

AT PLAY WITH THE HIEROPHANT

AT PLAY WITH THE HIEROPHANT:
AN EXAMINATION OF PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation into the role of the dramatics in Plato's *Phaedrus*. I claim that the dramatics are meant to point the reader to the religious ceremonies known to us as the Mysteries of Eleusis, and further to the profanation of those mysteries that occurred in Athens in 415 BCE. This contextualization of the dialogue is done in order to locate Socrates' and Phaedrus' discussion in an historical setting that was having difficulties determining where between the public and private distinction in society the responsibility for temperance lies. The *Phaedrus* can thus be read as Plato's response to the problem in this area that the generation before his own faced. The conclusion that Socrates draws in the *Phaedrus* is that some will be able to act in a temperate and moderate fashion of their own accord, with no influence needed from the state apparatus, and that these citizens must lead the way on a path that all society must be convinced to follow if the city is to be unified in its being.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Initiation	1
Chapter 1: "Grant That I Become Fair Within"	8
Lysias' Nonlover: Free Agent Under No Constraint	9
Winning The Battle	20
No End In Sight	37
Chapter 2: Public And Private	46
"That Such Outward Things as I Have May Not War Against The Spirit Within Me"	46
Golden Temperaments	55
Other Gods That Dwell In This Place	61
Following The Muse	80
Appendix: The Dramatic Date Of The <i>Phaedrus</i>	93
Bibliography	97

Initiation

Plato's *Phaedrus* is a philosophical work packed with literary devices. In terms of content, these range from simple images through more subtle historical references to full blown myths. Stylistically, the *Phaedrus* is no less diverse, making use of poetry, dialogue, and logical proofs. Some readers (much like the characters within the dialogue) will be struck by the variety and beauty of the scenery, and consideration of the literary side to this dialogue is bound to raise questions concerning its relevance to the more properly philosophic investigations contained therein: why create such an elaborate setting? What is the purpose of all that dramatic action? Should it even be investigated by one interested in extracting the philosophy from the text? Do the dramatics convey a message of their own in some way? How is the dramatic action connected to the more properly philosophic dialogue that takes place?

These are the questions to which my text is primarily addressed. In this introduction, I shall outline my own thesis as to the purpose of some of the dramatic facets to this gem, and show how these might play a part in the overall design of the dialogue.

In response to the question of why the dramatics deserve study, even by the philosopher, I would begin with the fact that the two main characters of the *Phaedrus* continually remark upon their surroundings. Comment on the setting of the conversation is a leit motif of the dialogue, and it demands that the reader take at least a cursory interest in the setting as well. Since Socrates and Phaedrus, who show so much interest in talking about love,

temperance, and rhetoric, also show a continued interest in discussing their surroundings, then perhaps we as readers, who are also interested in what they have to say about love, temperance, and rhetoric, ought to pay attention to what they are saying about their actions and surroundings as well. In this we would be following their lead, which seems safe enough even if our main interest lies in the *prima facie* weightier topics of love and dialectic. We would then be left to wonder how these various conversation points relate to one another (or even if they do),¹ and whether insight into one (such as the dramatics) might lead to insight in another (such as temperance).

In fact such a study might go even further than that, to the point where conclusions garnered from one aspect of the dialogue might contradict conclusions garnered from another. This scenario is not too difficult to imagine, especially since something very much like it happens in the two speeches given by Socrates. In his first speech, Socrates gives praise to choosing the nonlover over the lover; in his second speech, he praises the lover. Socrates even goes so far as to call his second speech a “palinode”

¹ And so my first mention of what Griswold describes as “the famous ‘problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus*’” (Griswold, 1986, 157). In terms of the analysis that I am outlining above, the obvious option which the problem of unity presents is that the various points of interest within the *Phaedrus* are unrelated. Were this to be the case, then there should be no caveats placed on simply disregarding Plato’s literary digressions if (for example) one is really interested in what Plato had to say about temperance. My response to this option is that the text should first be studied to determine if indeed its various parts are unrelated *before* considering them as such. Surely only after such a study has been made would one be justified in taking the ‘unrelated’ approach. Part of my task then, is to engage in just such a preliminary study and see if the dramatics should be brought to bear on the philosophical themes of the text. Thus my approach to dramatics will be with a constant eye to the arguments being expressed within them, in hope of showing how the two are connected. Showing such connection would refer back on the unity problem by adding support to the claim that the *Phaedrus* is unified; while it is a text showing off a tremendous variety of topics and styles, these topics and styles do relate to each other in meaningful ways. Interestingly, Helmbold and Holther hold that a purely literary analysis of the text will at least reveal that the dialogue is unified in style; they hold that a “light irony” is the prevailing tone of the work, with both lover and rhetoric being treated in this fashion (see Helmbold and Holther, 389).

(243b), thus making the reversal of his previous speech explicit. Socrates recants his previous position, and the implication for the reader looms large. For now the reader is presented with two opposing positions, both of which claim to be true.² Obviously, if the reader is to make sense of the topic, then both of these options cannot stand, and some sort of synthesis or alteration must take place. But a reader should not jump past the point that there is a tension between the speeches. A position propounded in one part of the dialogue is shown to be false or at least seriously lacking in another.

