς). However, this soul will experience the death of countless

¹ The *Republic*, for instance, develops and makes much use of the theory of Forms in its defense of the intrinsic value of being just or the dangers of mimetic early in book with virtually no mention of the soul's immortality; the argument for the soul's immortality and the eschatological myth of Er, on the other hand, are introduced at the end of Book X to describe the non-intrinsic benefits of justice (and the punishments for injustice) that morals receive from the gods.

² See F.M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*" 124-125 reprinted in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays* Vol. II. Ed. G. Vlastos. Double Day, 1971. See also B. Centrone, "L'immortalità personale: un'altra nobile menzogna?" 38-39 in *Interiorità e anima: La psyche in Platone*. Edd. M. Miglori, L.M. Napolitano Valditara, and A. Fermani. Largo A. Gemelli, 2007.

³ The specific term "ἀρχὴ κινήσεων" is used at 895B.

⁴ "Plato's Views on the Nature of the Soul" 235ff in Vlastos [1971]. Guthrie developed this suggestion to negotiate the difficulties in reconciling the psychology of the chariot myth in the *Phaedrus* with Plato's other accounts of the *mortality* of the lower parts of the soul. I am repurposing it for the sake of better understanding the soul and immortality in the *Symposium*.

host bodies as it navigates the cycle of reincarnation. In that sense it, like Diotima's Eros, is neither completely mortal nor immortal. However, Plato has a second sense of immortality – that of souls who, through repeated lives of philosophical purification, have escaped the cycle of death and rebirth and can dwell with the gods. These two notions can operate side by side in Plato's eschatology, and it is this second sense of immortality (compatible with the former) that Diotima refers to in the final line of her speech.

Le maschere di Dioniso nel *Simposio* di Platone

Fernando Santoro

ABSTRACT

Les personnages du Banquet de Platon sont les masques de plusieurs genres littéraires et, en plus, de diverses lignées de discours de sagesse, soit traditionnels soit innovateurs, concernant l'amour. Platon les met en dialogue dans une joute amicale, conviviale, philosophique. D'autre part, dans le Banquet, selon le dire de Socrate, on ne fait pas seulement hommage à Eros et Aphrodite, mais aussi à Dionysos (177e). Quels seraient les masques de Dionysos dans cet hommage à l'intérieur du Banquet de Platon? Le discours du personnage Aristophane, dans le masque du comique, est un discours anthropogonique, selon un modèle de théogonie d'inspiration orphique déjà présent dans les Oiseaux, comédie du vrai Aristophane. Il introduit aussi une leçon d'herméneutique des mythes, première étape du rite dionysiaque. Le discours de Diotime, sous le masque dialectique et ascétique de la philosophie, nous apprend l'initiation aux mystères, c'est un second pas du rite, qui fait sauter du particulier vers l'universel. Le discours confessionnel d'Alcibiade, qui se démasque et qui démasque Socrate, est ou bien une révélation époptique à des initiés ou bien la profanation d'un mystère. Ce troisième pas du rite apporte la profonde vérité qui ne se laisse dire que par ceux qui ont atteint la folie de l'ivresse et de l'amour. Notre visée sur ces trois personnages du Banquet et leurs discours cherche et analyse les rapports du dialogue platonicien avec l'exégèse, l'initiation et la révélation du mystère érotique et cosmique concernant une certaine sagesse inspirée de Dionysos. Nous sommes dans la succession des discours d'Aristophane, de Diotime et d'Alcibiade dans une suite analogue à celle des rituels téléétiques pratiqués par les orphiques, qui font la célébration du dieu. Dionysos n'est donc pas seulement le dieu des plaisirs conviviaux et de la folie. Il est aussi l'évocation de la puissance transformatrice de la nature et de la sagesse qui la concerne. C'est la sagesse du cycle existentiel de renouvellement de la vie dans le monde tout entier. Une philosophie de la nature sous les masques platoniciens du dieu du vin et de l'ivresse. Une philosophie aussi qui se fait en trois étapes : l'herméneutique du récit ou du texte ; la transposition du problème vers l'idée universelle ; et finalement le dépassement de l'universel en se retournant vers son application dans un cas particulier. Peut-on y voir une vraie méthode et une philosophie ? Est-ce, au contraire, juste un fil parmi d'autres de la construction fictionnelle créative et complexe de Platon? Peut-on y voir une reprise ou plutôt une reformulation de certaines traditions de sagesse et de certains rites religieux ? C'est ce qui sera examiné dans des passages précis du dialogue, mis en rapport avec les textes traditionnels où sont puisés les mythes, les rites, les images, la sagesse du dieu des masques et des transmutations.

Le *satyrikon* d'Alcibiade et rites d'initiation des mystères socratiques

Jean-Luc Périllie

La figure du satyre ou du silène surgit au sein des deux *banquets socratiques* qui nous sont parvenus. Curieusement, le terme même de *satyrikon* — autant présent dans la version de Platon que dans celle de Xénophon¹ — ne semble pas avoir spécialement retenu l'attention des interprètes². Il est vrai que dans le *Banquet* de Platon, en 222d, Socrate lui-même paraît sous-estimer la dimension de *drame satyrique* du discours d'Alcibiade, suspectant chez lui une stratégie amoureuse : ledit *satyrikon drama* ne serait là que pour faire diversion, l'objectif étant en réalité d'écarter le bel Agathon de Socrate. Bien évidemment, on ne doit pas se laisser abuser par le ton de badinage de la réplique de Socrate. Des révélations importantes ont été faites sur Socrate et sur son charisme. Si l'individu concerné paraît ne pas y porter une grande attention c'est certainement par fausse modestie. C'est aussi parce que le *drama* doit laisser place à une dédramatisation. Le temps fort du *satyrikon* s'étant accompli, il convient de revenir à la réalité coutumière en désamorçant la charge du sacré et en effaçant la monstration du silène. Prendre la réplique de Socrate au pied de la lettre et négliger ainsi l'apport du *satyrikon* d'Alcibiade c'est, certes, faire le choix d'une lecture critique et rationaliste du *Banquet* mais c'est aussi encourir le double risque de ne pas saisir le message final de l'œuvre et de ne pas en comprendre l'organisation d'ensemble.

Rares sont les exégètes qui ont accordé de l'importance à l'intervention d'Alcibiade³. Or celle-ci, comme l'a montré Luc Brisson, est à la fois l'aboutissement de toutes les prises de parole antérieures et l'occasion pour Platon d'exprimer ses sentiments envers Socrate⁴. Alors que Diotime a désigné Éros comme *daimôn megas* (*Banquet*, 202d13), Alcibiade intervient pour dire qu'Éros est bel et bien présent parmi les convives. Le mouvement d'ensemble de l'œuvre est ainsi de montrer que les éloges successifs doivent aboutir à l'épiphanie d'Éros tel qu'il s'est manifesté en la personne de Socrate, dont l'aspect (*eidōs*, 215b5) est celui d'un silène. Notons qu'Alcibiade, au début de son intervention, procède au *couronnement* de son compagnon selon la liturgie des Mystères (213e)⁵. Son

¹ Platon, *Banquet*, 222d2-3 : ἀλλὰ τὸ σατυρικὸν σου δρᾶμα τοῦτο καὶ σιληνικὸν κατάδηλον ἐγένετο. « Mais ce drame satyrique et silenique qui est le tien a été très clair ». Chez Xénophon, cf. *infra* n. 7.

² Signalons cependant l'étude de Florence Dupont *Le plaisir et la loi. Du Banquet de Platon au Satiricon*, Paris 1977, qui examine l'esthétique du *Satyrikon* de Pétrone sous l'angle d'une réécriture du *Banquet* de Platon : Trimalcion (sorte d'anti-Socrate parodique) arrive en retard comme Socrate dans le *Banquet* ; cinq convives de Trimalcion font successivement des discours sur la vie comme les cinq convives parlent de l'amour avant le discours de Socrate. Le festin de Trimalcion se termine par l'arrivée inattendue d'Habinnas qui jette le trouble, en réplique à l'irruption d'Alcibiade. Le caractère de *satyrikon* de l'œuvre de Pétrone renvoie au goût prononcé des Romains pour les aventures érotiques. Mais il se rapporte à une tradition grecque, probablement milésienne dans la lignée d'Aristide de Milet (vers 100 av. J.-C.), auteur des *Fables milésiennes* (*fabulae Milesiae*). Il est néanmoins évident, d'après l'étude de F. Dupont, que le *Banquet* de Platon a inspiré Pétrone. Et l'on est en droit de se demander si ce dernier n'a pas intitulé son œuvre en se référant au discours d'Alcibiade. Concernant les *satyrika* plus anciens, voir le *Cyclope* d'Euripide et un fragment des *Tireurs de filets* d'Eschyle (fr. 47a Radt, 474 Mette), avec une tirade du personnage Silène dotée de signification érotique. Cf. V.-H. Debidour dans *Les Tragiques Grecs, Eschyle, Sophocle et Euripide, Théâtre Complet, avec choix de fragments*, traductions et notes de V.-H. Debidour, Paris, 1999, p. 1752. Silène dans les *Cyclopes* apparaît comme accompagné d'une troupe de satyres.

³ Voir F.C. White, "Beauty of soul and speech in Plato's *Symposium*", *Classical Quarterly* 58.1 (2008), p. 69-81. White s'oppose à la tradition dominante (A. E. Taylor, W.K.C. Guthrie, G.M.A. Grube, F.M. Cornford, J.E. Raven) qui privilégie le discours de Diotime, Alcibiade n'ajoutant rien de significatif sur le plan philosophique. On relève aussi une prise au sérieux du témoignage d'Alcibiade dans une étude assez récente de Livio Rossetti "*Logoi sokratikoi*, Le contexte littéraire dans lequel Platon a écrit" in *La philosophie de Platon*, t. 2, dir. de M. Fattal, Paris 2005, p. 51-80. Enfin, Luc Brisson (cf. note suivante) y voit une synthèse de tous les discours.

⁴ Une lecture synthétique est proposée par L. Brisson (in Platon, *Banquet*, 1998, Présentation et traduction, p. 51-54), sur la base de nombreux rapprochements. Brisson y voit aussi l'expression des « sentiments profonds » éprouvés par Platon à l'égard de Socrate « resté pour lui une énigme fascinante ». Analyse entérinée par White (art. cit. p. 76).

⁵ J.-F. Mattéi (*Platon et le miroir du mythe*, 1996, p. 229) a mis en relation, point par point, la description de la progression des Mystères en cinq parties, fournie par Théon de Smyrne (*Expos.* Hiller, p. 14-15), avec certains thèmes initiatiques apparaissant dans les deux discours de Diotime et d'Alcibiade. Le discours de Diotime correspond à la deuxième partie, concernant la « tradition des choses sacrées (τελετῆς παράδοσις) » (en rapport avec *Banquet*, περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετάς, 202e8) succédant à la première phase de *purification* (représentée par l'entretien élenctique Socrate-Agathon) et précédant « la cérémonie qu'on appelle la *pleine vision* (ἐποπτεία) » (en rapport avec *Banquet*, τὰ δὲ τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά, 210a1). La quatrième partie concerne « la ligature de la tête et l'imposition des couronnes (ἀνάδεσις καὶ στεμμάτων ἐπιθέσις) » de celui qui vient d'être initié (en rapport avec *Banquet*, 213e1, où Alcibiade dit couronner Socrate, ἀναδήσω). La cinquième partie est l'obtention de la félicité éternelle, et d'être reçu dans l'amitié du dieu (κατὰ τὸ θεοφιλέος) (en rapport avec *Banquet*, θεοφιλεῖ, 212a6).

ivresse, bien que dérangeante, devrait revêtir un sens tout aussi rituel et même « satyrique »⁶. En tout cas, son discours s'avère puissamment organisé en fonction de la symbolique du silène « érotique ». Une lecture religieuse ou rituelle du discours d'Alcibiade *fondée sur la révélation* paraît dès lors justifiée. Mais quelles significations philosophiques et historiques — si tant est qu'elles nous soient accessibles — devons-nous retenir de ce *satyrikon* déclamé en fin de parcours par le mignon attiré de Socrate ?

Le discours d'Alcibiade est scandé par trois séquences siléniques. Celles-ci correspondent d'une manière significative au *commencement*, *au milieu* et *à la fin* de l'intervention. C'en est donc le principal thème d'inspiration. La similitude Socrate-Silène se déploie selon trois aspects différents : 1) Est d'abord présenté l'indice d'une ressemblance physique troublante. 2) La ressemblance s'enrichit du fait que Socrate est un *erôtikos anēr* à caractère néanmoins paradoxal. 3) La ressemblance n'est pas tant physico-psychologique que philosophique, concernant les discours socratiques eux-mêmes et le sens qu'ils revêtent.

1) La ressemblance physique

On ne saurait suffisamment insister sur l'importance du premier point, quand bien même la similitude serait fondamentalement d'ordre physique. Les disciples — Platon n'est certainement pas le seul à l'avoir constaté et mentionné — ont été particulièrement frappés par l'extrême ressemblance entre Socrate et le silène. Celle-ci fait l'objet d'un commentaire spécial de Xénophon dans son *Banquet*, le narrateur sortant tout à coup de sa réserve⁷. Dans le *Banquet* de Platon, l'expression *ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸν εἶναι τοῖς σιληνοῖς* (215a) est particulièrement assumée par Alcibiade (φημί). La similitude est ensuite présentée comme factuelle (*ὅτι μὲν οὖν τό γε εἶδος ὁμοῖος εἰ τοῦτοις*, 215b4-5) : l'*eidōs*, l'aspect physique tout au moins est particulièrement ressemblant. Socrate lui-même ne saurait le contester (*οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἄν που ἀμφισβητήσαις*, 215b5-6). Il ne s'agit donc pas d'une vague ressemblance mais d'un fait quasi objectif.

À la fin de son discours (221c-d), Alcibiade revient sur la nature silénique de Socrate, disant qu'on ne peut pas comparer son ami aux hommes du passé. Alors que tous les grands hommes du présent ont leur archétype ancestral chez certains hommes (par exemple Nestor pour Périclès), Socrate, lui, ne peut être associé qu'à un être divin, en l'occurrence un silène.

La similitude prend dès lors la dimension d'un leitmotiv et d'un *lieu commun* chez les disciples de Socrate⁸. On dénote cependant chez Platon le choix de la présenter sur un mode très subtil. Ceci de deux manières : a) en faisant intervenir les silènes sculptés avec *agalmata theōn*, plutôt que le personnage mythologique réduit à lui seul ; b) en proposant un commentaire comparatif sur le satyre Marsyas et ce qui en résulte au sujet des comportements de Socrate et de ses proches.

D'emblée l'accent est mis sur une exploitation iconographique du leitmotiv. Il est alors question de statues creuses de silènes probablement en terre cuite avec, en leur sein, « des figurines de dieux ». Ce genre de statuaire doit être compris comme étant de type initiatique puisque, d'une part, le rite dionysiaque était institué sur ce mode⁹, d'autre part, la présence des figurines intérieures implique une volonté de les dérober à la vue des profanes. Ce qui sur le plan du culte nécessite la mise en place

⁶ Voir le passage des *Lois* VII de Platon, 815c : « Toute danse bachique et autres danses qui s'y rattachent, où, sous les noms de Nymphes, de Pans, de Silènes et de Satyres (καὶ Σειληνοὺς καὶ Σατύρους), on mime, selon le mot convenu, des gens ivres, et où l'on célèbre certaines purifications et initiations (περὶ καθαρμῶν τε καὶ τελετῶν ἀποτελούντων), tout ce genre n'est pas facile à définir... » (trad. des Places). L'ivresse d'Alcibiade, même si elle n'est pas vraiment mimée, entre de plain-pied dans la célébration rituelle du *satyrikon*.

⁷ Dans le *Banquet* de Xénophon (IV, 19), Critobule dit ceci : « Oui, par Zeus, [je suis plus beau] sinon je serais le plus laid de tous les Silènes que l'on voit dans les *satyrika* (Νῆ Δί'..., ἢ πάντων Σειληνῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς σατυρικοῖς αἰσχιστος ἂν εἴην) ». Se présente alors un aparté de Xénophon (qui peut aussi être l'interpolation d'un copiste) : « Il se trouvait en effet que Socrate leur ressemblait (ὁ δὲ Σωκράτης καὶ ἐτύγχανε προσεμφερὴς τοῦτοις ὄν) ». Leo Strauss (1970-1972) (in Xénophon, *Banquet*, trad. fr. 1992, p. 25) a misé non sans raison sur un commentaire de Xénophon. La comparaison est en effet importante pour lui puisqu'elle revient in *Banquet*, V, 7, entérinée par Socrate lui-même, dans le contexte d'un portrait des plus représentatifs à cet égard.

⁸ Il y a fort à croire que le *Banquet* de Platon a été écrit après celui de Xénophon. La plupart des exégètes admettent plutôt la priorité historique de composition du *Banquet* de Platon sur celui de Xénophon, voir F. Ollier (Notice du *Banquet* de Xénophon, 1961, p. 32). Comme position récente, voir B. Huss ("The Dancing Sokrates and the Laughing Xenophon, or the Other 'Symposium' Author(s)" in *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 120, No. 3 (1999), p. 381-409), qui y voit une œuvre tardive, proche de *Cyropédie*, donc postérieure au *Banquet* de Platon. Sur l'ancienneté du débat cf. de Magalhaes-Vilhena, *Le problème de Socrate*, 1950, p. 226-227. Rappelons, *a contrario*, la remarque de Hartmann citée par de Magalhaes-Vilhena : « Il n'est pas compréhensible que, si Xénophon avait d'abord lu le *Banquet* platonicien, il eût osé écrire le sien ». Concernant la succession Xénophon-Platon que nous retenons pour les deux *Banquets*, voir l'analyse de Louis André Dorion in "Socrate entremetteur", *Études platoniciennes* VI, 2009, p. 121, n. 44.

⁹ Voir Platon, *Phèdre*, 256b3-4 : Διονύσου δὲ τελεστικήν.

d'un certain parcours pour les dévoiler¹⁰. Le fait est que le *Banquet* de Platon prend lui-même une allure rituelle : l'*epopteia* des Mystères d'Éros a été évoquée par Diotime (210a1). Avec le discours d'Alcibiade, celui-ci prolongeant celui de Diotime, nous passons de la *pleine vision* au *couronnement* de l'initié. Le *Banquet* de Platon dans ses deux discours terminaux est initiatique, comme l'ont mis en évidence les études déterminantes de Riedweg et de Mattéi¹¹.

Le satyre Marsyas est lui-même un joueur de flûte (*aulós*) qui, selon le rituel, parvient à plonger les célébrants d'un cortège dionysiaque dans l'état de possession. Alcibiade dit ceci : « Les airs de Marsyas (...) sont les seuls capables de nous mettre en dans un état de possession (μόνα κατέχεσθαι ποιῇ) et, parce que ce sont des choses divines (διὰ τὸ θεῖα εἶναι)¹², de faire voir quels sont ceux qui ont besoin des dieux et d'initiations (καὶ πολλοὶ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν τε καὶ τελετῶν δεομένους) » (215c3-6, trad. Brisson modifiée). Autant dire qu'il ne saurait y avoir qu'une simple ressemblance physique¹³. Socrate est donc un satyre aussi en ce sens qu'il suscite des élans d'enthousiasme. C'est un personnage charismatique qui foudroie, fait battre les cœurs, fait pleurer. Et Alcibiade d'utiliser à cet égard la comparaison avec les rituels de possession des Corybantes (215e).

Autrement plus économique, par contraste, est la similitude telle qu'elle est présentée par Xénophon¹⁴. Toutefois, cette autre présentation reste pour nous instructive en ce qu'elle fait apparaître le *lieu commun* (Socrate-silène) du cercle socratique. Elle offre de plus un descriptif détaillé des traits siléniques de Socrate (*Banquet*, V, 7), faisant intervenir par surcroît, au moment où la troublante ressemblance est présentée la première fois, la notion même de *satyrikon*. Par ailleurs, nous pourrions constater que la notion de rituel initiatique¹⁵ est loin d'être absente dans le *Banquet* de Xénophon, celui-ci employant le terme même de *thiasos* (VIII, 2) pour désigner les célébrants d'Éros, dont Socrate est le chef.

Pour ce qui concerne le premier point, on peut dire que le discours d'Alcibiade introduit à la fin du *Banquet* de Platon, et au regard des autres dialogues de Platon, des révélations plutôt étonnantes. Et ces révélations redoublent d'intérêt du fait qu'elles entrent en étroite correspondance avec ce que dit Xénophon : Socrate est très ressemblant au silène par son physique, certes, mais aussi parce qu'il procède à des initiations propageant des effets de trances dionysiaques ou corybantiques autour de lui. Il est en ce sens la nouvelle incarnation d'Éros, le nouveau chef d'un thiasos entraînant ses amis dans le délire bachique de la philosophie (*Banquet*^p, 218b). Les conclusions de Luc Brisson demandent dès lors à être prolongées, complétées¹⁶ : le *satyrikon* d'Alcibiade ne fait pas qu'exposer les sentiments personnels de Platon face à l'énigme-Socrate. Sa portée dépasse l'individu limité et subjectif, consistant à faire ressortir le *caractère phénoménal* et *charismatique* de Socrate, la fascination que le philosophe a exercée sur ses contemporains. Alcibiade insiste d'ailleurs pour signaler que ses impressions ne sont pas limitées à lui-seul (215d, 215e). C'est précisément dans le domaine de l'éros que Socrate s'est révélé être un véritable *phénomène*.

2) Socrate-Silène en tant qu'erôtikos anēr

Au milieu de son discours (*Banquet*, 216e4-217a2), Alcibiade signale que la nature silénique de Socrate renvoie à deux types de comportement : a) le comportement sexuel du satyre qui ne cesse de tourner autour de ses proies ; b) l'*eirōneia* comme profession d'inscience radicale.

Sur la sexualité socratique — lesdites « amours socratiques » — il y a à la base chez ce

¹⁰ On assiste effectivement à un dévoilement rituel. Pour preuve, Alcibiade paraphrase un vers orphique appelant au respect du secret mystérique in Platon, *Banquet*, 218b6-7 : καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος ἐστὶν βέβηλος τε καὶ ἄγροικος, πύλας πάνυ μεγάλας τοῖς ὤσιν ἐπιθεσθε (= 4[A 39] C. = F 19 B.). Il n'est pas certain qu'Alcibiade soit ici dans le dénigrement, car l'intention de Platon est de montrer qu'Alcibiade et Phèdre, poursuivis pour profanation, en réalité ne se moquaient pas des rites initiatiques. Sans quoi l'accusation aurait éclaboussé Socrate lui-même.

¹¹ Cf. *supra* n. 5. Christoph Riedweg *Mysterterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien*. Berlin, 1987, p. 68 sq. et L. Brisson, in Platon, *Banquet*, 1998, p. 69-70.

¹² Xénophon a mis dans la bouche de Socrate une formule similaire dans les *Mémoires*, II, *dia to erôtikos einai* : car tel est mon être érotique. Cf. *infra* p. 6.

¹³ Pour ce qui concerne les traits physiques de Socrate tels qu'ils sont rapportés par Platon, il convient de se reporter aux autres descriptions relatives au physique de Socrate dans les *dialogues* de Platon (en particulier *Ménon*, 80a, *Théétète*, 143e). Cf. la note de L. Brisson *ad loc.* p. 218 n. 529. Même si la notion de silène n'est pas mentionnée, les descriptions restent globalement en accord avec celles de Xénophon (laideur, nez camus, yeux globuleux à fleur de tête). La description de Théétète comme double de Socrate ne peut que rejaillir sur ce dernier. La compatibilité des divers portraits permet de dire que nous touchons là à l'idiosyncrasie socratique.

¹⁴ Cf. *supra* note 7.

¹⁵ Cf. Vincent Azoulay in "Xénophon et le modèle divin de l'autorité", *Cahier des études anciennes*, XLVI, 2009. V. Azoulay perçoit une manifestation, une *epopteia* dans le prologue du *Banquet*^x et s'appuie sur Plutarque, *Comment on peut s'apercevoir qu'on progresse dans la vertu*, 81d-e.

¹⁶ Cf. *supra* n. 4.

personnage une forte propension à rechercher la compagnie des jeunes gens¹⁷, doublée aussi d'une étonnante habileté en ce domaine. Alcibiade dit ceci : « Socrate est érotiquement orienté¹⁸ du côté des beaux garçons (Σωκράτης ἐρωτικῶς διάκειται τῶν καλῶν) : il ne cesse de tourner autour d'eux, et il est comme foudroyé par eux (καὶ αἰεὶ περὶ τούτους ἐστὶ καὶ ἐκπέπληκται) » (*Banquet*, 216d2-3). Les exemples à ce sujet abondent dans les *dialogues* de Platon. On pense en particulier au début du *Charmide* (155d), où l'on voit Socrate littéralement foudroyé par la nudité du jeune Charmide qui se dévoile subrepticement. Mais, parvenant non sans peine à se maîtriser, le philosophe peut finalement convertir le déshabillage physique et déshabillage de l'âme. La grande habileté « érotique » de Socrate est commentée dans le *Banquet* (222b). Dans sa conclusion (222a-b), juste avant le commentaire de Socrate sur le *satyrikon drama*, Alcibiade donne des exemples de jeunes gens censés être des *erômenoi* devenir à leurs dépens des *erastai*. Socrate avait ainsi le don d'invertir les rôles à son avantage. Parmi tous les *erôtika* socratiques des *dialogues*, on ne saurait ne pas évoquer la brûlante déclaration d'amour de Socrate envers Alcibiade, dans l'*Alcibiade majeur* (131c-e). L'expertise de Socrate en la matière est rapportée dans le *Lysis* à un don divin (ἐκ θεοῦ δέδοται, 204b) et, de même, Socrate dans le *Banquet* reconnaît lui-même son expertise érotique, en dépit de son habituelle déficience en savoir¹⁹.

Xénophon, dans un passage célèbre des *Mémoires* (II, 6, 28,2-30,1), précise que la nature érotique de Socrate est elle-même la cause (διὰ τὸ ἐρωτικὸς εἶναι) de son habileté dans la chasse aux jeunes gens. Et Eschine de Sphettos rapporte qu'une compétence a été accordée spécialement à Socrate par *theia moira* dans son amour même envers Alcibiade, employant le langage des Mystères dionysiaques (fr. 11c Dittmar = SSR VI A 53). Ces rapports sont encore une fois concordants et pourraient bien nous rapporter à l'idiosyncrasie de Socrate.

Revenons à ce que dit Alcibiade dans le *Banquet* platonicien (216d3-4). Socrate est un silène aussi en ce sens qu'il fait profession d'inscience (καὶ αὐτὸς ἀγνοεῖ πάντα καὶ οὐδὲν οἶδεν) : « n'est-ce pas là un trait qui le rend semblable au silène ? » (ὥς τὸ σχῆμα αὐτοῦ τοῦτο οὐ σιληνώδες;) ²⁰, demande Alcibiade. On comprend ainsi que la fameuse *eirōneia* socratique — comme pratique de la dissimulation et sous-estimation de soi dans un esprit d'autodérision (εἰρωνευόμενος δὲ καὶ παίζων, 216e4) — doit se comprendre comme étant un autre trait (*schēma*) plus psychologique que physique, néanmoins fort représentatif de la nature silénique de Socrate. Alcibiade nous révèle qu'en réalité le comportement de Socrate est duel, bipolaire, puisqu'il se convertit d'une manière inattendue en son contraire, notamment par l'effet du divin. Le comportement apparemment obsessionnel de satire de Socrate se voit ainsi curieusement transformé en une extrême modération : « avez-vous une idée de toute la modération dont il regorge ? » (πόσης οἴεσθε γέμει ...σωφροσύνης ; 216d7). Nous passons dès lors de l'apparence, de la peau de satire aux *agalmata theōn*, ceux-ci étant masqués, voire protégés par l'apparence grossière du silène. Un comportement sérieux se substitue à un comportement de plaisanterie et d'ironie : « quand il est sérieux et que le silène s'ouvre... (σπουδάσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνοιχθέντος...) », dit Alcibiade (216e5-6). Cette dualité de

¹⁷ Le thème de Socrate comme *erôtikos anēr* avait été présenté en 1911 dans les *Varia socratica* d'Alfred Edward Taylor (Oxford, 1911, "The Phrontisterion", p. 150-151, n. 1) : « A point of view which must be overlooked is that the spiritualisation of the doctrine of ἔρως into the conception of a holy marriage of the soul with its Divine Bridegroom τὸ ὄν is hardly likely to have come from any thinker who was not himself by temperament an ἐρωτικός. This is the familiar feature of Socrates, but we have no real evidence as to its presence in Plato ». La mise en doute de Platon comme *erôtikos anēr* paraît pertinente. Et, sous réserve d'inventaire, la thématique de *Socrate comme homme érotique*, ne paraît pas avoir été tellement prise en compte dans la littérature secondaire du XX^e et XXI^e siècle, mis à part quelques exceptions notoires, sur la base des témoignages d'Eschine de Sphettos (A. E. Taylor, "Aeschines of Sphettus", *Philosophical Studies*, London, 1924, p. 15 sq., Barbara Ehlers, *Eine vorplatonische Deutung des Sokratischen Eros. Der Dialog Aspasia des Sokratikers Aischines*, Munich, 1966, p. 22 sq. et Gabriele Giannantoni, "L'Alcibiade d'Eschine et la littérature socratique sur Alcibiade" in *Socrate et les Socratiques*, dir. G. Romeyer Dherbey, et J.-B. Gourinat, Vrin, Paris, 2001, p. 298 sq.). Ce qui apparaît dès lors comme une sorte d'évincement de la dimension « érotique » de Socrate, résulte, entre autres, de trois causes déterminantes : 1) la mise entre parenthèse de ladite « question socratique » par la critique du XX^e siècle ; 2) une lecture hypercritique des fragments d'Eschine de la part de G. Vlastos ayant fait autorité (*Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Cambridge 1991, trad. fr. 1994, p. 340-341) ; 3) la substitution de Platon à Socrate, en tant qu'*erôtikos anēr*, ou plutôt de ladite « théorie platonicienne de l'amour ». Alcibiade, au contraire, à la place d'une théorie, nous présente des comportements érotiques de Socrate.

¹⁸ Nous traduisons ainsi le διακείμενον de Socrate, qui est une disposition envers quelqu'un ou quelque chose, tout en maintenant le sujet (Socrate) et l'adverbe ἐρωτικῶς.

¹⁹ Platon, *Banquet*, 177d : Socrate : « Moi qui assure ne rien savoir d'autre que sur les choses érotiques (ὅς οὐδὲν φημι ἄλλο ἐπίστασθαι ἢ τὰ ἐρωτικά) ». En 193e, Socrate est qualifié par Aristophane de : δεινοῖς οὐσι περὶ τὰ ἐρωτικά, expression reprise en 198d1 (rapporté à Ἔρος).

²⁰ Texte établi par Burnet. L. Robin, au contraire, établit une ponctuation après α?το?, en expliquant qu'il n'est pas ici question de la ressemblance physique avec le silène, puisqu'il s'agit d'ignorance. Mais l'ignorance apparente est encore un trait silénique. Robin perçoit l'ignorance socratique, comme étant une « frime », une apparence. Elle est néanmoins présentée comme constitutive de la nature silénique de Socrate.

comportement se retrouve indéniablement dans le *Banquet* de Xénophon, bien que celui-ci n'utilise pas le symbolisme des statues de silènes pouvant être ouvertes pour révéler le divin.

L'extrait central du discours d'Alcibiade (216e4-217a2) ne dit pas cependant ce que devient l'inscience première, l'*erôneia* proverbiale de Socrate, dès lors que la statue en vient à être ouverte. Mais cela semble pris en compte dans la troisième partie du discours d'Alcibiade, appliquant le symbolisme de la statue de silène aux discours socratiques eux-mêmes.

3) Les discours siléniques

La dernière partie (221d7-222a6) du discours concerne les *sôkratikoî logoi* et se présente d'emblée comme une séquence venant parachever les deux autres présentations. Les premières présentations qui étaient plutôt axées sur les comportements insolents, « érotiques », étranges, ou proprement enthousiasmants du philosophe. Tout porte à croire que l'on en vient maintenant *au fin mot de la révélation*, bien que le propos soit pour nous plutôt elliptique et incomplet. C'est donc en fin de parcours qu'Alcibiade nous introduit à la signification philosophique du complexe siléno-socratique. Comme on le sait, le comportement de Socrate est apparemment marqué par l'*hubris*, l'insolence, à l'instar du *daimôn* Éros²¹. Ce que nous dit Alcibiade est qu'il ne s'agit que de la peau du satyre (σατύρου δὴ τινα ὕβριστοῦ δοράν, 221e3-4). Les discours socratiques insolents sont indéniablement les discours par questions-réponses représentatifs de sa pratique de l'*elenchos*, avec pléthore d'exemples peu engageants d'ânes bâtés, de forgerons et de tanneurs — exemples que le philosophe aimait soumettre sans la moindre gêne aux personnages souvent prestigieux avec lesquels il s'entretenait. Mais Alcibiade, là encore, nous étonne en nous faisant comprendre que les fameux discours réfutatifs qui, à première vue, constituent le tout de la méthode socratique, ne correspondent en réalité qu'à un versant apparent. Ces discours rugueux, selon ses dires, devaient être ouverts par moment, laissant apparaître les *agalmata theôn*, qui sont encore des discours, les seuls ayant du sens (νοῦν ἔχοντα, 222a2), précise Alcibiade. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie ? Une sagesse socratique positive tout à coup devait-elle être énoncée, se manifester au détour des discours réfutatifs ? Si tel est le cas, cette sagesse est aussi surprenante que les comportements de grande modération d'un individu qui présente d'abord tout l'aspect de l'obsession sexuelle du satyre. Force est de constater qu'Alcibiade reste bien trop laconique. Il signale seulement que ces *discours divins* se rapportent à ce qu'il convient de savoir pour devenir un *kaloskagathos* accompli.

Dans le domaine spécifiquement socratique, on a du mal à cerner le type de discours auquel Alcibiade fait ici référence. Aussi a-t-on pris l'habitude de considérer « l'ouverture » du silène comme proprement platonicienne (Platon introduirait ici, non sans habileté, ses propres *dogmata* à partir du fonds socratique). Il se peut néanmoins que l'*Alcibiade majeur*, que l'on a tendance actuellement à réhabiliter dans son authenticité²², nous fournisse un exemple de discours qui a du sens — indépendamment de toute référence à la théorie des Idées —, nous maintenant dans un domaine qui reste encore de type socratique. Socrate placé sous le tutorat du dieu (*theos epitropos*, 124c), émet tout à coup des conseils avisés, dépassant dès lors le cadre même de la réfutation. Ses conseils tournent autour de la nécessité de se connaître soi-même, en trouvant les mots justes, adaptés à la situation. C'est parce qu'il est amoureux, dès lors possédé par une sagesse divine, qu'il peut guider Alcibiade dans une voie positive d'accomplissement. Socrate amène d'abord par l'*aporia* le jeune homme à dépasser son orgueil primaire, et lui présente ensuite une voie d'accomplissement en tant que *kaloskagathos*. On peut aussi remarquer que l'accompagnement socratique, dans ce dialogue, s'avère finalement initiatique d'après le modèle même des Mystères, selon des phases de *katabasis* et d'*anabasis* (sévères mises à l'épreuve et révélations divines²³) : deux mouvements opposés qui structurent en définitive l'*Alcibiade majeur*. Cette finalité d'accomplissement du *kaloskagathos* — à travers même l'utilisation de cette expression — se retrouve encore une fois dans le *Banquet* de Xénophon, dès les premières lignes du *dialogue*. Il y a donc lieu de penser que cet objectif est à la base originellement socratique. Par ailleurs, le dialogue xénophontien présente en fin de parcours une procédure d'intronisation de Callias, ratifiée par Socrate, chef du thiasse célébrant le *megas daimôn* Éros.

Représenter l'entretien dialectique comme une initiation fait sens dans bon nombre de

²¹ Le mythe de la naissance d'Éros présenté par Diotime (203a-204b) prépare indéniablement l'épiphanie du discours d'Alcibiade, dans lequel Socrate apparaît comme un enchanteur (215d-e), un *deinos goês* (203d8). Cf. *supra* la note 4, concernant les rapprochements établis par L. Brisson.

²² Cf. la présentation et traduction récente de l'*Alcibiade* de J.-F. Pradeau (Paris, 1999, 2000), p. 24 sq.

²³ Le fameux épisode de la pupille (*Alc.* 132e-133c), qui a posé tant de difficultés d'interprétation, peut être considéré comme correspondant à un moment de révélation des Mystères socratiques.

dialogues socratiques²⁴. Par exemple, dans l'*Euthydème*, Platon semble aussi avoir étendu à l'échelle d'un *dialogue* tout entier le genre du *satyrikon* socratique, avec une procédure explicite d'intronisation de Clinias (277d-e). Il y est question de danses des Corybantes, ce qui nous fait penser aux danses de satyres et de silènes²⁵. Avec ce dialogue très déconcertant, les divers personnages évoluent au sein d'un drame satyrique, au sein d'une véritable représentation dramatique, avec un public qui applaudit.

Notre angle de lecture nous a permis et nous permet encore d'ouvrir quelques pistes. Nous comprenons mieux, nous semble-t-il, l'objectif même du *satyrikon*. En associant le genre dramatique du *satyrikon* aux entretiens socratiques, les disciples, Platon et Xénophon²⁶, voulaient certainement signifier deux choses. D'une part, il s'agissait de mettre en relief le fait que les *sunousiai* socratiques — fréquentations non dénuées de signification sexuelle — se déroulaient sous la forme d'un rite initiatique, selon des *phases successives de mise à l'épreuve et de révélation, dans une atmosphère chargée d'émotions fortes*. D'autre part, le genre mystérieux du *satyrikon* — difficile de ne pas penser aux fresques de la fameuse *Villa des Mystères* de Pompéi, avec satyres et silènes masqués — leur paraissait particulièrement adapté, en raison du fait qu'ils étaient troublés par l'identité quasi-consubstantielle de Socrate et du silène. Loin d'être le pur produit d'une élucubration, l'étonnante similitude leur paraissait constitutive de l'idiosyncrasie de Socrate et de la fascination qu'il exerçait. Le discours d'Alcibiade prend à ce titre un réel aspect de témoignage²⁷, ce qui renforce encore son caractère de révélation finale. Or cela pourrait bien nous ramener au Socrate de la période héroïque. Il s'avère en effet qu'un *drama* beaucoup plus ancien se présente comme la matrice littéraire d'où procèdent tous ces *satyrika* (discours d'Alcibiade, le *Banquet* de Xénophon, l'*Euthydème* de Platon) : il s'agit des *Nuées* d'Aristophane. L'apparence antisocratique de la comédie ne doit pas nous égarer outre mesure : encore une fois nous assistons à un *drame socratique, en tant que représentation d'un rituel initiatique avec procédure d'intronisation*. Il y a dès lors fort à croire que, nonobstant l'apparente parodie, la comédie burlesque a transmis à la postérité une toute première représentation des Mystères socratiques, hautement représentative de l'allure proprement initiatique des entretiens institués par le maître lui-même. Certaines études²⁸ ont relevé récemment l'aspect initiatique du vocabulaire utilisé et des différentes épreuves que Socrate fait subir à Strepsiade. A. E. Taylor avait par ailleurs repéré depuis longtemps une nette allusion à la maïeutique socratique (*Nuées*, 135-143), présentée comme « mystérieuse » et secrète. Le *Théétète* qui révèle tardivement l'art secret de Socrate pourrait fort bien être une seconde révélation, faisant suite à celle d'Alcibiade du *Banquet*. En conséquence, que Platon ait utilisé dans le discours de Diotime le mode initiatique de l'*epopteia* pour introduire sa propre doctrine des Idées, n'est pas nécessairement incompatible avec le caractère originellement socratique de ces Mystères, dont nous parlent non seulement Alcibiade chez Platon, mais aussi Aristophane et Xénophon, ainsi qu'un autre écrivain socratique, Eschine de Sphettos.

²⁴ Vishwa Adluri, "Initiation into the mysteries: The experience of the irrational in Plato" *Mouseion*. 111. Vol. 6 (2006), p. 417 sq. : « The religious, ritual motif frames Socrates' philosophizing in an explicit manner, and conditions how we read the argument it frames... We must admit that initiation plays an essential role in Platonic philosophizing... The reader is invited not merely to think but to participate in philosophy by experiencing a conversion ». Le *Gorgias* par exemple est fort représentatif à cet égard.

²⁵ Cf. *supra* n. 6. Sur le culte corybantique, cf. I. LINFORTH "The Corybantic rites in Plato", 1946, p. 157.

²⁶ Il va de soi que le *Banquet* de Xénophon est un *satyrikon* philosophique, tout comme le discours d'Alcibiade du *Banquet* de Platon. Ainsi s'explique les difficultés d'exégèse concernant cette œuvre en apparence aussi futile. Selon le modèle du *satyrikon* philosophique, Xénophon a pu associer des discours théologiques sérieux avec des plaisanteries désopilantes et apparemment très peu exploitables philosophiquement parlant. L'allusion de Critobule aux *satyrika* (cf. *supra* n. 7) nous délivre par conséquent, il y a tout lieu de le penser, la clé de cette œuvre déroutante.

²⁷ L'aspect de témoignage a d'ailleurs été repéré par Livio Rossetti. Cf. *supra* n. 3.

²⁸ Simon Byl "Les Mystères d'Eleusis dans les *Nuées*", in *Mythe et philosophie dans les Nuées d'Aristophane, Les* (1994), Bruxelles, p. 18-19, et *Les Nuées d'Aristophane, Une initiation à Eleusis en 423 avant notre ère*, Paris, 2007 ; A. M. Bowie, *Aristophanes, myth, ritual and comedy*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 123 sq.

Erotic Mysteries

Constance C. Meinwald

The following derives from a longer work-in-progress. Part of what I try to do there is give attention to ways in which the literary elements of Plato's text contribute to our reanimation of its philosophical content. For the present occasion, I'd like to try out some ideas about how the multiple framing of the *Symposium*, the "leisurely pedagogy" of Diotima, and the metaphor of the Eleusinian Mysteries all bear on interpretation of the thinking the dialogue offers about *eros*.

Plato composed the *Symposium* in an extremely elaborate way. Our narrator, Apollodorus, passes on a second-hand account he got from Aristodemus: a chain of reporting whose links are rather weak. The degree of mediation frequently makes itself felt as when our narrator launches on the hand-me-down report at 174a3:

ἔφη φάρ οἱ Σωκράτη ἐντυχεῖν λελουμένον ... καὶ ἐρέσθαι αὐτὸν ὅποι ῥοι οὕτω καλὸς γεγενημένος.

Here the indirect character registers maximally: we have ἐντυχεῖν and ἐρέσθαι depending on ἔφη, and then as well the content of the innermost utterance is thrown into the optative ὅποι ῥοι. Even when the words attributed to one of the party-guests are given in their original form, they are typically introduced by φάναι or εἰπεῖν, themselves infinitive constructions of reported speech reminding us that the words of the intermediate narrator are now transformed in the outer narrator's report (e.g. καὶ τὸν εἰπεῖν ὅτι 'ἐπὶ δεῖπνον εἰς Ἀγάθωνος...' at 174a6).

This has a dulling effect. For a parallel in English, let's compare an extract from P.G. Wodehouse with how that would be if presented in the manifestly mediated way. In the Wodehouse original (corresponding to Plato's composition in such works as the *Charmides*), Bertie Wooster recounts the start of his lunch for Sir Roderick Glossop as follows:

"What ho! What ho! What ho!" I said, trying to strike the genial note, and then had a sudden feeling that that was just the sort of thing I had been warned not to say. (P.G. Wodehouse, "Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch")

The distanced variant would have a non-participant narrator showing his reliance on an intermediate source, along some such lines as:

He [the source] reported Sir Roderick to have entered, then Bertie to have said, "What ho! What ho! What ho," and then Jeeves to have told them that luncheon was served.

I agree with such general explanations of the *Symposium*'s being multiply framed as that this indicates the importance to a number of people of the conversation at the famous party, and that Plato is using the distancing effect of the third-person narrators at several removes to emphasize our lack of reliable access to history. I wonder though if there isn't another purpose for the technique, connected with a certain kind of *variation among* passages in our dialogue.

True, the actions and interchanges of the party-guests are described (as above) in such a way as intrusively to remind us of the multiple mediation and so of our distance from the speakers at the symposium. But Socrates, after he finishes his examination of Agathon, launches into a narrative, taking up all of 201e8-212a7, that he presents in the manner of the *Charmides* and which is interrupted by no such reminders. Indeed these exchanges together with Socrates' scene-setting and concluding remarks (i.e. the stretch of text from the semicolon in 201d1 through 212c3) could be removed from the *Symposium* and be a lively little dialogue of their own. Plato has handled the nesting of speakers in such a way that the reported conversation between Socrates and Diotima is free at its opening, at its closing, and throughout from any of the tell-tale infinitives of mediation. This is the longest such stretch in the dialogue. (Before Socrates, the longest stretch in between appearances of the machinery was the speech of Pausanias – only a few pages, and lacking the hooks by which conversational exchanges involve us. Alcibiades' 7-page account of his relationship with Socrates is

¹ Using Dover's edition in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (1980) here and throughout.

the only other passage in our text in which conversation is presented in the vivid as opposed to the dulled mode, and I believe that it in fact has a special role in connection with our reception of the Socrates/Diotima one – but that is a story for another time.)

So Plato has contrived the sophisticated result that the most embedded (and fictively most mediated) exchanges *seem* more directly given to us than those at the symposium itself. While the supposedly historical party is recounted to us in a patently mediated and unreliable way, the exchanges narrated at the party are presented to us with all the liveliness of a novel.

Why has Plato contrived this? Let's consider his use of a similar technique in the *Parmenides*. The first part of that dialogue (including the exchanges in which the youthful Socrates repeatedly fails the elenchus when questioned by the namesake Eleatic about his theory of forms) also makes its framing and mediation by multiple narrators very visible; the dulling infinitives of reported speech are intrusively prevalent. The second part of the work though (a demonstration of the gymnastic dialectic recommended to Socrates as necessary if one is to go on to reach the truth) is, after a single introductory φάναί (137c4), given as an unadorned alternation of utterances by the Eleatic and by his interlocutor Aristotle – the almost 30 Stephanus pages from then on, if printed on their own, would be in form a play.

M.M. McCabe has proposed that, because the narrators do not reappear to close the frame at the end of the *Parmenides*, *we become the true audience* of the demonstration.² And in fact, the second part of the dialogue has proved to be where friends of the *Parm* since the eighties (like Proclus before us) have found the materials that are helpful in the continuing development of Plato's philosophy. I think that M.M. has definitely pointed out something correct in broad terms about the different ways the two parts of the dialogue function: the first part of the dialogue shows us how the character Socrates is said to have fallen short in the distant past, while the second part of the work is designed to draw us directly into the homework that will enable us to carry out Plato's continuing program. But to me it is incredible that we turn into the audience *only at the end of the work*. Rather, the audience is *what we have been throughout the gymnastic section*, because the dulling and distancing narrative intrusions have dropped out ever since its start; the non-closing of the frame at dialogue's end merely avoids disrupting the effect.