Furthermore a synthesis of sorts between Socrates' two speeches is given later on (266a), and it turns out that Socrates' first speech must be understood in the context provided by the second.³ This example causes one to wonder if the final words spoken in the discussion concerning love are in fact the "last word". They are after all surrounded by the context within which the discussion takes place; it might be best to make sure that this context itself is not silent on love. The synthesis in itself adds weight to the claim that the dramatics are somehow related to the philosophical discussion taking place by argument of analogy: two initially disparate positions are

² The text is extremely slippery when attempt is made to consign the position expressed in his first speech to Socrates himself. Instead, Socrates seems quite willing to pass it off on anyone he can think of: "the clear voiced Muses" (237a), "musical people of Liguria" (237a), Lysias (257b), and Phaedrus (244a) are all variously given credit for the performance, while Socrates himself never makes a claim to the extent that he actually believes what he is saying. However, Lysias is portrayed as believing the cause (227c: "He maintains that surrender should be to one who is not in love rather than to one that is"), and so may stand as the serious proponent of the idea in the dialogue, which forces a choice between Lysias and Socrates. Even in the case of Socrates, the point should be made that he expresses an intention to recite a palinode, which, when understood as a recantation, means that he must take at least some responsibility for the first speech; if he did not, he would have nothing to recant. These two points taken together give the impression that the nonlover's position is an earnest option being presented by the dialogue that vies for the attention in the mind of the reader with the plight of the lover.

³ For a description of how the palinode sets up a context in which Socrates' first speech is finally enveloped, see 265a-266a; Griswold gives a good schematic representation with accompanying commentary on the passage (Griswold, 1986, 179-181, 280 n.30).

shown to relate to each other when considered from a broader perspective, and hence the dramatic and rhetorical content being presented here may also have these deeper connections.

In pursuing this inquiry into the role of the dramatics in the *Phaedrus*, I have come to the thesis that some of the activities that Socrates and Phaedrus engage in are meant as a reference to the religious rituals and celebrations known as the Mysteries of Eleusis, and specifically to the profanation of these Mysteries that occurred in 415 BCE. I further hypothesize that this is done to locate Socrates' and Phaedrus' discussion of temperance in an historical and political context that was being traumatized by the distinction between public and private, and that their findings provide a plausible solution to the public/private dilemma.

My first chapter undertakes the broad goal of explicating the *Phaedrus*' philosophy of temperance as portrayed in the speech competition. Here my hope is to lay bare the philosophy that will serve as the foundation for understanding why a reference to the Mysteries in this text might be relevant. I begin with an exegesis of Lysias' speech, and his usage of the word "control". Lysias' speech presents the *Phaedrus*' first thoughts on temperance, and it discloses an understanding of self-control as the ability to keep one's affairs private. In anticipation of the position given in the palinode, and contrary to most scholarly opinion, the position of the nonlover as a viable alternative to the lover is here defended. In addition to this, some Sophistic overtones of the speech will be made explicit for the purpose of further contextualizing the speech within the Sophistic intellectual movement.

In stark opposition to Lysias' speech stands the palinode, with its

assertion that temperance is a moderating compulsion that comes from within and which must be integrated with other behaviorally compelling urges. The myth of the palinode is analyzed in terms of what the varying degrees of extra-heavenly perception entail for the soul once imprisoned on earth, with special attention paid to the normative relationship that emerges between beauty and temperance. This second analysis of temperance is then applied to extracting the conceptual difference between the terms “lover” and “nonlover”.

The examination of the speeches are rounded out with a perusal of Socrates’ first speech and its lover who pretends to be a nonlover. This man’s relationship to both Lysias’ nonlover and Socrates’ lover is explored, with reasons given as to why he might place himself in the position he does. Here temperance is characterized as an acquired judgment for what is best, and is coupled as a determinant of conduct with an innate desire for pleasure (237d). Dividing the forces at work in the soul in this way opens the space necessary for the public/private debate to make itself felt, and it is from this characterization of temperance that chapter two will begin its portrayal of the the public/private debate.

The public/private distinction I wish to make use of here is first depicted in the terms of the *physis/nomos* debate present in Athenian thought and politics of the later stages of the fifth century. *Physis* and *nomos* each represent one side of the conflict between public and private interest, and this conflict is shown to be comparable to the conflict that takes place within Socrates’ nonlover. Ultimately, this debate between public and private is shown to be synonymous with the circumstances depicted in Lysias’ speech,

wherein any temperate or moderating influence on an individual's appetites is relegated to the responsibility of the city. This complete abdication of self-moderation in the Lysian perspective is thus shown to be generative of the public/private conflict as it is portrayed in the *physis nomos* debate.

Having set the philosophical stage of the debate, some of the dramatic activity of the dialogue can now be made sense of. First it is necessary to show that a reference to the Mysteries at Eleusis is being made, and a catalogue of the similarities between the rites of the Mysteries and the action of the dialogue should make this clear. Further reference to the profanations of the Mysteries that took place in 415 BCE is also apparent from a close look at the actions of the dialogue, as well as from a consideration of the choice of Phaedrus himself as the sole interlocutor on this occasion. Having made this somewhat hidden reference explicit, the question remains as to what purpose it serves, and the situation surrounding the profanations is related to the discussion of temperance and the public/private debate given so far.

With this further contextualization of the discussion, the time is ripe for study of the solution to the problem that Socrates offers. His remedy requires that the context of the debate be adjusted away from the antithetical circumstances painted by the public/private distinction and towards the more unified picture of temperance and beauty given in the palinode. It is only in the palinode that appetitive and moderating forces are finally harmonized, and it is from this base that any solution must proceed. Having elevated human nature to include more than just appetites, Socrates continues with a critique of the written word which deflates the role of laws in society, as they are no longer required to be the sole force for moderation within the city.

Instead the rhetor will emerge as the persuasive force who convinces the populace to follow the path set out by one who has achieved harmony within. If successful, the city at large will begin to resemble the happy procession to Eleusis, cavorting about the hierophant, who leads them on a path to knowledge of the Mysteries.

CHAPTER 1
"GRANT THAT I BECOME FAIR WITHIN"

The three speeches of the *Phaedrus* all come about as a response to the beauty of a boy. The speakers thus show themselves to be affected by the boy's beauty, to the point where their appetites have stirred them enough to cause action. Thus all three speakers have responded to temptation, and it is worth looking at their various reactions to chart the progress of these desires in the quest for fulfillment. The speeches give the reader a first look at the relationship between desire and moderation, and so serve as an appropriate place to begin an investigation of the role of temperance within the *Phaedrus*. By the end of this investigation, a clear understanding of Plato's conception of temperance should emerge, which opens the way for its concomitant social ramifications to be explored. Thus my goal for this first chapter is to answer the question of "What is the nature of temperance as it is portrayed in the speeches of the *Phaedrus*?"

In unfolding this question I also hope to open up an interpretation of the speeches which will create room enough for the dramatics to enter into and be made sense of. This strategy will further allow me to locate myself within the current literature surrounding the *Phaedrus*; showing an understanding of what is actually going on in the speeches is a common theme in the literature, and in joining this forum I can show where I stand in relation to other modern evaluations of the dialogue.

Lysias' Nonlover: Free Agent Under No Constraint

Lysias' speech sets out to persuade a boy that a nonlover ought to be chosen over a lover as an appropriate sexual partner (227c). The speech is a product of Athenian culture of the fifth century BCE; as Dover points out, "Greek culture differed from ours in . . . its sympathetic response to the open expression of homosexual desire in words and behaviour, and its taste for the uninhibited treatment of homosexual subjects in literature".¹ Lysias has picked on a topic relevant to the Athens of his time; an Athenian youth would engage in a homosexual relationship with an elder in order that he might receive "social advancement and the friendship of an adult mentor".² Lysias' contribution is to try to persuade the boy of which adult to choose. Lysias puts his weight behind choosing the nonlover, an adult who is ostensibly not in love with the boy.

The question of who this Lysian nonlover really is has provoked a mild controversy of late. The majority of commentators, most notably Griswold and Burger, detect a note of duplicity in Lysias' nonlover, and claim that he is in fact a lover in disguise.³ Ferrari is the exception among the commentators, and makes no such claim about the nonlover's motives.⁴ All agree that Lysias' nonlover has a sexual appetite for the boy being addressed, but Griswold and Burger go on to make the further claim that the nonlover is in fact in love with the boy.

¹ Dover, 3.

² Ferrari, 90.

³ Burger, 25, and Griswold, 1986, 48. Rosen too makes this claim in his shorter article on the nonlover; I shall respond to his claims as my own interpretation becomes clear.

⁴ Ferrari, 88-95.

Griswold assumes Lysias' nonlover to be a lover in disguise simply by equating him to Socrates' nonlover, who states as much in his nonlover speech.⁵ However, this move is illicit as long as Lysias maintains that sexual desire can be separated from love. While it is true that Socrates' nonlover disguises his true feelings for the boy, such may not be the case for Lysias'. To show that *all* nonlovers are in fact lovers in disguise (which is the claim that Griswold is making by casting Socrates' and Lysias' nonlovers together in this matter), Griswold must show Socrates proving that *all* sexual desire is accompanied by love (as it would then turn out that the nonlover, merely by disclosing his wish for sex with the boy reveals himself to be a lover of the boy). Writes Griswold: "Socrates does this in exposing the nonlover as a concealed lover".⁶ But baldly stating a fact as Socrates does in the passage here being discussed (237b) only proves the case so far as it applies to Socrates' man, leaving the door open for Lysias' nonlover to disavow anything other than sexual desire (which he does, by describing himself as a nonlover). Indeed, Socrates indicates the plausibility of such an option when, a few lines later on in his first speech, he states that "we know that men desire that which is fair without being lovers" (237d).⁷

Burger follows a similar pattern in equating sexual desire to love. Burger takes the final point in Lysias' speech as confirmation of "the erotic

⁵ Writes Griswold: "Let me turn now to the difficulties internal to Lysias' speech that require its revision. The nonlover presents himself in a way that is self-contradictory. As is evident from Socrates' first speech, the nonlover is actually a concealed lover" (Griswold 1986, 48, italics mine). Here the jump from Lysias' nonlover to Socrates' is made with no clear justification as to why. Socrates paints the nonlover as a concealed lover at 237b.

⁶ Griswold, 1986, 48.

⁷ Unless otherwise specified, all translations are Hackforth's.

particularity he had originally condemned”,⁸ and thus as a betrayal of his status as lover. But here again, as long as a distinction between love and sexual desire is maintained, no such revelation is required. This distinction allows Lysias’ nonlover to castigate the lover while still making overtures towards the boy without contradicting himself. The final lines of the speech speak to the particular choice that the boy is to make once won over to the nonlover’s side; the boy should choose a partner so that “the business should involve no harm, but mutual advantage” (234b).