This difference between M.M.'s position and mine, rather slight with respect to the *Parm*, becomes greater if applied to our present dialogue. M.M. pointed out that since, in the *Symposium*, the frame does ultimately close, we are distanced from the dialogue as a whole.³ But I see it as also significant that within the work, there is one very extended passage (plus the more limited one) that retails conversation *not* introduced by means of the distancing infinitives, in this contrasting markedly with the ambient passages that are systematically dulled in those ways. True, in the *Symposium* the conversation in question is presented in the "novelistic" mode of the *Charmides* or *Republic* as opposed to being direct drama. But there still seems to me to be a significant contrast between the *Charmides*-style portions and the super-mediated ones.

Why should Plato have contrived to set us in different relations to the different parts of the text? It could be here too that the intrusively framed parts are interesting anecdotes about what the men at the party said and did, given to provide background for the portions of the work Plato designs to draw us into active philosophizing, these crucial portions being the exchanges that we experience as much more directly presented. So this would be a reinforcement from the compositional technique for the interpretative practice of making the Socrates/Diotima exchange of singular (though of course not sole!) importance within the work.

That first point has to do with the *role* we give to various passages in coming to our interpretation of the dialogue as a whole. Now I'd like to turn to some ways in which literary elements affect our understanding of the philosophical *content* of the Socrates/Diotima passage. In a place where Diotima has asked Socrates a question he is not prepared to answer, we read:

“οὐ μεντὰν σέ,” ἔφην ἐγώ, “ὦ Διοτίμα, ἐθαύμαζον ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ καὶ ἐφοίτων παρὰ σέ αὐτὰ ταῦτα μαθησόμενος.” (206b5-6)

"No, Diotima, if I had known, I would not have been so amazed at your wisdom, nor would I have come so regularly for instruction at your hands." (tr. Jowett).

Notice that Socrates portrays himself as actually *frequenting* Diotima for purposes of this tutelage: their exchanges, unlike that between Socrates and Agathon, form a series. Similarly, despite the

² "Unity in the *Parmenides*: The Unity of the *Parmenides*" in *Form and Argument in Late Plato* ed. C. Gill and M.M. McCabe (OUP 1996)

³ *ibid.* pp. 6-7.

circumstance that Diotima's teaching up to 207a has been presented as if it were given in a single continuous conversation, at 207a5-6 Socrates says:

ταῦτα τε οὖν πάντα ἐδίδασκέ με, ὅποτε περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγους ποιοῖτο
All this she taught me at various times⁴ when she spoke of love" (tr. Jowett).

There is an important intellectual consequence of these lessons' forming a series: Diotima has scope to employ pedagogic techniques not available in one-off elenctic encounters. If we try to imagine occasions that formed part of Diotima's series, surely different lessons would have developed different sub-portions of her view. One such topic may for example have been our fundamental goal (204e1-206a13), and another how the motivation of the epic hero to win undying glory (208c5-6) represents the contemporary culture's recognition of a route besides the continuation of one's house whereby to achieve a kind of immortality – a route Diotima then shows is taken also by poets and others who give birth to φρόνησις and the rest of virtue (209a3-4). I think it quite plausible to suppose that ideally one should devote at least one "lesson" to each such sub-topic. Once the lessons have been separately mastered, students (Socrates or ourselves) can try to put the parts together.

Seeing this text as derived from a series of lessons makes sense of certain important features it has. Often a discussion will slip in something additional to its primary focus – a marker, unexplained in its own context, for something that will later be developed at length. More importantly, it makes sense to see certain sequences whose members otherwise stand in a puzzling relationship to each other as the natural result of a pedagogic technique still familiar today, in which teachers work from early statements that are approximations of some claim they will develop in future with greater complexity. Consider the sequence: Love desires beauties (formulations Diotima attributes to Socrates at 204d2-4) / Love desires to possess beauties (Socrates' formulation at 204d7-9) / The job of love is to give birth in beauty (as Diotima finally articulates it in 206b1-8). To see such variations in this way is to see early versions (if later superseded by others that are justified by the content of the actual philosophical discussions) as first approximations that are employed because they work for students at that stage, even if not exactly correct. Thus far from being official permanent parts of Diotima's theory, such early versions should be regarded as anticipations of or elliptical for what we should really come to hold.

Diotima is by no means making life easy for students. In addition to the phenomenon I have just mentioned, she often introduces sub-topics without showing how they connect up with others. It may well be that the underlying reason why Diotima's lessons are represented in such a way as not to make obvious how they fit together is precisely to challenge us to activate ourselves in working through these indications: we have to reconstruct for ourselves the suggested theory of eros. (I believe that a parallel between deprecated passivity in both sexual and philosophical matters is thematic in our dialogue, but again cannot go into that now.)

Here's how the early parts of Diotima's account seem to me to connect up. Exploration from the common view that love desires beauty breaks off because Socrates is not at first able to say what is gained when this desire is satisfied. Diotima then switches to the new topic of our desire for goods, and we readers aren't sure how if at all these two are related. But eventually we can integrate all our elements, as follows. One falls in love with a beautiful love object (thus the account respects the well-known importance of beauty in matters of love). But this is no end in itself; erotic engagement with the beautiful love object leads to the birth of one's offspring, love's real task. In fact the production and preservation of offspring is the focus of our greatest efforts because leaving behind an offshoot like ourselves is how we extend ourselves into the future. As mortal creatures, this is our only hope for immortality; only in this way do we have the possibility of possessing the good forever (our fundamental motivation).

One sign of both the importance and perhaps the difficulty of the treatment of reproduction is that it is actually repeated in our text. Thus the first exposition (206b7-207a4) of love's task as birth in beauty waxes on about beauty and then briefly connects reproduction with immortality, in turn necessary for possessing the good forever. At 207a6-c1 Diotima in effect gives Socrates a pop quiz, drawing his attention to the tremendous efforts animals put into their offspring – itself additional support for her view, which was initially most naturally understood in terms of human beings – in gearing up to ask Socrates if he can explain this. To answer the question he would only need to have mastered what she has already said – it could easily be applied to the whole animal kingdom. But Socrates is not able immediately to put all this together, and Diotima goes on to explain again (207c8-

⁴ This tr makes explicit that Jowett takes ἐδίδασκέ as the imperfect of iterated or customary action.

208b6), this second time with much more about how the mortal creature's only way to extend itself into the future and achieve a kind of immortality is by leaving behind something new like itself.

These adjacent portions of text presenting overlapping content illustrate what I call “Diotima’s leisurely pedagogy.” Now I’d like to show how recognizing that the text does not always move forward in a strictly linear way can bear on our reading of the remaining discussion, concerning the preferred ways of transcending mortality.

I am of course referring to the generation of the offspring of the soul, discussed starting from 208c1 with the heroes of epic and ending in the climax of the ascent of love. Here we will have additional guidance from another literary element: language taken from the Eleusinian Mysteries structures our text. While I am certainly no expert on the Mysteries and I gather that much about them is necessarily obscure, one thing that seems uncontroversial is the sequence: first came initiation in the lesser mysteries; after an interval, initiates could go in for the greater mysteries. It was wrong to seek admission to the latter without having been initiated into the former.

Diotima’s assertion that her lesser rites are for the purpose of the greater ones shows clearly that she means initiation into her lesser mysteries to be a necessary condition for going on to the greater ones:

ταῦτα μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐρωτικά ἴσως, ὃ Σώκρατες, κἄν σὺ μνηθείης· τὰ δὲ τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά, ὧν ἕνεκα καὶ ταῦτα ἔστιν, ἕαν τις ὀρθῶς μετή, οὐκ οἶδ’ εἰ οἷός τ’ ἂν εἴης (209e5-210a2)

Which parts of the text describe which rites, and what is the difference between them?

A family of readings that has recently become prominent⁵ is based on supposing that Diotima’s lesser mysteries are the province of a population of honor-lovers who have been discussed in 208c1-209e4, before the text just quoted; then everything after the quote i.e. the whole ascent of love, concerns the greater mysteries, enjoyed by a completely disjoint population of philosophically-minded people. This interpretation gains in attractiveness if we assume that the text always proceeds linearly, so that once the greater mysteries have been mentioned in 210a1 we never go back to hearing about the lesser ones. Making love of honor thematic for the earlier passage offers a way to distinguish Diotima's lesser from her greater mysteries (though one may wonder if this distinction is motivated, perhaps improperly, by foreknowledge of texts on the tripartite soul). The problem with this reading I’m concerned with now though is that it violates the relationship that must obtain between the lesser and greater rites. Having been initiated into the lesser mysteries can’t function as a necessary precondition of going on to the greater ones if the populations each is aimed at are completely disjoint.

How else can we understand the distinction between the two kinds of rites? Since 210a1-2 describes the lesser mysteries as for the sake of the greater, let’s pay special attention to the occurrences within our passage of the notions *hou heneka* and *telos*. Diotima announces after describing the stages of the ascent from loving an individual beautiful boy through engagement with beautiful practices and sciences:

ὅς γάρ ἂν μέχρι ἐνταῦθα πρὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά παιδαγωγηθῇ, θεώμενος ἐφεξῆς τε καὶ ὀρθῶς τὰ καλὰ, πρὸς τέλος ἤδη ἰὼν τῶν ἐρωτικῶν ἐξαίφνης κατόψεται τι θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλόν, τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο, ὃ Σώκρατες, οὐ δὴ ἕνεκεν καὶ οἱ ἔμπροσθεν πάντες πόνοι ἦσαν (210e2-6)

i.e. the lover is now coming to the *telos* and *hou heneken*, which turns out to be the epiphany of Beauty Itself, described largely in terms of how it’s not like ordinary beauties at 210e7 ff. We then hear

ὅταν δὴ τις ἀπὸ τῶνδε διὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδευαστεῖν ἐπανιών ἐκεῖνο τὸ καλὸν ἄρχεται καθορᾶν, σχεδὸν ἂν τι ἄπτοιο τοῦ τέλους. τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ ἐστὶ τὸ ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐρωτικά ἵεναί ἢ ὑπ’ ἄλλου ἄγεσθαι, ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ἀεὶ ἐπανιέναι ... (211b5-c2)

⁵ Especially developed versions of this are G.R. Lear pp 116-20 in "Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's Symposium" in *Plato's "Symposium"* ed. J. Leshner, D. Nails, and F. Sheffield (Hellenic Center 2006) and F.C.C. Sheffield, at least on the most obvious reading of her DLM and DHM in *Plato's "Symposium": The Ethics of Desire* (OUP 2006) <<FURTHER INFO NEEDED!>>; G.R.F. Ferrari pp. 255-8 of "Platonic Love" in the *Cambridge Companion to Plato* ed. R. Kraut (1992) is a fore-runner (though p 260 departs from the clean-cut division). Cf. Kraut's understanding of the passages in question in "Plato on Love" in the *Oxford Handbook of Plato* (OUP 2008).

and this continues with recapitulation of the lower steps, leading up finally to description (211c7-212a7) of the *συνουσία* with Beauty at the blessed level. So going by these indications, at lower levels of the ascent our lover is not yet at the goal; he was presumably still being initiated into the lesser rites.

Recognition of Diotima's leisurely style of pedagogy has prepared us to find it unsurprising if this text does not always move forward linearly. Thus the initial discussion of the lesser mysteries at 208c1-209e4 (the passage locating the intuition in the surrounding culture about heroes aiming for undying glory as friendly to the theory under construction) can be a warm-up for the ascent passage that partially overlaps with it. Diotima at the lower stages of the ascent is revisiting (with some added detail) the lesser mysteries; we come to the greater mysteries *only* with the famous climax at 210e ff. Even then there is some looping back to recapitulate the lower and lesser levels before returning finally to the heights at the end of the passage. On this reading, the difference between the lesser and the greater mysteries is a matter of the beauties they engage with: a safe but limited formulation is to say the difference derives from whether or not a lover's *συνουσία* is with the form, Beauty.

More interesting is to observe the differences that go along with this, and how they bear on the way in which the goal of *ἔρως* is achieved. Let us now review Diotima's discussion. The basic picture as I see it is that in producing offspring of the soul, as in all erotic activity, encounters with beauties excite us to creative activity that is our best bid (as mortal creatures) to possess the good forever (the fundamental motivation). Heroic, artistic, political, and intellectual achievements are all due to the work of eros.

The warm-up discussion of the lesser mysteries starts from the culturally familiar case of the bid by the epic heroes for undying glory (at 208c5-6; later modified when discussing Alcestis and Codrus as well as Achilles to immortal *memory of their virtue* at 208d5-6, and finally to *immortal virtue and the glorious fame that follows*, the formulation most suitable to Diotima's theory, at 208d7-8). The superiority of this strategy to that of animal reproduction is due to the dual circumstances that the offspring is better than an ordinary child and also not subject to the fragility and dilution attendant on the chains by which a biological line is propagated. The lower stages of the ascent, overlapping in content with the warm-up discussion of the lesser mysteries, give additional detail in telling of a progression the spiritually fertile can make through a range of beautiful love objects that make possible the birthing of a series of increasingly valuable offspring, from love-poetry on up. Even when mathematical or scientific results are produced, I believe the offspring can be distinctively the lover's in the way the scheme requires.⁶ For one doesn't discover a theorem as an isolated truth, but by producing a proof for it. What kind of proof one can come up with and how one presents it in fact do show the character of one's own mind; different people can develop brute-force and elegant proofs of the same result; surprising or systematic presentations, etc.⁷ Our lover is meant to produce *λόγους* and *διανοήματα* (210d5-6), which can surely include proofs, in which case his offspring will be just as caused by and reflective of himself as love-poetry and such lower-level progeny evidently are.

After the description of these stages comes the fanfare I have already mentioned (210e2-6); then Diotima describes (with some back-tracking) the final revelation (through 212a7). In the real Mysteries the ultimate level is some sort of special vision. Plato's description uses the metaphor of a vision, while also keeping the elements that have constituted his theory of eros very much in play. The lover gazes on Beauty itself and is with it (so a beautiful love object and erotic engagement still figure). He will give birth, this time not to images of virtue (before Diotima did not make explicit the inferior status of the offspring under consideration) but to true virtue.⁸ Such offspring, like those at all previous levels of the ascent, seem to me to be things that will live on (for indefinite durations) in the world of change.

Let us now consider a way of transcending mortality contained in our passage and unique to the case of *συνουσία* with Beauty. The lover at our passage's climax experiences rapture with a love object that is not in space and time, and not subject to any change or qualification.⁹ Beauty itself is not

⁶ So answering a puzzle raised by G.R. Lear op. cit. p. 111 n. 20.

⁷ While I believe this point is plausible from our armchairs, see Reviel Netz *Ludic Proof: Greek Mathematics and the Alexandrian Aesthetic* (Cambridge University Press 2009) for a wealth of detail in connection with Greek mathematics, and the intriguing thesis that different styles of proving theorems are also cultural, so that there is e.g. a mathematical analogue to Alexandrian poetry.

⁸ Following G.R.F. Ferrari's suggestion in "Platonic Love" (*Cambridge Companion to Plato* 1995) that we regard all generated offspring of the soul as propositional (though with regrets for not having space to explore this claim now), this would mean that the epiphany of Beauty enables the lover now for the first time to produce *λόγους* and *διανοήματα* that are fully adequate.

⁹ G.R. Lear, op. cit.

just sempiternal (existing through all times) but in Plato's view has some mode of being which is outside time.¹⁰ I suggest that we see the experience of the lover at the top of the ascent as taking on--from the inside--the timeless character of its eternal object. This would make the episode of contemplation timeless from within, though when viewed so to speak "from the ground" it would occupy only a finite stretch of time. Within the experience, the lover would take on the mode of being of Beauty Itself, and in that way transcend the mortal.

As soon as Plato thought of representing our highest achievement by the metaphor of gazing on a divine object (and this will of course be a favorite trope especially notable in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*), which experience is not available to any chance person but requires special preparation and then in some way cannot be communicated, the parallel progress of an initiate in the mysteries must have seemed perfectly prepared. The special experience of an initiate in the ultimate rites was a culturally familiar analogue to the engagement with rarefied intellectual objects whose transcendence Plato now stresses for the first time, in the case of Beauty.

Is the idea that within the experience of gazing on Beauty Itself our lover would take on the form's mode of being fanciful? As some confirmation of the way I have suggested for understanding the highest level of Diotima's ascent, I'd like to end with a quote from Proclus (who, intriguingly, was acquainted with the daughter of the Eleusinian hierophant).¹¹ He describes what seems to me to be the exactly analogous thing for real-world initiates when he reports about the rites:

They cause sympathy of the souls with the ritual in a way that is unintelligible to us, and divine, so that some of the initiands are stricken with panic, being filled with divine awe; *others assimilate themselves to the holy symbols, leave their own identity, become at home with the gods, and experience divine possession.* (Proclus in *Remp* II 108, 17-30, ap Burkert p 114; emphasis mine)

¹⁰ Like all Platonic forms. See e.g. G.E.L Owen, "Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present"

¹¹ Burkert *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Harvard University Press 1987) p. 114 says that the varied descriptions show that Proclus is giving actual observations and not "speculation based on postulates."

Plato's Forms in the Language of the Eleusinian Mysteries

Barbara Sattler

ABSTRACT

In this talk I want to show in detail – in ways that have not been attempted before – that Plato uses the language and metaphors of the Eleusinian Mysteries in the *Symposium* as a template for the ascent to the Form of Beauty. And I try to give an explanation why he might have chosen to do so.

The standard accounts of the Eleusinian Mysteries come from sources that have themselves been heavenly influenced by Plato and hence are unsuitable to demonstrate the extent of his exploitation of the Mysteries. The first part of the paper offers a reconstruction of what can be known about the Eleusian Mysteries with the help of Pre-Platonic sources, by looking at material culture, archaeological remains, and pre-Platonic literature.

The second part gives a careful reading of the ascent to the Form of Beauty in the *Symposium* (209e5-211d3) so as to show in detail that Plato does indeed use the imagery, metaphors, and language of the Mysteries as a template for it. The Eleusinian template provides him, for example, with the central image of bridging two realms by ascending in several steps from one to the other under the leadership of a guide, an image that also stresses the idea that such an ascent requires serious preparation and leads to an understanding of divine things. Correspondingly, Plato introduces Diotima like a mystagogue who guides her charge Socrates through a series of steps, ascending in intelligibility, towards the knowledge of what truly and eternally is, to the knowledge of the *auto to theion kalon*.

In the third and final part of the paper I examine possible reasons for Plato's usage of the language and metaphors of the Mysteries. I argue that a central virtue of the terms and images of the Eleusinian Mysteries is that they enable Plato to make accessible his notions of Forms to the Athenian audience of his time: while hardly anybody of this audience would be familiar with his Theory of Forms, most of them would be acquainted with the Mysteries of Eleusis. Introducing an audience to his Theory of the Forms means introducing them to entities that are regarded as real, indeed as having the highest form of reality, and as something that can truly be known, but that is not perceptible or readily encountered in our everyday world. So even for a well-educated audience of his time, Plato's Forms would pose the difficulty of grasping something that is meant to be intelligible but not readily understandable. One crucial arena in which Plato's fellow Athenians would have come across something resembling the Forms in being eternal, transcending the realm of the sensible individual things, being connected to the promise of a good life, and requiring an elaborate preparation process for its comprehension is exactly the realm of the Mysteries. And also the idea that the understanding of the highest Form might be inexpressible in language is easily understood against the background of the Mysteries.

The Hermeneutics of Mystery in Plato's *Symposium*

Lloyd P. Gerson

In Plato's *Symposium*, the mysterious figure of Diotima presents Socrates with a set of mysteries—mysteries of love. So, we should not be surprised if the import of these mysteries is not transparent to us as indeed it is not to Socrates. Nevertheless, Diotima makes a number of claims that are deeply puzzling and unsupported and, perhaps, even unsupportable. For example, at 212A Diotima says that when one achieves the peak of the lover's ascent and sees Beauty, he then gives birth to true virtue, not an image of it. There are two obvious puzzles here: (1) why should the vision of a single Form produce true virtue? Would not the vision of others Forms do the same or, alternatively, would not a vision of more than one Form, say, the Form of Justice also be necessary to produce true virtue? And (2) why does the vision of the Form produce *true* virtue as opposed merely an image of it? What exactly are such images? The puzzles are not eliminated—indeed, they are exacerbated—by adding that, as we learn from the long previous passage, 204D-206B, love of the beautiful is nothing other than the desire for the good, that is, the desire to possess the good forever.¹ So, since the apex of the ascent is the vision of that which is beautiful, we must suppose that with this vision one possesses the good. This simple inference makes all the more puzzling why the vision of a Form of Beauty is the culmination of the quest for happiness or the good.

Symposium itself provides no solutions to these puzzles or mysteries. Even a cursory survey of the literature shows that if one is resolved to stay within the 'confines' of *Symposium*, no solution is possible. On the other hand, if one seeks a philosophical message in these mysteries, there are a number of other dialogues to which one can appeal for resolution, including *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*, and *Philebus*.² Most scholars who seek to ascertain such a message readily and properly appeal to these dialogues. With them, the puzzles of *Symposium* dissolve, or mostly so.

The aim of my paper is to explore some of the implications of accepting that no dialogue, including *Symposium*, is philosophically self-standing, even if each one is a complete and independent literary work. My principal claim is that Platonism is not identifiable with the content of any one dialogue. We only need add that if Aristotle's testimony is to count for anything, then Platonism is also not identifiable with the content of the sum of the dialogues. In making this claim, however, I am far from making the additional claim that the dialogues are not our best window into Platonism. Indeed, as Plato has Socrates argue in *Phaedrus* 274B6-278E3, the dialogues can serve as ὑπομνήματα of the teachings that constitute Platonism.

Here is the first puzzling sentence:

'Do you not understand,' she went on, 'that it is there alone, when he sees the beautiful with that by which it has to be seen, he will give birth not to mere images of virtue but to true virtue, because it is not an image that he is grasping, but the truth? When he has given birth to and nurtured true virtue it is possible for him to be loved by the gods and to become, if any human can, immortal himself.'³

If we confine our efforts to understand what 'true virtue' is in *Symposium*, we will, as most scholars do, take the word 'true' as a mere grace note, or, even less helpfully, as a contrast to 'false' virtue', that is, the mere appearance of virtue without the real thing. But first, there is no indication that the virtue produced in what amount to the 'lower mysteries' is false virtue.⁴ This is in fact the virtue that consists in the good arrangement of the family and the state; it is what Diotima calls moderation and justice. This is the virtue that results from the love of the beautiful, which is nothing but the desire to possess the good forever, when that love results in birth in the soul of one worthy.⁵ So, how does true

¹ At 204E1, Diotima uses the word μεταβαλόν ('altering') to indicate that 'beautiful' and 'good' are being used synonymously. Cf. *Protag.* 355E4-7 on this use of μεταβαλόν.

² See É. Des Places, 'Platon et la langue des mystères', in *Études Platoniciennes* (1981: 83-98) on the closely connected uses of the higher and lower mysteries across different dialogues.

³ *Symp.* 212A2-7: ἢ οὐκ ἐνθυμῇ, ἔφη, ὅτι ἐνταῦθα αὐτῷ μοναχοῦ γενήσεται, ὁρῶντι ᾧ ὁρατὸν τὸ καλόν, τίκτειν οὐκ εἰδωλὰ ἀρετῆς, ἅτε οὐκ εἰδόλου ἐφαπτομένῳ, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῇ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ· τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῇ καὶ θρεψαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι, καὶ εἴπερ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ;

⁴ *Symp.* 209A-B.

⁵ *Symp.* 206A.

virtue, the result of the vision of the Form of Beauty, differ from this?

I do not think it can be stressed too strongly that, if we confine ourselves to *Symposium*, there is no real answer to this question, whereas if we go outside *Symposium*, the question is easy to answer. The true virtue that results from the vision of the Form of Beauty is what the philosopher in book 9 of *Republic* has, and what the virtuous man in book 4 is missing. It is also what the virtuous man in book 10 in the Myth of Er is missing when he chooses the life of a tyrant.⁶ Finally, it is the true virtue of the philosopher in *Phaedo*, in contrast to the ‘practical and political virtue’ of the many.⁷

If one were to ask how a vision of the Form of Beauty is supposed to produce true virtue, the all too obvious answer is found in the central myth of *Phaedrus*. For there we learn that a vision of Forms in a previous life in the source of our virtue here below and that it is only the power of that vision that can ultimately save us. To ask further how such a vision actually transforms ordinary virtue—not, we must insist, produces a new and different virtue—is to ask a question where, once again, there is an abundance of material for an answer outside *Symposium* and no such material within it.

The last line of our passage identifies the vision as that which immortalizes us. How exactly is this supposed to happen? Either we are not immortal and ‘immortalizing’ is a metaphor for something like living a long life or being remembered for a long time by your descendents, or else we are immortal and we do not have to do anything to achieve what we already are. Neither alternative makes any sense in the context of this passage. And yet, if we go to *Phaedrus*, we have the emphatic statement that a combination of body and soul, in short, a human being, cannot be immortal.⁸ We are, though, also repeatedly told—although not in *Symposium*—that our souls are immortal. The answer, of course, is that we immortalize ourselves by recognizing that our identity is that of a soul, in particular, a rational soul. And at the same time, we gradually renounce our identity with the body and with bodily desires. That is, after all, what progress in virtue amounts to. So, once again, we ask how a vision of a Form is supposed to produce the true virtue that belongs not to the human being or the ‘composite’, but to the soul that we really are? The short answer to *this* question is that knowledge or ἐπιστήμη is a πάθος in the soul, the state or condition that is the presence of the intelligible object. The immortal soul is not transformed by acquiring this state, since it always has it. We, on the other hand, *are*, transformed by identifying ourselves as the soul in this state.⁹

The final issue I wish to make in regard to our passage is perhaps the most difficult. Why is it that the vision of the single Form Beauty is supposed to produce the requisite transformation? One would have thought that this was not the obvious Form and certainly not the only one that could produce this result. Indeed, the implicit connection between Beauty and true virtue has puzzled many, even to the point of insisting that the pursuit of beauty and virtue are in fact completely at odds with each other.

In this case, we do have some help from within *Symposium* itself, in the identification of the love of the beautiful with the desire to possess the good forever. But relying on this important clue alone, we are unable to explain why the good is achieved by the vision of a single Form; indeed, we are unable to explain how knowledge of this Form amounts to possession of the good.

To illuminate this aspect of the ‘mystery’, we need *Republic* and *Philebus*. First, in *Republic*, the Idea of the Good is ‘more beautiful’ (κάλλιον) than knowledge and truth because it is their cause.¹⁰ That is, it is the cause (αἰτία) of the knowability and truth that are properties of Forms, that is, properties of Forms in relation to intellects. So, one may surmise that in knowing the Forms one attains the good in the only way possible.¹¹ But this passage raises its own problem. If the Idea of the Good is more beautiful than the Form of Beauty, why would the philosopher be willing to stop at Beauty and even more puzzling, why is it not some sort of intellectual contact with the Idea of the Good that produces true virtue as opposed to the intellection of Beauty? In short, the real problem is how the Idea of the Good is related to the Form of Beauty and, of course, to all the other Forms which, it would seem, are no less beautiful than is Beauty.

⁶ See *Rep.* 619C8: ἔθει ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας ἀρετῆς μετελϋφότα. Cf. *Tht.* 176B2-3: ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὄσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι.

⁷ *Phd.* 69B3 with 82A11-B1.

⁸ *Phdr.* 245C5-D2.

⁹ AAt 211E1, the Form of Beauty is described as εἰλικρινές, καθαρὸν, ἄμεικτον. Cf. *Phd.* 67A6-B2 where philosophy is described as a process of purification and not until this process is complete can we expect to know that which is pure. It should be kept in mind that the description of the Form of Beauty here and at 211B1-2: αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ μεθ’ αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὄν are purely generic properties, applying to all of the Forms. Cf. *Phd.* 75D10-C3. Also, *Phdr.* 250B-C where the beauty that is seen is not distinguished from at least the Forms of Justice and Self-Control.

¹⁰ *Rep.* 508E3-4. Cf. 509A6.

¹¹ Cf. *Symp.* 211C8: τοῦ καλοῦ μάθημα and *Rep.* 505A2: ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα μέγιστον μάθημα.

To answer this question *Philebus* is indispensable. There are three brief passages toward the end of the dialogue which bring our problem and its solution into focus:

...we now have arrived at the threshold of the Good and so at the dwelling of that which comes from such a thing.¹²

So now we find that the power of the Good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful. For measure and proportion, I suppose, everywhere occur along with beauty and virtue.¹³

Then if we are not able to capture the Good in one Idea, let us do so by taking these three: beauty, proportion, and truth. And then, treating them as in a way one, let us say that this is the element in the mixture that we should most correctly hold responsible, that it is because of this that such a thing becomes good.¹⁴

These three texts tell us a number of things that are essential for making sense of the *Symposium* passage. First, the Good takes refuge in the beautiful.¹⁵ That is where we will find the Good. Second, that beauty, proportion, and truth can be considered to be in a way one. So, proportion and truth are in a way extensionally equivalent to beauty. So, the Good is the cause not only of the knowability and truth that the Forms have, but of their proportion and beauty as well.

Returning now to *Symposium*, should we take the Form of Beauty as in a way one with proportion and truth? In our passage, the lover produces true virtue because he has seized upon truth. Clearly, we have a case here of ontological, not semantic truth. That much we can perhaps discern without going outside *Symposium*. But it seems that here ‘truth’ has a considerably wider scope than does ‘beauty’. It would certainly appear that one seizes truth by cognizing any of the Forms, not merely the Form of Beauty. But in any case, it seems not unreasonable to take beauty as in a way one with truth. What of proportion? Our third *Philebus* text tells us that both beauty and virtue never appear without measure and proportion. So, it seems safe to say that that the vision of the Form of Beauty that is supposed to generate true virtue is a vision of that which also possesses proportion. How, though, does this help our question about the single Form of Beauty?

As the lover ascends the ladder of love, going from the beauty of bodies to the beauty of souls and then the beauty of laws and sciences, etc., it surely must strike every reader that it is not easy to see how the beauty in a body is the same kind of thing as the beauty in an institution or law.¹⁶ Actually, *Timaeus* tells us exactly how this can be so. The Demiurge makes the precosmic chaos beautiful by importing shapes and numbers into it.¹⁷ But of course these are not random shapes and numbers. He introduces mathematical, that is, geometrical, measure into the precosmic elements and proportionality among the elements composing living things. In order to do this, he looks to the Living Animal.¹⁸ Two points are here especially relevant. First, beauty is introduced into the sensible world via shapes and numbers. These are used to produce wholes consisting of proportionate parts. So, we shouldn’t wonder that beauty in bodies can be the same thing as beauty in psychic or intellectual wholes, since both can possess proportionality. Second, the Demiurge looked to the Living Animal (in the singular) which contains within it all the Forms of all living things. He did not look to the Form of Beauty in order to make the cosmos beautiful. Beauty is just the presence of Form, that is, in the sensible world the presence of proportionate wholes.

The comparison with *Timaeus* might suggest that the Living Animal is analogous to the ‘sea

¹² *Phil.* 64C1-2: ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ νῦν ἤδη προθύροις [καὶ] τῆς οἰκίσεως ἐφεστάναι [τῆς τοῦ τοιούτου]. There is no need for Badham’s bracketing of the words καὶ and τῆς τοῦ τοιούτου. Indeed, I think they are crucial for understanding the passage. This is especially the case if we take the ἤδη with what follows. The dwelling of the Forms is the threshold of the Good.

¹³ *Phil.* 64E5-7: Νῦν δὲ καταπέφενγεν ἡμῖν ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δύναμις εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν· μετρίότης γὰρ καὶ συμμετρία κάλλος δῆπου καὶ ἀρετὴ πανταχοῦ συμβαίνει γίνεσθαι.

¹⁴ *Phil.* 65A1-5: Οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ μιᾶς δυνάμεθα ἰδέα τὸ ἀγαθὸν θηρεῦσαι, σὺν τρισὶ λαβόντες, κάλλει καὶ συμμετρίας καὶ ἀληθείας, λέγωμεν ὡς τοῦτο οἷον ἐν ὁρθότατ’ ἂν αἰτιασάμεθ’ ἂν τῶν ἐν τῇ συμμείξει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὡς ἀγαθὸν ὃν τοιαύτην αὐτὴν γεγενῆσθαι.

¹⁵ Cf. *Tim.* 87C4-5: πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλόν, τὸ δὲ καλὸν οὐκ ἄμετρον.

¹⁶ M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986: 180), expresses the counterintuitiveness of the claim, ‘Just try to think it seriously: this body of this wonderful beloved person is *exactly* the same in quality as that person’s mind and inner life. Both, in turn, the same in quality as the value of Athenian democracy; of Pythagorean geometry; of Eudoxan astronomy’.

¹⁷ See *Tim.* 28A6-B1 and 53B5.

¹⁸ *Tim.* 30C2f.

of beauty' (τὸ πέλαιος τοῦ καλοῦ) in *Symposium*, namely, all the Forms, which is what is attained at the penultimate step of the ascent.¹⁹ But if this is the case, then one would suppose that the Form of Beauty is contained within that sea. If, however, this is not right, the sea of beauty must refer to the mathematical sciences described in the Divided Line in *Republic*.²⁰ Taken this way, the vision of the Form of Beauty would be analogous to the grasp of all the Forms in the light of the Good, the unhypothetical first principle of all.²¹ The Form of Beauty is metonymous for all the Forms as is the Living Animal. And in both cases, the unity of this object is only visible in the light of the Good. Thus, I interpret the words ὁρῶντι ᾧ ὁρατὸν τὸ καλόν ('by that by means of which the beautiful is visible') at 212A3.²²

The central claim I wish to make is that to concede that we need to go to dialogues other than *Symposium* to understand some of the claims that are made in that dialogue is to commit oneself to the view that Platonism is not the 'sum' of the dialogues. That is, it commits one to maintaining that even though each dialogue has its own literary integrity, it does not have its own philosophical integrity. And that is a very big concession indeed, both in what it constrains us from doing and in what it compels us to do if we want to understand Plato. It constrains us from thinking that Plato intended for any dialogue to stand on its own, which is as much as we ought to have anticipated given what is said in *Phaedrus*, suggesting that the dialogues should be viewed as ὑπομνήματα, that is memoranda presumably dramatizing ongoing Academic discussions.²³ And it compels us, or at least invites us, to see Platonism behind or beneath all of the dialogues, exactly as Aristotle does. If the question is raised about the relative chronology of the writing of the dialogues and an argument made that only those dialogues that are supposed to have been written earlier than *Symposium* can be used to interpret it, I would reply that if the dialogues are indeed ὑπομνήματα, then we can expect that the relevant metaphysical, ethical, cosmological, and psychological context presupposed by *Symposium* is familiar to the primary audience because these matters had been discussed in the Academy. This is so even if some of the elements of this context were not articulated in writing until after *Symposium* had been written.

In short, Platonism is the relevant and necessary context for interpreting any Platonic dialogue, including *Symposium*. To say this is to say nothing more than that we really ought to take Plato's self-testimony seriously (including, of course not only *Phaedrus* but also the 7th Letter), just as seriously as we ought to take Aristotle's testimony about Platonism and in fact the testimony of the entire ancient tradition of Platonists. We ought to cease trying to concoct a philosophical interpretation of any dialogue on the basis of a literary interpretation, especially since the dialogues, seen as ὑπομνήματα and not as little islands of quasi-philosophical self-sufficiency, provide most of what we need to understand and evaluate Platonism. A literary interpretation of any dialogue cannot provide the basis for a philosophical interpretation because the former are necessarily underdetermining as evidence for the latter. Once the insufficiency of the literary evidence is recognized—as it almost *always* is—one must have recourse to general philosophical principles drawn from elsewhere. But once these principles are adduced, the literary evidence becomes irrelevant. To make this claim for *Symposium* is not to denigrate the literary quality of the dialogue one iota.

¹⁹ *Symp.* 210D4. The very idea of the ascent to the beautiful must itself remain opaque to one who insists on drawing upon nothing else in the interpretation of *Symposium*. And yet this ascent is variously and richly described in *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and also in *Theaetetus* and *Timaeus*, although in the case of the last two dialogues, not so obviously.

²⁰ *Rep.* 510C1-511B2.

²¹ *Rep.* 511B3-C2. At *Symp.* 211B5-7 we read: ὅταν δὴ τις ἀπὸ τῶνδε διὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδευαστεῖν ἐπανιών ἐκείνο τὸ καλὸν ἄρχεται καθορᾶν, σχεδὸν ἂν τι ἄπτοιτο τοῦ τέλους. I take it that the words τὸ καλὸν ἄρχεται καθορᾶν are meaningless if we are here concerned with only a vision of one Form; either one sees the Form or does not. Further, the words ἄπτοιτο τοῦ τέλους seem to indicate a conclusion which is logically distinct from that vision. This would be the grasping of the Forms in the light of the Idea of the Good.

²² This is not the way these words are usually understood. The instrumental dative (ᾧ) is usually taken to refer to intellect as the cognitional instrument for intelligibles. But cf. *Rep.* 511B7 where it is by grasping (ἀγόμενος) the Good that one is able to have knowledge of Forms.

²³ See *Phdr.* 274B6-278E3.

Alcibiades and Socrates

Chair: Gabriele Burzacchini

The seductive voice of the *aulós* in Plato's *Symposium*: from the dismissal of the αὐλητρίς to Alcibiades' praise of Socrates-αὐλητής

Tosca Lynch

As attested by abundant iconographic and textual evidence, the *aulos* played a crucial role in the sympotic practices of Classical Athens.¹ Acoustically denoting the entrance to a cultural space devoted to sharing the enjoyment of pleasure,² the seductive notes of this instrument, together with the inebriating effects of wine and perfumes, encouraged the establishment of emotional and physical intimacy between the guests, leading to the formation (or reinforcement) of affective bonds as well as to a stronger collective identity of the group.³

This 'ideal' vision of a symposium, however, must not be mistaken for a complete and historically accurate description of this institution: it rather seems more like 'a dream, even hallucination of perfection', to use Halliwell's apt formulation.⁴ As, for example, Theognis' penetrating observations⁵ reveal, such an atmosphere of sympotic intimacy comprised also much more disquieting and conflictual aspects, turning into an occasion for silently uncovering the other symposiasts' natures by observing their behaviour in an apparently open and relaxed context. Plato himself, at the end of Book 1 of the *Laws*, emphasises this aspect of the psychology of sympotic gatherings: as the Athenian states, the apparently playful 'test of wine (τῆς ἐν οἴνῳ βασιάνου, 1.649e)', if carefully managed, can be a very useful tool to 'observe the disposition of the soul (ἡθος ψυχῆς θεάσασθαι, 1.650a)' of other people.⁶

The combination of these sharply different points of view presents us with a complex image of the symposium as a space of conflict between different psychological needs: on the one hand, the determination to perform well in the light-hearted – but nonetheless partly serious – contests held between the fellow drinkers, on the other the desire to indulge in the pleasure of music, wine and love.⁷ Plato's highly sophisticated literary representation of a *symposion* incorporates many traits inherited from this multifaceted, long-standing tradition and reinterprets them within the framework of his own agenda for the dialogue: celebrating the fundamental, though not unambiguous role of Eros in human life.

1) *The expulsion of the αὐλητρίς*

So, what part does the αὐλός play in this complex programme? Not a very important one, it would seem at least at first sight, given that the *aulos*-girl is sent away at the very beginning of the party. This action is particularly relevant given that not only the *aulos* itself but also this specific type of performer had a prominent role in sympotic contexts: as Rocconi points out in her recent contribution on the theme, 'from the mid 6th century BC onwards iconographical evidence shows that an important part of the entertainments was the musical exhibition of *auletrides*, *psaltria* and *orchestrides*, women of low social position hired for their artistic performances as well as (it seems) for erotic entertainment'.⁸ Their importance is widely confirmed also by textual evidence: they were regarded as such a significant component of sympotic occasions that they could represent a cause of litigation and rivalry. Aristophanes, for instance, touches on this problem in a vivid passage of the *Wasps*,⁹ where Bdelycleon rightly accuses his father of having stolen an αὐλητρίς from the symposium they had just attended together, in order to keep her sexual favours only for himself – a

¹ Cf. Wilson 1999; Bowie 1986, 27, 35; Pellizer 1990.

² Cf. e.g. Theogn. 531-34, and 791, as well as Xenoph. 1.19-20: 'praising the man who presents noble ideas while drinking, so that there may be recollection and striving after excellence'. Cf. Halliwell 2008, 109 ff.

³ Sheffield 2006.

⁴ Halliwell 2008, 117.

⁵ Theogn. 309-312, where the poet exhorts a young man (probably Cynus) not to show his real thoughts but to take part in the symposium and observe the nature of his companions, in order to use this knowledge in ordinary life.

⁶ The idea of needing a 'test' to prove the real nature of people recurs in many other Platonic passages: cf. e.g. *Resp.* 3.413c-d and 3.414a-b, where Socrates maintains that the future *phylakes* will have to be tested in fears and pleasures, to see whether they will maintain their disposition and fundamental beliefs unaltered.

⁷ For a poetically intense representation of this tension, see *IEG* Adesp. E27.

⁸ Rocconi 2006, 336. While the sexual kind of entertainment provided by these performers was a natural target for humorous remarks (cf. Aristoph. *Vesp.* 1364-1386, *Ach.* 551) the question of their social role and remuneration was no laughing matter: cf. Aristotle's *Ath. Pol.* 50.2, which reports how the Athenians appointed specific guardians (ἄστυνόμοι) to check that female αὐλητρίδες, ψάλτριάι and κιθαρίστριάι were not paid more than the maximum legal fee of two drachmas, solving potential competitions by casting lots.

⁹ Aristoph. *Vesp.* 1364-1386.

lively discussion which culminates with a physical fight between the characters.

So let us see how Eryximachus proposes the unusual idea to expel the *aulos*-girl from the drinking-party:

T1)

Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν, φάναι τὸν Ἐρυξίμαχον, τοῦτο μὲν δέδοκται, πίνειν ὅσον ἂν ἕκαστος βούληται, ἐπάναγκες δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο εἰσηγοῦμαι τὴν μὲν ἄρτι εἰσελθοῦσαν αὐλητρίδα χαίρειν ἔαν, αὐλοῦσαν ἑαυτῇ ἢ ἂν βούληται ταῖς γυναιξὶ ταῖς ἔνδον, ἡμᾶς δὲ διὰ λόγων ἀλλήλοις συνεῖναι τὸ τήμερον.
(*Symp.* 176e4-9)

Since now, said Eryximachus, it has been established that each person can drink as much as he wants, while nobody will be forced to, next I propose this idea: the *aulos*-girl who has just come in should be dismissed and either go out and play to herself or, if she wants, to the other women inside the house, while today we should entertain each other only with words and discourses.

This act is presented as an explicitly symbolic gesture, a cultural rejection which is all the stronger in comparison with the cultural background we have evoked at the beginning. After Phaedrus' already uncommon request not to drink *dia methes* but purely *pros hedonen*,¹⁰ Eryximachus' proposal to send the *αὐλητρίς* away suggests a consistent strategy: he aims at 'purifying' this gathering from external, mundane influences as much as possible, leaving them to lesser subjects such as slaves and women, in order to establish a higher intellectual level in the conversations between the guests.

Such a 'dream' of self-sufficiency, a quality that should supposedly characterise respectable symposiasts who do not need the *aulos*'s voice to fill a vacuum of thoughts, is not attested only in this text. On the contrary the simple, though unconventional indications given by Phaedrus and Eryximachus at the beginning of the *Symposium* seem to provide a precise practical instantiation of the model of a good drinking-party depicted by Socrates in the *Protagoras*:

T2)

ὅπου δὲ καλοὶ κάγαθοι συμπόται καὶ πεπαιδευμένοι εἰσὶν, οὐκ ἂν ἴδοις οὔτ' αὐλητρίδας οὔτε ὀρχηστρίδας οὔτε ψαλτρίδας, ἀλλὰ αὐτοὺς αὐτοῖς ἱκανοὺς ὄντας συνεῖναι ἄνευ τῶν λήρων τε καὶ παιδιῶν τούτων διὰ τῆς αὐτῶν φωνῆς, λέγοντάς τε καὶ ἀκούοντας ἐν μέρει ἑαυτῶν κοσμίως, κἄν πάνυ πολλὸν οἶνον πίωσιν. οὕτω δὲ καὶ αἱ τοιαῖδε συνουσίαι, ἔαν μὲν λάβωνται ἀνδρῶν οἰοίπερ ἡμῶν οἱ πολλοὶ φασιν εἶναι, οὐδὲν δέονται ἀλλοτρίας φωνῆς οὐδὲ ποιητῶν, οὐς οὔτε ἀνερέσθαι οἷόν τ' ἐστὶν περὶ ὧν λέγουσιν [...].
(*Prot.* 347c-348a)

Whenever the fellow-drinkers are refined and well-educated, you would not see any *aulos*-girls, dancers or harpers, but they would be properly prepared to entertain each other without silly or childish means, just with their own voices by talking and listening in turn and in orderly fashion, even though they may drink quite some wine. Therefore these kinds of gatherings, which bring together people such as most of us claim to be, do not need any alien voice, not even those of the poets, who can't be questioned about what they meant to say.

Further on in the *Protagoras*, Socrates contrasts this selected type of *symposium*, ideally separate from the human world and its cares, with the 'degenerate' practices proper to common drinking-parties: their members, being 'base and vulgar',¹¹ are not able to 'spend time together drinking and entertaining each other (συνεῖναι) with their own voices and discourses (διὰ τῆς ἑαυτῶν φωνῆς καὶ τῶν λόγων)'. Because of this fundamental lack of education, these people need to introduce into their parties 'the alien voice of the *auloi* (ἀλλοτρίαν φωνὴν τὴν τῶν αὐλῶν,)', specifically played by *aulos*-girls.¹²

The setting of Plato's own *Symposium* matches perfectly the 'ideal' type of drinking party

¹⁰ *Symp.* 176e1-3: ταῦτα δὲ ἀκούσαντας συγχωρεῖν πάντας μὴ διὰ μέθης ποιήσασθαι τὴν ἐν τῷ παρόντι συνουσίαν, ἀλλ' οὕτω πίνοντας πρὸς ἡδονήν.

¹¹ Cf. *Prot.* 347c4-5: τοῖς συμποσίοις τοῖς τῶν φαύλων καὶ ἀγοραίων ἀνθρώπων [...].