Lysias’ nonlover is expressing a desire to enter into an agreement in which sexual favors are exchanged for the proper mentorship, with no mention of love being made.⁹ Such a circumstance would create a tangible difference in the characters of Socrates’ lover and Lysias’ nonlover, the difference being that the one claims to be in love and the other does not. Why is this difference important?

A full answer to the question of why Lysias’ man describes himself as a nonlover depends on an understanding of the nature of the lover, as the claim implied by the title nonlover is simply not to be what the lover is. The lover gets his fullest treatment in the palinode, and so a thorough answer to this question must wait until after that speech has been explicated. However, the question can be given an initial treatment from the perspective of Lysias’ thoughts on the lover. Lysias has much to say about the lover, and his speech gives us the lover’s initial portrait.

⁸ Burger, 25.

⁹ This seems to be Ferrari’s position in the aforementioned section. At any rate Ferrari is clear in noticing the distinction between love and sex that Lysias’ nonlover makes, and his chapter heading shows it: “Lysias against love” (Ferrari, 89-95).

As is evidenced by his speech, Lysias has little time for the madness that accompanies love. He equates it with a sickness (231d), in effect saying that the lover is deficient or an "aberration" (231d), and somehow not quite fully human. In this Lysias emphasizes the rational element of humanity. At 233b Lysias says of a lover that "his passion impairs his own judgment". According to Lysias the lover influences others to judge a thing to be the opposite of what it should be judged (233b). A return from love means the lover has "come to his senses" and can once again "control himself" (both quotations 231d). The lover's inability to control himself is further emphasized by the fact that if the boy chooses the lover, the lover will be unable to keep himself from telling all and sundry about the affair (232a).

The picture that Lysias is painting of the lover is of someone who cannot control his own urges. The madness of love takes over, and one's control over oneself is lost. Lysias describes the truly intemperate man, swept away by his passions, and is advising the boy to stay away from the lover because of this trait. Lysias is making use of the distinction between self-control and abandon, and the lover is equated, prejudicially, with abandon. Unsurprisingly, self-control is registered as a quality of the nonlover, and the speaker's reason for claiming to be a nonlover becomes clear: he wishes to be seen basking in the positive light of temperance.

The speech indicates that for Lysias, it is proper to be in control of one's

actions through the use of reason.¹⁰ Lysias' nonlover proudly proclaims that "I am the master of myself, rather than the victim of love" (233c). Only the sane, rational individual can give meaningful evaluations that will allow for control of one's own life. The best sort look out for their own interest without being hampered by some invading force like love (231a).¹¹ Of their own accord they enter into deals that will work for the mutual satisfaction of the participants (234c). So even in Lysias' speech, self-control is trumpeted as a positive character trait; in fact all three speeches will hold this to be true. The debate between lover and nonlover hangs on which of them can properly claim possession of self-control.

Lysias' strategy on this issue is to point to examples. He cites the apparently well known behaviour of the lover who is constantly preoccupied with his love (232a), and points out how society never reproaches the nonlover's conduct (234b).¹² His argument from example is that lovers behave in a wanton way while nonlovers do not. Therefore it is the nonlover who ought to be chosen as the object of the boy's attention. However, Lysias is arguing on the nonlover's behalf and his attempt with this type of argument to be an impartial judge of the two characters should be

¹⁰ I am not the first to observe this; Hackforth describes him as a man of "cold, prudential calculation" (Hackforth, 31), and Griswold as "associated with discursivity and calculation" (Griswold, 1986, 45). However, they do not go on to draw any meaningful conclusions from it; Hackforth because he finds the whole speech distasteful and wishes to keep clear of it ("This tedious piece of rhetoric deserves little comment"--Hackforth, 31), and Griswold because of a belief that the man does not exist (derived from the position that all nonlovers are in fact lovers).

¹¹ Rosen writes that "the non-lover prides himself on his autonomy" (Rosen, 433).

¹² Or at least, so it is meant to appear to the boy; what the speech really says is that nonlovers are never reproached for "behaving to the detriment of their own interest", which is a far cry from actually acting in a temperate manner. However, this point is made in comparison to lovers, who are "admonished by their friends and relatives for the wrongness of their conduct", conduct which, in this speech, is consistently equated with intemperance. Lysias' man thus gives a subtle equivocation on the point.

taken with a grain of salt. The question arises as to what Lysias really means by self-control.

Lysias mentions some type of restraint or control four times: at 231a, 231d, 232a, and 233c. Interestingly, he first brings it up in relation to nonlovers, who are described as “free agents under no constraint” (231a). This initial characterization is extremely telling as it brings a broader perspective to the issue of the effects of love, which is here described as a restrictive force rather than a liberating one. To the astute observer, Lysias’ man reveals his character with this statement, for while it will seem that the lover is the one acting without restraint, with this statement Lysias discloses the fact that actually it is the nonlover who is free to act as he pleases. Love is indeed a sickness, only here its quality of being a restraining sickness shines through. This claim runs counter to the usual portrayal of love in Lysias’ speech, which is of a force that liberates its host from any restraint. The question of how love could be a restraining force shall be left to the palinode; for now it is enough to realize that in this broader context Lysias sees it as inhibiting the lover’s chances for satisfaction of his desires.

Indeed, Lysias’ man shows his control not in suppressing or overcoming his desire, but in keeping his desire private. This certainly is the point of control in the argument being made concerning public sentiment at 231e-232a. There control is directly equated with an ability to suppress information of the affair becoming common knowledge. On the other hand the lover “will be proud to talk about it” (232a, and it is this aspect of character that Lysias is referring to when he paints the lover as unrestrained), thus inciting

the displeasure of the public. At the two other points control is mentioned (231d & 233c) it is so mentioned in contrast to love, reinforcing the opposition in behaviour between the two.

It is important to recognize that control here does not mean the suppression of appetites (although any confusion in the boy's mind on this matter can only serve to help the nonlover's case). Lysias' man is giving a seduction speech and he never sways from this purpose. He shows no self-doubt and displays no inner turmoil or struggle in determining his conduct. Unlike Socrates' nonlover, Lysias' man delivers his speech in full and does not break off the attack. He shows no temperance or control of his desire itself, but rather controls the way it is displayed. On the issue of temperance, Lysias is indifferent; he refuses to restrict the appetites themselves. Thus he can say that the nonlover is free of constraint, as his nonlover sets out to satisfy his cravings rather than "control" them. It may even appear to Lysias that the lover has the same fulfillment in mind, and is simply unable to control himself enough to bring about his aim. However, the palinode will express a different conception of temperance.

Before leaving Lysias' speech I should like to draw some initial connections between it and the popular masters of oratory of these times, the Sophists. Fifth century Athens, the setting of the *Phaedrus*, is famous in history as being the cradle of democracy. Athens was a direct democracy, with accomplished speakers able to influence the decisions of the Assembly (the governing body of Athens) and the courts of law. The Sophists professed to be teachers of argumentation and oration, and thus had skills in high

demand at Athens. As De Romilly puts it,

Whoever had a chance of making his name heard thus owed it to himself to cultivate his talents at all costs. By doing so, he would be in a position to air his views in the Assembly or plead a case before a court of law. As for citizens who were less well placed, they wanted to be trained to understand, to pass criticism, and to express approval. For at the end of the day, they themselves would have to cast their votes on political matters and legal cases. It was essential for the citizens of a city such as Athens to know how to argue their cases and make up their minds on the rights and wrongs of the issues before them; and this was particularly important for young men of talent who were capable of taking part in political struggles.¹³

The first and perhaps most famous Sophist was Protagoras of Abdera.¹⁴ Protagoras is credited with being a major innovator in the field of argumentation. The tradition holds that Protagoras was the primary developer of opposed debates known as “double arguments” in which two sides dialectically confronted each other on some issue.¹⁵ It is from innovation in this field that his reputation to “make the weaker of the two arguments the stronger” developed.¹⁶ Aristophanes parodies the practice in his famous play *Clouds*, showing how individuals use it to justify conduct that is traditionally considered to be unjust.¹⁷

The parallels of these themes of the Sophistic movement with Lysias’ speech are obvious. First, there is the fact that Lysias himself is a speech-writer. This fact places him firmly in the Sophists’ camp, as the speech serves

¹³ De Romilly, 24.

¹⁴ Protagoras is actually cited in the *Phaedrus* at 267c, as the author of the rhetorical manual *Correct Diction*. For an interesting discussion of this passage, see Ferrari, 245 n.4.

¹⁵ De Romilly, 76.

¹⁶ De Romilly, 78.

¹⁷ Aristophanes goes so far as to have two of his characters named “Right Argument” and “Wrong Argument”, and then proceeds to have Wrong Argument win the debate. See Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 889-1112.

as an advertisement of his skills at influencing the minds of others through argumentation.¹⁸ Furthermore in his speech to the boy, the nonlover presents the very model of one side of a double argument. Each point made by the nonlover contains an explicit reference to his competition, the lover. The two are locked in combat, and the nonlover focuses on this point, never presenting a positive argument that would persuade the boy to choose the nonlover on its own merits. In contrast, when we get to the palinode, the nonlover will be long left behind, and the praises of love are sung in their own tune. Lysias' speech is an obvious descendant of the argumentative techniques developed by Protagoras, even down to the point of making the weaker argument the stronger.

For Lysias begins his arguments proper by having his nonlover state "Now I claim that I should not be refused what I ask simply because I am not your lover" (230e). The implication here is that the natural choice for the boy is to choose from amongst his lovers, and that their side represents what is *prima facie* the stronger argument. Here the terms "weaker" and "stronger" refer to the relative persuasive power of the arguments. The practice of making the weaker argument the stronger involved "reversing arguments so that damning circumstances are converted into a justification, whilst favorable ones are turned into a criticism."¹⁹

And this is precisely what Lysias' speech sets out to do. Lysias claims that it is ordinarily considered that the lover should be "highly valued" because he "professes to be especially kind towards the loved one" (231c).

¹⁸ As Ferrari notes, 251 n.8.

¹⁹ De Romilly, 78-79.

However, this favorable circumstance is turned on its head by the reflection that if this is true, then the lover “will set greater store by the loved one of tomorrow than that of today, and will doubtless do an injury to the old love if required by the new” (231c). Thus the lover’s heaping kindness upon his beloved is turned into a criticism of the lover, instead of being a positive factor in his suit.