¹² *Prot.* 347c-d. Cf. Pappas 2012, 95, where the author examines a red figure kylix decorated by the Brygos painter (British museum E71). This wine-drinking cup features sympotic scenes that include an *aulos*-girl, whose head is surrounded by nonsensical inscriptions, as opposed to an inscription reading *kalos*, at the edge of the scene.

described in the *Protagoras*: the refined guests of Agathon's party decide to get rid of the *aulos*-girl in order to entertain each other (in both texts indicated with the same verb, συνείναι) by taking turns in delivering and listening to speeches – an activity that is characterised in both texts as a sort of 'test' that leads to discover the 'truth' about the nature of the guests.¹³ But there is also another, more explicit reason to regard these texts as related to each other: in the *Protagoras*, Socrates explicitly exhorts his fellows to 'emulate' (μιμεῖσθαι) the good model of symposium that he described – a programme that is clearly fulfilled in the *Symposium*. Interestingly, among the distinguished addressees of this exhortation, including Protagoras himself, Prodicus, Hippias, there is a character that gives a completely different significance to Socrates' words: Alcibiades, the tragicomic figure who dominates the concluding section of the *Symposium*, to which we will now turn.¹⁴

2) The reappearance of the αὐλητρίς and Alcibiades' entry on scene

From the very moment of his appearance on scene, Alcibiades is presented as an outsider to the measured environment of the party. His arrival is explicitly signalled as an abrupt and unexpected 'invasion' of reality into the ideal and, to some extent, artificial intellectual world created in Agathon's house: Socrates has just finished his complex and fascinating discourse on Eros when, all of a sudden (ἐξαίφνης, 212c6),¹⁵ the guests hear a group of komastic revellers approaching, significantly announced by door-banging and by the sound of 'the voice of an *aulos*-girl (τὴν αὐλητρίδος φωνὴν ἀκούειν, 212c8)'.¹⁶

The voice of the *aulos*-girl and of her instrument,¹⁷ against which Socrates argued so strongly in the *Protagoras*, appears here as the symbol of the most extreme aspects of contemporary symposia and significantly preludes to the arrival on scene of Alcibiades, which is indicated with the very same expression: the guests hear first of all his voice (Ἀλκιβιάδου τὴν φωνὴν ἀκούειν), as he starts shouting from the forecourt of the house, completely drunk. This oblique connection is immediately confirmed, as Alcibiades enters the banqueting-hall accompanied by the *aulos*-girl in person (212d6).

Up to now Plato's use of *aulos*-based symbolism seems pretty clear: he consistently employs the image of the *aulos*-girl, a conventional cultural icon of sympotic excesses, in association with komastic elements and with the character of Alcibiades, Plato's supreme example of intemperance. His psychological imbalance is forcefully and extensively represented in these last pages of the Platonic *Symposium*: for instance, already drunk and therefore more inclined to reveal the dominant traits of his nature,¹⁸ Alcibiades hubristically proclaims himself as the new symposiarch, a gesture whose symbolic value hardly needs flagging. But it is in another, apparently minor, detail that Plato seems to me to express, in one of the subtlest examples of his literary artistry, all the force of his cultural condemnation of Alcibiades' psychology: he orders the slave to pass him the ψυκτήρ, which he uses as his personal cup. While this last gesture could be simply interpreted as a sign of Alcibiades' intemperance, as he asks for a large container and empties it in one shot, the request for *that* specific container (a *hapax* in the Platonic corpus) subtly adds a supplementary charge, as the ψυκτήρ was used to store *pure* wine.¹⁹ What action could be more symbolic of a disharmonic nature in a Greek symposium than disobeying the very basic νόμος of mixing wine and water? And here it is the self-proclaimed symposiarch who overthrows it, the person who normally would have reinforced this rule.²⁰ Alcibiades then turns into a living paradigm of that lawlessness (παρανομία) caused by a wrong emotional and psychological 'hierarchy'.

¹³ Cf. *Prot.* 348a1-2: αὐτοὶ δ' ἑαυτοῖς σύνεισιν δι' ἑαυτῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτῶν λόγοις πείραν ἀλλήλων λαμβάνοντες καὶ διδόντες. Cf. e.g. *Symp.* 214e6-215a, where Alcibiades repeated claims to reveal 'the truth' about Socrates, especially by means of his musical *eikon*.

¹⁴ The crucial role played by this character is highlighted since the very first definition of the theme of the *Symposium*, in 172a7-b1, where Apollodorus is asked to talk about τὴν Ἀγάθωνος συνουσίαν καὶ Σωκράτους καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τότε ἐν τῷ συνδείπνῳ παραγενομένων, περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγων τίνες ἦσαν.

¹⁵ This adverb appears again at *Symp.* 223b2, when the second group of revellers take over the party. Interestingly, it is also employed at *Symp.* 210e4 to characterise the sudden apparition of the nature of beauty (210e4) and at *Symp.* 213c1 to qualify Socrates' unexpected appearance in front of Alcibiades.

¹⁶ Cf. *Theaet.* 173d5: σὺν αὐλητρίσι κῶμοι. Cf. Bowie 1997, 9.

¹⁷ The term φωνή indicated both human voices and for the 'voices' of instruments: cf. Eur. *Tr.* 127, Plato *Prot.* 347c, Arist. *De anima* 420b7, [Arist.] *De Audib.* 802a, Mnesim. 4.56; see as well Plato *Resp.* 3.397a: σαλπύγων καὶ αὐλῶν καὶ συρίγγων καὶ πάντων ὀργάνων φωναί.

¹⁸ As he admits himself in a crucial moment of his speech, *Symp.* 217e: τὸ δ' ἐντεῦθεν οὐκ ἄν μου ἠκούσατε λέγοντος, εἰ μὴ πρῶτον μὲν, τὸ λεγόμενον, οἶνος ἄνευ τε παίδων καὶ μετὰ παίδων ἦν ἀληθής.

¹⁹ Forbes 1966, 116-117; Davidson 1997, 158-9. Cf. as well the parody of sympotic customs at Aristoph. *Eq.* 85-108, which also features the use of pure wine and of a large jug (*chous*) as symbols of intemperance.

²⁰ The role of the symposiarch is regarded as the crucial element that distinguishes well-ordered symposia in the *Laws*: cf. e.g. 1.639-640 and ff.

3) *The most wonderful αὐλητής, or the ‘truth’ about Socrates*

So far, it would seem that Plato’s attitude towards this instrument and its psychological effects is unequivocally negative. However, the following pages of the dialogue are destined to challenge the network of symbols we have traced up to now: in fact, while repeatedly claiming to speak the truth about Socrates,²¹ Alcibiades centres his discourse of praise²² on describing Socrates as the most excellent and wonderful αὐλητής (215b). So, how should we interpret this apparently odd choice? If Plato simply regarded the αὐλός and its players as a symbol of the negative consequences of an excessively indulgent attitude, why would he make one of his most forceful characters use this kind of imagery to describe nothing less than ‘the truth’²³ about Socrates?

After commenting briefly on the contrast between physical unattractiveness and ‘inner treasures’ which characterises both Socrates and the statues of musical Silens, Alcibiades moves on the most important and explicitly musical affinity between Socrates and the mythical *auletai*. Explicitly calling Socrates an αὐλητής,²⁴ Alcibiades compares him to the mythical archetype of all *aulos* players, the Phrygian satyr Marsyas, who is characterised as follows:²⁵

T3)

ὁ μὲν γε δι’ ὀργάνων ἐκίλει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῇ ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος δυνάμει, καὶ ἔτι νυνὶ ὃς ἂν τὰ ἐκείνου αὐλῇ – ἃ γὰρ Ὀλυμπος ἤϋλει, Μαρσύου λέγω, τούτου διδάξαντος – τὰ οὖν ἐκείνου ἕαντε ἀγαθὸς αὐλητής αὐλῇ ἕαντε φαύλη αὐλητρίς, μόνᾳ κατέχεσθαι ποιεῖ καὶ δηλοῖ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν τε καὶ τελετῶν δεομένους διὰ τὸ θεῖα εἶναι.
(*Symp.* 215c)

By means of his instruments, Marsyas bewitches people with the power of his mouth, and even today anyone who plays his compositions on the *auloi* – for I say that the pieces that Olympus played are actually by Marsyas, who taught him – whether it is a skilled aulete who plays them or a third-rate *aulos*-girl, these tunes are the only ones which can cast a spell over the listeners and which can reveal who is in need of the gods and of mystic rites, because they are themselves divine.

The very first and most relevant aspect emphasised by Alcibiades is the intense emotional effect of Marsyas’ music: with its seductive tunes, he bewitches (κηλεῖν)²⁶ the listeners and brings them to an entranced state (κατέχεσθαι), revealing which souls are troubled and need to partake in mystic initiation rites (τελεταί).²⁷ This extraordinary result, often associated with the *aulos*-music of Corybantic rites,²⁸ is so intimately related to the nature of these compositions that it can be achieved independently from the ability of the performers, significantly exemplified by a poor female performer as opposed to a skilled male one.²⁹

So what kind of music was Alcibiades thinking of here? Specifying that these tunes could be still heard at his own time, Alcibiades brings the figure of Olympus into the picture, characterising

²¹ Cf. *Symp.* 214e3; 215a2-3; 215a6.

²² While Alcibiades’ speech does not follow the programme established by the symposiarch, as his discourse of praise focuses on Socrates and not on Eros, the content of his encomium shows that the effect of Socrates’ presence and discourses effect is similar under many respects to Eros’ *mania*: cf. Belfiore 2012, 110-196 (esp. 161 ff.).

²³ *Symp.* 215a9: ἔσται δ’ ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἔνεκα.

²⁴ *Symp.* 215b8: ἀλλ’ οὐκ αὐλητής;

²⁵ Cf. esp. Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1132f, 1333d, 1333e (τὸν δὲ Μαρσύαν [...] εἶναι δ’ αὐτὸν Ὑάγνιδος υἱόν, τοῦ πρώτου εὐρόντος τὴν αὐλητικὴν τέχνην). As noted in *GMW1*, the author stresses the correlation between Marsyas and Phrygia, generally regarded as the place of origin of the instrument and of the Phrygian *harmonia*. For a rather ‘technical’ characterisation of Marsyas as a skilled aulete, cf. e.g. Plut. *De cohib. ira* 456b, *Quaest. Conv.* 713d. On Marsyas and Olympus’ paradigmatic role in Plato, cf. *Leg.* 3.677d, *Resp.* 3.399e and [Plato] *Min.* 318b-c, where Marsyas and Olympus’ αὐλήματα are presented in very similar terms to those used in the *Symposium*: they are capable of revealing who is ‘in need of the gods’ because they are divine.

²⁶ This verb seems to be related in particular to the specific power of fascination exerted by music, both in Plato and in other classical writers. For Plato, cf. e.g. *Resp.* 3.411b, *Leg.* 840c, *Lys.* 206b, *Prot.* 315b (and perhaps also metaphorically in 328d).

²⁷ Cf. Linforth 1946b.

²⁸ Cf. Linforth 1946a, Dodds 1951, 77-80, Ustinova 1992-1998. These rites are also associated with the pyrrhic dances in armour of the Corybantes and Curetes (cf. Strabo 10.3.7-18), characterised by short notes and very fast and passionate movements: cf. Arist. Quint. *De Mus.* 82.10-22, Dion. Halic. *De Comp.* 17.15-18. Interestingly, in *Leg.* 7.816a-b Plato mentions *pyrrhiche* as one of the type of ‘beautiful dances’ that is proper to war; cf. Ceccarelli 2002.

²⁹ As we have seen above, *aulos*-girls did not enjoy a very high social standing, as opposed to their male counterparts, on which cf. West 1994, 35 and 366; see as well the interesting interpretative option proposed by Barker 2011, 56, who associates the Platonic idea of a *phaule auletris* in the context of ecstatic ceremonies with the female-only initiation rites organised at the *Thesmophoria*.

him as Marsyas' pupil and, while Marsyas and his music belong entirely to the mythical realm, the connection established with Olympus gives us some hints.

If technical texts tend to mention Olympus in relation to the solemn spondaic mode,³⁰ all our Classical sources instead, including Aristophanes, Aristotle and Euripides,³¹ focus on Olympus' Phrygian compositions such as the *Metroia*,³² performed in honour of the Mother Goddess in the context of ecstatic rites, in which intense dancing, accompanied by the sharp sound of the *auloi* and by strong rhythmical beating, lead the initiates to experience *enthousiasmos*, as Aristotle tells us explicitly in the *Politics*.³³

Keeping in mind this type of musical composition, let us examine the rest of Alcibiades discourse, where he completes his *eikon* by explaining how Socrates' words resemble the Phrygian Satyr's music. Once more, Alcibiades starts by describing in great detail the nature of the emotional reactions triggered by the wonderful *auletes* Socrates: similarly to the ecstatic music of Dionysiac rites, Socrates is able to generate passionate feelings and desires in his audience, be it men, women or young people, and casts a sort of spell on them which brings them to an entranced state (ἐκπεπληγμένοι ἐσμέν καὶ κατεχόμεθα, 215d). Narrowing momentarily the focus on his own personal response, Alcibiades continues by portraying his physical and emotional reactions to the discourses of this 'philosophical Marsyas':

T4)

ὅταν γὰρ ἀκούω, πολύ μοι μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν κορυβαντιῶντων ἢ τε καρδία πηδᾷ καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων τῶν τούτου, ὁρῶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλους παμπόλλους τὰ αὐτὰ πάσχοντας· Περικλέους δὲ ἀκούων καὶ ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ῥητόρων εὖ μὲν ἡγούμην λέγειν, τοιοῦτον δ' οὐδὲν ἐπασχον, οὐδ' ἐτεθορύβητό μου ἡ ψυχὴ οὐδ' ἡγανάκτει ὡς ἀνδραποδωδῶς διακειμένου, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ τούτου τοῦ Μαρσύου πολλάκις δὴ οὕτω διετέθην ὥστε μοι δόξαι μὴ βιωτὸν εἶναι ἔχοντι ὡς ἔχω. καὶ ταῦτα, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ ἐρεῖς ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ.
(*Symp.* 215e)

Whenever I listen to him, my heart races much more than that of the people who are filled with Corybantic frenzy and his discourses make tears flow down my cheeks, and I see that many other people experience the same feelings. By contrast, listening to Pericles or other good orators, I used to think that they spoke well but I didn't experience anything like this: my soul was not thrown into turmoil nor was it irritated on the grounds that I lived in a servile manner. But often this Marsyas here has made me feel in this way, until I thought that my life is not worth living in my present condition. And you can't say that this is not true, Socrates.

Alcibiades' behaviour resembles and even exceeds those of people who partake in mystic rites: both his body and his soul are completely overwhelmed by the experience of listening to Socrates' enchanting voice. However, the 'philosophical mania',³⁴ caused by Socrates' *aulemata* unveils a kind of psychological unbalance that differs from the one revealed by Olympus' music: Socrates brings his Corybantes to feel dissatisfied with their own ethical attitude and actions, creating a conflict in the evaluations of their own choices and urging them to change. Precisely as the Corybantes respond to one specific type of music,³⁵ this deep reaction can be triggered exclusively by Socrates' words, not

³⁰ Cf. Ps.-Plut. *De Mus.* 1134e-1135f and 1137a-e.

³¹ Cf. Aristoph. *Cav.* 9, Eur. *I.A.* 576 ff., Arist. *Pol.* 1339b-1140a and Telestes *PMG* 806, as well as the aforementioned Platonic occurrences. For a detailed discussion of the various types of music associated with Olympus, cf. Barker 2011.

³² Ps.-Plut. *De Mus.* 1141b: καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν Ὀλύμπον ἐκείνον, ᾧ δὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς τε καὶ νομικῆς μουσικῆς ἀποδιδόασιν, τό τε τῆς ἀρμονίας γένος ἐξευρεῖν φασιν, καὶ τῶν ῥυθμῶν τὸν τε προσοδιακόν, ἐν ᾧ ὁ τοῦ Ἀρεως νόμος, καὶ τὸν χορεῖον, ᾧ πολλῶν κέχρηται ἐν τοῖς Μητρώοις· ἐνιοὶ δὲ καὶ τὸν βακχεῖον Ὀλύμπον οἶοντα εὐρηκεῖναι. A very significant exemplification of the strict correlation between Olympus and the Phrygian cults of the Great Mother and the Corybantes is symbolically expressed in Diod. Sic. 5.49.3, where Olympus is presented as Cybele's lover and Cybele's son Corybas, fathered by Iasion, is regarded as the founder of the rites of the Corybantes.

³³ Arist. *Pol.* 8.1340a8-11: ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτι γινόμεθα ποιοῖ τινες, φανερόν διὰ πολλῶν μὲν καὶ ἐτέρων, οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν Ὀλύμπου μελῶν· ταῦτα γὰρ ὁμολογουμένως ποιεῖ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐνθουσιαστικάς. Cf. as well Dion. Halic. *De Demosth.* 22.1-18, where the author mentions two types of music associated with Olympus in order to exemplify the two most different types of music: on the one hand, there is the serious spondaic tunes (ἐν ᾗ θει σπουδαῖος γίνομαι καὶ πολλὸν τὸ εὐσταθὲς ἔχω τῆς γνώμης, ὥσπερ οἱ τῶν σπονδείων αὐλημάτων ἢ τῶν Δωρίων τε κἀναρμονίων μελῶν ἀκροώμενοι), on the other the ecstatic music of the *Metroia* and the Corybantes (ἐνθουσιῶ τε καὶ δεῦρο κάκεισε ἄγομαι, πάθος ἕτερον ἐξ ἐτέρου μεταλαμβάνον [...]) διαφέρειν τε οὐδὲν ἐμαυτῷ δοκῶ τῶν τὰ μητρώα καὶ τὰ κορυβαντικά καὶ ὅσα τούτοις παραπλήσια ἐσσι, τελουμένων, εἴτε ὁσμάϊς ἐκείνοί γε).

³⁴ *Symp.* 218b3-4: πάντες γὰρ κεκοινωνήκατε τῆς φιλοσόφου μανίας τε καὶ βακχείας.

³⁵ Cf. Plato *Ion* 536c: ὥσπερ οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες ἐκείνου μόνου αἰσθάνονται τοῦ μέλους ὁξέως ὃ ἂν ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξ ὅτου ἂν

by any random, if skilled, rhetorician: as Alcibiades confesses, Socrates is the only person who can force him to admit that his ethical conduct is neither correct nor serves his real psychological needs, making him momentarily realise the pointlessness of his ambitions and making him feel ashamed of himself.³⁶

In this sense Alcibiades, by portraying Socrates as a wonderful aulete, actually tells the truth about him: Socrates' *aulemata* are as divine as Marsyas', because they are able to reveal the unhealthy and troubled state of other people's souls as well as provide a cure for them. However, there is one reason why Socrates is an even more wonderful *aulos*-player than Marsyas: he is able to achieve these life-altering effects even without the aid of an instrument, just with his bare words.³⁷

Conclusions

So how are we to interpret Plato's apparently contradictory attitude towards the *aulos*? Similarly to how the intense emotions related to sympotic practices are presented in a different light depending on the ethical approach that informs them, so also the evaluation of the effects of the αἰλός is not fixed and immutable because it is not the musical nature of the instrument *per se* or its ability to provoke powerful emotions that triggers Plato's worries: in fact, all these elements are presented in a positive light in connection with the figure of Socrates αἰλητής.

The reason why the *aulos*-girl, the symbolical representative of 'bad' eroticism, was sent away at the beginning of the 'good' symposium hosted at Agathon's house is that she does not take care of the deep psychological effects triggered by her music. But the very same psychological experiences have a completely different meaning in the case of the 'bacchic' frenzy caused by Socrates' *aulemata*: his music gives a precise direction to the emotional energy it liberates, making it the central tool to give the 'right shape' to disharmonic souls.³⁸ Instead, if oriented towards the wrong objects, the emotions elicited by these powerful forces³⁹ can actually achieve opposite results: the inner structure of the soul can be destroyed by the conflictual antagonism between different elements, a psychological outcome which does not involve just the individual, as Plato is well aware, but conduces as well, inevitably, to political στάσις.

These potentially opposite outcomes are well symbolised by the conflictual feelings of the character of Alcibiades. His gifted nature allows him to understand (intellectually) and feel (emotionally) 'the truth' of Socrates' μουσική but, not having educated his soul towards the correct objects of desire, as soon as the good music of Socrates is over, to use his own words, he falls again 'a victim to the honour of the crowds' (216b6-7).

Abbreviations

IEG West, M.L. (1992) *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati I-II*, Oxford.

GMW1 Barker, A. (1984) *Greek Musical Writings 1 – The Musician and his art*, Cambridge.

PMG Page, D. L. (1962) *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford.

κατέχονται, καὶ εἰς ἐκεῖνο τὸ μέλος καὶ σχημάτων καὶ ῥημάτων εὐποροῦσι [...]. A similar connection is presupposed in Menander *Theophr.* fr. 25. The image of the Corybantes, present in both of these passages, is very relevant also in other Platonic texts: cf. *Crito* 54d (effect of the Laws on Socrates), *Ion* 534a, *Euth.* 277d-e and *Laws* 7.790d, with Linfoth 1946a and Weiss 1998.

³⁶ *Symp.* 216a4-5: ἀναγκάζει γάρ με ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι πολλοῦ ἐνδεῆς ὢν αὐτὸς ἔτι ἑμαντοῦ μὲν ἄμελῶ, τὰ δ' Ἀθηναίων πράττω. Contrast this confession with the centrality of the concept of ἐπιμέλεια σαντοῦ in *Alc.* 1, e.g. 120d-124c. On the uniqueness of Socrates' achievement in relation to Alcibiades, cf. *Symp.* 216b1-2: πέπονθα δὲ πρὸς τοῦτον μόνον ἀνθρώπων, ὃ οὐκ ἄν τις οἶοιτο ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐνεῖναι, τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι ὄντινόν· ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτον μόνον αἰσχύνομαι.

³⁷ *Symp.* 215c6-8: σὺ δ' ἐκείνου τοσοῦτον μόνον διαφέρεις, ὅτι ἄνευ ὀργάνων ψιλοῖς λόγοις ταῦτόν τοῦτο ποιεῖς.

³⁸ Significantly, this outcome is precisely the one that is envisaged in *Laws* 1 for correctly organised symposia, metaphorical 'gyms' in which the participants engage in training their the souls by means of intense emotions and pleasures, in order to learn how their psychological reactions work and how to use them at best. This exercise (προσγυμνάζειν) against shamelessness leads them to become truly moderate and not be slaves of their passions – cf. *Leg.* 1.647c: Τί δ' ὅταν ἐπιχειρῶμέν τινα φοβερόν ποιεῖν μετὰ δίκης; ἂρ' οὐκ ἀναισχυντῆ συμβάλλοντας αὐτὸν καὶ προσγυμνάζοντας νικᾶν δεῖ ποιεῖν διαμαχομένον αὐτοῦ ταῖς ἡδοναῖς; Cf. as well 1.647d, 1.649d. The same idea is expressed in *Laws* 2.673e-674c, where correctly established symposia are characterised as 'institutions' that teach the citizens how to use emotions correctly and lead them to real mastery of pleasures, i.e. enjoying them but not being enslaved by them.

³⁹ The same goes also for good vs. bad rhetoric: while 'bad' rhetoric triggers intense emotional reactions only to win the approval of the listeners and does not help them to improve themselves (cf. *Gorg.* 501a-504e, where this skill is significantly likened to the excesses of contemporary *aulos* players), good rhetoricians are equally capable to create such emotional involvement but employ their skills with a different ethical aim: making people better (cf. *Phaedr.* 268a-272c, with De Luise 1997 *ad loc.*).

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Socrate *karterikos* (Symp. 216c-221b)

Alessandro Stavru

ABSTRACT

Dopo aver paragonato Socrate a delle statue di Sileni contenenti al loro interno simulacri di divinità (215b3-4), Alcibiade approfondisce il senso di questa metafora in una sezione del suo discorso nella quale rivendica di essere il solo, tra i simposiasti presenti, a conoscere Socrate (216c8-d1). L'interiorità del suo maestro consiste in una temperanza, *sōphrosynē* (216d7-8), di proporzioni del tutto inedite, tale da renderlo unico quanto a "intelligenza e capacità di sopportazione" (*phronēsin kai... karterian*: 219d6-7). Queste virtù vengono illustrate mediante alcuni aneddoti particolarmente significativi. In primo luogo, Alcibiade si sofferma sul suo fallimento nel tentativo di sedurre Socrate e sulla *sōphrosynē* di questi rispetto agli *erōtika* (spec. 219c3-6). Nel prosieguito del passo, Alcibiade chiarisce ulteriori aspetti di questa virtù, soffermandosi su alcuni episodi relativi alle campagne militari che videro protagonista Socrate (219e6-221b10). Emerge qui la natura più intima della *karteria* di Socrate, la quale si estrinseca nella sua capacità di resistere alla privazione di cibo, all'eccesso di alcol (220a1-5), ai rigori dell'inverno (220a6-b7) e alla stanchezza di un giorno e di una notte trascorsi a meditare all'impiedi in piena estate (220c3-d5), nonché nell'intervento che ha salvato la vita ad Alcibiade a Potidea (220d6-220e8) e nel sangue freddo dimostrato in occasione della ritirata da Delio (220e8-221b10). Al termine del suo racconto, Alcibiade è in grado di affermare che "tra coloro che sono vissuti e coloro che vivono nessuno è uguale a Socrate" (221c5-6), il che gli permette di conferire un nuovo significato alla similitudine dei Sileni e di concludere il suo discorso (221d-222a).

Il passo sulla *karteria* di Socrate svolge un ruolo fondamentale nell'economia del discorso di Alcibiade. Conformemente alla definizione fornita dallo stesso Platone in *Lach.* 192b-d, tale virtù si configura *meta phronēseōs* (220c3-8, 221b1 e 221b4-5), ma altresì per il suo carattere eminentemente *passivo* (Rosen 1987). Socrate agisce "di rimessa" sia che si trovi a letto con Alcibiade sia sul campo di battaglia: il suo primato "encratico" (cfr. 220a3, 220b2ss.) non consiste nel compiere azioni volte a modificare in modo radicale il mondo che lo circonda, ma nell'adattarvisi con raziocinio mediante un previo controllo delle passioni.

Il presente intervento mira a mettere in luce queste caratteristiche della *karteria* socratica muovendo da alcuni studi recenti sull'argomento (Dorion 2007 e 2012; Rossetti 2008; Müller 2009; Redfield 2010), e a ricostruirne il retroterra speculativo mediante una contestualizzazione nella letteratura di fine V e di inizio IV secolo. Fondamentali sono a tale scopo non soltanto alcuni frammenti della Commedia Antica (cfr. la ricostruzione in Patzer 1994) e le *Nuvole* di Aristofane (103, 363, 412-422, 501-504, 834-837, 1043-1082), nelle quali si assiste ad una caricatura della *karteria* di Socrate (360-363) che Platone si propone di correggere proprio nel *Simposio* (221b3-4), ma anche i *Memorabilia* senofontei (spec. I 5, II 1 e IV 5, su cui cfr. Dorion 2003) e alcune informazioni disponibili sul conto di Simone (*SSR* III A 16, su cui cfr. Sellars 2001), Antistene (*SSR* V A 126, 134, 192 e 208 su cui cfr. Brancacci 1993) e Fedone (frr. 6, 7 e 11 Rossetti, su cui cfr. Rossetti 1980).

The Ugliness and Beauty of Socrates: Portraits of Socrates in the *Clouds* and the *Symposium*

Wei Liu

There are probably no other two works that provide more contradictory images of Socrates than in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Plato's *Symposium*. In the *Clouds* Socrates is extremely ugly both in complexion and spirit, portrayed as a pale and filthy natural philosopher and sophist, and a destructor of moral and political norms; whereas in the *Symposium* Socrates is extremely beautiful both in appearance and mind, depicted as just bathing and putting on fancy shoes, he is exalted by the unforgettable encomium of Eros that Plato puts in his mouth, and is eulogized by Alcibiades in the last speech of this dialogue. Do we, then, have one or two images of Socrates? Can we find some way to put these extremely opposite portraits together?

In this paper, I attempt to show that a close examination of these two texts will allow us to detect, on the one hand, the potential beauty of Socrates from the somewhat malicious portrait in Aristophanes, and on the other hand, the potential ugliness or danger of Socrates from Plato's seemingly unsurpassable eulogy. In the end, therefore, we have an integrated complex and ambivalent image of Socrates, an "in-between" of beauty and ugliness, goodness and badness, just like the Eros under his own depiction, and this image of in-between is essentially rooted in his characteristic philosophical method, *elenchos*.

I. The Ugliness and Beauty of Socrates in the *Clouds*

Strepsiades, a previously pleasant peasant who marries a city woman, is deeply vexed by the debt his son Pheidippides causes because of his fanatical love of horse, and the only solution to the predicament that Strepsiades can think of is to persuade his son to study with Socrates and to learn the just and unjust speeches, especially the latter. But when Pheidippides hears his father's suggestion that he should go to the Thinkery (*phrontistērion*) and study there, he, without any hesitation, breaks the promise he just made that he would obey his father, shouting "Yuk! That scum (*ponēroi*). I know them: you mean the charlatans (*alazonas*), the pasty-faced (*ōchriōntas*), the unshod (*anupodētous*), like that miserable Socrates, and Chaerephon" (102-104).¹ Pheidippides' strong reaction manifests the common negative judgments of Socrates and his circle, at least among the Athenians with some aristocratic taste.²

Failing to persuade his son, the old man has to go to the Thinkery himself, and his son's complaint soon becomes true. The Thinkery is dirty and full of fleas, but Socrates has no care about this kind of bodily pain (144-147, 414-419, 633, 696-699, 709-716). The people in there are rude (133, 646, 726, 789-790), unkempt (835-837), unshod (362, 719, 858), and they look pale enough to be like long-time prisoners (186, 1173). They are extremely poor, and Socrates, the master, has to steal a cloak by trick to provide dinner for them (175-179). Socrates' behaviors are strange, for example, he hangs himself in a basket (225, 868-869), and the *Clouds* comment, "you strut like a popinjay through the streets and cast your eyes side-ways and, unshod, endure many woes and wear a haughty expression for our sakes" (362-363).³ What Socrates and his disciples are investigating are diverse, including almost everything in the sky and beneath the earth (191-217, 368-410), and some of investigations are very odd, such as the distance of a flea's jump (144-152), and from which bodily part gnats hum (156-164). Although what Socrates teaches is said to be "mysteries" (143), and although students should be initiated before the real instruction (258), Socrates has no such practical wisdom to test whether the students are suitable for the subject matter before teaching the core doctrine about gods (365-411, cf. 476-480), and Socrates has to kick out this stupid student when realizing that he is completely unteachable (627-632, 783). What he trains his students is to be "a smoothie, a castanet, the flower of orators" (260) by teaching trivial and misleading sophistic skills of metre and *orthoepeia* (627-692), and by showing the disastrous failure of "Better Speech" (*kreittōn logos*) which represents traditional value in the contest with "Worse Speech" (*hēttōn logos*) which represents the new hedonistic view (889-1114). What Socrates teaches is to overthrow traditional religious and moral beliefs, and replaces them with new deities (such as Clouds, Breath, Chaos, Tongue, Air), natural forces such as Vortex (*dinos*) and clouds (365-411), and he champions the

¹ Quotations from the *Clouds* are from Aristophanes (1998).

² For ordinary people like Strepsiades, what he hears about Socrates before going there is that "these people train you, if you give them money, to win any argument whether it's right or wrong" (98-99).

³ This depiction reappears in Plato's *Symposium* 221b where Alcibiades quote Aristophanes directly.

superiority of expertise over law and convention (1201-1202, 1283-1284, 1399-1400). This ugly and harmful Socrates eventually receives his deserved destruction in a fire set by outrageous Strepsiades with the encouragement of Socrates' "patron deities," the Clouds (1457-1461, 1490-1507).

But on the other hand, even in Aristophanes' somewhat malicious depiction we can detect the beautiful aspects of Socrates. His poverty and neglect of bodily need and weariness shows his temperance and endurance, and his great emphasis on the care of the soul.⁴ His lack of practical wisdom to test his students shows his eagerness to learn from and teach anyone, and is happy to discuss with anyone he encounters.⁵ What Socrates investigates, strange as they are, reflects his persistence in the pursuit of knowledge and his intelligent integrity.⁶ Disciples' reverence to Socrates and especially Pheidippides's change of attitude before and after receiving his training (compare 102-105, 119-120, 840, 865 and 1327-1328, 1399-1405, 1467) shows his great attraction and strong influence to his students.⁷ Socrates' humble claim that he is no more than the servants of the goddesses Clouds (264-265, 359) parallels his famous apology that in questioning others, he is in fact serving gods.⁸ From Aristophanes' portrait, we also see the familiar image of the spiritual midwife (137),⁹ the debunker of others' ignorance (842), and the practitioner of Delphic oracle "know yourself" (385, 842). Therefore, looking through his malicious caricature of the ugly Socrates, we also see Aristophanes' admiration of Socrates' beauty, as testified by Diogenes Laertius, who says that the comic poets in the act of ridiculing Socrates give him high praise, and he quotes *Clouds* 412-417 as evidence. He also mentions that Socrates did not mind being the object of comic poets, for "if they satirize our faults they will do us good, and if not they do not touch us."¹⁰

II. The Beauty and Ugliness of Socrates in the Symposium

The appearance of Aristophanes and his potential tension with Socrates (205e, 212c, 213c, and 223c-d) most naturally connect the *Symposium* with the *Clouds*.¹¹ At the first sight, the *Symposium* offers a completely opposite picture of Socrates in contrast with that in the *Clouds*, for in the *Symposium*, Plato's Socrates has great beauty both in appearance and in the soul.

On the day to Agathon's victory celebration, Socrates very unusually bathes and puts on his fancy sandals. He confesses to Aristodemus that he takes great pains with his appearance, and tries his best to look good because "I'm going to the house of a good-looking man" (174a).¹² So on this special day, Socrates looks much nicer than his accustomed way. Later on, when Alcibiades breaks in the symposium, and suddenly realizes Socrates' presence, he is shocked at first, and then deprives some of the ribbons offered to Agathon and makes a wreath for Socrates. Therefore, Socrates has this beautiful decoration on head as the symposium goes on (213e).

More beautiful is his soul. The frame dialogue between a business man and Apollodorus, a companion of Socrates, shows that Apollodorus, like Aristodemus before him, admires Socrates so wholeheartedly that he thinks everybody, including himself, is totally worthless except Socrates (173d). Later when Socrates finishes his contemplation at neighbor's porch and arrives at the dinner, he is warmly welcomed by the host, and is praised for his wisdom (175c-d). In striking contrast with his normal profession of ignorance, Socrates in the *Symposium* claims that there is one thing he knows, i.e., the art of love (177d). His eulogy of Eros as a great spirit and of the eternal and unsurpassable beauty of the Form of Beauty through the mouth of Diotima disappoints neither fellow symposiastics and us, for his speech is beyond any doubt the most beautiful one among all the six speakers on Eros, and surpasses them all by integrating their truth and criticizing their mistakes.¹³

⁴ See *Symposium* 209a-212b, 216e, 219d-220b, and *Apology* 29e-31c.

⁵ See for example *Apology* 23b, and 33b.

⁶ Even in his apology, Socrates does not explicitly deny that he used to study things in the heaven and under the earth, but merely says he has no knowledge of this kind of things. We know from *Phaedo* 96a-b that Socrates did investigate natural philosophy when he was young.

⁷ See *Symposium* 173b-d and *Apology* 23c-d.

⁸ See *Apology* 22a, 22e-23b, and 30d-31b.

⁹ Whether this is an allusion to Socratic midwifery is under debate; see Dover (1968), pp. xlii-xlii, and Tarrant (1988).

¹⁰ Diogenes (1972), II.27 and 36. This tolerance and playfulness does not necessarily conflict with Socrates' complaint in the *Apology* that the early unnamed accusers (except Aristophanes) caused more harm to him than the present ones (18a-19a), for his not caring about them may have worsened the situation.

¹¹ This tension seems to be a friendly, rather than malicious one, because (1) Aristophanes seems to have a good mood before his speech (189a-b), (2) Socrates' objection to Aristophanes' conception of love is rather mild (205e-206a) and he endorses Aristophanes' point that love fulfills one's nature, (3) Alcibiades' remark after seeing Socrates lying on the same couch with Agathon seems to put Socrates and Aristophanes in friendly terms, "why aren't you with Aristophanes or anyone else we could tease you about?" (213c), and (4) Socrates, Aristophanes and Agathon are the people who keep awake to the last, and they drink in turn (223c-d).

¹² All quotations of Plato's works are from Plato (1997), with minor amendments.

¹³ This could be a topic for another paper, and see Sheffield (2006), pp. 23-47 for an interesting discussion of this topic. For

Alcibiades' intrusion provides a glamorous praise of Socrates' inner beauty through the image of Silenus (215b, 216d, 221d, and 222a). This comparison works perfectly in appearance (215b), in skill of attracting others (215c-d), and in the bright and beautiful things inside (216e-217a). Alcibiades further compares Socrates with Sirens, who are able to keep people beside them all the time, and paradoxically claims that "I can't live with him, and I can't live without him!" (216c). He also praises Socrates for his moderation and courage by recounting his great deeds in Potidaea and Delium (219e-221c). Toward the end of the symposium, Alcibiades and Agathon interestingly fight to win Socrates' favor (222c-223b), which shows Socrates' unsurpassable attraction to young men.

But on the other hand, we can also detect the shadow of ugliness in this beautiful Socrates. His losing in thought and sending the uninvited Aristodemus to Agathon's dinner is, though quite typical for Socrates,¹⁴ impolite, and this neglect of appropriate social behavior sets a bad example for his followers, who, though Socrates is surely aware of, imitate him enthusiastically.¹⁵ Furthermore, Socrates shows his humor or naughtiness in his ironic praise of the wisdom of Agathon, the host and star of this evening's event (175e, 194b-c, 198a-c), and in his merciless refutation of the central point of Agathon's speech (199c-201c).¹⁶ This kind of behavior provides a good reason for others to speak of Socrates' *hubris*, as Agathon does in his immediate response to Socrates, "you are an insolent man" (*hubristēs ei*, 175e7), and as Alcibiades does in his praise of Socrates. Alcibiades charges Socrates, like in front of a jury (219c), for his insincerity and detachment from other people, i.e., his self-depreciation (*eirōneia*, 216d-e) and arrogance (*huperēphania*, 219c). This insincerity and detachment can find its explanation in Socrates' eulogy of the Form of Beauty. His pursuit of wisdom, which is for his own happiness (205a) and his wish to be like god (212a), seems extremely other-worldly, going beyond any particular situation, particular individual, and particular political community.¹⁷ In this sense, Socrates is truly a-political in his spirit, as manifested in the *Clouds*. This a-political characteristic of Socrates might have influenced Alcibiades. Alcibiades, a very political figure in some respect, might have followed his beloved Socrates, perhaps somewhat unconsciously, in being somewhat a-political, because what he really cares about is always his own glory and happiness (but his understanding of happiness is striking different from Socrates'), not the common good in the strictly political sense. It explains why he has no loyalty to any particular community, and could serve Athens, Sparta, and Persia equally well. And the dramatic date of *Symposium* shortly before Alcibiades led the eventually disastrous Sicilian Expedition further foreshadows his betrayal of Athens.¹⁸

So in his eulogy of the beauty of his master, Plato also reveals the potential ugliness and danger of Socrates' way of life and teaching. Despite the undoubtedly many differences between Aristophanes' and Plato's portraits of Socrates, such as whether Socrates followed Athenian religious practices, whether he was interested in astronomy and meteorology, and whether he taught the subject matters most sophists boasted to teach,¹⁹ these two works present, at least in spirit, an integrated or balanced image of Socrates. This double effect of Socrates as both beautiful and ugly may find its explanation in the image of Eros under Socrates' depiction.

III. Socrates the In-Between

Before his own encomium of Eros, Socrates emphatically corrects Agathon's praise of the beauty and goodness of Eros. By appealing to the neediness in any desire, Socrates argues that Eros is a pursuer of beauty and goodness, and thus lacks beauty and goodness. In his repetition of Diotima's teaching Socrates further illustrates Eros' characteristic of in-between by emphasizing his parentage. Inheriting from his mother Penia, Eros is "tough, shriveled, shoeless and homeless...always living with need"

me, to put it in most simple terms, Socrates' speech includes Phaedrus' advocate of honor as important value, and corrects his narrow focus on politics; it accepts the basic dichotomy between bodily love and spiritual love raised by Pausanias, and corrects his shameless praise of the behavior of the lover; it accepts Eryximachus' conception that Eros is a cosmic and comprehensive force, and corrects his too naturalistic view of love; it takes Aristophanes' piety and his pursuit of completion, but revises the goal of love from what is one's own to what is good, and argues that the real completion is not through re-union with a person, but through the vision of forms; and it admits Agathon's view that Eros is the source of human creativity, and corrects his identification of the characteristics of the love with those of the beloved.

¹⁴ See Aristodemus' comment at 175b and Alcibiades's similar report at 220c-d.

¹⁵ See 173b for Aristodemus' apparent similarity with Socrates.

¹⁶ The atmosphere of criticism is slightly abated when Socrates starts his speech by admitting that he used to make the same mistake as Agathon (201e).

¹⁷ See Vlastos (1981) for these features of Platonic love.

¹⁸ See Nails (2006) for the tragic historical background.

¹⁹ Dover provides a plausible explanation for Aristophanes' neglect of subtle differences between Socrates and the sophists, even if the evidence was certainly available for him. For he was more interested in the distinction between the normal and the abnormal than the one between two different kinds of abnormalities (Dover [1968], pp. lii-lvi)

(203d), and from his father Poros, “he is a schemer after the beautiful and the good, brave, impetuous, and intense, and awesome hunter, always weaving snares, resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a philosopher through all his life (*philosophōn dia pantos tou biou*), a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings” (203d). Eros is thus spoken of as between (a) beauty and ugliness, (b) goodness and badness, (c) resource and neediness, (d) wisdom and ignorance, (e) mortality and immortality, and (f) serves as the messenger between gods and men. This image of Eros as in-between and as philosopher is a perfect depiction of Socrates, and provides the essential clue to integrate the seemingly conflicting images in the *Clouds* and the *Symposium*.

Among the several pairs of characteristics of Eros listed above, some parallels between Eros and Socrates are easily seen. For example, (c) to say Socrates is between resource and neediness is in the sense that he is poor and unkempt in his everyday life, but is rich in intellectual life and is good at trapping and charming young men. (d) To say Socrates is between wisdom and ignorance is in the sense that he realizes his own ignorance comparing with gods’ wisdom, and tries his best to pursue wisdom and to imitate gods. Furthermore, as an enthusiastic pursuer of wisdom, Socrates has none but wisdom as his goal, and thus shows admirable persistence in this pursuit, but on the other hand he may neglect other earthly things, such as bodily comfort, wealth, honor, and even appropriate social behavior, and may thus be taken as ignorant. (e) To say that Socrates is between mortality and immortality is in the sense that he is a human being and thus mortal, but his intellectual pursuit, and his champion of a virtuous and examined life and of the eternal beauty of Form is of eternal value for philosophy as such. Socrates is clearly aware the immortality of his pursuit as he addresses Strepsiades as “creature of a day” (*phēmere*; *Clouds* 223) and in his comments on the pregnancy of the soul (*Symposium* 208c-209e). And (f) to say that Socrates is the messenger between god and men is that he brings the message of gods’ servant Diotima (the literal meaning of her names is honored by Zeus or honoring Zeus), and thus the message of god himself, to human beings, and to exhort them to pursue virtuous and wise life (212b).²⁰

For the present purpose, I will leave these four pairs of in-between aside, and focus on the other two, i.e., (a) between beauty and ugliness, and (b) between goodness and badness. Since in the context of Socrates’ speech beauty and goodness are so closely connected as the object of desire (201c2, 204d-205a and 206b) that in discussing Socrates’ double effect I will treat beauty/goodness and ugliness/badness as by and large synonyms. Furthermore, I will ignore the ugliness/beauty of Socrates’ appearances by focusing on the characteristic of his mind and practice.

In so far as Socrates is a human being, not a god, it is not difficult to understand why he is lacking complete beauty and goodness, which only belong to gods. And in so far as he is in constant pursuit of beauty and goodness he is beyond ugliness and badness, for as the parallel with wisdom/ignorance shows, a truly ugly and bad person would presumably consider himself as both beautiful and good.

But I believe Socrates’ being between beauty and ugliness, goodness and badness has deeper root than this. There is genuine potential ugliness and badness of his practice, and this is mainly due to his ordinary method, i.e., *elenchos* or dialectic. When explaining why it is he, not others, that is accused Socrates mentions an important, perhaps the most important, reason. As part of his service to god he and his “followers” often reveal the ignorance of other people, especially those prominent people, and these people are angry at him and use rather universal accusations toward any philosophy to accuse Socrates (*Apology* 22a-e). His method of revealing others’ ignorance is *elenchos*. This method is marked by a series of questions and answers, and the later questions are usually based on or drawn from the interlocutor’s previous answers, as particularly shown in such “Socratic dialogues” as *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Ion*, *Meno* and so forth.²¹ And this kind of enquiry usually ends up with showing the interlocutor’s inconsistency or self-contradiction and thus his ignorance, without establishing any positive or definite answers to the initial question (usually in the form of “what is X?”).²² Therefore, *elenchos*, at least as Socrates practices it, is mainly a method or art of refutation or destruction, rather than construction.²³ This method will lead people to examine whether their life is worth living, and this examination itself, presumably even without assuming the prospect of

²⁰ In the *Apology*, Socrates also claims that he is the servant and gift of Apollo, striving to keep the Athenians alert about their own ignorance and the unbridgeable gap between gods and men.

²¹ In our present context, this method can be seen in *Clouds* 658-694 and 1036-1070; *Symposium* 194a-d and 199c-201c.

²² I do not think Vlastos (1994) and many other interpreters are justified to criticize the so-called “problem of the *elenchos*.” For what Socrates aims to show by pointing out the interlocutor’s inconsistency is not *which* one of his answer is false, but *that* the interlocutor does not really know the subject matter he claims to know. I am in agreement with Benson (1995) on this point.

²³ There is no doubt that in the process of refutation, some correct elements toward the real definition of an objection (if there is real definition) may be established, but this positive aspect is not essential for the method of *elenchos* as such.

discovering the answer, is taken as the greatest good by Socrates.²⁴ But this destructive method and the examination itself will not guarantee any constructive or positive outcome. This method is fully capable of reveal the inconsistency of others' beliefs and thus their ignorance, but is hardly able to replace the old beliefs with new ones. The very examination and the series of arguments under scrutiny seems endless and often moves in circle.²⁵ The situation is still worse if we take Socrates' famous profession of ignorance seriously.²⁶ Putting these facts together, the overall picture looks rather miserable and pessimistic: Socrates, like an impotent captain, leads a ship in rather poor condition manned by still more impotent sailors, and drifts on the raging sea of *logos*. None of them knows the destiny of their journey.²⁷

This refutative or destructive, rather than constructive, use of Socratic *elenchos*, even taken by itself, lends great power to the practitioner, especially in a culture with great admiration of debate and persuasion. But this destructive use of *elenchos* clearly has the danger of being both well used and misused. This helps us solve an intriguing question in the *Sophist*. In the sixth definition of sophistry, the Eleatic visitor introduces a new starting point of discrimination or separation (*diakritikē*), and eventually reaches the definition of a "noble sophistry" (*gennaia sophistikē*): "let it be the cleansing part of the expertise of discriminating things; and let it be marked off as the part of that which concerns souls; and within that it's teaching; and within teaching it's education. And let us say that within education...the refutation of the empty belief in one's own wisdom" (231b). This definition poses a difficult question for interpreters, for the description looks a lot like the Socratic art:

They cross-examine (*dierōtōsin*) someone when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing. Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them. They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respect. The people who are being examined see this, get angry at themselves, and become calmer towards others. They lose their inflated and rigid beliefs about themselves that way, and no loss is pleasanter to hear or has a more lasting effect on them...The people who cleanse the soul...think the soul, too, won't get any advantage from any learning that's offered to it until someone shames it by refuting it (*elenchōn tis ton elenchomenon eis aischunēn*), removes the beliefs that interfere with learning, and exhibits it cleansed, believing that it knows only those things that it does know, and nothing more. (230b-d)²⁸

This passage leads many commentators to identify this definition with Socratic art. They deny that the Eleatic visitor is defining sophistry, but comments on Socrates's practice.²⁹ But I would rather take this definition as a genuine definition of sophistry, not *meant to* characterize Socratic art. But as the Eleatic visitor properly warns, the distinction between Socratic and some kind of sophistic art is indeed slippery (*olisthērotaton*, 231a8). There is a rather substantial similarity between Socratic and sophistic art. The Eleatic visitor says that the similarity between a sophist and what this definition portrays is like that "between a wolf and a dog, the wildest thing there is and the gentlest...the type we're talking about is very slippery" (231a). I take this comment to mean that there is a general or a "slippery" kind of sophistry, which aims to *purify the soul* from its ignorance *by means of elenchos*. Sophistry, here understood as the art of purification by means of refutation, and as the tool to point out other's ignorance, has its noble lineage.³⁰

²⁴ See *Apology* 30a, 38a and *Symposium* 215e-216a.