The naturally damning circumstance that corresponds to the nonlover’s position is that he has *no* special kindness to offer the boy. Special feelings beyond those of ordinary friendship are not a part of this nonlover’s vocabulary; indeed, “friend” is the only predicate with which the nonlover will describe his relationship with the boy.²⁰ The lover might claim that the boy should not choose the nonlover because of these circumstances; but here Lysias shows an especial subtlety in his argument, by casting this point in a very favorable light. The fact that the nonlover feels no special kindness towards the boy only shows that he does not suffer from the delusional love, and hence the boy need not worry about love’s effects in a relationship with the nonlover. It is a mark of the nonlover’s sanity and steadiness, and is an ingredient to be desired in one’s sexual partner.²¹

And again, Lysias continues in this vein by challenging the idea that the lover should be chosen because he is the more committed to his case. In this the boy is choosing between one who wants to be with him very much, and one who is substantially more relaxed in attitude. To this Lysias responds that such reasoning would cause us to “give our good offices not to the

²⁰ At 231e, 232b, 232e, 233a, 233c, and 234a.

²¹ Ferrari, 50.

worthiest people but to the most destitute" (233d). The contrast is artificial of course; there is no reason to believe that the most desirous person cannot also be the worthiest, but it is made to seem so by Lysias, and another seemingly positive aspect of the lover is turned against him.

Furthermore the idea that a person in love delivers up the very firmest friendship to a beloved (233c-d) is laid to rest. Familial relations are cited as examples of friends who are more lasting, with a special place being reserved for the class of "trustworthy friends" (233d), of which Lysias' nonlover presumably accounts himself a member.

Lysias is so audacious with the technique that he can even cite it as a fault in the lover's character. At 233b he writes that the lover "makes a man count that an affliction which normally causes no distress: secondly that, when things go well, he compels his subject to extol things that ought not to gratify them".²² Lysias disparagingly accuses the lover of engaging in the kind of sophistry which Lysias himself has perfected; it is a true role reversal, much like the nonlover pretending to be temperate whilst painting the lover as an out-of-control hedon.

This then is how I wish to interpret the speech of Lysias. It is a serious position that is not rife with contradictions, and is given with clear Sophistic overtones. Lysias' man is making sexual overtures towards the boy in the hopes of trading sex for mentorship, and he is keeping a strict distinction between love and sexual desire in making his suit. His perception of self-control is of an ability to keep one's affairs private and out of the public eye.

²² And here Ferrari's warning about Lysias' speech needs voicing: "Its sparkling deviousness invites further thought and could generate pages of commentary, but only after the fashion of a complex maze which, when penetrated, discloses an empty centre." Ferrari, 55.

He considers himself devoid of love for the boy, and is proud of the fact. If anything, he views the boy instrumentally, and wishes to be considered in the same light; he and the boy are two partners in a deal, and should think of each other as means to a desired end.²³

Winning The Battle

Standing in direct opposition to this position is the lover. He too is touched by the beauty of the boy and reacts strongly to it: he too gives a speech, though in the end it will turn out that his satisfaction will not come about through a sexual encounter with the boy. In Lysias' speech we found that control stood for an ability to keep the affair private, and that the appetite for the boy was left undisturbed by moderation or temperance. Socrates' lover will also lecture on temperance, though it will receive quite a different treatment.

In the palinode Socrates delivers a metaphysical narrative which claims that beyond the heavens and gods there exists an eternal and unchanging order of immutable beings (247c). Among these beings are justice (247d), temperance (247d), and beauty (250d). One is reminded of Guthrie's

²³ How then am I to deal with Rosen, who, in his investigation of the nonlover, makes much of the fact that the nonlover does distinguish between love and sexual desire (see Rosen, 432-433, and in particular, "according to the non-lover, he desires gratification as an 'objectified' commodity, independent of the personality of the boy, who is to him not a beloved but a reified unit in the free market economy, whose wares are subject to the laws of supply and demand"), yet still concludes that "The non-lover is in fact a concealed lover, however base a lover" (Rosen, 435)? At this point I am only willing to say that I heartily agree with Rosen's first characterization but cannot bring myself to call this man a lover, however base. My reasons for this final qualification lie in what I take to be the nature of a lover as described by the palinode; there is a crisis-point at which the lover proves himself as lover, and sets himself apart from the rest. I shall return to Rosen's claim having made my own position on the lover clear (see note 35).

statement that for Protagoras there is “no difference between appearance and being”. In the conception that Socrates is presenting here, there is a very clear distinction between appearance and being. True knowledge is “not the knowledge that is neighbor to Becoming and varies with the various objects to which we commonly ascribe being, but the veritable knowledge of Being that veritably is” (247d-e). In contrast to Protagoras’ world of appearance only stands this dual reality of becoming and being.