²⁵ The only sure thing is the standard of definition, which must be universally correct, without any exception. But this standard is never sufficiently fulfilled by the interlocutors of "Socrates dialogues."

²⁶ This claim of ignorance is explicitly seen in such Platonic dialogues as *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Laches*, *Ion*, *Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *Theaetetus*. It has to be admitted that in either Aristophanes' and Xenophon's portrait Socrates rarely claims his ignorance. But if his ignorance is closely related to his role of midwife, there is at least an implication in the *Clouds* (136); and in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates at least claims his ignorance in physical matters.

²⁷ The above judgment is mainly based on the so-called "Socratic Dialogues," and it has to be admitted that the Socrates in Plato's "middle dialogues" (especially *Symposium*, *Phaedo* and *Republic*) does provide positive teachings. But what softens this tension is that in the *Symposium* Socrates claims that what he knows is no more than erotic matters, and in the *Phaedo* Socrates expresses his reservation about his argument of the immortality of the soul (91a-c and 107b), and in the *Republic* he claims that he was pushed by the power of *logos* (394d), which implies that he does not really know, or at least is not completely sure (an evidence of knowledge) about what he is arguing. Even in "later" dialogues, such as *Theaetetus*, Socrates still claims that he is only good at guessing what is beneficial for those young men (151b).

²⁸ Similar point can also be seen in *Meno* 84b-c.

²⁹ See, for example, Cornford (1935), pp. 177-182; Trevaskis (1955); Vlastos (1991), p. 23.

³⁰ This noble lineage may be connected to Protagoras' claim that sophistry is an ancient art, and practiced by such great poets as Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides (Plato, *Protagoras* 316d-317a). It may well be the case that Plato thinks that dog and wolf come from the same lineage or the same species; see Kerferd (1954), p. 86.

This definition represents the same destructive aspect of both sophistic and Socratic art. This destructive role of pointing out others' ignorance, even taken by itself, has purifying force to the soul, for it removes the inappropriate confidence and arrogance of opinion-holders, makes them "lose their inflated and rigid beliefs about themselves," and thus paves the way for further genuine learning. We see the extreme and ironical exhibition of eristic refutation practiced by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus*, but if we see from a strictly logical point, many of Socrates' refutations are not much better than this kind of eristic refutation. Some of his refutations are clearly *ad hominem*, and others clearly based on bad logic.³¹ So on this aspect, sophistry and Socratic art are not far apart, but are more likely to fall into the same category, i.e., the art of refutation. Since it has purifying effect and can potentially serve for a still better purpose, it is justified to be called "noble sophistry."

Philosophers and sophists are often depicted as good hunter,³² just like how Eros is depicted: "a schemer after the beautiful and the good...an awesome hunter (*thēreutēs deinos*), and a genius with enchantments, potions, and clear pleadings (*Symposium* 203d-e), and Socrates is especially good at doing this (222b). A major, if not the most important, means of philosopher's and sophist's hunting the young is through *elenchos*, whose charm is shown clearly from the followers of Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, and Socrates. But unfortunately this attraction has no sure effect. As we know, Socrates is followed by Critias, Alcibiades, Aristodemus, Apollodorus, Euthydemus, Plato, among others. Although Socrates always tries to teach them to care about their soul, and to live an examined and virtuous life, they may not be as virtuous or as philosophical as Socrates would like them to be, since philosophy, however noble and divine, is a kind of rational persuasion, and lacks the guaranteed power of success. Socrates fails to change his crazy follower Apollodorus' sentimentality,³³ fails to change his close companion Chaerephon's impulsiveness,³⁴ fails to change his old friend Crito's caring for most worldly things,³⁵ fails to change Critias' tyrannical ambition, and especially fails to change Alcibiades' ultimate concern for his own glory. Alcibiades is deeply attracted by Socrates, and Socrates is the only person who can make him shame, but nevertheless he struggles with Socrates' influence and eventually departs from Socrates, as he himself testifies in the *Symposium*:

Socrates is the only man in the world who has made me feel shame...he makes me feel ashamed: I know perfectly well that I can't prove he's wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet, the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways: I cave in to my desire to please the crowd. My whole life has become one constant effort to escape from him and keep away, but when I see him, I feel deeply ashamed, because I'm doing nothing about my way of life, though I have already agreed with him that I should. Sometimes, believe me, I think I would be happier if he were dead. And yet I know that if he dies I'll be even more miserable. I can't live with him, and I can't live without him. (216b-c)

If philosophy lacks the guaranteed power to improve the students' character, it could be used in a worse way if combined with bad character, for the art of *elenchos* may be used to expose inconsistency in almost any opponent and gives upper hand in almost any verbal contest. In this sense, philosophy, especially the philosophy pursued by way of *elenchos*, is close to rhetoric, which is in essence a neutral art (see *Gorgias* 460a-461b). A pursuer of wisdom, just like the sophist or the rhetorician, can be both good and bad, both beautiful and ugly.

This neutrality or potential ugliness of philosophy explains why, in the *Republic*, Socrates reserves the dialectical education to the carefully selected few, who must in the first place have appropriate natural talent and character ("he is by nature good at remembering, quick to learn, high-minded, graceful, and a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage, and moderation"; VI.487a). And dialectical education will not start until the age of thirty, after a number of tests have been fulfilled, because "a greater evil comes from dialectic as it is currently practiced...those who practiced it are filled with lawlessness" (VII.537d-e).³⁶

In the end, we see in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Plato's *Symposium* an integrated image of Socrates, an Eros in human form, a *daimon* between beautiful and ugliness, and between goodness

³¹ Beversluis (2000) provides a detailed examination of Socrates' tricks. And it is always amusing to recall Barnes' words, "Plato's philosophical views are mostly false, and for the most part they are evidently false; his arguments are mostly bad, and for the most part they are evidently bad" (Barnes 1995, p. xvi.).

³² See, for example, *Sophist* 218d, 223b, 226a-b, and 231c.

³³ See *Symposium* 173d, and *Phaedo* 59a and 117d.

³⁴ See *Apology* 21a.

³⁵ See *Phaedo* 115b-c.

³⁶ Xenophon's defense of Socrates against the charge of corrupting Critias and Alcibiades in *Memorabilia* I.2.12-47 is probably the best example to illustrate the importance of character in the pursuit of philosophy.

and badness. What he is striving to do is to stimulate people to pursue wisdom as he himself does, and to give birth to wisdom in beauty. He may produce such beautiful examples as Euthydemus in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Plato in reality. But at the same time his destructive method of *elenchos*, his critical attitude toward common opinion, and the double effect of this pursuit (if not combined with appropriate good character) may produce such ugly cases as Pheidippides in the Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Alcibiades in reality.

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Transcoding the Silenus: Aristophanes, Plato and the Invention of Socratic Iconography

Andrea Capra

These days, the iconography of Plato and Socrates is attracting much attention, and, refreshingly, new data are part of the picture. Think of the so-called Berkley Plato: a Hellenistic replica of a ca. 360 BCE portrait has been (re)-discovered, and we now know that Plato, during his lifetime, was represented in such a way as to suggest the practice of wrestling¹. Meanwhile, scholars have been painstakingly examining Philodemian papyri, with the result that - thanks to the testimony of Philochorus as quoted by Philodemus - we now know, at least approximately, when and where the first portrait of Socrates was placed in the Academy². This privately sponsored portrait is responsible for what is usually referred to as "type A" among Roman copies portraying Socrates, as opposed to later "type B", which derives from a *public* statue made by Lysippus, as a result of the Athenians' remorse about Socrates' death³. The Silenic features of "type A" are usually contrasted with the more "human" look of "type B". Accordingly, "type A" is often discussed in the light of Alcibiades' famous description of Socrates-Silenus in the *Symposium*, and it will take centre stage in my argument as well⁴.

Let me take my cue from the deservedly popular work of Paul Zanker. Two statements from his book *The mask of Socrates* are especially relevant for my argument. Here is the first one⁵:

The earliest "portrait" of Socrates, in Aristophanes' *Clouds* of 423 B.C. (101ff., 348ff., 414; cf. *Birds* 1281f.), makes fun of his appearance. Like his pupils, he is pale and thin from strain and deprivation, dirty and hungry, with long hair. Indifferent to his own appearance, he parades through the city barefoot, staring people down and trying out his corrupting intellectual experiments on them. It has long been recognized that this description of Socrates' physical appearance is as much a conventional topos as the caricature of his supposed teachings. In any event, the starving thinker of the *Clouds* has little in common with the fat-bellied teacher with the face like a Silenus mask described by Socrates' own pupils Plato and Xenophon. Rather, it is a common stereotype, which we find occasionally in caricatures of "intellectuals" in vase painting.

And here is the second one⁶:

The likening of Socrates to silens, satyrs, and Marsyas, as we hear from Plato and Xenophon, probably originated with his enemies and detractors, for the particular traits that are usually mentioned in the comparison—the squat figure with big belly, broad and flat face with bulging eyes, the large mouth with protruding lips, and the bald head—were all considered, by the standards of *kalokagathia*, not only ugly, but tokens of a base nature (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.81). The decision to adapt the comparison with Silenus for a portrait statue intended to celebrate the subject, however, presupposes a positive interpretation of the comparison, such as we do in fact find, in particular, in the speech of Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*. Perhaps Socrates himself had already laid the groundwork for this new interpretation by accepting the comparison with his characteristic irony.

Two points are worth noting here: first, the statue of Socrates is in some sense "secondary", in that it presupposes the interpretation of Socrates' features made famous by Plato's *Symposium*; second, this Academic image of Socrates is in no way connected with his earlier Aristophanic portrait.

Let me start from the latter point. The main reason why Zanker keeps apart the Academic portrait from the comic mask is that Aristophanes' Socrates is "thin", that is he resembles the stereotype of the hungry philosopher, whereas the Academy's statue of Socrates allegedly features a

¹ The portrait herm is likely to "reflect an original of 370-365 B.C." (Miller 2009, 55).

² Cf. Voutiras 1991, with further bibliography, and Speyer 2001, discussed below.

³ D.L. 2.7. Diogenes' account is credible except for the dating: the statue cannot have been erected right after Socrates' death. See e.g. Giuliani 1997, 20-21.

⁴ For a general discussion of Socratic iconography, cf. Lapatin 2006.

⁵ Zanker 1995, 32-33.

⁶ Zanker 1995, 34.

"fat" body⁷. However, it should be kept in mind that we know nothing about the body of "type A". A fat body for the relevant statue is Zanker's own hypothesis⁸, one that is not supported by his other claim, i.e. that the statue of Socrates was in some sense related to the description found in the *Symposium*. In fact, there is nothing in the *Symposium* to suggest that the Silenus simile implies a fat body, and comparative material, in the form of Silenic iconography, tells a similar story: even a perfunctory look at the relevant entries of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* makes clear that classical Silenoi, not to mention Marsyas and the satyrs, are often remarkably slim and fit⁹. Personally, I would find it hard to believe that Plato "the wrestler" decided to set a fatty among the Muses of the Academy, but the simple truth is that we are not in a position to tell.

As for Socrates' *face*, it is a good idea to consider the first line uttered by Socrates in the *Clouds* (269):

SOCRATES: "*O ephemeral* creature, why call on me" (τί με καλεῖς, ὦ 'φήμερε)

As the relevant (and largely overlooked) *scholion* makes clear¹⁰, Socrates' words conceal a Pindaric quote (Pindar, fr. 157 Snell):

"When introducing the dialogue between Silenus and Olympus, Pindar had the former utter the following words: '*O ephemeral*, miserable creature (ὦ τάλας ἐφήμερε), you speak silly things...'"

The traditional story of the capture of Silenus and of his subsequent display of wisdom was made recognisable by the strange apostrophe "O ephemeral", working as a catchword. This is confirmed by another piece of evidence, preserved by Aristotle:

"... And Silenus was finally forced to talk: '*Ephemeral* seed (ἐφήμερον σπέρμα) of painful destiny, why do you force me to speak?'" (Aristotle, *Eudemus*, fr. 6 Ross)

The conclusion to be drawn here is that Aristophanes' Socrates, when he utters his first words, *presents himself as Silenus*. The allusion to Silenus' revelation was probably easy to recognize, but the joke could be appreciated in full only if the actor playing Socrates bore a clear resemblance with Silenus. This is why I am inclined to conclude that *the mask of the actor must have been Silenic in character*¹¹. The Silenic portrait of Socrates, then, can be traced back to the *Clouds*, and Zanker is probably wrong when he denies any relationship between comedy and Academy. Given that the *Clouds* was a major influence on both Plato and Xenophon, I think there is little doubt that the *Symposium's* image of Socrates-Silenus ultimately derives from Aristophanes.

Let me now move on to Zanker's other point. Zanker argues for "a possible connection between the concept behind the statue and an element of Platonic thought contained in the very passage of the *Symposium* that compares Socrates to Silenus", so that the statue may be seen as "a kind of extension of Socratic discourse into another medium"¹². On this view, the image put forth in

⁷ A similar point is made by Scheibler 1989, 26. Giuliani 1997, 41 nt. 50, also makes an emphatic distinction between the Academic portrait of Socrates and Aristophanes' caricature.

⁸ Cf. Lapatin 2006, 118.

⁹ Cf. the entries "Midas" (for Silenus), Marsyas and silenoi. The hint at Socrates' *gaster* found at Xen. *Symp.* 2.19 is hardly relevant here.

¹⁰ (223d.) ἐλέγετο ὁ Σωκράτης <τὴν ὄψιν> Σεληνῷ παρεμφέρειν· σιμός τε γὰρ καὶ φαλακρὸς ἦν. περιέθηκεν οὖν αὐτῷ <οἶον> τοῦ παρὰ Πινδάρῳ Σεληνοῦ φωνήν. ὁ γὰρ τοι Πίνδαρος διαλεγόμενον παράγων τὸν Σεληνὸν τῷ Ὀλύμπῳ τοιοῦτους αὐτῷ περιέθηκε λόγους "ὦ τάλας ἐφήμερε, νήπιε βάζεις". V. Perhaps the *scholion* is largely ignored because K. Dover (1967, 26-28) does not give it any credit.

¹¹ Aelian (VA 2.13.68-70) comments on the unmatched likeness of Socrates' mask in the *Clouds* (δῆλα γὰρ δὴ ὅτι καὶ οἱ σκευοποιοὶ ἔπλασαν αὐτὸν ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα ἐξεικάσαντες). His is no more than a fair guess, but - regardless of what Socrates' real face looked like - the mask-makers had only to adapt familiar satyr masks and faces, which clearly resemble "type A" (cf. Lapatin 2006, 111). Especially relevant is mid-5th Century statue of Papposilenus with child Dionysus and a tragic mask, found in the vicinity of the theatre of Dionysus and possibly related to Sophocles' *Dionysiscus* (National Museum of Athens 257, now on display in the New Acropolis Museum), Papposilenus, who wears a theatrical fleece-like coat but has no mask, bears an exceptional resemblance with Socrates' portraits. For a full and illuminating discussion see Charalabopoulos 2012, 159-178. Charalabopoulos suggests that "the Sokrates of the Academy could have been modelled on the Papposilenos of the Theatre of Dionysos" (176). This is very attractive: I would only add that Socrates' mask in the *Clouds* provides the missing link.

¹² Zanker 1995, 38-39.

the *Symposium* proved so powerful as to influence iconography proper¹³. Part of this, as we have seen, is arguably incorrect: the Silenic iconography of Socrates is not Plato's invention, but was spectacularly on display in Aristophanes' comedy, so that one should rather conclude that Aristophanes influenced Plato's description, which in turn influenced the construction of the statue. Even this, however, may be questioned, as I will now argue.

Plato founded the Academy around 388/387 BCE, and this may serve as a reasonable *terminus post quem* for the portrait (let me avoid the word "statue" in what follows). As I mentioned, only recently have scholars managed to make full sense of the relevant papyrological record. In the translation provided by Augustin Speyer¹⁴, here is how Philochorus, as quoted by Philodemus, refers to the portrait:

"Philochorus joked laughingly in the sixth book of the *Atthis*: 'He, Plato, obtains that all more or less in passing, and does not take it ... knowing ...' ... in the fifth: 'And they put up an image of Socrates, a bronze bust, on which was written: "Sotes made it" (*PHerc.* 1021 II, 5-16).

If the reconstruction is correct, a few lines further we learn that the statue was placed in the *Mouseion*. This piece of evidence seems to derive from the fifth book of Philochorus' *Atthis*, which comprised the history of Athens between 403/2 and 359/8 BCE. This is very fortunate, in that it provides an appropriate *terminus ante quem*.

Plato and his friends, then, had the portrait of Socrates placed in the Academy some time between 388 and 358, but one would naturally opt for an early date: the foundation of the Academy provides a convenient occasion for such an act of worship towards the unjustly convicted Master¹⁵. This is not the place to discuss the chronology of Plato's dialogues, so let me just recall a couple of fairly uncontroversial data: first, the *Symposium* is usually assigned to the so called middle period (388-366, between the foundation of the Academy and Plato's second journey to Sicily); second, few would doubt that an allusion to the dispersion of the people of Mantinea (193a) points to 385 BCE as an inescapable *terminus post quem*, but many favour 378 BCE, on the basis of a possible allusion to the Sacred Band of Thebes (178e-179a). In other words, there is a strong possibility that the portrait does not presuppose the *Symposium*, and that we should reverse the scenario. Arguably, it is the *Symposium* that presupposes the portrait and possibly - to those who were familiar with the Academy - invites comparison with it¹⁶.

What did the portrait look like? Philochorus' wording may be relevant here, for he literally says that Plato "dedicated a bronze *prosopon* of Socrates as an *eikon*"¹⁷. To be sure, *eikon* is a common term used by Plato's contemporaries when referring to any kind of portrait, including paintings, herms, statues and so forth. *Prosopon*, however, is less vague and more surprising: could it be the case that Plato's dedication consisted in a bodiless herm? Speyer refers to it as a "bust", and Stephen Miller has made a similar case for the Berkeley Plato¹⁸ (the two hypotheses would of course reinforce each other). Even more radically: what if the portrait consisted in (or at least was equipped with) a *mask*, according to a very common meaning of *prosopon*? Besides giving an unexpected twist to the title of Zanker's book, this would provide an arresting connection with the world of theatre and possibly a direct link to the *Clouds*. It would also square well with the theatrical character of the *Symposium*. This scenario is worth giving a thought, but let me stress that my argument *does not*

¹³ In fact, scholars had been hotly debating the priority of literary vs. iconographic portraits of Socrates, and the pendulum has gradually shifted towards the former. As Scheibler 1989 points out, "Die älteste Bildnisfassung des Sokrates und die erwähnten Texte von Platon und Xenophon dürften ungefähr derselben Zeit entstammen. Da dem Bildnis durchaus silenske Züge eignen, nahm die Porträtforschung dies gern als Beweis für die objektive Richtigkeit der in den Quellen gemachten Angaben zum Aussehen des Sokrates, literarische und künstlerische Überlieferung schienen sich gegenseitig zu stützen, wobei die Priorität gewöhnlich dem Bildnis zugesprochen wurde. In Wirklichkeit ist aber ihr Verhältnis zueinander nicht genau festzustellen, aus des heutiger Sicht lässt sich allenfalls von Parallelerscheinungen sprechen" (26).

¹⁴ Speyer 2001.

¹⁵ Giuliani 1997 aptly points out that "Die Errichtung der Bildnisstatue in der Akademie ist ein Akt der Pietät, aber - sofern sich diese Pietät auf einen Verbrecher bezieht - zugleich ein Akt der Polemik und des Protestes" (22).

¹⁶ Giuliani 1997 hints at the possibility of such a "entgegengesetzten Abhängigkeitsverhältnis" (25), but he eventually dismisses it. The Silenus simile, he argues, lies at the core of the Socratic legend and as such it affected - as a kind of ultimately misleading identikit - both literary and visual portraits.

¹⁷ Lines 13-15: ἀνέθε[σε]ν εἰκό[να] / Σ[ω]κράτους π[ρ]οσω[π]ον [χαλ] / κοῦν. The supplements are made possible by the fact that the phrase is found again a few lines below (26-28): ἀναθή / [σε]ν Ἀθ[ην]ε[σ]ι[ν] [εἰ]κόνα πρ[ὸ] / σωπον χαλκοῦν. To be sure, Σ[ω]κράτους may also refer to εἰκό[να], or ἀπὸ κοινοῦ to both εἰκό[να] and π[ρ]οσω[π]ον: it would be more or less the same.

¹⁸ Miller 2009, 52-53.

depend on it. By way of conclusion, I will try to show that Plato's appropriation of comic iconography is a recurring pattern in Plato's *Symposium* (as well as in other dialogues, although I lack the space to discuss them).

Contrary to common opinion, then, the Silenic portrait of Socrates can and should be traced back to the *Clouds*. This opens the way for a fresh reading of Alcibiades' famous words, as he introduces the Silenus simile:

"I'll try and praise Socrates? through *eikones* (δὲ εἰκόνων). And maybe he'll think I want to be funny, but the purpose of the *eikon* is not laughter but truth" (*Symp.* 215a).

Eikon possibly works as an allusion to the portrait placed in the Academy. Be that as it may, this is a programmatic statement that, I maintain, can guide interpretation: *Plato ironically appropriates comic images with a "serious" goal*. Plato is conjuring up the comic image of the philosopher only to suggest that it should be "opened up" like a Silenus statuette, so as to mean the opposite of what Aristophanes meant¹⁹.

This antiphrastic trope is best exemplified later on in Alcibiades' speech. On describing Socrates' military prowess, he says the following:

There was another occasion on which his behaviour was very remarkable ... He and Laches were retreating, for the troops were in flight, and I met them and told them not to be discouraged, and promised to remain with them; and there you might see him, Aristophanes, as you describe, just as he is in the streets of Athens, stalking like a pelican, and rolling his eyes, calmly contemplating enemies as well as friends, and making very intelligible to anybody, even from a distance, that whoever attacked him would be likely to meet with a stout resistance (221a-b, transl. Jowett).

Alcibiades directly addresses Aristophanes, who is listening to him together with Socrates and the others. His reference takes the form of a direct quotation from the following lines of the *Clouds*²⁰:

... And you, great high-priest of subtle nonsense, tell us what you want. To you and Prodicus alone of all the hollow orators of today have we lent an ear -to Prodicus, for his knowledge and great wisdom, and to you, because you walk stalking like a pelican, and rolling your eyes, barefooted, resigned to everything and proud of our protection (359-363).

Needless to say, in its original context the strange words describing Socrates' gait are malicious and result in a portrait of misery. They also possibly refer to the actor's look or behaviour, and are surely meant to be vivid, although it is difficult for us to pin down their precise meaning - "stalking like a pelican" is little more than a wishful suggestion for the rather elusive verb *brenthyomai*, from an unidentified bird called *brenthos*. What really matters is the way Plato "opens up" comic images, whether real or verbal, in search of unexpected treasures: in Plato's hands, comedy turns into a powerful tool, which can be seen at work in many different ways²¹. The ultimately Aristophanic portrait of Socrates set in the Academy, it would seem, had a very rich offspring, in both iconography and philosophical literature.

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¹⁹ I agree with Giuliani 1997 (42ff.) when he argues that the Academy portrait can be defined ironic and should be related to Socrates' well-known irony. Unlike Giuliani, however, I argue that comedy provides the appropriate background for both literary and visual portraits of Socrates. The ironic reversal affects primarily the comic image of Socrates. Similarly, I agree with Zanker 1995 when he says that "the likening of Socrates to silens, satyrs, and Marsyas ... probably originated with his enemies and detractors" (34) but, again, I think that the relevant background is provided by comedy.

²⁰ On Alcibiades' quotation cf. Bonelli 1991, 135ff.

²¹ In Capra 2007 I have collected a number of examples from the *Symposium* and other dialogues: Plato consistently appropriates and reverses comic images.

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The Historical and Platonic Socrates in the *Symposium*

Jure Zovko

ABSTRACT

Gregory Vlastos, the most consistent advocate of separating the philosophical legacy of Socrates within the *Corpus Platonium*, contrasts the “historical Socrates” of the early dialogues with a “Platonic Socrates” of the so-called ‘dialogues on ideas’. The latter, serving as the mouthpiece to Plato’s philosophy, presents to the reader a systematically developed moral theory, puts forward the proofs for the immortality of soul, and argues as a grand metaphysicist and epistemologist, or philosopher of science, language, religion, arts and education: “The whole encyclopaedia of philosophical science is his domain”.¹ The historical Socrates, on the other hand, was for Vlastos primarily an ironist and a moral philosopher, who opposed the dogmatic attitudes of his interlocutors and laid a primary emphasis on his own “ignorance”. In contrast to the traditional image of Socrates as a poet of immortality, Vlastos tries to demonstrate that the historical Socrates was actually a sceptic, and an agnostic with respect to the belief in afterlife: «For Socrates E [earlier dialogues] our soul is our self... The queries, ‘Is the soul material or immaterial, mortal or immortal? Will it be annihilated when the body rots?’ are never on his elenctic agenda... both options - total annihilation or survival in Hades - are left open». In this view, Socrates identified the human soul with the individual personality (*Apol.* 36 c; *Krit.* 47 e; *Gorg.* 486 e), whilst his elenctic disputes about moral values were focused primarily on the key question of practical philosophy: how to achieve a good and virtuous life?²

In the *Symposium*, two speeches, Diotima's and Alcibiades', appear to present two different doctrines and two opposing pictures. Diotima's speech, the climax of the dialogue, proclaims the philosophical enthusiasm for the beautiful, which raises human beings to the «ideal world of the ideas». At the very moment when we are contemplating the monumental innovativeness of Plato's concept of the ideas, however, Alcibiades comes onto the scene and reminds us of the historical Socrates, who «his whole life played an ironic game with people». (*Symp.* 216 e) Alcibiades recalls Socrates' unforgettable words, which «conceal in themselves a wonder of virtue» (*Symp.* 222 a). Why does Plato, after the poetic mastery of Diotima's speech feel the need to turn the readers attention once more to the historical Socrates, authentically portrayed by Alcibiades? In the *Symposium* for the first time in Plato's work the doctrine of ideas is rung out in full accord. Nevertheless, upon attainment of this acme, Plato casts his gaze backwards toward the historical Socrates and summarizes the fundamental characteristics of his philosophical doctrine. Diotima's and Alcibiades' speeches can thus serve as a line of demarcation between Plato's doctrine and the original thought of Socrates.

¹ G. Vlastos, “Socrates”, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988) 89-111; a quote in W. J. Prior (ed.), *Socrates. Critical Assessment*, London: Routledge 1996, p. 139. Cf. Vlastos, *Socrates. Ironist and Moral Philosopher*.

² Cf. G. Vlastos *Socrates. Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1991), p. 55.

Alcibiades' Connection: Plato's *Symposium* Rewriting the Case on Socrates and Alcibiades

Gabriele Cornelli

Two different but complementary movements are at play within the skillful construction of the dramatic figure of Alcibiades in the interior of the Platonic dialogues: first, a deft rhetorical construction, strongly marked by an emphasis on Alcibiades' sexual *paranomia*, that is, on his deviant sexual behavior, which is in turn functional to a political strategy of memory control, regarding the posthumous defense of Socrates and his *paideia* as responsible for creating the ethical-political figure of Alcibiades. The chosen locus of research will precisely be Plato's *Symposium*, where *eros* and *paideia* draw the fabric of dramatic and rhetorical speeches and, especially, the picture of the relation between Socrates and Alcibiades. In order to so do, we will focus, firstly, on two important facts, which are essential for the correct understanding of the dialogue, both of which appear at the beginning. First, it is said that Socrates, Alcibiades and the others (172b) were present at the famous banquet, and second, that the banquet and the erotic speeches of the participants were so celebrated as to attract the attention for several decades to come. So, the memory of that symposium is thus the memory, far beyond the other symposiasts, and through the erotic speeches, of something precise: that is, a particularly significant relationship, that between Socrates and Alcibiades. What matters most for the aim of this paper is the fact that Alcibiades is considered one of the major reasons for the defeat of Athens and the main cause of the crisis into which the city was plunged during the last years of Fifth Century BC. Due to the distrust of the city towards the groups of "philosophers" that remitted to Alcibiades' group, does not surprise that the so-called Socratics committed themselves to refuting the accusation of Socrates having been Alcibiades' mentor, to the point of reversing the charge. In the same way as the others Plato, also a Socratic, concerns himself with what might be called the *Alcibiades' Connection*. Realizing there obviously was no way to deny the deep connection between Socrates and Alcibiades, he uses a clever dramatic construction with the intention of operating a political intervention upon the memory of this relationship, that is, of rewriting history, with the intent of relieving him of a more precise charge, which must have especially weighed upon Plato and upon Socrates' memory: of him having been Alcibiades' lover/mentor. This Platonic apology is based, ultimately, in a clever rhetorical strategy, which emphasizes the now traditional sexual *paranomia* of Alcibiades, in order to make him guilty of an attempted excessive and outrageous seduction not only of Socrates, but of the polis itself. Reusing comic and oratorical/rhetorical motifs of his time, therefore, Plato deepens the *j'accuse* against Alcibiades, trying to withdraw him from the orbit of Socrates and the Socratics.

The central idea that we will here defend is that two different but complementary movements are at play within the skillful construction of the dramatic figure of Alcibiades in the interior of the Platonic dialogues: first, a deft rhetorical construction, strongly marked by an emphasis on Alcibiades' sexual *paranomia*, that is, on his deviant sexual behavior, which is in turn functional to a political strategy of memory control, regarding the posthumous defense of Socrates and his *paideia* as responsible for creating the ethical-political figure of Alcibiades.¹

The chosen locus of research will precisely be Plato's *Symposium*, where *eros* and *paideia* draw the fabric of dramatic and rhetorical speeches and, especially, the beautiful picture of the relation between Socrates and Alcibiades.

In order to so do, we will focus, firstly, on two important facts, which are essential for the correct understanding of the dialogue, both of which appear at the beginning. First, it is said that Socrates, Alcibiades and the others (172b) were present at the famous banquet, and second, that the banquet and the erotic speeches of the participants were so celebrated as to attract the attention for several decades to come.² One can thus collect from these first exploratory observations that the memory of that meal is thus the memory, far beyond the other symposiasts, and through the erotic speeches, of something very precise: that is, a particularly significant relationship, that between Socrates and Alcibiades.

The very structure of the dialogue leaves no doubt about the centrality of the relationship

¹ Thanks to Nicholas Riegel for his very generous and competent revision of the english text.

² It certainly is the case of noting that in Xenophon's namesake *Symposium*, even if it is another banquet, this time in the house of the wealthy Callias of Athens, in Piraeus, held with the pretext of celebrating the recent victory at a pankration competition, in the Great Panathenaic of 422/3, of the young Autolycus, the son of a certain Licon, in the third part of it (ch. 8) Socrates says exactly one *erotikos logos* to signify the importance of that memory (according to Pinheiro 2011, 14-15).

between the two: Diotima's speech would in fact seem the culmination of the discussion about love, from a theoretical point of view, and the dialogue could then end there. However, it is exactly at this point that Alcibiades, mask of Eros and Dionysus, model lover, comes into play. In a way, it is possible to say that, playing with the lexicon of the *Symposium* itself, all the speeches longed and missed the entrance of the lover's own mask, the incarnation of Eros: Alcibiades. In his great literary skill, Plato seems to be able to converge all the speeches towards the final *mise en scène* of Alcibiades' entry.

Socrates' first speech (213d) after Alcibiades' entry sets the tone of the character: here Socrates expresses his fear of Alcibiades' *mania* and *philerastia*, that is, of his excesses in love.

Agathon, see if you can defend me for the love for this man gave me no little trouble. From the moment I have fallen for him I am not even allowed to look or talk with one beautiful young man, he, overcome by jealousy and envy, makes incredible scenes, insults me and gets close to coming to blows. Please take care that this is not the case right now, and instead try to keep the peace between us, because I loathe both his *mania* as his pederasty (*Symp.* 213c -d).³

The plea for Agathon to control Alcibiades in his violent excesses in eros should not go unnoticed. The binding of erotica and violence is not only the character's card, but, as we shall see, his leitmotif throughout the dialogue.

With the excuse of having drunk too much wine, Alcibiades, significantly, refuses to continue the *erotikoi logoi* game, claiming to be able of speaking only about Socrates, and on this to want/to be able to tell only the truth (214c-d). With this speech of Alcibiades, therefore, the record of the conversation changes: from theory to history, from praise to the truth (a true Dionysiac, characterized by *mania* and *parrhesia* of drunkenness — *oinos alethes*, 217e: *in vino veritas*), from concepts to images (215a), being those of a life lived side by side (as in the case of military service), being, especially, those with great mimetic skill chosen to represent the real Socrates.

The very first image that Alcibiades uses is the one from the Sileni statues. The image goes beyond the approximation, widely perceived by ancient iconography, between the human typology of Socrates (some ugliness, fleshy lips, etc.) and the Silenus image. Here Alcibiades refers to something more precise, probably something that we know nowadays only through the Russian Matryoshkas statues, dolls that contain within them other dolls. The Sileni statues to which Alcibiades refers to, therefore, tend to be monstrous and tacky statues that once opened, reveal to contain within them statues of deities. In the same way — this is the moral of the image — Socrates would have been: a mask of himself, ugly and rude on the outside, but divine on the inside.

A detail from this image that often escapes the translators — Brisson, in this sense, well noticed it (1998, 217, N526): Alcibiades literally refers to statues that are in the laboratories of the *hermoglupeioi*, that is, the sculptors of herms (215B). But this initial and veiled reference to the herms cannot be considered casual.⁴ On the contrary, it inaugurates the Platonic politics of memory. In fact, Agathon's banquet would have happened a few months before this major event. On the morning of June the 8th, 415, it seems, it was found that all the herms had been mutilated, according to the testimony of Thucydides, "on the front" (*prosopa*, VI, 27, 3), which primarily means a mutilation of their sexual attributes. Placed at the entrances and exits of houses and temples, at intersections and at the city gates, the herms were — symbolically — entrusted with the protection of the city. The horror arisen by such tremendous sacrilege was boosted due to having been committed during a particularly critical juncture for Athens: the preparation for one of the most ambitious (and dangerous) military expeditions: that against Syracuse and its powerful allies. The suspicion of a sacrilegious act — one which also had a humorous side to it, so to speak — should usually fall upon the mess and brawl of some drunken youths. Plato seems, somehow, to want to endorse this version. In fact, the story of the very arrival of Alcibiades at the symposium at Agathon's house seems to contain a reference to suspicions that the Athenian people had come down on Alcibiades and his companions: while Socrates and the others spend the night drinking at home, and moderately, Alcibiades arrives at dawn, drunk and — that is what the text suggests — having wandered through Athens in an altered state. An Athenian would not need to use much fantasy in order to imagine Alcibiades and his drunken parties committing any sort of profanity. Plato's insistence on this version should also be one of the reasons for the telling of the second interruption of the banquet at the end of it (223b), held also by several other drunken youths. That is, Plato seems to insist presenting nights of rioting in the street, right at the time of the herms' mutilation, thus endorsing the lightest version of the motives that lay behind the sacrilege.

³ The translation is mine. But the translation of " blows " was suggested to me by Schiappa de Azevedo.

⁴ Likewise, Plato's game is probably present in the use by Alcibiades of the *hermaion* term, which also refers to herms, in order to describe his fate when he met Socrates (217a).

And yet, if this may seem a *non troppo* veiled admission of Alcibiades' and his party's guilt by Plato, freeing Socrates and his group of this suspicion, it is more likely that Plato is masking (after all, we are talking about the banquet, that is, of one most able game of masks) something more severe. Actually, in contemporary sources, the suspicion of desecration does not fall so much upon drunken youths: rather, a plot came more easily on people's mind, hatched up in an articulate manner, by groups intending to weaken the confidence of Athens and its democracy at a time so delicate in its history, wanting by this to restore oligarchy or tyranny.⁵

Let's see Thucydides' account on this matter:

No one knew who had done this, but large rewards were offered by the state in order to find out who the criminals were, and there was also a decree passed guaranteeing immunity to anyone, citizen, alien or slave, who knew of any other sacrilegious act that had taken place and would come forward with information about it. The whole affair, indeed, was taken very seriously, as it was regarded as an omen for the expedition, and at the same time as evidence of a revolutionary conspiracy to overthrow the democracy (Thucydides, VI, 27, 3).⁶

Obviously, conspirators groups like these actually existed, as evidenced by the successive *staseis* that profoundly shaped the fifteen or twenty successive years of Athens' democracy. They were called *hetairias*, groups of friends, companions. The members were all of high social origin, and their meetings were usually associated with the ritual of the banquet and the symposium. That is, the suspicion falls exactly on top of a group like the one Plato sets in the *Symposium*, happily gathered a few months before the mutilation. In fact, several of these *hetairias* were charged and brought to trial, through the use of exceptional legal instruments such as the *eisaggelia*.⁷ Athens starts to get obsessed with the risk of a return to oligarchy, or worse, to tyranny. Gradually — Thucydides is the main source on this issue — a rich, excessive, rebellious and powerful figure such as that of Alcibiades gets to meet all the conditions to concentrate on itself the fears of the democratic people. Thucydides states that plainly:

As for Alcibiades, the same enemies of his who attacked him even before he set sail now renewed their attacks, and the Athenians took a serious view of the matter. Now that they thought they had discovered the truth about the Hermae, they were all the more inclined to believe that the sacrilege with regard to the mysteries, in which he was implicated, had been done by him as part and parcel of the same plot against the democracy (Thucydides, VI, 61: 1).⁸

But Alcibiades was never formally charged in relation to the case of the herms. However, within the climate of terror and slander prevailing while Alcibiades was preparing for the Syracusan expedition, there appears an explicit complaint against him of having committed another sacrilegious act: the accusation was that he participated in a parody of the mysteries, in a private home. Androcles tried to connect the two desecrations, the herms and the parody of the mysteries, as prologues to a threat to democracy. Plutarch thus reveals the defamatory intentions of Androcles:

Androcles, the orator, presented as witnesses a few slaves and metics who accused Alcibiades and his friends of having mutilated other statues and of having parodied the mysteries under the effect of excessive drinking. It was said that a certain Theodoros played the harbinger, Pulition the torch bearer, Alcibiades the hierophant, and that the other elements of the group as spectators watched, playing the role of the initiated into the mysteries (Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 19, 1-2).⁹

Although Alcibiades participation in the case of the herms was never proven, the association of the two sacrileges strongly marked Athens' public mind.¹⁰ Thus, in fact, Thucydides describes the reaction of the Athenian people:

These events had impressed themselves on the people of Athens and, recalling everything that they had heard about them, they were now in an angry and suspicious mood with regard to those who had been accused in connection with the mysteries; everything that had happened

⁵ Several contemporary commentators - Nails rightly notes (2002, 20) - seem to fall into the Platonic trap, and consider as a prank the case of the herms (prank: Dover 1970), underestimating motivations and political impacts of the gesture.

⁶ Trans. R. Warner (1972).

⁷ Cf. for the narration of events and the operation of emergency laws De Romilly (1995, 82).

⁸ Trans. R. Warner (1972).

⁹ The importance of the charge of Androcles to the fate of Alcibiades is also confirmed by Thucydides (VIII, 65, 2), on the occasion of the former's murder.

¹⁰ It is significant in this sense, Thucydides' (VI, 28, 1) mixing of the two charges, one regarding the desecration of the herms and the other regarding the parodies of the mysteries.

was, they thought, part of a plot aiming at setting up an oligarchy or a dictatorship (Thucydides, VI, 60, 1).¹¹

The economy of this text does not allow us to monitor the troubled months that followed this complaint. Suffice to say that it was initially denied, and Alcibiades was able to travel as strategos, towards Syracuse. However, while in the middle of the expedition, a woman from a prominent family, Agariste, raised another version of the same charge of parody of the Eleusinian mysteries: but this time, it was alleged to have happened in the house of Charmides, member of Alcibiades' *hetairia*. She accused him of playing the central role in it, the one of the high priest.¹² Considering the seriousness of the charge, a ship was immediately sent to Sicily in order to bring Alcibiades to stand trial in Athens. The rest is well known: the flight of Alcibiades marks his first betrayal and the exile.¹³

What matters most is that from this moment on, Alcibiades begins plausibly to be considered one of the major reasons for the defeat of Athens and the main cause of the crisis into which the city was plunged. And with him all those who belonged to his group. There is certainly nothing new in stating, as does Centrone, that "the proximity to so controversial a figure as Alcibiades was one of the real causes of the death of Socrates" (1999, xxxviii).¹⁴ And the distrust of the city towards the groups of "philosophers" that remitted to him.

Nor does it surprise us that the so-called Socratics committed themselves, from this tragic moment on, to refuting the accusation of Socrates having been Alcibiades' mentor, to the point — as stated by Gribble — of reversing the charge: "*the allegation that Socrates corrupted Alcibiades, the charge made by society against philosophy, is not just refuted but turned on its head: it is society which corrupts Alcibiades and others like him*" (1999, loc. 394 *Kindle Edition*).

In the same way as the others Plato, also a Socratic, concerns himself with what might be called the Alcibiades' affaire (or the Alcibiades' Connection). Realizing there obviously was no way to deny the deep connection between Socrates and Alcibiades, he uses a most clever dramatic construction with the intention of operating a political intervention upon the memory of this relationship, that is, of rewriting history, thus producing another apology for Socrates, with the intent of relieving him of a more precise charge, which must have especially weighed upon Plato and upon Socrates' memory: of him having been Alcibiades' lover/mentor (trying to translate the broad vocabulary regarding the *erastes/eromenos* relationship).

The idea is obviously not novel. Already Gomperz (1905, 394) considers Alcibiades' speech as a response to Polykrates, who in the late 90's of the fourth century, that is, a few years after the death of Socrates, is thought to have written an act of accusation against Socrates. The main witness to the existence of a *kategoros*, of an accuser identified by the critics as Polykrates, is Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (I, 2, 9).¹⁵ Although Robin (1908) considered the possibility of this direct response to Polykrates as *toute gratuite* (1908, 60), and preferred, in the same case, to think of a polemic between Plato and Aristophanes, who would then have been considered by Plato "among Socrates' opponents, the one whose influence at that time was still worth fighting against" (1908, 61). The fact is that Plato, since he associated Socrates dramatically with Alcibiades, seemed to everyone to be feeling the need to defend him.

Socrates having the need of, somehow, being defended from Alcibiades is a recurrent *topos* in the dialogues. Consider, for example, the famous divine prohibition (*daimonion enantioma*) that prevented Socrates from speaking to Alcibiades at the beginning of *Alcibiades Major* (130a).

Not surprisingly, much of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* tends to emphasize the defeat of Socrates' *paideia*, thus reinforcing the impression of a strong apologetic tendency. Socrates' very words, at the end of the praise, underline this defeat, when they attempt to debunk the prevarication, the use, the unfair exchange between Socrates' true and ephemeral beauty, which Alcibiades sought to carry out, in his own admission (218e). The term that Socrates uses to indicate this "forcing of the issue" of Alcibiades is very significant: *pleonektein*. Alcibiades is thus set in a context of violence and prevarication that describes those years of Athenian imperialism, and which Vegetti masterfully

¹¹ Trans. R. Warner (1972).

¹² A comprehensive review of the charges can be found both at *About the mysteries* as well as at *About his return*, speeches that the also involved Alcibiades writes during the last turbulent years of the fifth century.

¹³ Nails (2002, 15) notes rightly that tradition knows two other recalls of Alcibiades and that they are often mixed one for the other.

¹⁴ I devoted myself to the examination of these causes in a recent article published in the Proceedings of the 2008 Socratica Congress, to which I refer (Cornelli & Chevitarese 2010). Efforts to unravel the reasons for this conviction and death are certainly not irrelevant, although I must agree with Ferrari that this constitutes "a perhaps insoluble problem" (Ferrari 2007, 20).

¹⁵ Xenophon refutes these accusations with the same force throughout ch. 2.

summarized using the concept of “anthropology of *pleonexia*” (Vegetti 2003).

Thus, in a large part, the praise of Socrates by Alcibiades can be considered more of an apology.

Let's, for example, think about the very use of the images of the Sileni statues, which illustrate the need to overcome the appearance, the historical and uncomfortable mask of Socrates, to look at a truth about his life and his legacy, which still remains hidden to the majority. For Alcibiades says “none of you know him” (216c-d). It is not difficult to see that through the voice of Alcibiades, Plato himself is saying this to Athens.

The apologetic sense is especially evident in Socrates' insistence, as the Alcibiades account goes, that he abandon *ta Athenaion pratto*, the political issues of Athens, to devote himself to the care of oneself (*emautos*). Obviously, both *in re* as in *post factum*, such an advice to abandon politics, when addressed to the great statesman, a true Athenian political animal, is doomed to failure, but it is functional to the politics of the Platonic memory, in his historiographical project, which is to mark a separation between Socrates and the Athenian *staseis* of his times.

The wonderful 221 and 222a pages, on the Socratic *logoi*, which metonymically participate in the image of the Silenus statue, which Alcibiades attributed to Socrates himself, so common on the outside, but divine on the inside, closes with the admission that these same speeches “tend towards, for those who want to become *kalo – kagathoi*” (222a). That is, the *paideia* of Socrates, although it may seem *atopic*, is indeed deeply committed to the ideals of the *kalo – kagathia* that guide the Athenian *politeia*.

Thus, the problem is not Socrates' teachings, but, rather, Alcibiades' inability to overcome his *philotimia*, his love for the honors of the many (216b). This *philotimia*, of which Alcibiades is an almost paradigmatic example within the ancient world (according to Thucydides, *Alcibiades Major*; Plutarch, *passim*), on the one hand, moves him away from Socrates, thus escaping from his counseling, but on the other makes him feel ashamed of his own weakness. Giorgini (2005, 454) puts it well when he says that “without a doubt, the figure of Alcibiades represented the widest failure of both Athenian education and socratic pedagogy”.

To explain Alcibiades' immunity to the Socratic *paideia*, in order to save Socrates from defeat, Plato makes use of a rhetorical strategy that comedy, oratory and Thucydides himself had already outlined: Alcibiades' *philotimia* and weakness would essentially indicate unequivocal *feminine* traits.

But this weakness of Alcibiades is not a simple association of immoderate demand for honors and wealth, with the parallel representation of the ethics of the feminine gender as necessarily connected to *philothimia* and to some weakness with respect to pleasure seduction. There is something more precise regarding the characterization of the *paranoia* of Alcibiades as a man, which makes him both feared and admired in the eyes of his contemporaries and even in the several centuries of tradition that followed. Once more Gribble rightly points out that “in the last ten years of the Peloponnesian War the constant ambivalence and indecision which characterized the Athenian attitude towards Alcibiades crucially undermined Athenian policy” (1999, loc. 61).

This indecision, a mixture of fear and attraction, is in a way the description of Athens' erotic relationship with Alcibiades. Aristophanes understood this well, when in *The Frogs* he makes Dionysus say that Athens “wants him, hates him and longs for him”.¹⁶ The meaning of this statement takes a very special connotation when you think that it was presented at the theater in the year 405, while Alcibiades was in exile and the war was almost lost, and that Dionysus is dramatically visiting, in the afterlife, the tragedians Aeschylus and Euripides.

It is Thucydides himself (VI, 15) who tells us of the great *paranoia* of Alcibiades, as the one which scandalized the Athenians (*oi polloi*) the most, regarding his *diaita*, his lifestyle. A *paranoia* which is described more precisely as *kata to eautou soma*, that is, regarding one's own body. Although you can certainly think of such excesses as the bodily pleasures of food and drinking, the expression refers more precisely to sexual deviancies (Gribble 1999 loc. 1094).¹⁷ It is no accident that Antisthenes states that Alcibiades would be “*paranomos* towards women as well as regarding the remainder of his *diaita*” (Caizzi frag. 29).

Alcibiades' *paranoia* seems to carry within it a very precise sexual characterization. This is clearly shown by the large number of anecdotes, information and dramatic representations that characterize the tradition on the character.

¹⁶ *Frogs* 1425: ποθεῖ μὲν, ἐχθαίρει δέ, βούλεται δ' ἔχειν.

¹⁷ The proof is also a fragment of Eupolis (fr. 351 Kock), where, regarding both pleasures - drinking and sex -, Alcibiades stood out as much as to be considered practically the inventor of new forms of performance: πινύειν, something like getting back to drink in the morning and λακκοπροκτία, idleness, licentiousness.

Since childhood, according to Plutarch, Alcibiades' fame has been linked to female behavior. This is emblematic in the case of a famous fight, the central space for defining the male gender, in which Alcibiades surprisingly makes use of a bite:

Once, when he found himself in trouble during a fight, in order not to fall, he brought towards his mouth the arms of the opponent that dominated him, and almost grabbed them from side to side. That one, dropping his prey, said: 'You bite, Oh Alcibiades, just like women do!' — and Alcibiades replied: 'No, just like the lions!' (Plutarch. Alcibiades 2, 2-3).¹⁸

Alcibiades' answer — "not as a woman, but like a lion!" — refers itself more immediately to another central passage of Aristophanes' comic reflection in *The Frogs*, on what to do with Alcibiades. The character Aeschylus actually says: "first of all, one should not raise a lion in the inner city. But if someone so does, then he must bend to its character" (1432-3). The lion, associated not only with the figure of Alcibiades, but more generally with an unruly and potentially dangerous social role within the community (in Homer, Achilles is a lion — *II* . 18. 318-22), is in the fifth century Athenian context an image that immediately refers to the most feared tyrannical tendencies. Herodotus associates the image of the lion with that of tyrants (V, 56; V, 92); and again Aristophanes, at the *Knights* (1037), speaks of a woman giving birth to a lion in Athens; Calicles, in Plato's *Gorgias*, compares the submission of the best and the strongest citizens to the city's laws to the one that is established in order to train young lions (*Gorg.* 483e).

This double feral and feminine imagery attributed to Alcibiades eventually pushes his representation more towards the wilderness than to the civilizing culture. Such a dichotomy between nature and culture is a strong mark of the rhetoric of gender. That is, as a lion and a woman Alcibiades flees from the moral norm and the established policy, outraging the social uses and threatening, in his irreducible difference and his ongoing challenge, the culture of sexual appearance promoted by the polis.¹⁹

In the political crisis of the late fifth century Athens, Alcibiades' sexual *paranomia*, therefore, plays a key role in the representation of an individual driven by his excesses and incapable of the *metron*, which has been established as the great democratic value (Darbo-Pechanski 2009, 51). Accordingly, this gender characterization reveals its inherent political connotation: "sexual pleasure is seen as the strongest and most dangerous of the desires of the body, hence its particular association with tyrants" (Gribble 1999 loc. 1094).

Thus, the very concept of *pleonexia*, which as we have seen was central to the political rhetoric of the late fifth century, turns out also to reveal an unprecedented gender connotation, referring to intemperance in sexual desires, in another example of the overlapping of the two areas. That Alcibiades' sexual *paranomia*, his lack of masculinity, is primarily a political issue is also underlined by Gherchanoc: "*sa féminité est présentée comme un atout politique même si elle est du ressort de la critique*" (Gherchanoc 2003/4, 787).

A very well attested tradition portrays the young Alcibiades, in fact, as the favorite of many aristocratic lovers: always ready to be the object of the pleasure of others, not by constraint, but precisely because he is unable to control his own sexual desire. The same picture, indeed, emerges in the Platonic *Symposium*. See especially the statement (219b-d) regarding the ploy of "throwing himself under the covers" of Socrates to seduce him and spend the night with him.

A sexually deviant figure is a recipe for comedy, obviously. Aristophanes calls Alcibiades *euruproktos* (vagrant, *Acarn.* 716), while Eupolis represents the sexual role of Alcibiades as a woman's role (fr. 171 K-A).

But how to articulate this description with the one — also present in tradition — of Alcibiades as a *womanizer*? One must express, of course, a further hermeneutic caution: the short circuit suggested by this question may depend more on the modern description of gender relations, which not necessarily correspond to the same description within the ancient world. In fact, Davidson appropriately notes that, even more than his own passivity, his most feminine feature, according to ancient Greek ethics of gender, would be his inability to control his desire (Davidson 1997, 167-182). Likewise states Gribble (1999, loc. 1025), who thus solves the seeming contradiction just mentioned: "because the key issue in determining 'ethical gender' is the attitude of the subject to pleasure, even as active sexual agent the *kinaidos* remains assimilated to the feminine", especially when adulterous.²⁰ The complex web of gender relations representation, when referring to the ancient world and, more precisely to Alcibiades, is far from the simple naturalizing dichotomy man/woman, if one assumes that an adulterer and a womanizer can be considered generally feminine. An ancient comic fragment

¹⁸ Translated by Maria do Ceu Fialho and Nuno Simões Rodrigues.

¹⁹ For a description of this culture of sexual appearance see Éloi & Dupont (2001).

²⁰ Cf. Davidson (1997, 165).

by Ferecrates is in fact symptomatic of this gender perspective: “for not being a man (*aner*), Alcibiades, it seems, is now the husband (*aner*) of all women around him” (fr. 164 K-A). For not being a man, that is, for not controlling his desires — that one being the most defining representation of the male — Alcibiades is an adulterer.

Later tradition does not cease to collect several anecdotes that represent his specific sexual *paranomia* from the history of the trip to Abydos, in the company of his uncle Axioco, in which both are said to have slept with the same woman, Medontis, and to have claimed the paternity of the child that was from her born.

There is also the incident at Melos, where once again political and sexual excesses outrageously intertwined: after having decreed the mass enslavement of the inhabitants of the island of Melos (Thuc. V, 84ss), Alcibiades bought to himself a Melian woman and had a son with her. Andocides in his speech against Alcibiades, notes with revolt that the son of Alcibiades, born from a Melian slave within the context of the island’s and its inhabitants’ destruction, would most certainly be another enemy of Athens. With the result that Alcibiades therefore, as an Athenian general, is creating, with his sexual excesses, new enemies for the city (Andocides. *In Alcibiadem* 22-23).

Alcibiades dies fighting, referring conventionally to a *manly* death. However even in the traditions that mention his death, the representation of Alcibiades’ femininity is strongly present. In fact, Plutarch, as is usual in his *Parallel Lives*, at the end of the life of Alcibiades briefly symbolizes his existence in the final hours, using two representations unequivocally feminine (Plutarch 2011, 17). On the one hand, in the ultimate premonitory dream of his death, a courtesan applied cosmetics in him “and as if he was a woman, combed his hair” (39.2). On the other hand, after his death in battle, Alcibiades is dressed for the obsequies with woman’s robes: “Timandra [his companion then] collected his corpse, wrapped it and covered it with her own clothes” (39.7). Therefore, the last image of Alcibiades refers symbolically to his gender *paranomia*.

However, probably the best description of Alcibiades gender *paranomia* can still be found in the very Platonic *Symposium*, in the reversal of roles between lover and beloved, a central *topos* to the economy of the dialogue as a whole: Alcibiades is the one in love with Socrates, and not vice versa (222b).

On page 213d quoted above, Socrates expressed his fear of Alcibiades’ *mania* and *philerastia*. Alcibiades, in fact, mask and the very incarnation of Eros, is as powerful and surreptitious as him (205d). He is the paradigm of the tyrannical man, well described at the end of Book VIII of the *Republic*. But here in the *Symposium*, *eros tyrannos* is also reversed, as Alcibiades regrets twice having been put into slavery by Socrates, feeling obligated to love him: thus, the tyrannical man par excellence, he uses the adverb *andrapododos*, “like a slave”, and the preposition *hypo*, “under”, to show this subjection to Socrates (215Ee). Alcibiades says bluntly that sometimes he even has the desire to see Socrates dead, to get rid of this tyranny (216c). Certainly a *post factum* reference, gently tragic, from Plato to his already dead mentor, but also an affirmation of the nuisance that Socrates-Eros would have provoked at the Athenian polis elite, which Alcibiades is here representing.

The game of the reversal of roles serves simultaneously as a compliment, as high as possible, to Socrates as even superior to Eros himself and as the true incarnation of a philosopher, but also, once again, the reverse of the dramatic plot, serves to endorse the suspicions that Alcibiades, in his multiple *paranomiai*, was ultimately trying to achieve tyranny.

The introduction in the speech of Diotima of the theme of the mysteries’ initiation can be analyzed in the same way as in the case of the presence of a lexicon linked to the herms. Mentioned already was the serious charge against Alcibiades of having participated in a parody of the mysteries, a charge that led to his first defection and “was a/the? source, not the least important one, of the defeat of Athens” (Thuc. VI, 15, 3). It is therefore impossible not to think that Plato, always a most able “weaver of words”, has presented the discourse of Diotima, just before the entrance of Alcibiades, referring to a double initiation into the mysteries, having in mind the rhetorical plan of the scenic effect of this approach onto the figure of Alcibiades.

The rhetorical game of Plato, so clever and suggestive, designed along the lines above, ends up reinforcing the suspicions about Alcibiades, at the same time as it seeks an opposite effect: that is, the planning of a renewed apology for Socrates and his *hetairia*.

Socrates, at the end of the speech of Alcibiades, debunks the “satyric and Silenic drama” hidden behind the compliment: that is, the lover’s intention of separating his beloved from Agathon, so that he can be with him (222c). All the rhetorical construction of the speech of Alcibiades would have thus been woven by an erotic story. As in much of ancient iconography, where Eros and Peitho appear side by side, the relationship between the two deities, love and persuasion, structures the whole *Symposium* dialogue, from the prologue to the speech of Alcibiades.

But this plot to hide is not only related to the charge that Socrates directs towards him at the end, that the praise was for other persuasion purposes. The thesis here proposed is that the story that Plato is hiding in his *logos sokratikos* — which is always *erotikos* par excellence — is that of an apology for Socrates, built with great literary skill, with plenty of implied references and lexical tricks. An apology that the *eromenos* Plato, in love with his mentor Socrates, judges to be only possible by “separating”, albeit post-mortem, his memory from that of Alcibiades, within a precise and articulated strategy of memory policing. The latter will thus be the only one to blame for his own malpractices, including perhaps the very death of Socrates, which Plato would plausibly attribute largely to the fatal connection of the two.

The diverse representation of gender in the ancient Greek world, distinct from the dichotomy of male and female sex roles to which we are accustomed by our modernity, can reveal more precisely the rhetorical strategy of Plato in his use of Alcibiades’ erotic *paranomia* as a symptom of a character politically dangerous because of his immoderate seduction exercised of Socrates and Athens.

This Platonic apology, which follows an investment on a policy of memory, is based, ultimately, in a clever rhetorical strategy, which emphasizes the now traditional sexual *paranomia* of Alcibiades, in order to make him guilty of an attempted excessive and outrageous seduction not only of Socrates, but of the polis. Reusing comic and oratorical/rhetorical motifs of his time, therefore, Plato deepens the *j’accuse* against Alcibiades, trying to withdraw him from the orbit of Socrates and the Socratics.

It is finally impossible not to notice that in facing Alcibiades’ case this way, Plato himself acts according to the script of his character, Alcibiades: inspired by Eros and Peitho, he does “anything” to separate Socrates from the other *eromenos*. “With the intention that I love you and nobody else” (222d) — these are the words that Socrates directs to Alcibiades. But much of Plato’s work, and especially the *Symposium*, is also an attempt to win Socrates over, to keep him only for himself, to rescue the memory of his beloved mentor, highly disputed in the literature of the beginning of the fourth century. Thus, the Socratic dialogues of Plato end up looking very much like the compliment of a lover — just like that of Alcibiades — that is, with a seductive declaration of love.

Fiction and reality, drama and authorship thus coincide, undoubtedly resulting in one of the most exciting and daring literary and philosophical works of all times.

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Ascending the Ladder of Love

Chair: Lesley Brown

“The Greatest and Most Beautiful Part of Wisdom” (*Symp.* 209a): Moderation and Justice as the Creating of Laws

Melissa Lane

Diotima mentions laws explicitly once each in her accounts of the ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ mysteries respectively, and we can identify an implicit mention in each account as well.¹ In the ‘lower’ mysteries: here the implicit mention comes in the description of the ‘greatest and most beautiful part of wisdom’ addressing ‘the proper ordering of cities and households’ (209a5-7), leading on to the explicit mention of the laws of Lycurgus and Solon and others (209d4-e3) as examples of such wisdom.² In the ‘higher’ mysteries: here the explicit mention of laws is as a beautiful object for contemplation on the way to attaining knowledge of the beautiful itself (210c3-5), while the implicit reference is in the ‘true virtue’ to be born and cared for by the person who finally grasps ‘the godlike Beauty itself...in its one form’ (211e3-4) and so will ‘give birth not to images of virtue (because he grasps no images) but to true virtue (because he grasps the truth)’ (212a6).

The contrast between the role of laws in each half of the ascent can be further spelled out. In the ‘lower mysteries’, laws are an example of spontaneous creation by a lover seeking immortal fame, whereas in the ‘higher mysteries’, they serve as an object of contemplation (and perhaps afterward once again a spontaneous creation, this time informed by knowledge of the form of the beautiful). Understanding these contrasting roles played by laws can offer a new perspective on the ascent as a whole and on the relation between its two halves in particular. To develop this understanding, I call attention to an often neglected contrast in the ways in which Diotima describes the two parts of the ascent. The ‘lower mysteries’ (characterized as ‘rites’ only in retrospect) are described as carried out by a spontaneously ascending pregnant lover, whereas the ‘higher mysteries’ are described as carried out at the behest of a guide who leads the protagonist through those rites, at one point exercising compulsion to do so (210c3: see below).

Now there is no reason in principle that these two experiences could not both be undergone by a single individual. Nevertheless, in order to distinguish between the distinct experiences of their protagonists, we can usefully label them as if they were two different people, meaning to capture in each case a protagonist undergoing just that experience described in each half of the ascent (and so leaving open that one person might in fact experience both). I will use the Italian term *gestante* for the spontaneously ascending pregnant lover who engages in the ‘lower mysteries’; I will use the English term ‘initiate’ for the protagonist who is led by a guide through the rites of the ‘higher’ mysteries. While the initiate must also be pregnant in soul, he sets out on his ascent not as a spontaneous impetus of his pregnancy as does the *gestante*, but rather due to being led by an external guiding hand. It is that guidance, I suggest, that enables the initiate to get farther than does the *gestante*, ultimately attaining the contemplation of the nature of beauty itself.³

Let us begin with the ascent of the *gestante*, which is preceded by Diotima’s general discussion of ‘how human beings love honor’ at 208c2-3. She explains how it is that the best natures among humans spontaneously seek immortality as a central motivation. The quest for honor is the highest expression of the ascent that a spiritually-pregnant *gestante* will spontaneously achieve. Seeking immortality by ‘loving honor’ (τὴν φιλοτιμίαν, 208c2-3) is something characteristic of humans, who are prepared to brave any danger for this end, much more than they are for the sake of their [biological] children (208c5-7).⁴ It is especially characteristic of the ‘better’ humans, those who are, ‘pregnant in their souls even more than in their bodies ... [with] wisdom (φρόνησίν) and other virtue’ (208d2-209a2, 209a3-4). At this stage, Diotima specifies that the ‘wisdom and other virtue’

¹ Diotima does not herself give a label to the former, while calling the latter the ‘final and highest’. Nevertheless, I follow the literature in calling the two parts of the ascent the ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ mysteries, though as I will argue, the relationship between them is I think often misunderstood. Sheffield 2006 for example argues that honor plays a role only in the lower mysteries, whereas I show that it plays a role in the higher also; Liberman 1996: 456 treats the ascent as starting only from 210a with the higher mysteries, without seeing that the discussion of the so-called lower is part of an ascent also. My view is close on this point, and more generally, to that of White 2004, who uses the term ‘true lover’ for the figure I call the ‘initiate’, but he puts less stress than I do on the role of compulsion in guiding the latter.

² I have generally made my own translations, but have hewed to the Nehamas and Woodruff translation of 209a5-7 (in Cooper 1997) as it was that translation that I quoted in originally proposing the title of this paper.

³ In this short paper I can only incline to the view that the nature of the beautiful should here be considered in fact to refer to (one facet) of the good, such that it is not knowledge of one Form only that is attained, but knowledge of all the Forms and of the Good which gives them their nature and power. This case is argued, following Plotinus, by Lloyd Gerson (2006).

⁴ See also Diotima’s mention of fame (κλέος) which can last for all deathless time, 208c5-6; and her reference to immortal virtue and the fame attending its good reputation (εὐκλεοῦς), 208d6-7.

she has in mind is what is produced by ‘the poets, all progenitors, and those of the artisans who are said to be inventors/discoverers (εὐρητικοί)’. I take this latter qualification to mean that these are not craftsmen who simply reproduce given patterns (like the maker of chair after chair all to the same design), but rather those who invent or discover a new kind of work, albeit one embodying the same timeless principles of virtue.⁵

It is as an exemplary product of such creative spiritual pregnancies that we find laws in the story of the gestante. For ‘very much the greatest and most beautiful part of [such] wisdom is that concerning the ordering of cities and households, the name of which is moderation and justice’ (209a5-8). Why is it specifically moderation and justice that together, epexegetically, constitute the ‘greatest and most beautiful part’ of wisdom⁶ – with no mention of courage (characteristic after all of the Homeric heroes and Lyncurgan warriors) nor of piety? Neither courage nor piety is paradigmatic of social relations among citizens: courage in the city regulates primarily relations of citizen-warriors to outside enemies, while piety regulates relations between mortals and gods. In contrast, moderation and justice are specifically the social and political virtues, regulating relations among humans within the city (and households) that they share.

The person pregnant in soul with such wisdom and virtue – which is ‘what is appropriate for a soul to conceive and birth’ (209a2-3) – spontaneously goes about seeking the beauty in which he can give birth.⁷ Hence he is drawn more to beautiful than to ugly bodies, and it seems, more to male than to female bodies.⁸ Most importantly for our purposes, he is drawn not just to a beautiful body, but ideally to an individual who is beautiful not only in body but also in soul: we are told that he will ‘most of all welcome the combination’ of both (209b6-7). It is in interacting with such a person – as for the sake of his pregnancy he seeks to do – that he will conceive and give birth to his pregnancy of wisdom and virtue.

Such interaction spontaneously produces certain births out of the pregnancy: ‘such a man makes him immediately abound with arguments about virtue, about the qualities of a good man and how he should behave (ἐπιτηδεύειν)’ (209b7-c1). Having given birth to those arguments about virtue, he spontaneously expresses them in conversation with his beloved: ‘and so he endeavors to educate him’ (209c1-2). Their shared progeny binds them in a friendship and communion greater and firmer than those shared by parents of biological progeny. Diotima now gives examples of such spiritual progeny. They include the new poems invented by Homer and Hesiod ‘and all the other worthy poets’ (209d1-2) that display the virtues in new incarnations of characters and plots. And they include the laws created by Lyncurgus and Solon, and by implication lawgivers elsewhere (209d4-e3).

Why are laws the final kind of ‘immortal children’ named by Diotima in discussing this spontaneous kind of ascent? We have seen already that education of the single beloved is the first fruit of the gestante’s pregnancy. But notice that this is education *about* ‘customary activities’: it is already social in orientation. Thus the education, it seems, will not be in content simply individual. Rather, its subject will already have a social dimension, being education about how a person ‘should behave’ in a normative sense of social training (we will see a form of the same verb ἐπιτηδεύειν repeated at key moments in the ascending of the ‘higher’ mysteries). And this explains why its highest exemplar is Lyncurgus: someone who educated the Spartans not individually or one on one, but by framing a set of laws and educational institutions precisely to do so. Indeed, a later Platonist, Plutarch, would specifically contrast the ‘writings and words’ left by ‘Plato, Diogenes, Zeno’ and other praised successors, with Lyncurgus’ production of ‘not writings and words, but an inimitable actual polity’ (*Lyc.* 31.2; see Lane 2013). Even Plato, on this account, and *a fortiori* Socrates, were insufficiently productive: Socrates left *logoi* in the memories of his interlocutors and hearers; Plato left written *logoi* as well; but Lyncurgus produced a polity, a living and breathing body of men and women whose deeds

⁵ Compare a designer today who may seek to embody simplicity in every design, but who invents new forms of teakettles or tables that display such simplicity in new ways. We may infer that from the vantage point of the end of the ascent, these products of the arts will count as merely ‘images of virtue’ (produced by the stimulation of contact with images of beauty) to contrast with the ‘true virtue’ produced by the initiate who has completed the ascent.

⁶ The Greek word translated ‘wisdom’ here, φρόνησις, expresses a certain practical orientation, though Plato does not, as Aristotle will, systematically distinguish practical from theoretical wisdom. As to the epexegetic identification of moderation and justice as a single ‘part’ of wisdom here: in my view, this echoes the closeness with which they are presented also in the *Republic*, almost as two facets of a single quality of social relationship. But for a different view of the relation between moderation and justice in the *Republic*, see Weiss 2012.

⁷ Note that he is said to have become pregnant while still unmarried, perhaps meaning as a virgin (209b1). As commentators such as Guido Bonelli (1991:62-3) have noted, this is one of the remarkable inversions and re-imaginings of sex and pregnancy, and their associated gender roles, in the dialogue.

⁸ This initial attraction to beautiful bodies is something he shares with those who are pregnant only or primarily in body, but while their attraction is to female bodies with which they can reproduce biological children, his is (it is implied) to male bodies.

were shaped by the laws he sculpted.⁹

Lycurgus and Solon are mentioned here by name as exemplars of a role also exercised in other Greek cities, and one that Diotima archly¹⁰ suggests even Socrates could come to exercise: ‘Even you, Socrates, could probably come to be initiated into these rites of love’ – which I take to mean the rites so far described, the spontaneous rites of the gestante which are commonly labeled the ‘lower mysteries’. If we consider the kind of pregnancy which might characterize Socrates, it would seem to be precisely a spiritual pregnancy.¹¹ And we will learn later in this dialogue, from Alcibiades, that Socrates is indeed attracted to boys who are physically beautiful (216d2) – but that what he actually cares about is something other than their physical beauty (216d7-8). In conversing with such a youth, Socrates might indeed be thought to give birth to ‘arguments about virtue – the qualities of a good man and how he should behave (ἐπιτηδεύειν)’ (209b7-c1). And of course, Socrates in the *Republic* lays down laws together with his interlocutors for a ‘city in speech’. Whether that falls short of the Lycurgan achievement of actual lawmaking, or whether it represents a higher spiritual progeny (though arguably that of Plato rather than Socrates), is a question that I think the *Symposium* here prompts us to ask – though I cannot answer it here.¹²

So far in the ‘lower’ mysteries, Diotima has presented those pregnant in soul and the creations to which they give birth as reaping a reward of immortality largely in the form of immortal *honor*. The poets win admiration for their creations, and so attain the immortality embodied in the deathless memory of glorious fame. And the lawmakers and men of similar glorious works win the immortal honor of human shrines. The laws they frame are created to win such honor – and while they express the wisdom and other virtue engendered by a suitably partnered gestante, they fall short (as I read the end of Diotima’s speech as implying) of embodying ‘true virtue’ as opposed to merely ‘images of virtue’. This imperfection is signalled by the fact that they are compared to the works of certain artisans, who presumably lack full knowledge even of the patterns that they create in response to the stimulus of beauty.

But if the lawmaking gestante lacks full knowledge in creating his laws, that is not to say that what is good and beautiful in those laws is not an image of what is genuinely good and beautiful. On the contrary, the metaphysics of participation suggests that whatever is an image of beauty is in fact an image of the Form of the Beautiful, and that it is possible for someone to create something that is imperfectly beautiful without having full knowledge of the Form. Hence, as Diotima’s speech demonstrates, laws may be viewed from two distinct perspectives: the standpoint of the producer, those who have historically created them, honor-lovers who create them as (what will turn out to be) images of true virtue, and we can add, of true beauty; or the standpoint of the contemplator, someone seeking to recognize beauty as common in every beautiful thing, person, work or instance, on the way to knowledge of the beautiful as such. The standpoint of the producer is the standpoint of the gestante of the lower mysteries; the standpoint of the contemplator is the standpoint of the initiate of the higher mysteries – even though he will give birth to various progeny along the way, and ultimately to ‘true virtue’ once having completed his ascent.

I turn now to the story Diotima tells of the ‘higher’ mysteries. That story starts with the traversing of some ground common to the experience of the gestante, but the experience differs in important ways insofar as it is now in the ‘higher’ mysteries described from a new standpoint: that of someone who undertakes his ascent not spontaneously, but at the direction of a guide. The spontaneous ascent through the lower mysteries is recounted wholly descriptively; the higher rites, in contrast, are described from the vantage point of someone who seeks to know how it is necessary and proper to proceed in order to attain their final ends (δεῖ...τὸν ὀρθῶς ἰόντα, 210a4). Indeed this initiate is described as being ‘led’ by a ‘leader’, who should ideally lead him ‘properly’, the same word implying this normative standard for the path repeated (ἐὰν ὀρθῶς ἡγῆται ὁ ἡγούμενος, 210a6-7). This language of normative appropriateness recurs throughout the higher stages of the ‘higher

⁹ Lycurgus is presented as having ‘saved’ Sparta and (‘it may be said’) virtually the whole of Greece, whereas Solon ‘is honored by you [Athenians: inferred from her addressing the Athenian Socrates] for having brought his laws into existence’ (209d4-7). That is, Diotima holds Lycurgus as having been a genuine savior, while presenting Solon simply as in fact honored among the Athenians.

¹⁰ The archness of her report is of course heightened and complicated by the fact that it is narratively reported to the reader by none other than Socrates (or rather, by Apollodorus reporting Aristodemus’ report of Socrates’ recounting).

¹¹ Socrates’ self-description as a ‘midwife’ in the *Theaetetus* (149a, 150a-b and ff.) expressly requires that he share the qualities that he ascribes to midwives for physical births: having capable of pregnancy and indeed having given birth at a younger age, so becoming a midwife only when beyond child-bearing age (148b-c). Diotima does not address the question of whether spiritual pregnancies are possible at any age.

¹² The question is explored in relation to Plato’s concern with law and legislators in the *Republic* in Lane, forthcoming, and in Plato’s broader thinking about law, in Lane 2013.

mysteries' ascent.¹³

I will identify three commonalities between the experiences of the gestante and the initiate, within which we will already begin to see the more fundamental contrast that divides them and that I will then elaborate. The first commonality is that both stories seem to begin in the same place, with the love of beautiful bodies. But whereas the gestante attracted to beautiful bodies spontaneously most welcomes a single individual who combines beauty of body and soul, the initiate is enjoined to generalize his initial attraction to one beautiful body (a particular attachment to which his leader is indeed to guide him) to become 'a lover of all beautiful bodies' (210b4-5), having grasped that the beauty of one such body is 'kin' (ἀδελφόν, 210b1) to that of another. In this way, he is 'led' (ἡγησάμενον, 210b6) to treat any attachment to a particular single body as 'contemptible and negligible' (210b5-6).

This does not mean that attachment to a particular beautiful body must be abandoned, only that from the standpoint of understanding the nature of the beautiful (which is the ascending quest on which the initiate's guide is leading him), the beauty of a particular body should not be thought of as having any special weight. It is contemptible and negligible when compared with higher instances and ultimately with the Form of the Beautiful itself. By insisting that the initiate's quest is normatively guided for a particular purpose – that of understanding the nature of the beautiful – we can alleviate controversies that treat it as having a more general significance (such as telling us generally how we should treat or value individuals).¹⁴

The next stage of the initiate's guided ascent evinces a second partial commonality with the gestante's spontaneous ascent. For the initiate is next 'to be led' (ἡγήσασθαι) to consider the beauty in souls to be 'more honorable' (τιμιώτερον) than that in bodies (210b6-7). It is striking that even in the initiate's guided ascent, the considerations of honor that spontaneously motivated the gestante are still allowed as appropriately motivational at this stage. This makes sense from the standpoint of Diotima's broad framing of the mortal desire for immortality, and of the characteristically (and admirably) human form of seeking honor that this may take. Someone being initiated into the rites of love – which are after all rites leading to giving birth to preexisting pregnancies, even though the pregnancy of the initiate has not so far been mentioned or stressed in Diotima's account of the higher mysteries – can at least initially be appropriately motivated by the honor that will win him immortality, an honor that accrues especially to the spiritual progeny of the soul as she has already explained.

This brings me to the third partial commonality. For the initiate who has been led to consider the beauty of souls to be more honorable than the beauty of bodies, is willing to interact with 'someone' (τις, 210b8) with a decent soul – not necessarily a superlatively beautiful one: 'to be satisfied with him, to love and care for him and to give birth to such arguments and to seek such as will make young men better' (210c1-3). The gestante had spontaneously sought out beautiful bodies, while spontaneously welcoming most of all someone as a beloved who combined beauty of body and of soul. Now the initiate is told by his guide that he must be 'satisfied' with someone who is, as it were, good enough in his soul – even if (Diotima adds) he has a body of negligible beauty (210b8-c1). And while he will interact with this single 'someone', and give birth to 'arguments' about virtue as a result of so doing, these arguments will be such as tend generally to make young men better – that is, they explicitly have the same social orientation that we detected more implicitly in those produced by the gestante. Already at this stage then, when he is still motivated by what is (more) honorable and before he has attained knowledge of the Form of the Beautiful, the initiate, like the gestante, produces what must be (given the lack of full knowledge) arguments involving images of virtue, for the purpose of education.

Despite these three commonalities, the crucial difference between the spontaneous and guided ascents has already begun to emerge. For the gestante, giving birth to laws or poems or other such spiritual progeny is the end of the story. That Diotima goes no further in describing such an ascent implies that its spontaneous force runs out there. The honor motivation finds its acme of fulfillment in the work of someone like Lycurgus: worthy of honor, but not a philosopher. In the case of the initiate

¹³ Although I noted earlier that there is normative language in the 'lower' stages, that language attaches to the laws and customs issued, not to the process of ascent itself.

¹⁴ Such controversies are rooted in Vlastos 1981, who objects to Diotima's putative instrumentalization of the beloved (not distinguishing gestante from initiate) and in Nussbaum 1986, who objects additionally and indeed primarily to her putative dismissal of the importance of the beloved's individuality; Price 1981 makes some of the same objections while also addressing the earlier criticisms. Various solutions, to which my own views are close, include Nehamas 2007 (the lover need not discard previous objects of love as he ascends); Sheffield 2006 (the instrumentalization of his various objects of love is not objectionable); and Carone 2006 (likewise, adding that the ascent need not dismiss concern for the individuality of the beloved). I was prompted to think again about these matters by McLuckie (unpublished), and am indebted to Alan McLuckie also for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

however, he is led by his guide to such intermediate productivity for a specific purpose: ‘in order that he be compelled (ἀναγκασθῇ) to contemplate (θεάσθασθαι) the beauty in forms of behavior (τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι) and of laws (τοῖς νόμοις) and to see that all of this is akin to itself’ (210c3-5).¹⁵ Here, conjoined with laws, ‘forms of behavior’ clearly has the sense of ‘customary ways of life’.¹⁶

The immediate purpose of this compelled contemplation is to lead the initiate to consider bodily beauty negligible (albeit that this seems redundant, since he has already ascended from the beauty of bodies to the beauty of souls – but perhaps he had resented that directed ascent still). Yet its more pervasive effect is that each subsequent step of the guided ascent until its acme is attained will begin with *contemplating* before prompting *birthing*, intensifying the fact that the steps of the initiate so far have involved prescribed ways of thinking and judging. The next step is summarized as the guide’s leading the initiate on from ‘forms of behavior’¹⁷ to ‘forms of knowledge’ (210c6-7), ‘in order to see the beauty of forms of knowledge, and already for the most part seeing the beautiful in no way as that of a single individual, as would a servant (being a slave, mean and small-minded) who welcomed the beauty of a child or certain man or a single form of behavior, but rather being turned on the whole to the sea of the beautiful, and contemplating many and beautiful arguments, would give birth to magnificent conceptions in philosophy without envy...’ (210c6-d6). Here the key aim to which the initiate is guided is contemplation of the beauty that is common and kin to forms of behavior and forms of knowledge. And this is because the overall purpose of his ascent (which will be reached with just one more step, one that I lack space to discuss here) is to gain knowledge of the nature of beauty itself.

Even before attaining such knowledge, however, the initiate again engages in an intermediate (if now higher) form of creation: he creates philosophical conceptions. These seem to be higher than any of those that will later be called merely ‘images of virtue’ – the latter (I infer) including those produced by the gestante. Finally Diotima reflects on what kind of life will be lived by a human who has attained contemplation of ‘the godlike Beauty itself... in its one form’ (211e3-4). Only in that life of contemplation of beauty itself ‘will he give birth not to images of virtue (because he grasps no images) but to true virtue (because he grasps the truth)’. Only the initiate whose guided quest has attained this end will give birth to true virtue and care for it (212a5-6).¹⁸

Notice that the language of that final conclusion exclusively uses the language of birth and breeding (τίκτειν, 212a3; τεκόντι, 212a5), without any admixture of the artisanal craft-production language that had been combined with birth-language in the ascent of the gestante. The artisans, like the poets and lawgivers, produce their crafts spontaneously, but what they produce (again like the artisans of Book X of the *Republic*) are images of virtue rather than the real thing. While the images they produce do share in beauty, it is only the initiate – compelled to contemplate until he understands the common nature of beauty as such – who will be able to give birth to true virtue. Perhaps the craft-language describing the work of the gestante is a sign of the image-status of his products (even though they too are the result of spiritual pregnancy). Nevertheless, the laws produced by a gestante like Lycurgus do constitute images of virtue, and they are produced out of a spiritual pregnancy that also manifests itself in a genuine concern for an individual beloved and for guiding him and others like him to live well.

While the gestante becomes a guide to the best of his ability, it is only the initiate with the benefit of being guided himself who attains the knowledge which alone can lead to the production (we should here say more precisely the generation) of true virtue. The laws of a gestante like Lycurgus are an image of beauty and can be studied on the ascent through the higher mysteries precisely because they convey an image of beauty. But it is not someone like Lycurgus, who has produced laws

¹⁵ I read the *Republic* as presenting a few humans as natural philosophers, with the natural virtues that result from their instinctive love of learning -- yet nevertheless, the ascent out of the Cave as requiring compulsion to be exercised upon one of the prisoners, such that we may wonder how far out of the Cave even a natural philosopher could get on her own. This single reference to ‘compulsion’ by Diotima does not give us enough to settle whether she means compulsion in the sense of coercion or in the sense of the attractiveness exercised by the Good; she may mean both. For a discussion of compulsion in the *Laws*, see Lane 2011; for a contrasting reading of the Cave denizens as not natural philosophers precisely because they require compulsion (which would afford an even better parallel with my reading of the *Symposium*, could I but accept it for the *Republic* as on other grounds I do not), see Weiss 2012.

¹⁶ It was less clear that ἐπιτηδεύειν carried the same sense at 209c1, but seeing that it must bear that sense in the later passage reinforces the argument I made about the social nature of the gestante’s creative products in the earlier one.

¹⁷ Here τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα (210c6) seems to be deployed as a gloss on the whole of the previous conjunction of τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι and τοῖς νόμοις, again reinforcing my view of its social and political customary nature. The same term is used twice in the ‘rising steps’ summary passage at 211b7-d1.

¹⁸ White 2004 argues well that the true virtue produced by the figure I call the initiate will be philosophical arguments that can attain immortality, not merely an internal state of his soul; I speculate that such true virtue could also be embodied in ideal laws.

spontaneously in a quest for honor as immortality, who can produce the best laws. That, I infer, is a role reserved for the initiate who has attained full knowledge of beauty (and of the good to which it is inseparably connected). No spontaneous lawgiver, not even Lycurgus or Solon, has yet produced laws that embody true virtues; those would have to be the work of a lover who has been compelled to ascend to knowledge of the nature of beauty and the good. By focusing on the role of laws in the ascent passages of the *Symposium*, we can better appreciate the differences between the lower and higher mysteries. And we can also more precisely estimate Plato's deep but ultimately bounded respect for a man like Lycurgus. The laws he created are images of beauty, yet they inevitably fall short insofar as Lycurgus lacked a guide able to lead him to attain knowledge of the beautiful and so to frame laws able to produce not merely images of virtue, but true virtue, in the citizens whom they mould.

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Scaling the Ladder: Why the Final Step of the Lover's Ascent is a Generalizing Step

Anthony Hooper

ABSTRACT

The '*Scala Amoris*' (210a-212b), or 'Ladder of Love', constitutes the philosophical and aesthetic centrepiece of Socrates' *encomium* of Eros in the *Symposium*. Here Socrates describes how a lover ascending up the Ladder directs his erotic attention to a number of different kinds of beautiful objects, first bodies, then souls, just institutions, and knowledge, until finally he catches a glimpse of Beauty itself. In this paper I advance an 'inclusive' reading of the lover's ascent – to use A. A. Price's (1991) terminology. I begin by establishing that, in his ascent, the lover does not abandon the previous objects of his erotic attention upon attaining a higher rung, but instead incorporates an increasing number of different kinds of beauty into his sphere of erotic concern. Inclusive readings of this kind have become common in the literature since Price's analysis, but I offer a firmer foundation for such a reading, particularly through analysis of the key term '*kataphronein*' at 210b5-6. Concerning the translation of this term, most scholars opt for the stronger sense of 'to despise', but I recommend the weaker sense, 'to look down on'.

In the second part of the paper I focus particularly on the final step of the ascent, in which the lover catches a glimpse of Beauty. For this analysis I draw on the distinction between 'transcategorical steps', in which the lover discovers a new kind of object upon which to direct his erotic attention, and 'generalizing steps', in which the lover recognises relationships between various beautiful objects. I argue against the general consensus in the literature that the final step up the Ladder constitutes yet another transcategorical step – a position advanced in all of the recent major analyses of the *Scala Amoris* passage, including Bloom (2001), Hunter (2004), Sheffield (2006), Ferrari (2008), Kraut (2008), and Reeve (2009) – and instead suggest the novel thesis that we have good reason to think that this is a generalizing step. But unlike the other generalizing steps involved in the ascent, in which the lover recognises the family resemblances between objects *within* a certain class of beauty – for example, that the beauty of all bodies are akin (210b) – here the lover recognises the relationship *between* the various categories of beautiful objects he has encountered in his ascent. In the penultimate step of the Ladder, the lover comes to look at the 'sea of beautiful objects', not as a series of discrete waves, each representing a different kind of beauty, but as part of a unified category of beauty, that is shaped in accordance with a single principle: Beauty itself. To catch a glimpse of the 'Form of Beauty', then, is to recognise and understand the unity of the *logos* of beauty, which captures all and only beautiful things. This conclusion has important implications for our understanding of the 'forms', particularly for readings that assert a strong ontological separation between forms and things.

Loving and Lovable Bodies in the *Symposium*¹

Maria Angelica Fierro

Aunque bajo la tierra
mi amante cuerpo esté
escribeme a la tierra
que yo te escribiré.
Miguel Hernández Carta

In the Higher Mysteries the right way of dealing with erotic matters implies that beautiful bodies must be scorned, insofar as love for them is just a first step (210a6-7) which needs to be surpassed in order to ascend to beauty itself. As said at 210c5-6, the beauty of the body is “something trivial” (*smikrón ti*) compared to the beauty of the soul.² In addition to this, as asserted at 211d3-8, the attainment of knowledge of beauty itself is easier if we are detached, as much as possible, from the body,³ an idea which is repeatedly expressed in the *Phaedo* as well.⁴ In short, the true lover, that is to say, the philosopher, loves beautiful bodies just insofar as the eidetic realm is revealed through them.⁵

However, in some respects, the dialogue suggests a positive view on physical love and, along with it, on the body.

a) In Diotima’s speech, although sexual desire, which springs from the body and looks for physical satisfaction, is an inferior expression of *erôs*, it is beneficial. Insofar as the basic expression of *erôs* is not as desire for knowledge and the production of beautiful *logoi* but as biological procreation, bodily craving is presented as a vital, positive force.⁶ Animal passion is something good, insofar as it is “part of a general drive of mortal nature towards (a kind of) mortality through replacement” and, then, similar to the universal desire for the good which drives every human soul.⁷

b) Sexual desire is valued positively in Aristophanes’ and Alcibiades’ speeches, even if in tragic opposition to the fleshless love of the philosopher described in Diotima’s speech.⁸ Aristophanes’ discourse certainly expresses an overall positive assessment of sexuality, particularly of the yearning for intimate contact which overcomes to each individual after the encounter with his/her original half (*Smp.* 192d-e). Moreover, Alcibiades’ speech illustrates and describes in detail his unambiguous physical attraction towards his beloved, that is to say, Socrates.

In what follows I aim to show how these apparently opposite views towards the body in the *Symposium* are in fact complementary.

1. Loving and lovable bodies in the Minor Mysteries

As opposed to the *Phaedo*, where the body is related not only to physiological needs but also to what we would call “mental phenomena”, such as fears, desires, passions, illusions,⁹ at 207d8-e1 the *sôma* is mentioned as a pure ensemble of biological components such as hair, flesh, bones and blood.¹⁰ However, the body is not conceived as just a jumble of these different pieces. They are said to be subject to continuous flux and renewal insofar as they are imbued with the constant, repairing force of *erôs*. Thus, even at this basic level, the living *sôma* is presented not as some kind of inert matter -a sort of container for the operations of the soul- but as a “loving body”, that is to say, a body permeated by *erôs*.

The description of the procreation *kata to sôma* gives further evidence that in all living creatures the erotic impulse for immortality has its spontaneous beginning at this somatic level. Insofar as *erôs*’ hybrid -*metaxy*- nature implies a mixture of a lacking condition and resourceful capacities, actual possession of its object of desire -the real good- is banned and only an endless

¹ Translations from *Symposium* are taken from Rowe 1998, sometimes modified slightly; text (with references) from Burnet 1900 - 1907.

² See Rowe 1998: *ad locum*.

³ See Dover 1980: *ad locum*.

⁴ See for example *Phd.* 66b-67a.

⁵ See Reale 2004: 220.

⁶ See Ostfeld 1982: 207.

⁷ See Rowe 1998: *ad* 207a5-208b6. He points out how this reflects a teleological conception of the *kosmos* which is also present in Eryximachus’ speech and widely developed in the *Timaeus*.

⁸ See Nussbaum 1986: ch. 6.

⁹ See *Phd.* 66c. However, this does not necessarily mean that these mental phenomena belong to the body. It is possible to interpret that they just have their *origin* in it whenever the soul turns towards the sensible realm instead of turning towards the eidetic realm (*Phd.* 65 c-d).

¹⁰ In fact, “habits, traits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, pieces of knowledge” are attributed to the soul (207e2-5).

replacement of it is available. The first expression of this erotic activity is precisely biological giving birth¹¹ in beauty and nursing the progeny which is evidenced by the fact that most human beings as well as animals naturally tend to generate new individuals of their own species and strive to take care of their own offspring (207a-c). Thus, insofar as giving birth ensures the continuity of life, it is declared as something divine (*theion to pragma*, 206c). It is true that one of the aims of Socrates/Diotima's speech is to expand the meaning of *erôs*, which becomes not just the intense sexual attraction for someone,¹² but also the desire that leads and constitutes each individual life (see 205a-d). Actually one of the main points made in the Minor Mysteries is that in human beings *erôs* has the chance to transform itself from being a merely physical urge into an aspiration to give birth to beautiful cultural expressions, that is to say, to beautiful productions *kata tèn psychên*. However, the engine of desire initially needs to warm up *kata to sôma*.

In addition to this it is also clear that it is a desirable body which more spontaneously provokes *erôs* to arise in its basic form of physical desire and provides an appropriate medium to the act of literally "giving birth". However, although any person can experience his/her *sôma* as a "loving body", lovable bodies need to fill the special requirement of being beautiful.¹³ Beauty, as has been pointed out,¹⁴ provides them with a special status which makes them stand out above other kinds of bodies. Here again it is better if the lover rather turns his interest to beautiful souls, which would make possible to him to procreate *kata tèn psychên*. Even so, his attraction for beautiful bodies keeps operating within him and actually the combination -beautiful body and soul- in the beloved is welcome.¹⁵

In the Minor Mysteries the body is, then, brought as something positive insofar as *erôs*' first form of expression is that of a loving body which desires to procreate in a beautiful body. Moreover, in spite of our unawareness of its activity, *erôs* also secretly imbues our *sôma* through the constant generation of its constituents. However, in the case of human beings we have the chance to expand our share of *erôs* to more subtle, cultural forms of creation.

2. Loving and lovable bodies in the Higher Mysteries

In the Higher Mysteries Diotima gives some hints about how to approach a more difficult but actually more rewarding path to *ta erôtika*, insofar as she describes a trail which leads us to a full development of the "love of truth" or *philo-sophia*. In this itinerary physical attraction for beautiful bodies constitutes in fact the natural first step:

The person who turns to this matter [i.e. the erotic things] must begin, when he is young to turn to beautiful bodies... 210a4-5

The body is essential for the triggering of erotic development for two reasons: beautiful bodies are the most effortless means of arousing erotic desire; correspondingly, sexual desire is the easiest, most primitive way to begin the erotic ascent insofar as the person experiences himself as a lover who desires and wishes to procreate.