But Protagoras and the rest were ready with an answer even for the possibility that there was some kind of bifurcation of reality along these lines. The realm of being described here by Socrates is for them equated with the realm of the gods. For Thrasymachus the gods were silent in the affairs of humans and thus might as well be disregarded when it came time to considering human action.²⁴ For Protagoras knowledge of the gods and their ways was unachievable for limited mortals, and this rendered understanding of a divine justice unattainable. In both cases divinity and the universality it represented were cut off from the human world and so could be forgotten. Irreligious attitudes like these had some influence over the ruling echelons of Athenian society at this time, as evidenced by the profanations of the Myteries of Eleusis and mutilation of the Herms; that these attitudes would have a direct effect on the Athenian understanding of moderation and temperance is a connection that Plato makes in the *Phaedrus*. The challenge for the character of Socrates is to bridge this gap, and show some human access to these unchanging beings.

Socrates achieves this task in the palinode with a remarkable

²⁴ For Thrasymachus and this position on the impact of the gods, see De Romilly, 116-121.

exposition of the soul and the phenomenon of beauty. He first gives a short, blunt proof as to the immortality of the soul (245c-246a).²⁵ He narrates that all souls are like a chariot team, consisting of two horses and a driver, and then further distinguishes the soul into two categories: in its perfect state, soul soars in the heavens and has stewardship of the whole world; otherwise it descends to earth to enter into a composite structure with a body (246b-c). The primary abode of souls is within the heavens, and therein exist two basic types: the gods and "others" (246a-b).

Details of the soul's existence within the heavens come fast and furious at this point, and a careful tracking of time spent there is necessary to getting the story right. First there is a distinction between the heavens themselves and that which is beyond the heavens (henceforth to be called the "hyperuranian place" (247c), or the "Plain of Truth" (248b)). Inside the heavens the gods "do their work" (247a), each god being followed by those other souls who "can" and are "willing" (247a).

On occasion though, heavenly souls (both gods and most "others") climb up on to the arch of the heavens, in order to have a feasting or banquet (247a). Thus heavenly souls spend their time in one of two ways; either as part of the "heavenly chorus" (247a), at which time they work within the heavens (presumably at caring for the whole universe), or on the "back of the world" (247b), feasting.

This feasting is characterized as a looking into the hyperuranian place. It is there that true Being dwells, without colour or shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul's pilot, can behold, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof. Now even as the mind of a god is nourished by reason

²⁵ I take my understanding of this proof from Bett's characterization of it (Bett, 3-16).

and knowledge, so also it is with every soul that has a care to receive her proper food; wherefore when at last she has beheld Being she is well content, and contemplating truth she is nourished and prospers (247c-d)

After one full revolution of the heavens, a god and the souls in its train descends from these hallowed heights and “comes back home” (247e) to take up residence within the heavens once again. Furthermore this feast is not a one time occurrence; Socrates is telling a tale of “such times as they go to their feasting and banquet” (247a), and so we are led to believe that heavenly souls spend their time oscillating between caring for the universe and gazing outside the heavens.

Beauty is numbered among the eternal beings said to reside outside the heavens. Socrates goes on to enunciate how all of these wondrous beings have their earthly imitations (250b). The uniqueness of the quality of beauty lies in its ability to resonate within a person perceiving it (250d). When we perceive beauty in the world around us, it reminds us of the backdrop of the hyperuranian beings and the beauty that our souls perceived upon experiencing the realm beyond the heavens. In the metaphysics that Socrates is describing, beauty acts as an attractive force that causes a remembrance of our soul’s feasting while at the top of the heavens. Thus beauty acts as the connector between this world of becoming and the realm of being.

The awakening of our soul’s understanding of the forms beyond the heavens further causes us to act in accord with their dictates. Earlier Socrates related how heavenly souls are vested with wings. “More than any other part”, he goes on to say, the wing “shares in the divine nature which is fair, wise, and good, and possessed of all other such excellences” (246d-e). Socrates

then claims that when we view the earthly imitation of this heavenly beauty (say, for instance, in a young boy), these wings are caused to grow (251b).

The symbolism of the wings is not to be missed; a soul is endowed with a working pair while inhabiting the heavens, and the wings are clearly meant to be representative of the ability to function in a noble manner. Wings hold the soul up in the heavens and give it a chance to perceive justice itself and other fine beings. The wings are the active component in the soul's fulfillment, and allow it to remain in the heavens where it may take a role in the control and care of the whole world (246b). But more than that, I wish to claim that the wings are in fact the storehouse of what a soul perceives or learns when looking upon the Plain of Truth. Socrates states that "the plumage by which they [souls] are born aloft is nourished thereby [by perceiving the forms]" (248c). Already the wings have been directly associated with these excellences (246e); now we learn that it is the wings that are nourished by such intercourse. Earthly wings are what makes a bird able to fly, and we can assume that the same is the case for souls; with a healthy pair of wings they are able to stay aloft within the heavens, and to make the "steep ascent" up to its very "summit" (247a, both quotations). Simply put, I take this to mean that a soul gains justice and temperance through perceiving them, and it is justice and truth which cause such perceptions. This situation is more akin to a feedback loop than a vicious circle; it is similar to observing that one's current understanding of truth provides the basis through which a greater understanding of truth can be learned, and hopefully the cycle continues.

However, this is not always the case, as a soul is a complex thing whose parts can come into conflict with each other, causing detriment to the overall soul. For each god, “that [soul] which follows best” actually “raises her charioteer’s head into the outer region, and is carried round with the gods in the revolution” (248a). This follower who is best thus has a direct view of the forms (unmediated by heavenly stuff), and gets a look for the entire revolution, although even this soul is distracted by the effort it takes to maintain this position (248a). It seems only the gods get an unhindered view of the forms.