However, as is well known, even at this level, the initiated person is supposed to make some kind of intellectual as well as existential progress, given that the passage continues this way:

...and first, if the one leading him leads him correctly, he must fall in love with a single body and there procreate beautiful speeches (*logoi*), and then realize for himself that the beauty that there is in any body whatever is twin of that in any other, and that if one should pursue beauty

¹¹ According to Dover *tiktein* refers to the ejaculation of semen by the male and probably the emission of something like semen by the female in the moment of orgasm and not to "the complete process of creating a child" which would include what we normally call 'pregnancy' (Dover 1980: 147). However, Pender 1992 has shown that in Diotima's speech Plato refers to four different kinds of pregnancy: two physical – a 'female' type (the normal state of pregnancy of a woman after intercourse) and a 'male' type (ejaculation) – and two spiritual, both of which are metaphors of the two types of physical pregnancy. Differently Brisson 1998: 65 thinks that "à une conception masculine de l'éducation associée à l'éjaculation, Diotime oppose une conception féminine comme procréation".

¹² On the usual meaning of *erôs* in Greek culture see Dover: 1980, 2.

...if ever what is pregnant approaches something beautiful, it becomes gracious, melts with joy, and gives birth and procreates; while when it approaches what is ugly, it contracts, frowning with pain, turns away, curls up, and fails to procreate. 206d

¹⁴ See *Phdr.* 250d and also Nightingale 2004: ch. 4.

¹⁵ Thus at 209b:

So he warms to beautiful bodies rather than ugly ones, because he is pregnant, and if he encounters a soul that is beautiful and noble and naturally well-endowed, his welcome for the combination –beautiful body and beautiful soul- is warm indeed.

of outward form, it's quite mad not to regard the beauty in all bodies as one and the same; and having realized that, he must become a lover of all beautiful bodies. 210a6-b3

A possible interpretation of this puzzling passage could be as follows.¹⁶ Although procreation of *logoi* does not necessarily imply that physical procreation should be eradicated, the important point at stake is that the lover of bodies procreates *logoi* in them. A first understanding of this assertion could be that here *logoi* refers to the words normally used to praise the physical attributes of the beautiful beloved person or the speeches which the lover more generally delivers to his audience concerning all the implications of his experience of being in love with such a beautiful individual.¹⁷ As for the following lines they can be taken as an encouragement of promiscuous sex insofar as the initiated person is inspired to fall in love with *all* beautiful bodies. However, these assertions could also be understood as encouragement to comprehend beauty common to all beautiful bodies and to strive for a better appreciation of them on the basis of their share in the common pattern of what makes them beautiful. From this experience *logoi* about such matters would be generated. On the other hand, although the most straightforward reference to the beautiful *sômata* which excite erotic desire is the bodies of the beloved ones, they may also point to other expressions of perceptible -“aesthetic” (Robin 1951: p. xciii)- beauty such as beautiful artistic productions, beautiful natural sceneries, the heavenly bodies¹⁸ or the whole universe itself.¹⁹ Thus, at the beginning of the ascent an expansion of *erôs* at the somatic level would be taking place.

In the second step of the *scala amoris* beauty of the soul is prioritized over beauty of the body, as 210b5-c6 shows:

The next stage is that he must consider beauty in souls more valuable than beauty in the body, so that if someone who is decent in his soul has even a slight physical bloom, even then it's enough for him, and he loves and cares for the other person, and gives birth to the sorts of speeches –and seeks for them- that will make young men into better men, in order that he may be compelled in turn to contemplate beauty as it exists in kinds of activity and in laws, and to observe that all of this is mutually related, in order that he should think beauty of the body a trivial thing.

However, this does not necessarily imply sheer contempt for the body as such but it may be read as an access to a comprehension of the *sôma* not as *only* a body but as fundamentally endowed with a soul and actually an instrument of it.²⁰ Insofar as the lover comes to understand his beloved (and himself) as an ensoul body²¹ and to love him as such, he seeks to make him (and to become himself) a better human being, that is to say, to produce appropriate discourses (*logoi*) in order to make him embody (and to incarnate himself) the beautiful *epitêdeumata* and *nomoi*, the beauty of which the initiated person has now become able to recognize.

Nevertheless, the final stage of the erotic ascent in which contemplation of beauty itself is attained implies, among other things, detachment from the body. Insofar as beauty itself is beautiful and this is without qualification, while particular beautiful things are only beautiful in relative or qualified terms,²² beauty itself is in no way instantiated. Thus, it could not be instantiated, among other things, in any corporal way:

...whoever is led by his teacher thus far in relation to love matters, and contemplates the various beautiful things in order and in the correct way, will come now towards the final goal of matters of love, and will suddenly catch sight of a beauty, amazing in its nature –that very beauty, in fact, Socrates, that all his previous toils were for: first, a beauty that always is, and

¹⁶ Actually what the whole passage of the *scala amoris* refers to is quite puzzling. One possibility is to understand it in the light of the educational program in presented in the *Republic* (see Fierro: 2008).

¹⁷ An example of this is Hippothales who is in love with beautiful Lysis and is said to be constantly talking about him to everybody (see *Ly.* 204b-c).

¹⁸ At *Ti.* 40a the heavenly bodies are actually described as true ornaments traced over the whole.

¹⁹ On the perfect beauty of the body of the universe see for example *Ti.* 33b.

²⁰ On how the mortal body can work as an “obstacle” or a “vehicle” for intelligent action in the *Phaedrus* see Fierro (forthcoming a).

²¹ In our present existence the soul is always “an incarnated soul”, in other words, the soul is “messed up” (*sympephyrménē*) with the body (see *Phd.* 66b and Fierro (forthcoming b)). In Plato's philosophy there is a soul-body dualism, but not of a Cartesian type. On this point see Ostenfeld 1987: 28-30; Broadie 2001.

²² The difference is that in the form of Beauty the predicate ‘beautiful’ would apply without qualification, while it would be applied with qualification to the instances of beauty. This takes us into the issue of self-predication of the Forms. I will not consider this problem since it is out of the scope of the aims of our discussion here.

neither comes into being nor perishes [...]; *nor again will beauty appear to him the sort of thing a face is, or hands, or anything in which body shares*, or a speech, or a piece of knowledge. 210e2-211b7

This is underlined by the subsequent claim that beauty itself is “pure, clean, unmixed, *and not contaminated with things like human flesh, and colour, and much other mortal nonsense*” (211e1-3). However, this does not necessarily entail utter scorn for beautiful bodies -nor for the higher but, nonetheless, limited expressions of beauty, such as beautiful customs and laws and beautiful sciences. It would be strange if contemplation of beauty itself implied to be blind to the beautiful things which surround us. On the contrary, it should involve afterwards a more accurate awareness of the presence of beauty in its different instances at different levels, which also include, of course, its most obvious expression in the beautiful bodies. In addition to this the procreation of true virtue which is open to the person who attains this final stage also implies that he has acquired a solid qualification to promote the production of truly beautiful products in every level of reality, including the physical one.

From different perspectives the other discourses also anticipate this view that physical love is good provided it is directed to higher goals, as Socrates/Diotima’s teaches. Thus, in Pausanias’ speech (180c-185c), while heterosexual love is scorned for being *just* physical, ‘heavenly’, homoerotic love which is directed at the moral improvement of the beloved and not just at physical intercourse is praised. In Eryximachus’s speech (185e- 188e), where *erōs* concerns essentially to the body and operates at all levels of the cosmos, while excessive, harmful *erōs*, which brings illnesses and all sorts of disarrangements, is presented as something negative, temperate, healthy *erōs*, which medicine helps to re-establish by bringing harmony in cases where this is disturbed by excessive *erōs*, is something good. As for Aristophanes’ discourse (189c-193e), as has been pointed out,²³ it gives a positive view on ordinary sexuality, although the encounter with one’s original half reveals something ineffable, beyond sexual intercourse, which the lovers cannot explain (192d-e).

Socrates’s complex behavior towards beautiful young men in the dialogue also illustrates this complex view about the body. On one hand, he openly shows his desire for physical nearness with remarkably beautiful individuals such as Agathon and Alcibiades and does not reject their eagerness to be physically close to him.²⁴ But, on the other hand, after the arousal of erotic desire on both sides, he works to canalize *erōs* towards higher aims insofar as through his words and behavior he does not intend to have sex with them but to turn their lives towards the search for the truth.

It can be concluded, then, that according to the *Symposium* the erotic experience always begins at physical level and the body must be despised only if we wrongly halt our understanding at this level and obliterate the development of *erōs* in further areas. The *sōma* is, thus, disdained to the extent that it continues to be considered *only* as a body. From the wider perspective of the *scala amoris*, a different and truer appraisal of it becomes open to the lover/philosopher: physical *erōs* can be understood as an experience which hints at a more transcendental quest, i.e. the search for truth; if someone could contemplate beauty itself, beautiful bodies could be really appreciated for what they really are, i.e. limited but immediately recognizable instances of it. Thus, through the erotic ascent the body is discovered not as an inert recipient but as a loving/lovable body, which is not an end in itself but an instrument in the pursuit of wisdom.

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Enigmatique *exaiphnes*

Alonso Tordesillas

ABSTRACT

De l'ensemble relativement réduit d'occurrences du terme *exaiphnes* dans les dialogues de Platon, les lignes que lui consacre le *Banquet* (210 e) sont parmi les plus célèbres et l'articulation de la connaissance avec sa détermination temporelle fait l'objet dans ce dialogue de l'une des plus belles pages consacrées, comme dans le *Timée* et le *Parménide*, aux formes que peut prendre le temps et à son articulation avec une connaissance présentée ici comme extatique. Isolée de son contexte dialogique, la notion d'*exaiphnes* a été considérée comme le concept métaphysique suprême de Platon, indicateur s'il en est de l'extra-temporalité des idées. Dans le *Banquet* nous trouvons 4 occurrences d'*exaiphnes* (210 e 4 ; 212 c 6 ; 213 c 1 ; 223 b 2) à des moments clés du dialogue : la première dans le discours de Diotime, la seconde à l'occasion de l'irruption d'Alcibiade, la troisième relative à la présence de Socrate au moment où l'on s'y attend le moins, la dernière comme quasi clôture du *Banquet*.

Dans des termes souvent considérés comme initiatiques, Diotime décrit les étapes par lesquelles celui qui est instruit des mystères d'Eros parvient à la vision soudaine (*exaiphnes*) du beau en soi. Cette vision a été présentée par certains commentateurs comme relevant d'une intuition soustraite à toute temporalité voire comme une quasi révélation.

Revenant sur cette interprétation, la communication voudrait montrer, par l'examen du contexte du dialogue, et à l'épreuve de ce que l'on sait de la notion d'*exaiphnes* par d'autres dialogues de Platon, que le moment apparemment décrit dans le *Banquet* comme supra-rationnel est le terme d'un processus rationnel et comment ce n'est qu'à partir d'une analyse du processus temporel lui-même que Platon peut dégager cette nature étrange (*atopon*), stupéfiante, insaisissable et énigmatique du « tout soudain », de l'« instantanément », de l'*exaiphnes*, en sorte que le caractère apparemment contradictoire qui en ressort tient à une insuffisante analyse dialectique, laquelle est en mesure mettre en évidence que le caractère insaisissable et fuyant de la notion tient principalement à ce qu'elle immobilise le moment d'un processus qui, en tant que tel, ne peut être séparé de tous les autres moments. En replaçant cette vision dans le contexte du dialogue, il apparaît clairement que seule une méthode qui procède par ordre et correctement (*ephexes te kai orthos*) – et le terme *orthos* est récurrent dans ce passage – permettra de saisir à l'improviste et tout soudain (*exaiphnes*) « une certaine beauté merveilleuse par nature » (*ti thaumaston ten phusin kalon*), immuable et soustraite à toute forme de devenir. Il apparaît clairement que l'instant qui détermine le changement d'ordre est bien un événement ponctuel, mais qu'il est lié à une préparation longue et progressive qui requiert une véritable éducation. Cela revient à dire qu'on ne saurait parvenir à une connaissance éidétique de manière immédiate. Même si ce mode de connaissance se donne comme extatique, comme le rappelle l'analyse de l'adverbe *exaiphnes* que donne Aristote en *Physique* IV, 13, même s'il n'est pas exprimable de la même manière que les autres formes de savoir, et même si Platon semble envisager la possibilité d'une telle connaissance extra-temporelle, ce qui est indiqué dans ce passage est qu'il n'est pas possible d'y parvenir directement par une pure intuition noétique, mais qu'elle requiert un processus scandé par une série d'étapes précises qui ne sont pas séparables du terme du processus, en sorte qu'une connaissance qui se présenterait comme le résultat d'une pure inspiration ne saurait être connaissance authentique et, réciproquement, qu'un tel savoir intuitif serait précaire, éphémère et inadapté faute de comporter les médiations nécessaires à une recherche capable de rendre raison d'elle-même par sa propre méthode, ce que montrent *a contrario* les autres occurrences d'*exaiphnes* que l'on trouve dans le *Banquet* (212 c 6 ; 213 c 1 ; 223 b 2). En disant que ce n'est qu'à celui qui est correctement éduqué qu'apparaît « tout soudain » (*exaiphnes*, 210 e 4) la vision du beau, les pages consacrées à l'analyse de cette apparition donnent une leçon de bonne éducation.

On which step of the *scala amoris* is Socrates standing in the dramatic action of the *Symposium*?

Beatriz Bossi

I

In this paper I should like to explore the question of where Socrates 'is' in the matter of love: on which step of the ladder is he standing at the moment of the dramatic action of the *Symposium*? The implications of the answer are significant to the understanding of the relation between knowledge and perfection, on the one hand, and turn out to be quite revealing of a peculiar picture of the wise man that Plato has in mind at writing the dialogue, on the other hand.

In my view, neither the philosopher is necessarily *all alone* after climbing the ladder, nor a virtue-driven love relationship with a younger male is a mere *instrumental condition* for the philosopher's achievement of his goal¹, but it seems to me that the philosopher is conceived as someone particularly sensitive to beauty who spends his life searching for the truth, and this activity includes dialogue and care for others. His loving questioning and teaching flows naturally from his need to confirm or refute his views with others, and his desire to contribute somehow to the education of the city. An egocentric utilitarian picture of the lover/philosopher does not really fit with what is either taught by Diotima or exhibited in the dramatic action.

I will attempt to show how both Socrates and Alcibiades are on the same *first* step of the ladder, for different reasons: Socrates is there ('playing the fool') to contact the young boys in order to question them and move them up, for certainly he has something to tell them, while Alcibiades is on the same step for, due to his ignorance and egocentrism, he simply cannot ascend the *scala*. The question of Socrates' previous access to the summit is, in my view, something deliberately left in the dark; it all depends on the different perspectives one takes into account. Socrates introduces himself as the one who knows *the truth about Love*, but on the other hand, he does not think he has more than *doubtful* wisdom. On the contrary, Alcibiades makes efforts to praise his wisdom and excellence as if he had had access to Beauty itself.

Moreover, the dramatic action offers evidence of various contrasting types. On the one hand, Socrates seems to be 'possessed' by philosophy and concentrated on the vision of ideas on at least two occasions and is said to have the *divine inside*, according to Alcibiades' praise. However, on the other hand, Socrates declares he is *terrified* by Alcibiades' rages, at the beginning of his speech, begs Agathon to reconcile them, adopts a *distant* attitude towards him during the praise and finally feels *upset* with him at the end of his discourse, when he accuses Alcibiades of praising him only in order to provoke enmity with Agathon. If this is his view of Alcibiades, how can he be a wise calm philosopher in love with such a man?

II

Let us analyze the evidence that comes from the texts step by step. On the one hand, Socrates claims to *know the truth about Love*, even though he says he has no knowledge at all about how any such thing as *ta erotika* should be praised². He cannot just be a eulogist of Love the way the others have been, but proposes first to 'tell the truth', and in his own way³, about the subject in question; then, he declares straightforwardly, 'they will hear the truth about Love'⁴ not just praise of it. At the end of his speech he admits that he has been persuaded by his teacher Diotima, and that he honors Eros and

¹ Vlastos (1969/1981) accuses Plato of having an instrumental theory of love in which the lover is not in love with an individual person but with the excellences he or she exhibits. Irwin (1977) calls this interpretation 'exclusive' as the lover 'despises' the ones he used to love as a matter of no account, once he ascends towards upper steps; Irwin regards the lack of reciprocity between the creativity of the lover and the beloved as a default of Plato's theory of love. Nussbaum (1986) (against Vlastos) views Alcibiades' praise as the expression of an authentic individualized personal love relationship, but her approach implies there is a rupture between the literary speeches on love (including Alcibiades' praise) and Diotima's philosophical abstract impersonal theory. She seems fascinated by the historical contingent passionate elements that could not be captured by the scientific Platonic view that Diotima teaches. Robinson (2008) raises the question whether the boy-love has been jettisoned by the lover once the ladder is scaled or the virtue-driven love relationship with a younger male is a condition of the life of a *philosophos*, and offers an alternative view.

² καὶ ἔφην εἶναι δεινὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά, οὐδὲν εἰδὼς ἄρα τοῦ πράγματος, ὥς ἔδει ἐγκωμιάζειν ὅτιοῦν (198 d 1-3).

³ οὐ γὰρ ἔτι ἐγκωμιάζω τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον – οὐ γὰρ ἂν δυνάμην – οὐ μέντοι ἀλλὰ τὰ γε ἀληθῆ, εἰ βούλεσθε, ἐθέλω εἰπεῖν κατ' ἐμαυτόν (199 a 6-b).

⁴ ὅρα οὖν, ὦ Φαίδρε, εἴ τι καὶ τοιούτου λόγου δέη, περὶ Ἑρωτος τάληθ' ἡ λεγόμενα ἀκούειν (199 b 2-4).

practices the ‘rites of Love’ with special diligence, and commends them to others (212b-c).

Diotima, however, who over a number of meetings taught Socrates everything he knows about love (201 d 5), claimed she was not sure about his capacity for initiation and follow her to the topmost rung of the ladder of love⁵, (209 e-210 a), since at the time of the conversations with her he *was sensitive to the beauty of boys and young men to the point where they could strike him out of his senses and make him forget everything except looking at them and being with them*⁶. For that reason, in order to ensure herself that Socrates would get to know the nature of Love by his own devices, she would need to *reveal* the various steps of the *scala* to him.

This evidence appears to show that:

at the time of the drama, Socrates knows the truth about Love, while

at the beginning of his training with Diotima he did not know the truth about Beauty itself.

But is this the case? One possibility is that he does indeed *know* the Form of Beauty at the time of the dramatic action of the *Symposium*, and, as a consequence, needs the help of no ‘images’, since he already knows the truth, (i.e. has had intercourse with true beauty and so can procreate beautiful speeches that persuade and care for the young) and enjoys the calmness and perfection characteristic of the wise man. The other possibility is that he has merely an *opinion* about the Form of Beauty, and, as a consequence, is still terribly attracted by the beauty of the young; is troubled by Alcibiades’ behavior (i.e. he is not as brave as in battle but is said to be *horrified* by him); and is replete with ‘images’, for as he has had no access to the truth, his knowledge remains as doubtful as a dream.

Let us consider the various pieces of testimony provided by Alcibiades. He offers a picture which suggests that Socrates is in fact a genuine lover, who must have reached the topmost rung of the *scala* and contemplated the Form of Beauty, since he is a brave, moderate, and pious citizen who exhibits all the genuine, extraordinary virtues which flow from contact with the truth. Indeed, most scholars commonly assume that Socrates instantiates in his daily life the ideal depicted by Diotima⁷.

However, Alcibiades also gives the impression that Socrates is *still strongly physically attracted by boys and young men*. Is this view just the result of his jealousy? Or does Plato want to present Socrates as someone who, though knowing the truth about Love and Beauty in itself, also practices the ‘rites’ of love, in the sense that he is still an amorous person, and loves looking at and talking to beautiful boys and young men because he feels, at least in part, attracted by their beautiful bodies? Can this actually happen to a truly wise man? Rowe’s reading suggests so⁸.

If this is Plato’s account of Socrates it does not *seem* to coincide with his teacher’s description of the wise man. In strict sense, according to Diotima, one who has come to know the absolute, pure, unmixed Beautiful in Itself, which is ‘not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality’, will not measure beauty by the beauty of gold or clothing or by beautiful boys and youths, but is supposed to be able to give birth to genuine virtue (not just to images of virtue), and to become a friend of the gods and immortal, if any human being could ever become so⁹. These claims might give the impression that he would not *need* any other relationship, as though his happiness consisted in the full and self-sufficient possession of the truth. If we consider the passage that refers to the various steps on the ladder that are used towards attaining the topmost rung¹⁰ we

⁵ ταῦτα μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐρωτικά ἴσως, ὃ Σώκρατες, κἄν σὺ μνηθεῖς· τὰ δὲ τέλεια καὶ ἐποπτικά, ὧν ἕνεκα καὶ ταῦτα ἔστιν, ἐάν τις ὀρθῶς μετή, οὐκ οἶδ’ εἰ οἷός τ’ ἔν εἴης. ἐρῶ μὲν οὖν, ἔφη, ἐγὼ καὶ προθυμίας οὐδὲν ἀπολείψω· πειρῶ δὲ ἔπεσθαι, ἂν οἷός τε ᾦς (209 e 5-210 a 4)

⁶ ὃ ἐάν ποτε ἴδῃς, οὐ κατὰ χρυσίον τε καὶ ἐσθῆτα καὶ τοὺς καλοὺς παῖδας τε καὶ νεανίσκους δόξει σοι εἶναι, οὐς νῦν ὁρῶν ἐκπέπληξαι καὶ ἔτοιμος εἰ καὶ σὺ καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί, ὁρῶντες τὰ παιδικὰ καὶ συνόντες ἀεὶ αὐτοῖς, εἴ πως οἷόν τ’ ᾦν, μήτ’ ἐσθίειν μήτε πίνειν, ἀλλὰ θεᾶσθαι (211 d 3-8).

⁷ Socrates lives out, *so far as he can*, the lessons of Diotima, according to Rowe (1998) (among many others) (my italics). The use of a remote conditional by Diotima (211 e 1-3) makes the reader doubt about the chance for a human being to see the Form of Beauty. However Rowe asks: ‘if Socrates hasn’t completed the ascent, who has?’ (200).

⁸ Rowe (1998) 193-6, ad 209e5-210c8: the lover will need someone to address his beautiful words to; at the first stage he will apparently leave him behind; at the ‘third’ stage the lover is attracted, if only a little, by the beloved’s body and by the potential represented by his soul and he cares for him, while also he is not preoccupied exclusively with him, because he gives birth to and seeks for words which will make young men, better men. He also observes that ‘there is no indication that the lover will ever desert the beloved, even if his love turns out to include others as well’. However, he assumes that the beloved will not be the same as the recipient of the beautiful words of the last stage (for b7- c1 seems to indicate a new encounter) but, he says, there is no reason for the lover to abandon his new love, as he will need one in which to procreate his soul-offspring.

⁹ τί δῆτα, ἔφη, οἰόμεθα, εἴ τῳ γένοιτο αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἰδεῖν εὐκρινές, καθαρὸν, ἄμεικτον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆς φλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν δύναιτο μονοειδὲς κατιδεῖν; ἂρ’ οἶει, ἔφη, φαῦλον βίον γίνεσθαι ἐκεῖσε βλέποντος ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐκεῖνο ὃ δεῖ θεωμένου καὶ συνόντος αὐτῷ; ἢ οὐκ ἐνθυμῇ, ἔφη, ὅτι ἐνταῦθα αὐτῷ μοναχῷ γενήσεται, ὁρῶντι ὃ ὁρατὸν τὸ καλόν, τίκτειν οὐκ εἰδῶλα ἀρετῆς, ἅτε οὐκ εἰδῶλου ἐφαπτομένῳ, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῇ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ· τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῇ καὶ θρεψαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι, καὶ εἰπέρ τῳ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ; (211 d 8-212 a 7).

¹⁰ ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ἀεὶ ἐπανέναι, ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον (211 c 1-3).

might imagine that the wise man does not need anyone else to love and live with, and that love for the young was a mere stage in *his own* progress. But is this impression either correct or necessary? The passage does not necessary imply that the beautiful (either things or people) are used as mere *means* but rather that each step, which is not only theoretical but also implies an emotional change, as the sight or understanding of the natural order of beauties pushes the lover to appreciate things in a different way. He is taken to appreciate the beauty of the souls better than the beauty of the bodies *so that he is forced* to love the beauty that lies in noble actions and right laws, and then he must be led towards more beautiful instances (the sciences) that, in turn, lead to the vision of Beauty itself. So the emotional changes follow the theoretical sight and, in turn, the love for noble deeds (i.e. the emotional attachment to good actions) seems to prepare the sight of the beauty of the sciences. This ladder might be compared to the line paradigm of the *Republic* where each degree of knowledge is necessary to reach the Forms. But this time each degree of understanding is immediately followed by an emotional conversion of the lover's love.

On the other hand, the *instrumental* interpretation does not fit with what Plato says in other dialogues. Here again the *Republic* might give us as an interesting indication: the slave who liberates himself from the cave and gets to know the Forms has to return to the cave to teach the others there; it is true that the philosopher-king has to be *forced* to return, but being wise, he also accepts his duty. And the highest destiny in the *Phaedrus* is reserved for those who have loved the young with philosophy (249 a). So we may assume that once the wise man reaches the topmost point of the ladder, he should want to devote his life to loving the young in conjunction with the practice of philosophy. Well, this is exactly what Diotima's lesson suggests, and this is precisely what Socrates is said to do, according to Alcibiades' praise¹¹.

We do not need to assume that the lover has gone up only with his leader. At each stage of the ascent there must be at least someone to love and, in my view, there is no need to imagine that the first beloved should necessary be 'used' for the lover has to give birth to beautiful speeches in him or abandoned when the perspective of the lover widens to include other beautiful bodies, or when it gets deeper and he happens to love the souls better than the bodies. Once he is *forced* to love (noble) actions and laws, *in order to* be able to contemplate the sciences and the great sea of beauty around, at this stage he may produce magnificent *speeches* and thoughts 'in a love of wisdom that grudges nothing' (ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἀφθόνῳ: 210 d 6), i.e. in philosophy without envy. This means that he is to share the treasures of beauty he could grasp and so, he must look for an audience to love and care¹². The dramatic action immediately subsequent to Diotima's revelation, including Alcibiades' mixed feelings and hidden intentions, as well as Socrates' emotional reactions and supposedly hidden objectives, turns out to be the right place in which to find more evidence to confirm a more generous interpretation.

III

Socrates declares that his love for Alcibiades has brought trouble to his life; he is terrified by Alcibiades' madness and by his passion for his lover, up to a point where he demands that Agathon either reconcile him with Alcibiades or protect him from his violent, jealous rage¹³. It is worth noticing that Socrates' fears are really strong, as he uses ὀρρωδῶ: *horresco*, meaning he is terrified, he feels horror towards Alcibiades' mad attachment to being loved¹⁴ (φιλεραστίαν) full of envy and violence, as he cannot share Socrates' dialogues and cares with anyone else.

One might wonder why a man of Socrates' wisdom might be supposed to be in love with

¹¹ It would be a contradiction in terms that, being a philosopher, he gave up being driven by Eros for wisdom (i.e. abandoned his condition as a *philosopher*) and became a kind of God that would spend his life completely separated from the world he belongs to and from the love for others.

¹² Rowe (1998) ad 210 c8-d3 puts it this way: 'What the lover is leaving behind is not so much a particular individual as *slavery* to a particular individual; in other words there is no suggestion that the beloved has been unceremoniously dumped, though the latter might well find that he is now having to share his lover (and tutor) with others (...) the conversion away from the individual – whether lover or beloved? – is an epistemological process, involving the acquisition of that ability to grasp the general/generic which is blocked by too great an attachment to the particular' (197). In his note to 211c 3-6 where the list of stages that make the ascent is summarized, he observes that "significantly there is no mention of 'souls' in this list; a further indication, perhaps, that the lover never moves beyond his attachment to souls, that is, to 'caring for' and improving them (210 c 3)" (200).

¹³ καὶ τὸν Σωκράτη, Ἀγάθων, φάναι, ὅρα εἴ μοι ἐπαμύνεις· ὥς ἐμοὶ ὁ τούτου ἔρως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐ φαῖλον πρᾶγμα γέγονεν. ἀπ' ἐκείνου γὰρ τοῦ χρόνου, ἀπ' οὗ τούτου ἠράσθην, οὐκέτι ἔξεστί μοι οὔτε προσβλέψαι οὔτε διαλεχθῆναι καλῶ οὐδ' ἐνί, ἢ οὐτοσί ζηλοτυπῶν με καὶ φθονῶν θαυμαστὰ ἐργάζεται καὶ λοιδορεῖται τε καὶ τὸ χεῖρε μόγις ἀπέχεται. ὅρα οὖν μή τι καὶ νῦν ἐργάσθῃται, ἀλλὰ διάλλαξον ἡμᾶς, ἢ ἐὰν ἐπιχειρή βιάζεσθαι, ἐπάμυνε, ὥς ἐγὼ τὴν τούτου μανίαν τε καὶ φιλεραστίαν πάνυ ὀρρωδῶ. (213 c 6-d 6).

¹⁴ I follow Rowe's translation, lit. 'madness and attachment to lovers'.

Alcibiades, one of the proudest and vainest young men in the city. That would imply that wisdom is sufficient to make the possessor of such a treasure excellent, but that it can neither be communicated to a beloved nor save Socrates from the peculiar passion of continuing to be in love with the wrong man and never being able to set him on the right path, as history attests. However, 'the enduring nature of his love, as well as the form it takes –caring and talking, as at 210 c 2-3' is described by Diotima, 'may well be part of the point we are meant to discover in Alcibiades' encomium'¹⁵. In any case, the dialogue is set in 416 BC, when Socrates was about 50 and Alcibiades about 30, and one has the impression that Socrates is starting to suspect he is never going to be successful in his dealings with this beloved, and that this may be the reason why he utters such sober and austere words to him: he wants, it seems, to put some distance between them.

Does he really feel afraid Alcibiades will be violent? Hardly, given that the context is the relaxed one of a banquet. Is it just a literary strategy, then, to create a certain tension that will make the dialogue more appealing? And will also let the reader know that Alcibiades is a potentially dangerous, violent man?

This is possible. On the other hand, Socrates' reaction to Alcibiades looks more comprehensible if one takes into account that Alcibiades proclaims himself to be the only one who really knows him, and has discovered his 'tricky game'. He declares openly that Socrates plays the fool with beautiful boys, following them around in a perpetual daze, making them believe he knows nothing. Alcibiades also adds that Socrates does not really care whether a boy is beautiful, or rich, or famous in any other of the ways that most people admire (216 d-e). This is merely an external performance, he says; a hook to keep close to them. He wants to be around them in order to make them aware of what they lack; feel ashamed; and move on to take care of themselves (instead of just pleasing the crowd, as Alcibiades admits he himself does).

If this is the case, the wise man should not be conceived of as a lonely person who has used others as stepping-stones in the pursuit of his own personal perfection, but as someone whose life is devoted to them.

However, Socrates claims to be afraid of Alcibiades' mad passion, and seems not to be satisfied with Alcibiades' ways. He must know that, when Alcibiades leaves his side, he goes back to his old desire for power, as Alcibiades himself admits (216 b), so we can reasonably assume that he might to some degree have already grown tired of him, not only by the time of the dramatic action of the *Symposium* but even at an earlier stage than that, since Alcibiades tells how on such an earlier occasion he made clear his intention to exchange his external beauty for Socrates' internal beauty. Socrates' cold answer was that 'if it were true that there was a power in himself to make Alcibiades a better person', Alcibiades was not acting foolishly, since such a deal would be profitable to his beloved. Nevertheless, Socrates has doubts about his power to persuade Alcibiades, and even charges him with fraud, claiming that he wants to 'exchange' gold for bronze (218d-219a). This charge is not easy to understand, if Eros is defined as the desire for the good. Alcibiades wants to become like Socrates, for he admires him. He wants to imitate him. And this is perfect Platonic doctrine, if we remember that men are expected to imitate the gods, and to attempt to become as wise as they are¹⁶. However, Socrates' inner images, to put it in Alcibiades words, i.e. Socrates' visions, cannot be lost by being shared with his beloved. In fact, no real exchange is possible in a material physical sense: Socrates does not get a beautiful body and Alcibiades cannot deprive him of his wisdom. It is an exchange in which nobody loses but both win¹⁷.

In my view Socrates should in a certain sense feel satisfied with Alcibiades, for he has managed to create a desire for the good in his beloved. Alcibiades is able to admire Socrates' powers and would, apparently, like to become like him. The trouble is that Socrates seems to know how ephemeral Alcibiades' wish is. This Socrates is far from being the loving character of the dialogue *Alcibiades I*: here he does not manifest a wish to take care of his beloved, and is no longer the only friend left to get to know him deeply and to remain faithful to him. He seems more interested in Agathon, and remains distant and suspicious. Why?

Even in a mature dialogue like the *Phaedrus*, Socrates takes pains to persuade his companion

¹⁵ Rowe (1998) 204 ad b9-c2.

¹⁶ Obviously, wisdom cannot be transferred to somebody just by lying next to him, as is averred at the beginning of the *Symposium* (175 c-e), but the fact of having become genuinely moderate and brave surely implies that one has completed a long and difficult part of the ascent towards wisdom.

¹⁷ This would be a win-win deal which turns out to be analogous to the one in the *Phaedrus*, in which, according to the first type of love, the teacher-lover is rewarded by the sight and touch of his beloved's young, beautiful body. Let us remember that, as particles flow from the beloved's beautiful body, enter the lover's eyes, and then flow back to him (255 c- e), a real reciprocal exchange of beauty takes place, in the same way beautiful memories flow from the lover's mouth into the beloved's ears.

about what real love is. This does not mean that, while the *Phaedrus* presents us with two passionate characters in love, the *Symposium* is just an artificial sequence of discourses without passion. For, on the one hand, in the *Phaedrus* we only have ‘a play inside the play’, i.e. a mere simulacrum that enables Socrates to play the part of the lover in order to let Phaedrus learn how to do the same with his own beloved, Lysias¹⁸. On the other hand, it is true that, in the *Symposium*, not only does Alcibiades demonstrate passion in his drunken action and madness in his love for Socrates, but Socrates himself is presented as being stubbornly mad, as he apparently keeps on loving a man such as Alcibiades. What is exhibited in Alcibiades’ discourse and complaints is the result of Socrates’ skills as a reluctant/passionate lover. He turns out to be reluctant to make concessions to his and/or Alcibiades’ appetites, while being passionate enough to attempt to make his beloved change his mind about the forces that drive him.

If he does, we should observe that he seems to hide it very well in the short dialogues he has with him, where the tone is either complaining or fearing or unmasking.

It is commonly admitted that Alcibiades’ description of Socrates as a charmer and a powerful wizard (215 d-e) is quite analogous to Diotima’s description of Eros: he is the resourceful hunter, always weaving snares, spending his life as a philosopher, the wizard with his enchantments and potions, and the sophist¹⁹. Eros is a kind of sophist for he is powerful at persuading by using his weapons. And so is Socrates according to Alcibiades’ picture²⁰ but that is not what is acted on stage. Why, then, is this Socrates distant from, and also, perhaps deep down inside him, irritated with Alcibiades? Probably, in my view, because of a perceived double failure on his own part: he is a supposedly wise man who can neither make Alcibiades a better person nor rid himself of his love for him.

Let us assume that Socrates has reached the topmost rung and seen the truth. Where is he standing now? It seems to me that, with regard to Alcibiades, he has come back to the first step, and is attempting to push him up to the second one. However, the fact of being wise does not save him from passion for, and trouble with this young man, who, even when at times he may look up in admiration at him (i.e. gaze on the divine images inside of Socrates), refuses to hold Socrates’ hand and go up with him, for he still expects that he should be desired and conquered by Socrates’ (ugly) body and (noble) will, in payment for his own having become possessed (literarily: ‘bitten’) by Socrates’ powerful arguments.

If Plato’s intention is to depict the wise man as someone also deeply human, who is devoted to bringing about changes in the young by the making of noble discourses, and is also emotionally affected by his beloved ones’ failures, it seems to me that the *Symposium* is the right place to look for evidence of such a realistic picture of the wise man, who knows what beauty and love are, who may lead an excellent life as an individual and may be surrounded by beautiful young boys, and yet, being human, is still looking for protection against his beloved’s violence and jealousy; for, in a very peculiar sense, he cannot rid himself of his eros for him. One might wonder: what kind of madness is this? What kind of passion? In essence, we might think, a mad passion to teach him... but this peculiar passion does not let him enjoy the calmness a wise man has a right to have. So should he not draw away from him? On the contrary, Socrates asks Agathon to *reconcile* him with Alcibiades. Why? Just because he fears him? And if he feels the horror he does, can he still be regarded as a steady, brave, and wise man?

IV

Socrates says he knows the truth about Love, but, one could object, such supposed knowledge is inherited from Diotima. He claims himself that his wisdom is of a poor sort, and as doubtful as a dream (ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐμὴ φαύλη τις ἂν εἴη, ἢ καὶ ἀμφισβητήσιμος ὥσπερ ὄναρ οὐσα: 175 e 2-4). Moreover, according to Diotima, mortal knowledge only lasts till it is forgotten, though it gives the impression that it remains the same, because it is constantly being replaced by new knowledge, as studying replaces with a fresh one each memory that has departed (208 a-b). This statement seems to imply that mortals cannot keep divine knowledge inside them forever. It seems that we should probably admit that Socrates has no genuine, pure, divine knowledge, but only doubtful dreams and

¹⁸ Bossi (2012).

¹⁹ κατὰ δὲ αὐτὸν τὸν πατέρα ἐπίβουλος ἐστὶ τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, ἀνδρείος ὢν καὶ ἵτης καὶ σύντονος, θηρευτὴς δεινός, αἰετίνων πλέκων μηχανάς, καὶ φρονήσεως ἐπιθυμητὴς καὶ πόριμος, φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου, δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεὺς καὶ σοφιστής (203 d 4-8).

²⁰ Curiously, Diotima is called by Socrates ‘most wise’ (σοφωτάτη: 208 b 8) and also regarded as somebody who speaks in the manner of the ‘perfect sophists’ (ὥσπερ οἱ τέλει σοφισταί: 208 c 1) i.e. someone who, as Bury points out *ad locum*, has something to *reveal* in a professorial *long* style (without dialogue), and -he adds- it is also possible that in τέλος there may be a hint at the mystery-element in Diotima’s speech.

partial memories of a revelation from Diotima.

Indeed, Socrates is in love with a jealous, envious, petty, fraudulent, seditious soul who wants to create enmity in order to ensure for himself both the Socratic care of his soul and also the favors of Agathon (222 c-d). And Socrates himself, given that he has not chosen a noble soul as his companion, must still be only on the first rung of the ladder. Diotima was right in her doubts: Socrates would not be able to make progress.

On the other hand, if we sum up the various statements of Alcibiades, there are enough signs to conclude that Socrates has indeed reached the topmost rung, for:

he does not care if a young man has a beautiful body (or is rich or powerful) (216 d-e); when Alcibiades declares that Socrates 'despised' and mocked him for his beauty (219 c 4), he even uses the same verb (*καταφρονέω*) as Diotima does when she observes that the lover on the second step must think that his wild gaping after just one body is a small thing, and 'despise' it (210 b 5-6). In the light of the comparison, this statement should be understood as the rejection of depending on slavish passion, i.e. as a sign of endurance, rather than a denial of the sensible beauty of a particular body, which has enabled the ascent²¹.

he is able to produce persuasive philosophical speeches that assault Alcibiades' emotions, and make him feel ashamed and wish for a change (though Alcibiades resists these feelings, and cannot resist crowd-pleasing) (215 c-216 c);

he possesses genuine virtues that manifest themselves in particular circumstances: he is brave and strong in battle (220 d; 221 a-c), moderate in the matter of pleasures and honors (219 e-220b; 220 e), and pious towards the gods (220 d). In a word, he has all the virtues that flow from his 'admirable and extraordinary' wisdom; and

he carries divine, golden images in his soul which make Alcibiades do what he orders (216 e-217a), once bitten in his heart by the Bacchic frenzy of philosophy (218 a-b).

Could it be that Alcibiades cannot measure distances properly, and places Socrates at the topmost point simply because of his own position at the foot of the climb? It seems impossible; Alcibiades means *he tells the truth* about Socrates eight times (214e6, 214e10-15a1, 215a6, 216a2, 217b1-2, 217e3-4, 219c2, 220e4) for perhaps he thinks the others will not believe his funny stories about such an strange man, the fact is that neither Socrates nor the others ever stop him to correct him while the praise takes place.

At the end of his speech, however, Socrates' return for Alcibiades' compliment is to openly reveal his hidden intention, dropped in as an afterthought: Alcibiades, he says, is sober enough to stir up a quarrel between Agathon and Socrates, for he thinks Socrates *and no one else* should be Alcibiades' lover, while Alcibiades himself *and no one else* should be Agathon's lover (222 c-d). This accusation shows that where Alcibiades is standing is on the first step of the *scala* only, for he is unable to get beyond an exclusively egocentric relationship or to understand the task Socrates has set himself with young boys, interpreting as he does Socrates' devotion to them as a trick, under cover of which he pretends to be a lover but in fact – he claims – becomes the beloved of the boys.

Alcibiades' praise is Plato's tribute to *his* Socrates in order to clear him from any charge of corrupting the youth. After his ascent (as far as he could) Socrates spends his life physically present on the first level of the *scala* trying to collect his 'burden' of young men. From there he has reached out to Alcibiades, but his beloved will never be able to climb a single step, since his soul's eye is far from possessing the appropriate acuity²² (219 a).

Does this mean, then, that the dialogue and its dramatic action leave little hope for education? Not necessarily. It means rather that no matter how good the teacher is, if the disciple cannot rise due to the burden of his own weight, the teacher cannot help him. Alcibiades is introduced as a tyrant who imposes his own will over Eryximachus' agreements: the flute player comes back and they should drink till they get drunk²³.

What about Socrates himself? According to our own suggestion, Socrates turns out to be a wise man who gets into trouble with the young, and is affected by their feelings and reactions in a very human, understandable way: he says he is afraid of Alcibiades at the beginning of his speech and gets annoyed with him at the end of it. In his attempt to put the young on the right track towards the

²¹ The lover must get over his attachment to a particular body or to a particular soul exclusively, as the one Alcibiades seems to expect, in order to ascend from the individual beauty to the multiplicity of beauties and from it to the unique Form.

²² ἢ τοι τῆς διανοίας ὅστις ἄρχεται ὁξὺ βλέπειν ὅταν ἡ τῶν ὁμμάτων τῆς ἀκμῆς λήγειν ἐπιχειρῇ· σὺ δὲ τούτων ἔτι πόρρω (219 a 2-4).

²³ Sales (1996) 108-110.

truth, he sometimes fails. The same thing happens in the *Phaedrus*, where he takes pains to avoid direct answers so as not to scandalize a companion who is in love both with Lysias and with Lysias' thesis about the goodness of a love which is indifferent, and 'cold'. Only when he threatens to cross the river and leave Phaedrus in the dark does his companion open his mind to listen to Socrates. However, the case of Alcibiades is different: the audience in the drama guesses, and the reader knows, that Socrates will never persuade him²⁴.

In conclusion, does Socrates possess real, divine knowledge or merely opinion? According to Alcibiades' words of praise, he must have reached the topmost rung of the ladder, for he is a man of true excellence. And if the one who reaches the top and grasps Beauty itself 'is with it' he should keep that particular vision for the rest of his life, in spite of the weakness of every other mortal knowledge that is forgotten and lost. In this sense, he should spend part of his life on the summit, while he recalls his vision. The *Symposium* offers evidence of such veiled experience at the neighbours' porch, by a man who is regarded as strange and extraordinary.

According to Socrates himself, he cannot possibly have done so, but is only retelling a lesson he has learnt from another; his supposed wisdom is of 'no account, a doubtful dream'. One who is truly wise will never admit he is wise, for, being wise, he is aware of what he ignores. That is why the philosopher driven by Eros, cannot lead a separated exclusive happy life. His happiness consists in learning and sharing his divine treasure with those who are ready for it, begetting in them beautiful, noble arguments²⁵. Can any man, while still in this world of images, ever really reach the topmost rung and see the Beauty itself, the nature of the beautiful *completely once and forever*? According to Diotima, Socrates' assumed guide in his ascent, (and according to Socrates' own *palinodia* in the *Phaedrus*) it does not seem so. But the force of the *scala*, despite its (somehow) unreachable summit (for mortals), lies in the invitation to make the ascent as far as one is able to. In my view, the mixed feelings the philosopher might experience while trying to persuade his interlocutors, at the cost of (apparently) spending long *symposia* 'at the foot of the ladder', do not constitute a weakness of the Platonic doctrine of Love and Beauty, but a feature of realism. For in spite of his horror and his disappointment, according to Apollodorus (173 d 6), Socrates is the only one who is not in a miserable state.

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²⁴ For a careful historical analysis of Alcibiades' politically dangerous character due to his immoderate seduction exercised on Socrates and Athens, and the hypothesis that Plato's intention in the *Symposium* is to set a clear separation between him and the memory of his mentor Socrates in order to save it from any responsibility in the eyes of his contemporaries, see Cornelli (2012). In the same way, Sales (1996) regards the *Symposium* as a critical historical judgement on the loss of *paideia* that has taken Athens to decay (102). Rowe (1998) speculates that perhaps Plato wishes to suggest that if only Alcibiades and others like him had been more prepared to follow Socrates and his example, Athens might never have been defeated in the Peloponnesian War (206).

²⁵ Similar doctrines are presented in the *Phaedrus* 276 e - 277 a.

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Eudaimonism in the *Symposium*?

Rachana Kamtekar

ABSTRACT

On the standard reading, Diotima's account of *eros* in the *Symposium* is eudaimonist: beginning from the desire we have for our happiness, viz., to possess good things, correct love makes us aware of truer beauties so that we can identify better goods to beget. The standard reading takes our desire for happiness to be something we explicitly represent to ourselves, and the ascent to consist in progressive discoveries of what realizes this desire. I offer an alternative reading, according to which our desire for happiness need not be explicitly represented, but may instead be an unconscious aim discoverable by the examination of our actions. What is explicitly represented in the mind is not the aim, but the object of *eros*--viz., a beauty. Virtues of this alternative are that (1) it allows Diotima to give a unified account of the *telos* of our behaviour and the behaviour of the wild animals that sacrifice their lives for the sake of their young (as in the 'lower mysteries'), and (2) it avoids the worry that Diotima's account of *eros* instrumentalizes the beloved (in the 'higher mysteries'). A consequence of the alternative is to call into question the account's support for psychological eudaimonism.

Plenary session

Chair: Shinro Kato

Eros: One, Two, or Two-in-One?

Vasilis Politis

ABSTRACT

Is there a single argumentative thread running through Plato's Symposium and connecting together the series of speeches on *erōs*? This is the question I want to address in this paper. I shall argue that there is a single issue and line of argument in the dialogue, and it is this: Whether *erōs* is one or two; and if two, whether the two *erōtes* are separate or essentially connected. If there is a single passage in which this issue is crystallized – and in which we have, therefore, a pivotal point of the dialogue – then it is, I think, at 187, when Eryximachus, who has just argued, following Pausania and contra Phaedrus, that *erōs* is not one, but two, and that the two *erōtes* are antithetical and opposed – the one being wholly good, the other wholly bad – attacks Heraclitus for implying that, if there are two *erōtes*, then they may be essentially connected and make up a single whole of two parts in a state of productive tension.

That this passage provides a clue to the unity of the dialogue has recently been argued by Wardy. Wardy, however, far from recognizing that the passage indicates a single issue and line of argument in the dialogue, and one concerning the nature of *erōs*, concurs with the critical view which says that this work is distinguished by 'rarity of argumentation' (1). He thinks that the unity indicated by this passage relates to, first, the compositional structure of the dialogue, and second, a plethora of polarities, only a few of which are about *erōs* (see his *A Partial Taxonomy of Symposium Polarities* at the end of the paper).

If this is the single central issue and line of argument in the Symposium – Is *erōs* one, two, or two-in-one? – then we must ask where Plato stands on the matter. This is an especially difficult question, since, as has become recognized in the critical literature, we cannot simply assume that Socrates' climactic speech is a statement of Platonic doctrine. Be that as it may, we must first of all ask how Socrates' speech stands on the matter. I shall argue that, while Socrates accepts that *erōs* is not simply one, and that it may tend both well and bad, he rejects the view that there are two separate and antithetical *erōtes*, the one wholly good, the other wholly bad; rather, he defends the Heraclitus inspired view that *erōs* is a single whole of two parts in a state of potentially productive tension – *erōs* is, as we may say, essentially ambivalent. This, I think, begins to explain why, according to Socrates, we cannot hope to ascend through *erōs* to the contemplation of true beauty unless we first go through the erotic attraction to the beauty of sensuous bodies.

Saturday

20th July, 2013

Plenary session

Chair: Francisco Bravo

What does Diotima mean by *erōs*?

Anthony W. Price

I

Like the Anglican preachers of my youth, I open with a text:

Given, then, that love is always of this [viz., of possessing the good forever], in what way will those pursuing it do so, and through what activity, if their intense zeal would be called love? What really is its function? ... I'll tell you: it's generating in beauty, whether in respect of the body or of the soul (206b1-8, after Rowe).¹

What does 'love' (*erōs*) mean here, and does it have one meaning, or two? The commonest reading is stated succinctly by Christopher Gill as follows (1999: 78 n. 112): 'Here Diotima uses the general motive identified as 'love' in 205a-206a to explain the subdivision of this motive (marked by a special "enthusiasm and intensity") that is normally called "love".'²

However, a number of interpreters have rejected that, and argued that *erōs* retains a single sense and reference through these lines.³ The question is of more than local significance. Plato is preparing an analysis of the nature and works of *erōs* that will continue until the very end of Socrates' invocation of Diotima (212a). If he is presenting, through the double intermediacy of the pair of them, a theory of love of his own, it must go with our reading of 206b *what* we think he is presenting a theory *of*. So it becomes critical how 206b is to be read.

II

R. G. Bury justifies the common reading by a brief note ad loc.: 'For the limitation of the notion of Eros here (*an kaloito*), cp. that in 205a ff. (*kalountai*, c,d).' Diotima has drawn a comparison, reminding Socrates that the term *poiēsis* actually *applies* to all forms of production of all kinds, and yet *is applied* only to one form of it:

One part has been divided off from *poiēsis* as a whole, the part concerned with music and verse, and is given the name of the whole. This alone is called (*kaleitai*) *poiēsis*, and those to whom this part of *poiēsis* belongs 'poets' (205c5-9).

The same, she asserts, holds of the term *erōs*:

It's the same with love too. To sum up, the whole of desire for good things and for happiness is 'the supreme and crafty love', to be found in everyone; but those who direct themselves to it in all sorts of other ways, in money-making, or in love of physical exercise, or in philosophy, are called (*kalountai*) neither 'in love' nor 'lovers', while those whose zeal attaches to just one kind of love take the name of the whole – 'love', 'loving', and 'lovers' (d1-8).

These two occurrences of *kaleisthai* have naturally suggested that, at 206b3 also, its appearance acknowledges a common and restricted usage of a term for which Diotima has just proposed a more profound but less familiar application.

As Christopher Rowe has noted (1998b: 182), the parallel would be closer if, at 206b3, as at 205c8 and d5, we had the indicative mood rather than the potential optative (*an kaloito*, 'would be called'). However, this variation can be explained by what is also a response to a different objection of his (1998a: 245): 'If Diotima means to mark a transition back to "specific" eros it is hard to see why Socrates should be at a loss for an answer to the question about what sort of activity causes the

¹ In 206b1, I follow many others in emending *touto* ('this') to *toutou* ('of this') after Bast. It is a marginal improvement, though possibly upon Plato himself. 'Pursue' (*diōkein*) can be applied, in Greek as in English, either to a mode of activity (e.g., 'pursue philosophy'), or to its goal (e.g., 'pursue the truth'); for examples, see Sier (1997: 221-2).

² This goes back beyond Bury (1932, 1st edn 1909: xxxvii n., ad loc.), who is followed by Robin (1929: lxxxiii), Santas (1988: 34), Price (1997, 1st edn 1989: 25), Ferrari (1992: 254), Waterfield (1994: 86).

³ See Kahn (1987: 93-4), Sier (1997: 99 ff.), Rowe (1998a), (1998b: 181-2), Sheffield (2006: 85 n.).

“intense eagerness” we associate with eros. Why should he not simply reply “sexual activity”?’ (1998a: 245). I stand by my original response as a reader for the journal (whom Rowe quotes as ‘X’): ‘Of course, it might be easy (actually, not so easy for Plato) to characterize specific eros out of the blue; not so easy to characterize it as a species of generic eros as that has just been artificially defined’ (1998a: 245 n. 15). This also explains the optative mood of *kaloito*: so far it is only posited that that there is a mode of pursuing the goal of generic *erōs* whose motivation would count idiomatically as *erōs*; until we have made this out, we have identified no motivation to be called *erōs* in that sense.

Another of Rowe’s objections is this (1998a: 245-6): ‘Diotima has taken a great deal of trouble to introduce the idea of eros as genus, and if she were taking us (and Socrates) back to specific eros we would surely expect her to give a clear signal that she was doing so; but she gives no such clear signal.’ But, of course, the other side interprets the words *an kaloito*, with the parallels, as precisely such a signal. Again, there is no question of a simple return from Diotima’s to common-garden *erōs*. Rather, on this view, 206b1-3 are turning from the goal of generic *erōs* to its operation; this takes us back to specific *erōs*, which is now privileged not simply by counting idiomatically as *erōs*, but as operative in a way that at last – unlike money-making, physical exercise, and even philosophy (205d4-5) – is focused upon the immortality that has now been argued (in 206a) to be a further aspect, supplementing happiness itself, of the full goal of ‘the supreme and crafty love’ (205d2-3).⁴ On this reading, there is indeed a shift of focus in 206b1-3, but one that still falls *within* the abstract *erōs* that Diotima takes to be fundamental.

I conclude that initial objections to Bury’s reading by reference to these lines, and what has preceded them, lack force. Yet this is only, of course, a very preliminary conclusion: there is much else to consider, notably in what will follow them. Do we *already* have any counter-objection to Rowe’s reading? Take again Diotima’s initial question: ‘Given, then, that love is always of this [viz., of possessing the good forever], in what way will those pursuing it do so, and through what activity, if their intense eagerness would be called love?’ (b1-3)? Does it contain any obstacle to interpreting *erōs* in both its occurrences as signifying the desire, in effect, of eternal happiness? (For the equivalence, cf. 204e5-205a1.) It would if ‘would be called’ *had* to mean ‘would be called according to common usage’, as Bury supposes it *does* mean. But there is this alternative: ‘would be called’ may mean instead ‘would be called in accordance with the characterization just given’, viz. that *erōs* is directed towards eternal happiness. When the question is being posed within the scope of the clause ‘given that love is always of this’, what could be more plausible?

A response could be drawn from Gill’s phrase (1999: 78 n. 112), ‘the subdivision of this motive (marked by a special “enthusiasm and intensity”) that is normally called “love”’.⁵ For us, it is natural to read Diotima’s question as asking Socrates to identify one way of pursuing eternal happiness that is distinguished from other ways by its ‘enthusiasm and intensity’, and to connect this way with ‘love’ in the form of erotic love. Bury’s citing of parallels involving *kaleisthai* is surely a *further* consideration that may serve to back this easy presumption.⁶ However, we are given pause by a sentence I have already quoted, ‘The whole of desire for good things and for happiness is “the supreme and crafty love”, to be found in everyone’ (205d1-3). When Diotima proceeded to identify ‘those whose zeal attaches to just one kind of love’ as alone being *called* ‘lovers’ (d6-8), she was apparently deriving this ‘zeal’ from ‘the supreme and crafty love’ that is generic, and *not* simply attaching it to the ‘one kind of love’ distinctive of this subset of lovers.⁷ Here we may well find her highly implausible (just think of *amour fou*); but the evidence is that she associates the ‘intense zeal’ of 206b2 with desire in its most fundamental, if also abstract, form.⁸ Hence, contrary to initial appearances, the phrase does nothing to indicate that the *erōs* that she is now asking about is specifically erotic.

Nor, admittedly, is the phrase a counter-indication: her thought could be (much as at 205d6-8) that the ‘intense zeal’ characteristic of desire in general is also present in what would idiomatically be

⁴ For the association of cognates of *dolos* (‘guile’) with Aphrodite, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII 6, 1149b15-18. Nehamas & Woodruff, Gill, and Rowe all translate *doleros* at 205d7 as ‘treacherous’; that seems to me too harshly negative (not that erotic love can’t stoop to that).

⁵ Rowe concedes that this is plausible (1998b: 182).

⁶ One may also cite other Platonic uses of the terms *suntasis* and *spoudē* (206b2). The *Philebus* applies the phrase *suntasis agria* (46d1) to mixed pleasures that are bittersweet, and involve feeling hot while shivering or feeling chilled while sweating. In the *Symposium* itself, Phaedrus early claimed of idiomatic *erōs*, ‘Gods too honour especially the zeal (*spoudē*) and courage that come with love’ (179d1-2).

⁷ This is confirmed at 208b4-6, though it states the goal as immortality rather than happiness: ‘Don’t be surprised that everything by nature values what springs from itself; this zeal (*spoudē*) and love that attends on every creature is for the sake of immortality.’

⁸ Here, of course, she is faithful to the Socratic psychology of earlier Platonic dialogues; see Price (1997: 254-5), (2011: 97).

called *erōs*. The reality is that, so far, we have got nowhere. We need to read ahead.

III

That we as yet have two contrasted but possible readings of 206b1-3 should be good news: it must increase our chances of coming up with a tenable interpretation once more of the evidence is in. As we proceed further in the dialogue, however, we meet many problems, whether we take the *erōs* of b3 to be generic or specific. After exploring these, I shall suggest a variant upon Rowe's reading that may fit the evidence better than that reading does as it stands, and so be preferred to its rivals.

It must help to identify what question is being asked to focus upon its answer:

What really is its [*erōs*'] function? ... I'll tell you: it's generating in beauty, whether in respect of the body or of the soul (206b3-8).

About 'generating in beauty' (whether by 'begetting' or 'giving birth' – Plato plays with the ambiguity of *tokos* and *tiktein*),⁹ much has been written, some by myself (1997: 21-35, 255-7). I shall here be brief.

The object of *erōs* is to possess the good forever (as is reiterated at 207a2), and yet nothing is presumed about life after death – perhaps because Diotima is describing universal human aspirations that cannot depend upon distinctive Platonic views at variance with traditional Greek religion (which bleakly envisaged immortality without the good). What human nature already provides, as an antidote to the ravages of time, is sexual reproduction. Both in procreating and nurturing offspring, all animals display just that intense commitment that Diotima has connected to a desire for eternal possession of the good; hence we may impute not just to human beings, but to 'mortal nature', an innate if mostly inarticulate aspiration towards immortality (207a6-d3).

It is in the presence of perceptible beauty that this becomes a conscious desire that motivates action (206c1-e5). Yet what shows that procreation offers more than a simulacrum of survival over time is that it re-enacts a pattern of automatic loss and replacement that alone offers a body continuation even through a lifetime (d4-e1). If living bodies persist through time, it is only through processes analogous to those active in sexual reproduction. Hence, if we count renewal through a life as a form of persistence that satisfies a desire for survival, we should count renewal through a sequence of descendants as also satisfying that desire. If we can only conceive this as *vicarious* survival, it is because of a crucial difference: as boy grows into a man, the boy disappears as the man appears, whereas, when a man begets a boy, the man remains in existence as the boy comes into existence.¹⁰ And yet, as Derek Parfit has asked of cases of fission in which a person seems to split into two persons, why should a double success thereby count as a failure? Logic may forbid a father to say, pointing to his son, 'I am *there*, and also *here*', and yet physical continuities link his past self to *both* present places.

Diotima speaks analogously of the persistence of a mind or mentality, with two salient differences. First, the rehearsing or conning or going over (*meletan*, 208a4) that replaces one memory with a new one is a conscious activity under the control of a subject. Secondly, the processes of disappearance and reappearance apply to 'the whole body' (207e1), but are never ascribed to the soul itself as well as its contents. These points are doubtless linked: it is the soul as a continuing subject that renews its own states. (This is how, though Diotima is silent about the Platonic doctrine of the essential immortality of the soul, she does not exclude it.) Now, just as I replace one memory by another just like it by *reminding myself of it*, I may pass on an idea to another person by *informing him of it*.¹¹ This is where Diotima locates the Greek tradition of pedagogic pederasty: 'It's by contact with what is beautiful [viz., a boy], and associating with it, that he [the lover] begets and procreates the things with which he was so long pregnant' (209c2-3). This actually resembles mental continuity within a life more than sexual reproduction resembles physical continuity; for rehearsing a thought by oneself and communicating it to another are both intentional activities, whereas the self-renewal of a body is an automatic and unconscious process.

All that I have just been rehearsing falls within erotic *erōs*, specifically conceived. At the

⁹ See Dover (1980: 147).

¹⁰ Thus Wordsworth's analogy, 'The Child is father of the Man', is inexact.

¹¹ As David Mabblerley pointed out to me, this anticipates Richard Dawkins's notion of the *meme* (analogous, of course to the physical *gene*), defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as 'an idea, [mode of] behavior or style that spreads from person to person within a culture'.

same time, it places that within the fundamental teleology of desire for ‘immortality together with the good’ (206e8-207a1). This deep diagnosis of the springs of sexuality has interesting implications for Plato’s sexual morality. Pausanias’ moralizing lover was set on sexual pleasure, but willing to associate it with philosophy and the rest of virtue (184d1). Diotima’s lover pregnant in soul may or may not make love to the boy, but must view this as at worst a perversion, and at best a diversion; for it fails to connect – even if it does not conflict – with his fundamental orientation towards immortality.

So far, I have drawn attention to nothing that tells against the view that, from her first mention of ‘generation in beauty’ (206b7-8), Diotima is focusing upon *erōs* idiomatically so called, though against the background of a more abstract teleology. Which suits Bury’s reading of 206b1-3 well. And yet there are uncertainties about the scope of the account. One arises even within personal relationships: Diotima describes the lover pregnant in soul as going round ‘looking for the beautiful object in which he might procreate; for he will never do so in what is ugly’; she even adds, in case there were any ambiguity, ‘He warms to beautiful bodies rather than to ugly ones’ (209b2-5). And yet mental fertility seems well exemplified in Socrates’ narrative of his relations with Diotima, which surely does not presuppose that he was good-looking when young. And why should we not find a paradigm of fertile psychic love not in a lover, however platonic, but in a father and mentor? George Devereux once wrote, I don’t know how truly, ‘The Greek father usually failed to counsel his son; instead, he counseled another man’s son, in whom he was erotically interested’ (1967: 78). And yet a union of generation, nurture, and education may seem to us to provide by far the fullest paradigm, both physical *and* mental, of the communication first of life and then of a way of life.¹²

Troublesome also are other features of Diotima’s presentation. In invoking the impact of poetry and legislation, she applies the language of generation freely: all poets are the ‘procreators’ of wisdom and the rest of virtue, things ‘that it is fitting for the soul to conceive and bring to birth’ (209a2-4); legislators such as Lycurgus and Solon ‘procreated’ laws and virtue of all sorts, which have since counted as their ‘children’ (d4-e4). Yet in this context she makes no mention of personal beauty as a partner or midwife. Are we to suppose that it is unnecessary, despite all that has been said, or that it is implicit?

Facing the same problem from a different point of view, Rowe prefers the second alternative (1998a: 255):

All creative activity that is worth anything, she [Diotima] suggests, occurs as a result of the sort of encounter Pausanias envisaged between the better sort of lover and his younger, beautiful beloved; and after all, if it is a matter of ‘procreation’, what could be more natural than to adopt that model – one which also underlies all the other speeches? ... And so it turns out that all great achievements, especially in poetry, and in legislation, must themselves have resulted from such encounters. Diotima does not explicitly say that the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, and the laws of Lycurgus and Solon (209d4-7), were ‘procreated’ in this kind of erotic context, yet that is the implication, since she has not mentioned any other kind of situation in which ‘spiritual’ procreation can take place.

Yet he then reads this as ironical (on Plato’s part if not Diotima’s – if we allow her any independence): ‘Here too, surely, we must detect the presence of irony and play, since once more the only alternative seems to be to have Socrates endorsing what is patently false, contrary to what he said in 198b-199b.’ That there has been some irony (on his part or hers) is clear enough from some things said within 209: only so can we understand Plato’s having her cite ‘all poets’ – even Agathon? – as procreators of ‘wisdom and the rest of virtue’ (209a3-4). It is more disconcerting if even her conception of ‘generation in beauty’, developed over several pages, is either subtly ironical, or blatantly false.

Alas, things only get worse if we adopt Rowe’s own view, which associates Diotima’s conception of ‘generation in beauty’ not just with erotic, but with generic, *erōs*. If one reads 206b1-3 like Bury, one must interpret the *erōs* of b3 as subserving the abstract *erōs* of b1 in a specific way. Rowe’s idea is the converse of that (1998a: 246-7):

¹² We may note that, at 208d4-5 Diotima cites Codrus as dying on behalf of his sons, with whom he was hardly in love; also that men pregnant in soul are described as ‘pregnant in their souls *still more* than in their bodies’ (209a1-2). Even if Plato (as Jasper Griffin once remarked to me) was ‘the first unmarried man in Europe’, we do not have to think of the naturally celibate and childless. However, it must make a difference whether, at 209b1, we read *theios* (‘divine’) or, with Dover, *ēitheos* (‘unmarried’).

So what *is* Diotima doing? Here is my proposal: rather than taking us back to ordinary eros, her purpose in this whole context is to interpret eros for the good *as if it followed the pattern of, and involved the same sort of 'activity' as, ordinary or 'specific' eros*. All our desire, all our eros, I for the good – or rather for permanent possession of the good, which we can only achieve through procreation in beauty.

It has troubled us that generation in beauty, if always associated with erotic *erōs*, does not seem necessary, or even particularly *à propos*, for becoming immortal through passing on ideas and ways of life. Puzzling now *as well* is how generation in beauty, so understood, can be equated with *erōs* in action (as it was in 206b1-3) if *erōs* is generic. Rowe writes as follows (1998a: 246, n. 18):

Diotima seems to me to give every indication of wanting to attach the activity of 'procreation in beauty' to the whole of whatever eros in question in 206b1-4; that that eros is generic ('fundamental') eros; and that therefore money-making, gymnastics, and every other activity *ought* then, somehow, to involve 'procreation in beauty'.

His response to the difficulty is to impute, yet again, a lack of seriousness:

I would go on to protest, however, that this is to interrogate the idea too hard, since (on my interpretation, at least) it will have a high metaphorical content. The idea of 'procreation in beauty' is specifically adapted to *creative* activity – what Agathon, too, made Eros responsible for; if asked how Diotima's account would handle others sorts of activity, I presume that Socrates would simply abandon the metaphor on her behalf, and return to the barer account of desire and eros in terms of the good.

In effect, this replaces an interpretative principle of charity (we should try hard, in interpreting any philosophical text that merits our attention, to interpret it as making sense) by free-wheeling imputations of irony. It is now suggested that even my focal text, 206b1-3, was not to be taken seriously. But then we must wonder what force can attach to Rowe's objections to a rival reading of those lines: if they were never serious, why are we not free to interpret them however we like? Indeed, Socrates' reply to Diotima's question about the function of *erōs*, 'If I could say [what its function is], I certainly wouldn't be admiring you for your wisdom, and visiting you to learn just these very things', b5-6, is just the kind of flattering and self-deprecating remark that is most often read as displaying Socratic irony. So perhaps there *was* an obvious answer to the question, and Socrates' failure to provide any was no objection to Bury's reading of b1-3, even if (as I disputed) that makes the answer obvious.

Thus finding ourselves in a swamp, we must try to get back to firmer ground, even if it is far from *ideally* firm. Taking the *erōs* of 206b3 as specific and idiomatic, and generation in beauty as its mode of operation, the worst objections we incurred were two: a mentality can equally be propagated within a personal relationship without any element of sexual attraction; and it can also be propagated, and far more widely, outside any personal relationship. If, in the sphere of the mind, *generation* need not be *generation in beauty*, it has not been explained why *erōs*, in its restricted sense, should be privileged as a means to the ultimate human goal of achieving 'immortality together with the good' (206e8-207a1).

This complaint has force, and yet it may be a fair objection *to Plato*. (An interpretative principle of charity has its limits, and cannot presume, even of great philosophers, that they always prove their points.) Further, it is worth noting what is said, and what is *not* said, about the function of poetry and legislation. As I cited, Diotima is happy here to apply the metaphor of *procreating* (209a4, d7, e2) *children* or *offspring* (d2, e4). Yet she does not speak in this context explicitly of generation *in beauty*. So it may be that she has to be willing to concede that, while generation in beauty, understood as a function of personal *erōs*, is indeed important as a mode of propagating ideas and thereby achieving a kind of immortality, it enjoys no monopoly in this role. It is true, as Rowe objected, that Diotima *had* 'not mentioned any other kind of situation in which "spiritual" procreation can take place' (1988a: 255) – but perhaps she *has now*.

Doubtless, the upshot is unideal. Even in this role, practising personal *erōs* must have the advantage of being open to many who cannot hope to make a general impact, cultural or political; for surely there are more men 'pregnant in their souls still more than in their bodies' (209a1-2) than there can be successful poets or legislators. And yet it may be that, as a mode of self-immortalization, generation in beauty is a second best, open to minor practitioners like you and me, but not really

deserving to take up the time of a Socrates or Plato.

IV

That may well be a conclusion to live with. (Plato isn't a philosopher whom we generally read in order to be convinced.) However, I shall conclude by mooted an alternative, which takes the *erōs* of 206b3 to be identical to that of b1, and yet aims to make it plausible that generation in beauty should be its mode of operation.

It has long troubled interpreters that Diotima offers no real argument for supplementing the Socratic truism that the ultimate goal of a man's desire is his *eudaimonia* (204e2-205a3) by this further thesis:

It is immortality, together with the good, that must necessarily be desired, according to what has been agreed before – if indeed love is of permanent possession of the good. Well, from this statement it necessarily follows that love is of immortality as well (206e8-207a4).

What was agreed before was simply a series of questions and answers (206a3-13). Just giving the answers, we have this sequence of thoughts: people love the good, and to *possess* the good, and to *always* possess the good. However, this appears to rest less upon an argument than a verbal sleight of hand. Dover makes the point incisively (1980: 144):

Stage (7) [that all eros is a desire to have what is good always], which is needed for her [Diotima's] argument about the desire for immortality (20bb-208b), does not rest on reasoning at all; it is foreshadowed by 205a6f. *pantas t'agatha boulesthai hautois einai aei*, where, although a Greek reader would be bound to say (if asked) that *aei* goes with *boulesthai* (as it does with *erōsi* in b1), the collocation *einai aei* is meant to lodge in our minds and reduce the likelihood of our objecting to 209a9-12. Naturally, as long as the alternative possibilities of having good and having bad exist, we wish to have good, but it does not follow from that that we ourselves wish to exist for ever.

However, if a desire for happiness is neither itself, nor entails, any desire for eternal happiness, we do not have to suppose that Diotima is *inferring* the second from the first.¹³ Rather, she may be *adding* it as a distinct though related motivation, in order to create a *new* conception of abstract *erōs* which better serves to illuminate Plato's current concerns (whatever exactly these may be). When we read at 206b1, 'given that love is always of this', viz. of possessing the good forever, we should keep in mind her new conception, and, in *this* context, set aside the familiar Socratic one.¹⁴ If we do this, we have the option of following Rowe in identifying the *erōs* of b3 with that of b1, and of regarding generation in beauty as its distinguishing mode of operation, but without thereby incurring the danger of having to apply the notion even to making money and taking exercise (mentioned together at 205d4-5).

There remains the question just how the phrase 'generation in beauty' should best be understood. If it is to hope to capture all the operations of *erōs* for immortality, its application cannot be restricted to the context of an erotic relationship. And then we may be able, in principle, to accommodate poets and legislators after all. (I say 'in principle' since Plato may not really think much of those whom Diotima cites.) Dover writes, 'Diotima does not explain beauty medium "in" which Homer "generated" poems or Solon laws, but it can only be the virtuous character of the societies for which Homer sang and Solon legislated' (1980: 151-2). That is one possibility, and perhaps the one most likely to occur to the reader of 209. Yet let us read on – and we shall face the final implications of how we read 206b1-3.

¹³ Diotima emphasizes that *erōs* is *necessarily* of immortality together with the good (207a1, a3), but conditionally upon its being of eternal possession of the good (a2); so the inference is only from a wording to a rewording.

¹⁴ Cf. Sier (1997: 100): 'Indes heißt es 207a1 ausdrücklich, der Eros richte sich auf die Athanasie *meta agathou*, und zum Schluß (211e4-212a7) verspricht Diotima dem, der das Wesen des Schönen erfaßt hat, den doppelten Gewinn eines geglückten Lebens und einer bevorzugten ("echten") Unsterblichkeit. Am Anfang und am Ende (vgl. auch 208e4) erscheinen Eudaimonie und Athanasie als *zwei* verknüpfte, aber differente *telē*.' Which I welcome, so long as it means that, as 206e8-201a1 clearly indicate, immortality becomes not a separate goal (which would run counter to the objection to Aristophanes at 205d10-206a1), but one aspect of a new and more complex goal, which is 'immortality together with the good'. However, Sier continues, 'wie es für den generischen und nicht für den vorausgesetzten spezifischen Eros kennzeichnend ist', which admits only a single generic *erōs*; so he seems *not* to be envisaging my proposal that desire for eternal happiness is distinct from desire for happiness *simpliciter*, and that human beings are subject to *both*.

There has been, and will always be, debate about how closely to connect the ascent passage (201a-212a), and its ‘greater mysteries’, to the ‘lesser mysteries’ that preceded them. It is here at last that *erōs* is linked to philosophy, and more particularly Platonic philosophy. I have argued in the past that Diotima must still have in mind the generation in beauty that has been expounded since 206b7-8 if her line of thought is not to be broken-backed. Taking this to involve personal relationships, I particularly appealed for textual support to her talk of ‘correctly loving a boy’ (211b5-6), *through* which – and not *after* which – the lover approaches his final destination.¹⁵ I still think that Diotima retains *an* interest in personal *erōs*, and that, *if asked* in whom true virtue is to be begotten (212a3-5), she would mention a loved one as well as a lover; but I would now concede that her focus has extended more widely. An early clue is that the *logoi* that the lover will ‘beget’, once he has come to appreciate that beauty of soul is more valuable than beauty of body, are described as ‘the sorts of words ... that will make young men into better men’ (210b8-c3). This envisages not just wise words that *would* edify other young men, but winged words that *do* enjoy a wider circulation. (Philosophy has yet to make its entrance; but we can think of the metric moralizing of a Tyrtaeus.) As I have stressed before, it is said repeatedly that what are generated are *logoi* (210a7-8, c1-2, d4-5); if this is not made explicit after the culmination of the ascent (d6-e1), it would be rash to infer anything more significant than some restraint in repetition. If the lover is finally to become ‘loved by the gods’ and ‘as immortal as any man can become’ (212a6-7), this is surely because, in this respect like the gods, he not only achieves true virtue for himself, but displays it (in the only way in which it can be no less blessed to receive than to give) in transmitting it to another *and* others, plural as well as singular.¹⁶

More emphatic here than any discarding, or retaining, of a personal object of love is a transfer of attention and a depersonalization of inspiration: the lover becomes inspired not just by the beauty, physical or mental, of a particular person, but by that of practices and laws (210c3-4), and even of branches of knowledge (c6), before he comes at length to the contemplation of the Form of Beauty itself. This admits a new application of the phrase ‘generation in beauty’: ‘the great sea of beauty’ whose contemplation inspires the begetting of ‘many beautiful and magnificent words and thoughts’ (d3-6) is an impersonal beauty that releases an enhanced fertility. While Diotima’s attention has now shifted to matters more Platonic, this surely permits a re-reading of the fertility of Homer and Hesiod, Lycurgus and Solon. We need not now suppose, with Dover, that they were inspired by a beauty already present in their society; nor need we surmise, with Rowe, the backroom presence of a *bel ami*. We may rather envisage that the beauty that inspired them, real or meretricious, characterized their own dreams of a significant past or a better future.

If this is right, Diotima’s conception of generation in beauty extended beyond erotic contexts even before being transcended in the ascent. What the notion turns out to capture falls far short of the widest genus of action for the sake of the good, but goes well beyond the narrow species of erotic activity involving a pair of participants, whether in making love or in exchanging noble sentiments. This newly identified sphere is one of *creativity*.¹⁷ This encompasses a wide range of activities through which an agent transmits aspects of his particular or distinctive being, physical or mental, to future generations. It is this that she can intelligibly, if boldly, subsume under a general and innate human aspiration towards being happy forever. If this is indeed her intention, we can hope to make sense of 206b1-3 without either extending *erōs* so widely that its operation cannot be identified with generation in beauty in any plausible sense, or restricting it so narrowly that this only becomes one path among others leading towards immortality.

Is such a line of interpretation permissible? I think so, at least given the competition. Is it persuasive? That I must leave to you. Let me end, however, by expressing just one reservation. It would be a welcome confirmation if the ‘intense zeal’ that is associated with *erōs* at 206b3 derived precisely from a desire for immortality. Well, it may be that, at this point, it does. And yet earlier, at 205d1-8, the ‘supreme and crafty love’ from which, it appeared in context, even the zeal of erotic lovers was derived was nothing but a desire for good things and *eudaimonia*, with no mention, at that point, of immortality as an associated *desideratum*. There are graver objections, I have argued, to the two familiar alternatives between which I was initially trying to adjudicate. Yet just this failure of perfect fit leaves me, for all that, with a scintilla of doubt. I hope that Plato held his two abstract conceptions of *erōs* apart; I cannot be confident that he did. It is possible, of course, that he intended to leave things open. I leave you with the thought that we might imitate him.

¹⁵ I am glad that, for all our other divergences, Rowe here agrees with me (1998a: 257).

¹⁶ When we read that a love of wisdom is ‘ungrudging’ (*aphthonos*, 210d6), we are put in mind of acts of generosity *towards others* (e.g., *Timaeus* 25c6) that are characteristic of divinity (ibid., 29e1-30a3).

¹⁷ A suggestive term here is *heuretikos*, which may connote ‘inventive’ or ‘quick in discovery’; it is applied to certain craftsmen, who are associated with poets, at 209a5; cf. *Republic* V 455b7, *Politicus* 286e2, 287a4.

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Desire and will in the *Symposium*

Álvaro Vallejo Campos

The generic character of love

It is by no means clear what we mean when we refer to the concept of will, because it does not mean the same for everyone who uses this concept, and, from our special point of view, different philosophers have held completely different theories about the existence and character of will. The main object of my exposition will be to gather together separate threads and elements in Plato, which are clearly present especially in the *Symposium* and other dialogues and will have a decisive presence in the concept of will as it is propounded by later philosophers.

The main thesis of my presentation is that in Plato's concept of love, as expounded in the *Symposium*, provides a clear antecedent of the concept of will which will be clearly distinguished as an autonomous faculty in later philosophers, such as Saint Augustine or Saint Thomas Aquinas. From this viewpoint I would like to concentrate on two characters of Plato's concept of love which are interconnected and make this perspective possible. First of all, the general form which is imposed on all the particular classes of desire, if they are to operate in the life of the soul, and secondly the difference between the mere concept of desire and the will, so conceived, which will make it possible to recognize the will as a third element between reason and desire. I will analyse both aspects separately.

Dealing with the general character of love, Socrates, following Diotimas' indications, protests again the particularization of the meaning acquired by the word in current Greek, where *érōs*, as it is well known, means specifically sexual desire. The same happens with the word *poiēsis* (205b8), which designates only poetry, instead of meaning all the arts that are capable of bringing something into existence that did not exist before. We must recognize that Plato is not very consistent in the use of the vocabulary and in this specific case he uses indistinguishably *epithymía* (200e4, 205d2, 207a7), *boúlēsis* (205a5) and *erōs* (200e5, 205a5, 207a7) or the corresponding verbs *epithymeîn* (200a3, 202d2, etc.), *boulesthai* (205a2-3) and *erân* (205b2) and we could also add the philo-compounds verbs (205d5). But what I would like to stress is the general character to which Plato is making reference in the *Symposium*. It is true, as a scholar has pointed out¹, that while Aristotle has a generic term, such as *órexis*, for the different classes of desire (*boúlēsis*, *thymós*, *epithymía*), "Plato has no comparable genus and no generic term". Nevertheless, in direct relation to the concept of love explained by Diotima, we do find in the *Symposium* a generic concept of desire which is very close to what we would call a concept of will. Plato uses the words *érōs* and *boúlēsis* interchangeably to mean that it is an invariable law of human will to desire the good or to desire under the appearance of the good (*sub specie boni*). He expresses in this text a generic concept of will as a longing for the good. When I say generic I am referring to two different aspects. First, it is generic because it is a form of will which is attributed to all mankind. "All men perpetually desire to be in possession of the good"² (205a), says Diotima, but this thesis is repeated in other dialogues, such as the *Meno*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Republic*. In the *Meno*, Socrates says that nobody desires (*boúletai*) what is evil (78a-b) and, conversely, that everyone desires good things (*epithymouûsin*, 77e). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates, once more, establishes what he considers a general law valid "for everybody" (*peri pantôn*, 467d6), that man acts on every single occasion "in pursuit of the good" (*tò agathòn ára diōkontes*, 468b1). This is a paradoxical thesis, because Plato asserts that, as far as the wish for good things is common to all humanity, "no man is better than his neighbour" (78b5-6). This means that, with respect to the will, the good man is no better than a tyrant and, in fact, Plato affirms in the *Gorgias* that if a man kills another or banishes him or confiscates his property, he does these things thinking that they are for his advantage and thinking, erroneously, of course, that they are good (cfr. *Meno* d-e). So both of them act under the same formal appearance of "willing the good" (cfr. *tà agathà boulómetha*, *Gorg.* 468c). But, even in the tripartite psychology of the *Republic*, we can find the same thesis, that the good is what every soul pursues (*diōkei*) and for its sake does all that it does (505e).

This longing for the good is therefore generic, because it can be attributed to all men, but, in a second sense, it also constitutes a general form that, under certain conditions, can be assigned not only to the rational part, but also to the other parts of the soul. The character of the examples given in the *Gorgias*, where Polus and Socrates speak of the power attributed to the rhetoricians, gives no room for doubt about their irrational origin, for on this occasion Polus refers to rhetoricians who, like

¹C.Kahn, "Plato's Theory of Desire", *Review of Metaphysics*, XLI, 1987, 77-103, p. 79.

²W.Hamilton trans., *Plato, The Symposium*, Introduction and Translation, Penguin Books, 1951 (and reprints).

tyrants, are able to put to death any man they will (*boúlōntai*, 466d1) or commit any other crime in order to satisfy their selfish passions. Nevertheless, Socrates is ready to assure that even in these cases, with people who have to kill other fellow citizens or “sail and suffer dangers and troubles”, they will (*bouletai*, 467d3) that thing (wealth), for the sake of which they are doing all that. They will all these things, persuaded that they are “advantageous” (*ōphélīma*, 468c4) for “we will the good” (*tā agathā boulómetha*, 468c5). I want to emphasize these kind of examples because it seems clear that the principle of longing for the good is valid not only for reason or a rational wish, but for all kinds of desires. Even in the case of objects of irrational desires, such as killing a man, banishing him or confiscating his property (468b5-6), we can apply the same principle, that men always act under the appearance of the good, doing what “seems best to them” (*hoti àn autoîs dóxēi béltiston eînai*, *Gorg.* 466e1-2).

It is true that Plato has no common term for the different classes of desires, as Aristotle has with *órexī*, nor does he use a firm and consistent terminology. For example, in the *Charmides* (167e1-5) Socrates seems to establish a contrast between the terms *epithymía* and *boulēsis*, the objects of which are, respectively, pleasure (*hēdonē*) and the good (*agathón*). Nevertheless, we find other texts where this contrast, characteristic of Aristotle³, cannot be confirmed and both terms seem to function as synonyms, as in the *Seventh Letter* (331a1-2) or the *Republic* (426c4), or texts, such as the *Laws* (687e6-9), where *boulēsis* expresses an element of human personality independent of reason and thus not necessarily in accordance with *phrónēsis* and *noûs*.

Turning back to the *Symposium*, we find in Diotima’s concept of love a generic character of will, a general form under which all the objects of the different classes of desire can be presented to the unified centre of the person. Diotima refers to a generic concept of love (*to kephálaion*, 205d), distinguishing between this general character and the specific sexual desire which usually receives the name of *érōs*, and speaks in this sense of a “desire (*epithymía*) for good and happiness” (205d2) that can be found in many different ways. Here, love, taken in this generic sense, is recognized as such in three different fields: in business, in love for gymnastics and in love of wisdom (205d4-5). In the interpretation which I will offer of this text, I take these three fields to be a reference to the desires which derive from the three parts of the soul, which will be analysed in detail in the *Republic*. Good and happiness are sought in various ways and through different types of life⁴. One of these is to pursue money: this is the meaning of *kata chrēmatismon* mentioned by Diotima (205d4). People can also express their desire for the good through business, trying to make money. The good, aimed at by the will, appears as money, a desire which the tripartite theory of the soul in the *Republic* attributes to the appetitive and irrational part, because money (Socrates says there, IX 580e5) “is the chief instrument for the gratification of such desires” concerned with food, drink and love.

In second place, the text mentions the term “*kata philogymnastían*” (205d3) as another form under which good and happiness are sought for. This word and its derivatives mean the love for athletics. But what is the aim of the person who is fond of athletics? In Plato’s opinion, what moves him is not primarily the desire to earn money, but the love of honour and victory (*philotimía*, *philonikía*), which are just the impulses characteristic of the choleric or high-spirited part of the soul (*Rep.* 586c9, 582e4-5, 548c7, 545a3). Depending on the part of the soul which takes the lead in human life, we have three classes of men and the choleric one is a lover of honour who regards, instead, “the pleasure that comes from money as vulgar and low” (581d5). This kind of man, bound to pertain to the military class in the ideal state of the *Republic*, is highly sensitive to the pleasures which come from “predominance, victory, and good repute” (581b2). These aims, under which such kinds of people seek the good and happiness, are easily achieved through the practice of gymnastic and athletic games. In fact, Plato attributes to the timocratic man, “due to the predominance of the high-spirited element” (548c), this same devotion to gymnastics (*philogymnastés*, *Rep.* VIII 549a6), mentioned in the *Symposium*. So, I take this second motive through which many people look for the good as a clear reference to the desires derived from the choleric part of the soul, corresponding to the tripartite psychology of the *Republic*.

In third place, our text mentions philosophy or, most exactly, the love of wisdom (*katá philosophían*, 205d3). But this is the dominant impulse of the rational part of the soul and also the

³Cfr. *Metaphysics*, XII 7, 1072a28; although for Aristotle *boulēsis* is a rational desire, considering all the texts, I agree with R. Sorabji, that “the general effect is to make *boulēsis* distinct from reason, though still related to it”, see “The Concept of the will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor”, in T. Pink and M. W. F. Stone (eds.), *The Will and Human Action, From Antiquity to the Present Day*, London, 2004, 6-28, p. 8.

⁴On the relation between the different fields of business, gymnastics and philosophy, mentioned in the *Symposium*, and the three types of life or “primary classes of men” distinguished in the *Republic* (583c), see F. M. Cornford, “The Doctrine of Eros in Plato’s *Symposium*”, in G. Vlastos, *Plato, A Collection of Critical Essays*, Notre Dame, 1978, II, 119-143, p. 123.

chief aim of people dominated by this part who choose a life devoted to the search of the truth. The lover of learning and lover of wisdom (*philomathès, philósophon*, *Rep.* IX 581b9), alluded to in this text of the *Symposium*, pursues a type of life where the good and happiness are sought in the form of knowledge as well as the pleasures derived from it. Therefore, the text, in my opinion, speaks of a single form under which the will is oriented towards the good and the search for happiness, but by three different paths which allude to the dominant impulses of each part of the tripartite soul and which in the *Republic* will give rise to the existence of three different kinds of men, depending on the chief motive of their lives: the life of “the philosopher or the lover of wisdom, the lover of victory and the lover of gain”. From this viewpoint, -and this can be a controversial issue-, I see no difference in Plato between a rational and an irrational faculty of desiring, in the sense that all the different desires have to be referred to a common centre which imposes a unified form on them, if they have to operate within the common life of the soul. In conclusion, in the *Symposium*, no contrast can be drawn between the good, on the one hand, and honour and pleasure, on the other, as some scholars have tried to establish⁵, but of a single will for the good through different objects such as money, victory or, naturally, knowledge.

The theory of love in the Symposium and the psychology of the Republic

My thesis is that this common character that the *Symposium* emphasizes is not incompatible with the tripartite psychology of the *Republic*. This common centre is not identified with reason, but it is said to be a character of a generic dynamics of man oriented towards the good, which is called love. It is true that *érōs* is identified with a desire or *epithymía* of good things, but, in this generic character, *érōs* can also be distinguished from the particular desires which are oriented towards the satisfaction of human needs. This is why I interpret that Plato is envisaging, through this general form connected to *érōs*, something different from reason and particular desires, something which is in the line of what the medieval philosophy would call the *voluntas*, will. Nobody would deny that Saint Thomas of Aquinas has a distinctive concept of will, whatever elements of intellectualism can be found in his moral philosophy. When I say that the *Symposium* offers a central thread of the concept of the will, I am thinking for example of Saint Thomas’ saying that “love is the first movement of will” and that “good is essentially and especially the object of the will (and the appetite)” (S.Th.1a, 20, 1). Although he is at pains to demonstrate that “natural necessity does not take away the liberty of the will”, quoting (q.82, art.1, *reply to Objection 1*) the words of Saint Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* v, 10), his conception of a free will, responsible for human sin, does not prevent him from recognizing, in a Platonic-Aristotelian manner, that “the will can tend to nothing except under the aspect of good” (q.82, art.2, *reply to objection 1*) and in this sense he has to accept that “the will adheres to the last end” (q.82, art.2) the same as “the intellect naturally and of necessity adheres to the first principles”.

Naturally, I am not suggesting that we can find in the *Symposium* or in other Platonic dialogues a complete and coherent concept of the will, but that the generic form imposed by Plato’s theory of love on the singular and particular desires directed to different objects is a clear anticipation of the theory of will which will distinguish with this name a third factor besides reason and desire. Some scholars have interpreted in this sense the role of the choleric part of the soul. To the suggestion that the Greeks had no concept of the will as an autonomous element⁶, it has been held⁷ that the *thymoeidēs* is a strong candidate for this role in the sense, not that Plato is distinguishing the will as an independent function, but, “in so far as he is acknowledging a role for will” that makes it independent of reason and desire. The case of Leontius in the *Republic* and his struggle against his base desires with the support of the spirited element has probably been a suggestive source for the reflection of later philosophers on the nature of the will, as has been pointed out⁸. Nevertheless, in my view the distinction between this general character of love, with which all types of desire have to be confronted, and the desires in themselves can represent an important factor in the anticipation of a theory of the will. This impression is reinforced, when we also take into account the distinction which the *Republic* seems to establish between desires and values or, from another perspective, the conflict between the different parts of the soul and the unity of the person who has to choose between different motivational drives.

We need to recognize with Dihle that Plato’s concept of love “was not transformed into an

⁵Cfr. R. Sorabji, *locus cit.*, p.8.

⁶Cfr. J. Mansfeld, “The idea of will in Chrysippus, Posidonius and Galen”, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1991), ed. J. Cleary, Leiden, 1993, 107-141.

⁷Cfr. D. Sedley, “Commentary on Mansfeld”, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1991), ed. J. Cleary, Leiden, 1993, 146-152, 147.

⁸Cfr. H. Oberdiek, “The Will”, in G.H.R. Parkinson (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, London, 1989, 463-487, p.465.

operable and terminologically fixed theory”⁹, so that he or his successors could have introduced the will as an “isolated factor of intention or volition into their doctrine of human action”. This is partly true: Plato’s concept of love perhaps does not provide us with a consolidated terminology, but it does offer a philosophical doctrine that can be developed into a consistent theory of the will. This doctrine comes to the surface by contrast with the tripartite doctrine of desire that we find in the *Republic*, because the three parts of the soul are seen as independent motivational forces, which, at first sight, are not necessarily oriented to the good but rather to their own proper aim. This is naturally most clear in the case of the irrational desires. In the *Republic*, when Socrates introduces the theory of the tripartite soul, he deals with thirst and hunger in a special way and seems to distinguish the brute force of these desires from the conception of the will that we find in the *Symposium*, for he says that we should not be disconcerted and be led to affirm that “everybody desires not drink, but good drink and not food but good food” (*Rep.* IV 438a). We are expressly told that, taking into account the nature of the different desires and their special aims, we should not apply the principle that “all men desire good” (438a). Instead we are asked to include the desires into the class of relative terms and, as such, to conceive them as things “related to a qualified correlate” (438a-b). This means that desires can be related intrinsically to objects that are independent of the good. Some scholars have found that this doctrine¹⁰, which makes the existence of the psychological conflict possible, is incompatible with the previous principle of that universal *boúlēsis* for good things that Socrates states, as we have seen, not only in the *Symposium*, but also in the *Gorgias* and the *Meno*.

If we confront the generic theory of “love and *boúlēsis*” of the *Symposium* with this conception of desire, expounded in the *Republic*, as an impulse intrinsically attached to certain objects and, thus, independent of the good, the contradiction seems clear. Some intents have been made to combine both viewpoints without contradiction. Some scholars have tried to limit the desire for the good to the rational part of the soul¹¹, given that the irrational desires are presented in the *Republic* as those more inclined to oppose the rational part that is in charge of looking for the “whole”, that is, “for the community composed of the three” parts of the soul (442c). Nevertheless, as we have seen, in the *Symposium* the generic *boúlēsis*, whose object is the good, is not reduced to the desires characteristic of the rational part of the soul and we are explicitly told that this longing for the good is achieved not only *katà philosophían*, but in fields very different from those which are exclusively of a rational or philosophical character. In fact, they are also pursued through business and in the competitive world of athletics, i.e., *katà chrēmatismon* and *katà philogymnastían*. If now we turn to the *Republic*, although the tripartite theory of the soul sustains that the parts are motivational forces attached to their proper objects, independently of the good, we again find the thesis that “every soul pursues and for its sake does all that it does” (505d-e). Here the generic character of this law of the human will, referred essentially to the good, is not applied only to every man (*hápasa psychē*), but also to everything which the soul does (*pánta práttei*). Thus we cannot interpret it, as Kahn does¹², in the sense that “the good is what we all want *in so far as we are rational*”. I would say rather that the good is what we all want insofar as we are human beings and we have a capacity to choose in terms of values, that is, in terms of images of the good capable of persuading the unity of the soul that has to act. This concept of the will, which has to be distinguished from mere desire, derives probably from Socrates, as Jaeger held¹³, and it must be considered the fundament of Socratic intellectualism. The determinant role of the intellect should not diminish the importance of the doctrine that holds, as Jaeger said, “to be a contradiction in itself to say that will can knowingly will what is bad”. In accordance with this view, “human will has a purpose” “because it is directed towards the good”¹⁴.

Dealing with the same problem in Aristotle, T.Irwin¹⁵ reminds us that some critics who claim that Greek philosophers have no concept of the will may really mean that they do not hold a voluntarist conception. In my opinion, this could also be applied to Plato, considering the general character of *érōs* explained in the *Symposium*. The problem is in what measure this doctrine, universally repeated in the dialogues, even in the *Republic*, can be reconciled with the existence of

⁹A.Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, London, 1982, p.54.

¹⁰In accordance with C.Kahn, the doctrine of Diotima “ignores altogether the broader spectrum of Calliclean appetites” and “as a consequence the phenomena of psychic conflict” expounded in the *Republic*; cfr. *locus cit.*, p.95.

¹¹See C.Kahn, *locus cit.*, p.89, C.Rowe, “The Place of the *Republic* in Plato’s Political Thought”, in G.R.F.Ferrari, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, Cambridge, 2007, 27-54, p.52, n.30.

¹²*Locus cit.*, p.89. For C.Rowe, “it is in virtue of reason’s natural connection with the good that “every soul” (importantly, not the whole soul) . . . does everything [it can] for the sake of [the good]” (6.505d-e), *loc.cit.*, *idem*.

¹³W.Jaeger, *Paideia, The Ideals of Greek Culture*, translated from the second German edition by Gilbert Highet, Oxford, 1971, vol.II, p.68.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵T.H.Irwin, “Who discovered the Will?”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6, 1992, 453-473, p. 468.

desires intrinsically attached to objects that cannot be identified with the good. The resolution of this problem can in itself prove the existence of a concept of the will that is operating under the surface of the conflict of desires, as presented in the *Republic*. This is why I do not entirely agree with Dihle when he contends that “Plato restricted himself to stating that all three parts of the human soul have their special share of volition among their functions”¹⁶.

Values and Desires

We must bear in mind that Plato maintains in the *Republic* both doctrines, the thesis held in the *Symposium* that every soul pursues the good in every action and at the same time the existence of desires attached to objects that are independent of the good. To combine the two theses, we have to analyse the distinction between values and desires, for this distinction, introduced in my opinion in the *Republic*, also makes it possible to understand the concept of the will that is beginning to operate as something different from mere desire. Dealing with conflicting desires that threaten “to seize the citadel of the young man’s soul” (*Rep.*560b), Socrates alludes to “false and braggart words and opinions” which constitute the cognitive and axiological counterpart of the desires belonging to the irrational parts of the soul. Why are these *lógoi* and *dóxai* (560c2) necessary for desires (*epithymíai*, 560a-b) to accomplish their aim? They are necessary because desires have to be converted into values capable of persuading the will which operates in the unity of the soul under the appearance of the good. We find in the *Republic* many references to the unity of the soul or to “an entire soul” that is able to direct our conduct in accordance with “the wisdom loving part” (cfr. *Rep.*586e4)¹⁷ or that is equally capable of been misguided by the irrational forces. The parts of the soul are motivational drives, but they cannot operate without this cognitive and axiological background. Desires and values are not the same because of the difference between these motivational and sometimes blind forces, from one part, and the will, from the other, that has to act under the principle of this generic *boúlēsis* mentioned in the *Symposium*. In a memorable passage, Socrates describes what happens when the irrational desires achieve their triumph against opposing desires of a different nature: “they euphemistically denominate insolence ‘good breeding’, license ‘liberty’, prodigality ‘magnificence’ and shamelessness ‘manly spirit’” (*Rep.* 560e-561a). The conversion of *hýbris*, *anarchía*, *asōtía* and *anaideía* in *eupaideusía*, *eleuthería*, *megaloprépeia* or *andreía* respectively, is necessary because the motivational brute forces of irrational desires have to be converted into values capable of persuading the will. The words just mentioned do not represent desires but recognizable values of Greek culture¹⁸. The difference between a desire, which has its origin in a part of the soul, and a value is that a desire is to its respective object and a value adds to this mere force an image of the good, so that it can prevail against other opposing desires in the unity of the person who acts by the will that pursues the good in every action.

Returning to the *Symposium* once more, our dialogue describes the inverse movement. For in the passages just mentioned of the *Republic*, we are faced with a discourse of ideological justification, by means of which the base desires of the irrational parts of the soul try to appear as something valuable and honourable, while values of a contrary character, such as “temperance” (*sōphrosýnē*), “moderation (*metriótēs*), and orderly expenditure (*kosmía dapanē*)” have to be presented as “want of manhood” (*anandría*), “rusticity (*agroikía*) and illiberality (*aneuleuthería*)” (560d3-5). This labour of transforming the base desires into respectable values, described by Socrates as a process of *enkōmiázēin* and *hypokorízesthai* (560e4), is possible by means of a rhetorical strategy consisting in “calling something bad by a fair name” or contrarily “calling something good by a bad name”, as Liddel’s lexicon reminds us in relation to the last word (*hypokorízesthai*). The ladder of love in the *Symposium* describes the inverse movement by which objects that are not immediately attractive to the base desires can become valuable and even capable of transforming the initial motivational forces. Naturally we discover a cognitive element in this process, which was also present in the inverse one just described, and thus Socrates repeatedly uses verbs such as *katanoēsai*, *hēgeísthai* or *ennoēsai* (*Symp.* 210a-c) that indicate to what degree this cognitive background is necessary to transform an initial desire attached to certain objects into something different, into an object capable of resulting more attractive to a faculty that in my opinion is nearer to what we call the will than to appetite or mere desire. The result of this process, which is the process of the Socratic *paideia*, consists in creating values or, as Diotima herself says, in making certain things, such as beauty of soul, “more valuable” (*timiōteron*) than others, such as beauty of the body. A value is thus an object that can gain

¹⁶A.Dihle, *opus cit.*, p.53.

¹⁷See A.Vallejo Campos, “The Theory of Conflict in Plato’s *Republic*”, in N.Notomi-L.Brisson (eds.), *Dialogues on Plato’s Politeia (Republic)*, Sankt Augustin, 2013, 192-198, 196 ss.

¹⁸See A.Vallejo, *locus cit.*, p.197.

the approval of the will: this entails a cognitive process which produces not only new valuable objects for that “*érōs* and *boúlēsis*” which loves *sub specie boni*, but also a relaxing of the intensity of the previous passion (210b). And this last consequence is exactly what we might expect from the channelling metaphor of the *Republic*, where it is explicitly said that “when in a man the desires incline strongly to any one thing, they are weakened for other things” (486d). This movement of debilitating or reinforcing in virtue of which one is able to resist and even transform the force of his passions and desires is the life of the will that is going to be adequately stressed in those philosophers who seek to work out specifically the autonomy of the will. The intellectualist and cognitive character of this movement can be a determining factor, due to the force of the images that the educational process has to put before the eyes of the subject to persuade him. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the existence of the will envisaged by Plato in the *Symposium* as a longing for the good. In this sense, I would like to remember that passage in the *Symposium* where Diotima works out the consequences of her definition of love whose object is “the perpetual possession of the good” (206a). She is reflecting about the different objects under which that generic faculty can exercise its influence in human conduct and through which we look for the good, and she warns us of the occasional irrationality (*alogía*, 208c3), sometimes wholly unconscious, that men can display in this search. The possibility of this irrational character means, in my opinion, that the *boúlēsis* and *érōs* described in the *Symposium* is not merely a byproduct of cognition, but an independent faculty not necessarily identified with reason.

Nevertheless, the role of reason is so determinant that it seems to diminish or make superfluous the existence of the will, because, as C.Kahn puts it¹⁹, “on Plato’s view there is no gap between knowing the good and wanting the good”, but in my opinion this is not only because we are rational, but, more exactly, because the human will is conceived of as something that is itself directed towards the good. This is why *boúlēsis* in Aristotle becomes a rational faculty and we can understand that it is good, as Socrates says in the *Republic*, to act under “the guidance of the wisdom loving part” (586e). Of course, this conception of the will is not satisfactory from a voluntarist viewpoint, but it is not very different from Aquinas’ doctrine, for whom the *voluntas* is the “rational appetite” (S.Th. Ia, Iiae, q.8, art.1). He also knows, as Plato says explicitly in the *Symposium*, that “some men desire riches as their consummate good; some, pleasure; others, something else” (S.Th. Ia, Iiae, q.1,7), but all men desire these things under the aspect of good, and in last instance, as he himself says, “the object of the will is good” (S.Th. Ia, Iiae, q.8, art.1). Nevertheless, we have to recognize that in Plato we do not find the dramatic quality that acquires this theme in Saint Augustine, for whom the direction of the will is thought of “as independent of the cognition of the better and the worse”²⁰ and for whom it is possible to do wrong *sciens volens*, precisely because of the *mala voluntas* or the perversion of the human will. Although it could be said that in Plato and Greek philosophy in general the theological tones which are present in his reflections about the will are missing, in the final myth of the *Republic* we are reminded that the fortunes and misfortunes of human life are dependent on virtue and that in this respect “the blame is his who chooses”, for “god is blameless” (617e).

¹⁹C.Kahn, *locus cit.*, 89.

²⁰See A.Dihle, *opus cit.*, p. 129.

Plenary session

Chair: Gabriele Cornelli

On the Good, Beauty and the Beast in Plato's *Symposium* *

Christopher J. Rowe

The fundamental question underlying the present paper is usefully summarized by Frisbee Sheffield in her fine book on the *Symposium*, published in 2006:

'It is not altogether clear', she writes, 'how the psychological theory of the *Symposium* should be seen in light of other Platonic dialogues such as the *Meno* and the *Republic*. Recent scholarship seems divided on the issue of whether and, if so, in what sense, the theory of *erôs* in the *Symposium* assumes, or is compatible with, (a) what is referred to as 'Socratic' psychology, that appears in the *Meno*, for example, or (b) the psychological theory of the *Republic*.'¹

Sheffield goes on gives a sketch of some recent literature on the two sides of the question, thus sparing me the necessity of repeating the task here, though I shall go on to say something about the contributions of some of the protagonists. Anthony Price, Terry Irwin and myself are listed on the side of those who think that the psychology of the *Symposium* is 'Socratic' (whatever that may be deemed to be: I shall address this question in a moment), while the other side is represented by Angela Hobbs and Alexander Nehamas. Sheffield herself, in her book, is broadly agnostic on the question, though she gives some sign of favouring the view that while the 'Socratic' perspective may actually be dominant in the dialogue, the tripartite psychology is also somehow lurking in the wings:

'None of the [relevant] passages [in the *Symposium*] ..., then,' she concludes, 'assume, or require, a division of the soul, and the evidence in favour of this psychological thesis is weak. Although the evidence for the "Socratic" picture is stronger, there is no evidence to rule out tripartition either. The picture that emerges from the *Symposium* is underdetermined in many ways. It may be the case simply that Socratic desire is the only item on the evening's agenda, and not that it is the only item on the cards.'²

I think Sheffield's conclusion here, that both theories of desire are 'on the cards', and could in principle have been 'on the evening's agenda' together, may be right – in some way or other. My question, however, is how their both being 'on the cards' is to be understood. We might perhaps understand the suggestion to be that the two theories are in principle available, and that a choice at some point will need to be made between them (only not now, because – one possibility – the *Symposium* is not about moral psychology?). This is certainly a position that standard, modern interpretations of Platonic psychology would be likely to favour, insofar as such interpretations typically propose that Plato at some point moved on from a Socratic and unitary psychology to an essentially tripartite (or sometimes bipartite) one, often locating the shift in or around Book IV of the *Republic*.³ However, as I have argued elsewhere,⁴ the two models, unitary and multipartite, can and do appear *together*, i.e., in one and the same dialogue, and go on appearing together even after *Republic* IV, and even while apparently being alternative to one another – if one assumes that souls in general cannot simultaneously be undivided unities and complex, divided entities.⁵ The *Republic* itself is the most obvious and noteworthy example, but *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws* also

* DRAFT ONLY (for circulation prior to the Symposium, as an indication of the likely content of a plenary paper with the same title; not to be cited in this form, please).

¹ Frisbee C.C. Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire* (Oxford 2006), p.227 (in an appendix entitled 'Socratic Psychology or Tripartition in the *Symposium*?').

² Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium*, p.239. Sheffield seems here to end up not so far from Anthony Price's position: having spoken of the *Symposium*'s 'loyalty to the Socratic psychology of the *Lysis*', Price later continues '... it serves Socrates' present purpose, which is to say nothing against erotic desire, that he gives no hint of divergence or conflict of the kind that serves in the *Republic* to distinguish rational and irrational desires' (Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (2nd edition, Oxford 1997), p.254).

³ But see the Introduction to R.Barney, T.Brennan, C.Brittain (eds), *Plato and the Divided Self* (New York 2011), p.?: 'To speak of the impact of tripartition is not to assume a 'developmentalist' account, though, or assume that tripartition requires Plato to *recant* ideas developed earlier, such as Socratic 'intellectualism'. This volume is one piece of evidence that crude 'developmentalism' is in fact now giving way to something subtler and more flexible.

⁴ See, e.g., my paper 'On justice and the other virtues in the *Republic*: whose justice, whose virtues?' in N.Notomi, L.Brisson (eds), *Dialogues on Plato's Politeia (Republic)* (Sankt Augustin 2013 = *International Plato Studies* 31), 49-59.

⁵ I shall go on to suggest, however, that this assumption is far from secure: the soul *can*, in a way, be both a unitary whole and divided into parts (or kinds) at the same time.

show the same tendency to combine the two types of psychology, unitary or Socratic and ‘Platonic’ and (usually) tripartite. This is, in my view, demonstrably so, however rarely it may have been recognized.⁶ If so, it is plain enough that the situation will be rather more complicated than the standard interpretations would suggest: however Plato may think of the two different ways he has of viewing the soul, it is not simply a case of his abandoning the one for the other.⁷

But first we need to establish what the two psychological theories in question actually are. Many aspects of the tripartite account of the soul are disputed and/or poorly understood (for example, the nature of the ‘parts’ in question, and of their interactions),⁸ but the basic outlines of the account are clear enough not to require repetition here; the only dispute that is directly relevant for my present purposes is over the question whether the theory is intended to be wholly general (so that all human beings without exception are being said to possess souls with three parts, or aspects, or elements, or however we are to understand the triad of *logistikon*, *thumoeides* and *epithumêtikon*), or whether there may be, or could in some imaginable world possibly come to be, individuals with unitary souls.⁹ (This is a question to which I shall return.) By contrast, the Socratic, unitary view of the soul, and the intellectualist theory of action that forms its central ingredient,¹⁰ are altogether more slippery, being understood in fundamentally different ways. The commonest way of understanding Socrates’ proposal is to take him as saying that human desires are either reducible to, or at least determined by, our beliefs about what is good for us. ‘All desires ... will be rational [, and rational desires will be] ones in the sense that they are all and only desires for what the agent perceives to be good (whether or not she is mistaken)’, as Sheffield puts it.¹¹ But as Terry Penner and I have urged, in our book on the *Lysis* and elsewhere, this is to get Socratic intellectualism back to front, as it were: what (Plato’s) Socrates says is rather that we all, always, desire what is *actually* good, for us, the problem being that we have no great success at establishing what that is. In other words, our desires are never mistaken; we always desire what is good, even if we go after what is bad for us, in the belief that it is in fact good. So our desires neither do nor can ever overcome our beliefs, and if there is conflict – between the real good we desire, and our beliefs about what that real good is – it goes unnoticed. The soul, then, remains a unitary, undivided whole, even when following a misguided course of action.

This, I maintain, is the theory that Diotima alludes to at *Symposium* 205e7-206a1), when she roundly declares that ‘there is nothing else that people are in love with except the good’. The main lines of what is intended by this declaration are indicated clearly enough by the surrounding context: Diotima is not talking *just* about people ordinarily said to be ‘in love’, but about everybody and anybody who goes after anything at all, and that is every single person there is. Her claim is that whatever we desire, we desire because we think it is good, and think it will bring us happiness, because that is what good things do. This is, if you like, ‘psychological eudaemonism’,¹² but ‘psychological eudaemonism’ – I propose – with a difference: the claim is not that ‘each person, when acting rationally, pursues her own perceived greatest happiness’,¹³ but that each person, when acting, is pursuing what will *in fact* best contribute to his or her happiness.¹⁴

It would be too much of a stretch, indeed actually false, to say that this last part is secured by the context in *Symposium* 204-6, or indeed by the *Symposium* generally. That is, nowhere do Diotima

⁶ See especially David Sedley, ‘Socratic intellectualism in *Republic* 5-7’, forthcoming in G.Boys-Stones, D.El Murr, C.Gill (eds), *The Platonic Art of Philosophy* (Cambridge); also Jennifer Whiting’s essay ‘Psychic contingency in the *Republic*’ (in Barney, Brennan and Brittain, [pages?]), in which she argues persuasively that the *Republic* itself contains a unitary as well as a tripartite/multipartite account of soul – the latter being required for, and exclusive to, corrupt or non-ideal souls (a proposal that will turn out to be fundamental to my own argument: see below). A unitary conception of the soul is a *sine qua non* for Socratic intellectualism: if not for all interpretations of ‘Socratic intellectualism’, at any rate for Socratic intellectualism as I propose to understand it.

⁷ Cf. n.3 above.

⁸ See, e.g., the volume *Plato and the Divided Self* (n.3 above).

⁹ Cf. Jennifer Whiting’s conclusions as referred to in n.6 above.

¹⁰ Or rather, is normally taken to do so; Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith, in their book *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge 2011), seem to water down Socratic intellectualism so much that, whether they admit it or not, it scarcely merits the title (‘intellectualism’) at all. See Rowe, ‘Socrates on Reason, Appetite and Passion: A Response to Thomas C.Brickhouse and Nicholas D.Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology*’, in *The Journal of Ethics* 16 (2012), 305-24.

¹¹ *Plato’s Symposium*, p.229, where the interpretation is wrongly attributed to Terry Penner; similarly in Brickhouse and Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology* (as I point out in my review article [see previous note]).

¹² Pace Terry Irwin, who in *Plato’s Ethics* (Oxford, 1995), claims that ‘In the *Symp.* he [i.e., Plato, a.k.a. Diotima] neither endorses nor rejects this [tripartite] division of the soul, since he neither affirms nor denies psychological eudaemonism’ (n.12 to p.303).

¹³ The definition is lifted from Robert Heinaman’s Introduction to Heinaman (ed.), *Plato and Aristotle’s Ethics* (London, 2003), p.xiii.

¹⁴ Sc. even when the action being done, because done from a false belief about what is best under the circumstances, will not so contribute.

or her pupil Socrates clearly signal that they are claiming, not that we desire what we perceive as good for us, but, extraordinarily, that what we all, always desire is the *real* good.¹⁵ Such a claim would be extraordinary because it would be in danger of implying not only that we often don't in fact desire the things we think and say we desire, but that what we *do* desire are the sorts of things Diotima and Socrates end up saying are the most desirable – in effect, removing oneself from ordinary life and rejecting ordinary love in favour of contact, not with people of flesh and blood, or even perhaps with souls, but with Beauty Itself. And that, on the face of it, is so extraordinary as to be incredible: that is what we all desire? Surely not! Yet I think it is the most natural reading of Diotima's rhetoric, which Socrates declares has persuaded him (212b). What the wise woman describes, in the final part of her speech, is the *correct* way to approach loving (210a), which allows the initiate gradually to rise above any ordinary kind of love, whether illustrated by the first five speakers, by initiation into the lesser mysteries as sketched before this final part, or by Alcibiades at the end; a way of loving which will allow the true lover to beget true virtue, and become god-beloved (*theophilês*) and immortal, if any human being can become such (212a). It is for the sake of immortality, Diotima has said, that not just every human being but every living creature loves its offspring (208b), and we want immortality because we want permanent possession of the good (206a). It is in our nature to desire to give birth (206b); love is 'of procreation and giving birth in the beautiful' (206e5). 'Why of procreation?' Diotima asks.

'Because procreation is something everlasting and immortal, as far as anything can be for what is mortal; and it is immortality, together with the good, that must necessarily be desired, according to what has been agreed before – if indeed love is of permanent possession of the good. Well, from this argument it necessarily follows that love is of immortality as well' (206e7-207a2).

The true lover, having reached the top of the *scala amoris*, thus achieves goodness and godlikeness – being god-beloved and immortal (so far as immortality is possible for humans) – to the highest degree, and so, by Diotima's argument, is to the highest degree happy. By implication, all other routes to happiness are inferior substitutes. And who wants an inferior substitute when one could have the real thing? Diotima's implied answer, I think, is – no one.

Here are two possible objections to this conclusion of mine, namely, that Plato/Diotima/the initiated Socrates are proposing that it is the desire of all of us, without exception, to climb and reach the top of the ascent of love. (A third, and more threatening, objection, will follow.) The first and most obvious objection is that practically everyone else, i.e., apart from Plato, Diotima, and the new Socrates, will immediately dismiss any such claim about what people, including them, really desire. The immediate response to this objection will be on grounds of irrelevance: in the face of a theory framed in terms of a presumed *real* good, our perceptions of what we want are neither here nor there. But such a response, while perfectly correct, will satisfy nobody. More helpfully, one can point to a famous passage in the *Republic*:

'And isn't it ... plain that whereas many would choose to do, or possess, or think things that seemed to them just and beautiful, even when they were not so in fact, they draw a line when it comes to *good* things? They won't be satisfied with getting things that merely seem good; they'll insist on seeking out what really is good. This is one sphere in which nobody needs to be told to scorn mere appearances' (*Republic* VI, 505d5-9),

and find traces of it in the treatment of the legislators and poets in the 'lesser mysteries' passage in the *Symposium*. On the surface, Diotima rates these great men highly, treating them as procreators of 'wisdom and the rest of virtue' (209a4-5). But her language is carefully hedged:

'... there are those who are pregnant in their souls still more than in their bodies, with things that it is fitting for the soul to conceive and to bring to birth. What then are these things that

¹⁵ It is an essential part of the interpretation of the *Symposium* proposed in this paper that the dialogue includes an account of desire in general, and not just of *erôs* or sexual passion/love. This fact is evident enough both from Diotima's analogy between *erôs* and *poiêsis* in 205b-d, and from the vocabulary of Diotima's speech, and of the preceding interchange between Socrates and Agathon; in both, the verbs *erân*, *epithumein* and *boulesthai* are used quite indiscriminately and interchangeably. But by the end of Diotima's speech, the god of Love turns out to have taken over not just all procreative but all creative activity as his fiefdom – as he must, if Socrates is to keep to the instructions for speakers at the banquet: to praise Love.

are fitting? Wisdom and the rest of virtue; of which *all* the poets are, *of course* (*dē*), procreators, along with all those craftsmen who *are said to be inventive*.¹⁶ But by far the greatest and most beautiful kind of wisdom is the setting in order of the affairs of cities and households, which is called “moderation” and “justice.” (209a1-b1)¹⁷

There is more than enough here, I think, to make us wary of supposing that Diotima is here any more inclined than her pupil Socrates is, in other Platonic dialogues, to give her full, unqualified endorsement even to the best of the poets and legislators. And how could she, when on her own theory they remain uninitiated, like the Socrates before her, in the highest rites of love and the insights that these bring? The wisdom of Homer or Lycurgus, or the ideas of moderation and justice spawned by a Hesiod or a Solon will, in the language of the *Republic* (with which Diotima shows more than a passing acquaintance), fatally lack the philosophical basis that the virtues even of the ordinary citizens of Callipolis, the City Beautiful, possess, thanks to the philosopher-rulers. These lover-poets and -statesmen may well have climbed above the lowest rungs of the *scala amoris*, but they remain fundamentally on the lowest rungs, still enamoured of particular individuals and their bodies; perhaps enamoured of their souls too, but still tied to the particular and individual. Their offspring, in fact, will be among the ‘phantoms of virtue’ referred to at 212a; they are the result of what is still ignorance, and of unions reflecting that ignorance. Having only seeming wisdom, they will presumably have produced only seeming goodness, and a seeming immortality, in the context of a beauty – that of individuals – that is only a shadow of the real thing.¹⁸ If they only knew that the summit of their achievement was the production of phantoms, how could they, or anyone, be satisfied with that?

I now move on to the second objection to my claim about Plato’s intentions in the *Symposium*, i.e., that he is suggesting that we all – all human beings without exception, despite what we say we desire, and actually go for – in fact desire to emulate Diotima’s ‘correct’ lover. Is it not inconsistent with this claim that Plato has Diotima allow that not everyone will be capable of reaching the summit,¹⁹ indeed, that practically no one will be, perhaps even Socrates himself?²⁰ In short, no. That an ideal may be impossible for some, or even all, does not prevent it from being an ideal, or desired, as is illustrated by Diotima’s own case: immortality. On her own account, we all desire immortality; even animals desire it. Actual immortality is possible only for gods, and yet all humans still pursue it. This is in fact the norm, in Plato’s world and our own. We all desire justice – not just whatever semblance of justice will turn out to be possible, but real justice, despite knowing that our chances of achieving it approach zero. Similarly we want bridges that will never collapse; we want the perfect performance of Shostakovich’s 2nd Piano Concerto, the perfect cup of coffee ... Just so, on Diotima’s account we all want happiness: not just a bit of happiness, but *happiness*, even if either some or many or even all of us will finally fail to achieve it.

But here is a third objection, which is implicit in most modern treatments of the *Symposium*. Plato (or his Diotima, and his Socrates) cannot, surely, be saying that we all desire to be like the ‘correct’ lover, because he must (surely) hold that we desire other things too. There seem to be two main reasons for saying this. The first has to do with the dating of the *Symposium*: it is after all one of the ‘middle’ Platonic dialogues, or at least a very late member of the earliest group, close to the *Phaedo* and not so far from the *Republic*; and as such it is, typically, held to be one of those pieces in which Plato is making that break with Socrates that is so fundamental to the standard, modern account of his life and work. Just as the dialogue includes reference to that paradigmatic Platonic innovation, forms or ideas, so we should expect it to show other signs of Plato’s growing away from his master. In particular, we should expect to find (or not be surprised to find) Plato moving on from Socrates’ peculiar psychology, and theory of action, as he does decisively – or so the story goes – in the *Republic*, and acknowledging that our desires are much more complex; that they have the kind of complexity, in fact, that is recognized by the tripartite psychology. I have argued elsewhere²¹ that

¹⁶ Presumably the legendary (human) founders of the various crafts.

¹⁷ Note also, e.g., the way in which Solon’s reputation, and that of others, is made to rest on the honours they have received from ordinary (presumably uneducated) human beings.

¹⁸ Cf. 210e-211b.

¹⁹ See especially 208c-e.

²⁰ ‘In to these aspects of erotics, perhaps, Socrates, you too could be initiated; but as for those aspects relating to the final revelation ... I don’t know whether you would be capable of initiation into *them* ... you must try to follow, if you can’ (209e5-210a4). But at this point, of course, Socrates is still officially uninitiated, still claiming to be at the same level as Agathon (201e).

²¹ See Rowe, ‘The *Symposium* as a Socratic dialogue’ (in J.Lesher, D.Nails, F.Sheffield, *Plato’s Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*: Washington, DC, 2006, 9-22), the argument of which the present paper amplifies, but also in some respects modifies.

innovation in metaphysics (if the ‘introduction’ of forms is indeed the innovation it has traditionally been claimed to be) is not necessarily accompanied by innovation in psychology, and that there is nothing about Platonic forms that is incompatible with a fully-fledged Socratic moral psychology, or *vice versa*. However, and this is the second major reason why the *Symposium* has generally not been taken as endorsing Socratic psychology (again, whatever this is held to be), the general view seems to be that Plato could not have abandoned Socrates’ view of desire soon enough; it is a *bad theory*, especially because it fails to take account of other desires that we all too clearly have. This is clearest in what Anthony Price has to say on the subject,²² even while admitting that ‘the conception of desire in the *Symposium* remains Socratic’:

‘If the conception of desire in the *Symposium* remains Socratic, it is also precarious, for it is easier to suppose that desires that are rooted in the body have their own ends that are not identical to the goal of reason. In the *Phaedo*, written at about the same time as the *Symposium*, Plato ascribes desires to the body itself (66d7), and aims them at “the pleasures that are through the body” (65a7). Celebrating the escape of the soul from the body, and not hymning the loves of soul and body, the *Phaedo* takes a less positive view of the body’s inclinations. The *Symposium* avoids pointing soul and body in different directions: even if we say (as Socrates in fact does not) that our bodies desire what our “mortal nature” pursues (207d1), this will still be a single end desired as a result both of rational deliberation (cf. 207b6-7), and of a natural teleology that explains both animal behavior and physiological processes. *Of course the upshot contradicts common sense, and may seem not so much innocent as myopic. Socrates owes us a redescription of the phenomena that we commonly take to constitute mental conflict.*²³

But if Socrates does owe us this debt, it has been due for some time. After all, he has operated exclusively within an intellectualist framework over the course of numerous dialogues, i.e., those we have come to call ‘Socratic’. Worse still, from Price’s point of view, he has repeatedly and deliberately *rejected* the option of describing the phenomena in question in terms of mental conflict, insofar as he has denied the very possibility of ‘weakness of will’, i.e., of our rational selves’ being ‘overcome’ by desire. He has also argued for his psychological model, in the *Lysis*, and proposed an account of *sôphrosunê*, a virtue the analysis of which, in its guise as a kind of self-control,²⁴ would ordinarily have been hardly separable from a recognition of irrational desires, with hardly a trace of a mention of them.²⁵ This, of course, is in the *Charmides*. True, some have claimed that in this dialogue Socrates ‘describes himself as struggling for self-control as he suddenly burns with desire (155d4) for the youthful Charmides’;²⁶ but if so, it is striking that this kind of *sôphrosunê* plays no observable part at all in the analysis of the virtue that follows.²⁷ In view of all this, I find it distinctly odd that no one, or at least no recent commentator that I know of,²⁸ has proposed seriously to treat the *Symposium* like the *Charmides*: that is, as a dialogue offering a thoroughly intellectualist account of an aspect of human experience, love and desire, which from any ordinary point of view *patently* has a large non-rational component. If the *Charmides*, why not the *Symposium*?

I cite the same two factors as before (the dating of the *Symposium* in or near to Plato’s ‘middle period’, and the tendency on the part of many to dismiss Socratic intellectualism – albeit on

²² I have not yet, in fact, found anyone prepared, in print, to treat the *Symposium* as being Socratic through and through in its psychology. Sheffield herself, in her essay ‘*Erôs* before and after tripartition’ (in Barney, Brennan and Brittain [n.3 above], pp.?), now finds the evidence for Socratic intellectualism in the *Symposium* at best weak

²³ Price, *Mental Conflict* (London 1995), 13-14, without footnotes, italics mine; cited, for the same purposes, in my 2006 paper (at pp.15-16), where I appended the observation ‘but that – “a redescription of the phenomena” – is exactly what Socrates is offering us [here in the *Symposium*]; the redescription is just not in terms of “mental conflict”. But ... Socrates specifically denies that the phenomena “constitute mental conflict”, or at least the model of “mental conflict” that Price represents [implicitly] as an incontrovertible fact of human experience.’

²⁴ I.e., as the opposite and pair of *akolasia*.

²⁵ That is, of irrational desires that are or can be in conflict with, and obstruct, the proper functioning of reason. On the account of Socratic intellectualism that I propose, it recognises plenty of irrational desires, and not just the usual ones (hunger, thirst, sexual desire); *all* desires will be irrational, in fact, until they combine with reason. (But, crucially, all will be as it were constitutionally incapable of interfering with reason, which alone decides how we act.)

²⁶ For ‘some’ here, read ‘at least two’, i.e., Brickhouse and Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology*, 52.

²⁷ Socrates is known for his playfulness, and I suggest he is playing here – *playing* at having to control himself at the sight of what is inside Charmides’ cloak. This is the same Socrates who shows himself quite immune to Alcibiades, as the latter ruefully reports. The function of the episode in the *Charmides* is precisely to illustrate the difference between true (Socratic) *sôphrosunê* and *sôphrosunê* of the sort commonly recognized.

²⁸ That is, apart from Anthony Price, who treats Plato in the *Symposium* as keeping tripartition (or some alternative, non-unitary account of the soul) in reserve, apparently for what may broadly be called dramatic or literary reasons.

the basis of what I take to be a mistaken view of what Socratic intellectualism is). But now I add a third explanation: that most readers of Plato, probably ancient as well as modern, have taken it not only that there is good evidence for thinking that we all possess non-rational desires of a destructive and corruptive sort – the ‘beast’ of my title – but that there is also good evidence for Plato’s believing that we do. The primary evidence for the latter claim is probably at *Republic* IX, 571, where Socrates and Adimantus are starting their discussion of the tyrannical type of individual. Socrates gives a fuller description of desires, introducing a special kind ‘contrary to any sort of law’ (*paranomoi*, 571b4), which

‘*probably come about in anybody*, and if they’re kept down by the laws and by the better desires, along with reason, in the case of some people they can probably either be eliminated entirely or significantly reduced in number and strength; but in some cases they remain stronger and more numerous.’

These are

‘the ones that are aroused in the context of sleep ... when the rest of the soul – the rational, gentle element that rules over the other – is dormant, allowing the beast-like and savage element, fuelled by food or wine, to skip away, push sleep aside and look to realizing its own true character. In such a situation, cut loose from any sense of shame and without wisdom around to bother it, you’ll agree there’s nothing it won’t do. Without a moment’s hesitation it sets to copulating – so it thinks – with mother, and anyone or anything else, human, divine or animal; no murder is too foul for it, no flesh too horrible to eat – in short, it exhibits a perfect mindlessness and lack of shame ... But ... it’s a different matter when a person has a healthy control over himself, and goes to sleep after arousing the rational element in him, and feasting it on fine words and fine subjects for thought. This sort of individual has reached an accommodation with himself, having neither starved nor sated his appetitive element, so that it is lulled to sleep ... In the same way he will also have calmed the spirited element in him, and won’t go to sleep after an angry quarrel with someone, passion still blazing.’

And Socrates finally concludes

‘Well, this has taken us a bit far away from our immediate subject, but *what we need to appreciate is that in each of us, even in some who appear entirely decent people, there really is a fearsomely savage and lawless type of desires like this, as revealed by what happens in sleep.*’ (571b4-572b6)

This passage is worth quoting at length, in order both to give a sense of the general context and to bring out the qualifications Socrates makes to his claim: the ‘unlawful’ desires in question ‘*probably come about in anybody*’ (*kinduneuouσί men engignesthai panti*); then ‘in each of us, even in some who appear entirely decent people’ (*hekastôi [enestin], kai panu dokousin hêmôn eniois metriois einai*). On ‘*probably ...*’. Margaret Deslauriers comments

‘But of course the savage desires [in question] are only one kind of unnecessary desire. Moreover the *kinduneuouσι* indicates precisely some doubts about the origins and the universality of such desires. It suggests that this may not be a claim about our nature (talk of nature is significantly absent from the passage itself), but rather a claim about how our desires are formed in the context of certain kinds of political organization.’²⁹

The continuation of the same sentence in 571b strengthens Deslauriers’s case (‘... and if they’re kept down by the laws and by the better desires, along with reason, *in the case of some people they can probably either be eliminated entirely or reduced to a small number of no great strength ...*’), as does the move from ‘in anybody’, in 571b, to ‘in each of us, even in some who appear entirely decent people’ in 572b. Much though we may be tempted to connect the passage with notions of original sin, or with Freudian hypotheses, we should firmly resist the temptation. This is despite the description of the construction of the ‘mortal’ soul by the created gods in the *Timaeus*:

²⁹ Margaret Deslauriers, in ‘Commentary on Barney’, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* vol. XVII, 2001, 234 (with a note referring to *Timaeus* 69c ff., as possibly pointing in a different direction; on which passage see further below).

‘And within the body they built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind, which contains within it those dreadful *but necessary* (*anankaia*) disturbances: pleasure, first of all, evil’s most powerful lure; then pains, that make us run away from what is good; besides these, boldness also and fear, foolish counselors both; then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage, and expectation easily led astray. These they fused with unreasoning sense perception and *lust/passion ready to attempt anything* (*epicheirêti pantos erôti*), and so constructed the mortal type of soul *as was necessary* (*anankaiôs*)’ (*Timaeus* 69c7-d6; Zeyl’s translation, slightly modified, italics added).

The crucial feature of this passage is its bracketing by mentions of *necessity* (‘those dreadful *but necessary* disturbances’, ‘[they] so constructed the mortal type ... *as was necessary*). But what sort of necessity is involved? Is it (a) because mortal ‘necessarily’ = bad, or is it rather (b) because human life, resulting from the embodiment of the soul, requires pleasures and pains, boldness, fear, and so on? The fact that all these things are listed and described under their negative rather than any positive aspects, and that the list ends with the apparently ‘necessary’ addition of ‘lust ready to attempt anything’, at first sight suggests reading (a). But Timaeus is merely describing the ‘mortal kind of soul’ as it is, or would be, when viewed by itself. It may be necessary that this kind of soul should have the bad features in question if taken in complete isolation from the immortal, rational part with which it will always in fact find itself in partnership (so that from this perspective, mortal in fact = bad). But this is plainly not the necessity that Timaeus is referring to, which the placing of ‘necessary’ in both cases clearly shows is (b). The main reason why he mentions the negative rather than the positive aspects of the mortal soul is that he is moving towards an explanation of its location, suitably away from reason; and what makes this necessary is not that it always will cause trouble, but that *as separated from reason, which it never needs to be*, it can. And this will apply to the ‘lust ready to attempt anything’: this is not in itself the ‘beast’ in us, but can become it; in itself, it represents what we might term our *drive*, as necessary to human life as its pair in the text, perception. Given the accompaniment of reason, and the right conditions (as later described: 86b-90d), all the negative features of the mortal soul as Timaeus describes them can be avoided. In short, we do not all desire to sleep with our mothers or eat our children, even in our dreams.³⁰

My claim is that at no point does Plato commit himself to the view that we all, necessarily, include a bestial aspect to our nature, which has forcibly to be restrained by reason and nurture, and will inevitably break out if not so restrained.³¹ Plato’s view of human nature is quite different. He sees human nature as he sees every other kind of nature: that is, in terms of what it can and should be, not as we perceive it to be, from observing the world as it is. The final part of Diotima’s speech in the *Symposium* describes humanity, and human life, from this perspective: not as a perpetual struggle between good and bad, or soul and body, but as an ascent to an understanding, and realization, of humanity in all its rational potential. Mental conflict is not excluded or suppressed, in this account; rather, it is treated as not part of human nature at all. In earlier parts of her speech, Diotima similarly omits mention of conflict in other, non-ideal lives, by implication – as I have suggested – making these a result of lack of knowledge, however caused. The *Symposium* as a whole has very little to say about the deeper causes, that is, the causes of ignorance itself, beyond Diotima’s suggestion that some are more ‘pregnant’ in body than in soul, and *vice versa* (208e-209a), and of course the presence or absence of the ideal lover’s mysterious guide. If the dialogue had been more about causes, then perhaps it might have introduced some sort of division of the soul, as does the *Phaedrus*. But such a division would, I think, apply only to non-ideal souls – souls that are not such as nature, from Plato’s perspective, intended; and perhaps even only to *some* non-ideal souls, for I see no reason why some should not be quite stable and unconflicted, perhaps just plodding and unimaginative. For the tripartite analysis is itself fundamentally an analysis, not of the soul as Plato thinks it truly is, but of the soul as corrupted and distorted by its experience in the body.

This is a large claim to be making at the end of a paper, and will be shocking, perhaps incredible, to some; especially to those who have expended a great deal of effort on trying to understand tripartition, as being – what they have taken to be – *the* Platonic paradigm of the soul. But I make no apologies for doing so, firstly because the claim in question is what I take as being as close as possible to a simple transcription of what Plato’s Socrates himself says at the end of the *Republic*, in that famous passage about the sea-god Glaucus in Book X (611b-612a); secondly because I have

³⁰ As might perhaps be suggested, to the unwary reader, by Zeyl’s rendering of *epicheirêti pantos erôti* as ‘all-venturing lust’.

³¹ This claim clearly requires much more by way argument and support than can be offered in the present context, but I hope to have offered enough at least to give it some sort of plausibility.

been arguing for the claim, in one form or another, for some years now;³² and thirdly because Jennifer Whiting has recently made a quite independent, and in my view quite telling case for it, in the specific context of the *Republic*.³³ Much more work needs to be done, clearly, to make it stick. In particular, it would urgently need to be explained how, if tripartition holds exclusively in the case of non-ideal souls, it seems to be built into the entirely general description of the construction of the human soul by the lesser gods in the *Timaeus*. But such an explanation can, I think, be provided: it would start by observing (1) that even a strictly intellectualist account will at some point have to admit the ineradicable existence of hunger, thirst, sexual desire, and possibly of anger and the passions in general; (2) that there might be problems about attaching these too closely to the rational kind (*eidos*, *genos*) of soul; (3) that such non-rational kinds of soul might then reasonably be located away from the rational kind; (4) that there is no obvious reason why they should be in conflict with the rational kind;³⁴ (5) that the case for distinct ‘parts’ is made to depend, in the classics argument in *Republic* IV, on such conflict; and (6) that the language of ‘parts’ is in fact virtually absent from the context in the *Timaeus*, which unlike the *Republic* almost exclusively uses the language of ‘kinds’ (*eidos*, *genos*), or a definite article and adjective in the neuter.³⁵ At any rate, I remain optimistic that Jennifer Whiting’s conclusions (and my own) can be extended beyond the *Republic*, as they would need to be if they were to stick – and as I need them to do for the purposes of the present paper.

In short, my argument is that if the Beast, or even its less monstrous relatives, make no appearance alongside Beauty in the *Symposium*, that is not because the dialogue is some sort of innocent (or ‘myopic’) fantasy,³⁶ built around what even Plato himself came to see as a hopelessly inadequate model for understanding human nature and human action. He never abandoned that model, and I believe with good reason: there is no compulsion on us to agree with Christian apologists, or with Freud, or with anyone else who insists that human beings are born with the seeds of rottenness and corruption already in them. What Plato and his Socrates offer is an alternative and more optimistic view, one which says that, properly understood, to be human is to be essentially *rational*, and that while our nature is inevitably such that we cannot live uninterruptedly rational lives, because we need to feed ourselves, procreate, defend ourselves, and so on, such needs can be perfectly well accommodated within a good and rational life. This is the view that dominates the *Symposium*, and determines its design. The difference between the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* is not at all that the *Symposium* suppresses what the *Phaedrus* brings out into the open. Rather it is a difference of strategy. The *Phaedrus* puts at its centre a kind of tale of redemption, as a partially corrupted, conflicted soul manages to wrestle its overgrown appetitive element into submission. The *Symposium*, by contrast, centres around the case of someone who is led smoothly up past all the possible pitfalls – the ones, perhaps, that trapped the lover in the *Phaedrus* – to realise his full human, rational potential. Again, the *Phaedrus* works through contrasts combined with a mediation: beginning with *erôs* at its worst, then gradually introducing the best kind via the contrast between the twin horses of the soul. The *Symposium*, more straightforwardly, sets the Platonic/Socratic vision in direct opposition to other perspectives, whether standard, medical, literary – or Alcibiades’. The total effect is to emphasise the strangeness, both of Socrates’ views, as derived from Diotima, and of Socrates himself. The strategy of the *Phaedrus* perhaps reflects an insight expressed by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*: that if philosophers try telling non-philosophers the truth straight and undiluted (in this case, that a life of injustice is, whether they think so or not, the most miserable of all: a position that flows with particular directness the Socratic psychology as I have described it), ‘[people who don’t understand why justice really is undesirable] will respond exactly like the clever, unscrupulous characters they are, and hear it as coming from imbeciles of some sort’ (176e-177a). The *Symposium*, set as it is at a dinner-party between friends and intimates, can be more direct, and indeed is bound to be so by the fact that it portrays a competition between speakers, each setting out, or expected, to try to outdo and outshine the others.

My chief point, however, is that the *Symposium* is no light and occasional piece, for all that it has its many lighter aspects; nor is it superseded, by the *Phaedrus* or any other dialogue. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* are rather to be understood as companion pieces, each approaching the same set of ideas in its own and fully complementary way. But it is the *Symposium* that gives the

³² See especially *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (Cambridge 2007).

³³ See n.6 above.

³⁴ That is, unless a beast in us is really always stirring beneath the surface.

³⁵ The one possible exception, as I count, is the summarizing *merê kai melê* at 77a1, which might be held to cover parts of the soul as well as of the body.

³⁶ As, of course, the children’s story is: the Beast turns into a handsome prince.

fuller description of what Plato, and his Socrates, see as the ideal kind of life.³⁷

³⁷ For confirmation of Plato's continuing adherence to the ideas advanced in the *Symposium*, despite their sometimes apparently opportunistic nature, see, e.g., *Laws* IV, 721b6-c8 (with the commentary on the passage in Rowe, 'Socrates in Plato's *Laws*', in V. Karasmanis and A. Hermann (eds), *Presocratics and Plato: A Festschrift in Honor of Charles H. Kahn* (Las Vegas 2012), 344-6): 'A man should marry in between the ages of thirty and thirty-five, having reflected that there is a way in which the human race, by virtue of a certain aspect of its nature, shares in immortality – something at which in fact every desire of every human being is by nature aimed; for [sc. desiring] to become famous, and not to lie nameless after death, is a desire for this kind of thing. The human race, then, is something that has natural affinity with the whole of time; it goes along with it always, and will always do so, in this way being immortal, by leaving behind children, and children of children, always being one and the same thing, and so having a share in immortality, through reproduction. So (dê) to deprive oneself of this willingly is never acceptable to the gods (hosion), and whoever neglects [sc. having] children and a wife does this purposely.'

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