After this soul which follows best comes another which “now rises, and now sinks, and by reason of her unruly steeds sees in part, but in part sees not” (248a). This soul has a worse time of it, as the charioteer’s head only spends part of its time in the outer region, unmediated in its view of the forms by heavenly stuff. The final group in any god’s train are all eager to catch an unmitigated glimpse but cannot extract themselves from the heavens even for a moment.²⁶

Those souls who have pushed their heads out beyond the heavens feast on that which has “true being” (247e); those who have not must content themselves with “the food of semblance” (248b; Rowe translates as “what

²⁶ It is interesting that only with this final group of souls following in a god’s train is the situation described as a social setting. While the first two followers are described on their own terms and as individuals, this last group is a riot of confusion, competition, and conflict (Socrates blandly lumps them together as “the rest”). Socrates’ nonlover (a person I will take to be a descendant of this group) makes note of similar qualities when discussing the pursuit of knowledge in this world: people disagree with each other, and must rely on commonly held definitions of a thing in order to discuss it. In other words the pursuit of knowledge in this world (for Socrates’ nonlover) is an eminently social pursuit. Conversely for the lover, knowledge is obtained on a personal level by following the beloved (a person the lover reveres as a god) who incites a personal remembrance of the forms, which were first seen by the soul’s following a god.

only appears to nourish them”,²⁷ and Nehamas and Woodruff translate that “when they have gone they will depend on what they think is nourishment--their own opinions”²⁸). My understanding of this passage is in line with Griswold’s, in that these last souls seem to be like bodies underwater looking up at a light that exists above the surface.²⁹ Close to the surface one can see that there is obviously something up there, although the water around one has the effect of distorting it (for fish and divers the distorting stuff is water; for souls it is the heavens themselves). Consequently, one must rely on what one thinks the thing giving off light is, without directly perceiving it. That is to say that one must rely on one’s opinion of the thing. Further down in the depths the light becomes dimmer and dimmer to the vanishing point; at some point divers will become unaware that there is even a light up there.

Indeed, much like a low-lying creature of the deep, an unfortunate soul will meet “with some mischance” (248c), and, over the course of a whole revolution, “sees none of it [the hyperuranian place]” (248c), thus gaining nothing (not even opinion) with which to nourish its wings. Following the metaphor through we can assume that a wing starved in this fashion (and here may be an attempt on Socrates’ part to warn us not to become complacent with our knowledge and cease using it to garner more) dies, and is lost to the soul. Indeed, the text continues to say that a soul falls to earth because it has “shed its wings” (246c) and thus lost the ability to act in noble ways. It is important to note that these souls who receive no nourishment

²⁷ Rowe, 65.

²⁸ Nehamas and Woodruff, 35.

²⁹ Griswold, 105; my choice of “a light” above the surface is not arbitrary, as I think this best fits with the one adjective we are given that describes a form itself, which is brightness in the case of beauty.

are characterized as being “not able so to follow” in the train of the gods because they “are burdened with a load of forgetfulness and wrongdoing” (248c).³⁰ These souls are unable to join in the gods’ parade, and hence lose their ability to stay in the heavens.

A soul that falls to earth has no wings, and it may be presumed to be without the excellent qualities that go with them. The soul in this state connects with a body (Socrates refers to it as a prison at 250c) to begin its time in the realm of becoming. It seems as though Socrates’ elaborate myth is all for naught, as he himself has come around to the position that humans start out life with no measure of divine knowledge. But here the recuperative powers of beauty come into play.

The beautiful in this world acts as a catalyst for the reformation of the soul’s wings. When a lover looks upon a beautiful boy,

by reason of the stream of beauty entering in through his eyes there comes a warmth, whereby his soul’s plumage is fostered, and with the warmth the roots of the wings are melted, which for long had been so hardened and closed up that nothing could grow; then as the nourishment is poured in, the stump of the wing swells and hastens to grow (251b)

Again I wish to stress the point that it is the wings that allow souls to

³⁰ The sentence order of this difficult passage helps somewhat in my interpreting there to be this fourth group of non-godly heavenly souls. Notice how after describing the way of the gods at the feast, Socrates divides the souls following into three groups: 1) the “best” follower, whose head remains outside the heavens for the entire revolution, 2) “another” who rises above and sinks below the surface of the heavens, and 3) “the rest”, who do not push their head through the surface, but who nevertheless feed on opinion. Only after these three groups are described does Socrates then go on to give the reason why these souls are “eager” to get a look; it is because such a look sustains their noblest parts (i.e. the wings that hold them up in the heavens get nourished in this process). Having given this reason Socrates then tells the tale of the soul “not able so to follow”, who sees none of the forms, and hence receives no nourishment (on my interpretation; the distinction I wish to make here is that they don’t even get the food of opinion). My reading of the text is that these are the souls that fall, and not any of the other three groups.

act in a manner that accords with the hyperuranian beings; by rehabilitating the heavenly wings on this mortal coil, Socrates is in effect describing the actions performed by any agent so rehabilitated as heavenly. Through beauty one is reminded of the beauty in the hyperuranian place, and Socrates' connection is made.³¹

In fact this connection need not come through beauty alone. All hyperuranian beings have their earthly imitations (250b), and it stands to reason that anyone perceptive enough to perceive the imitation would be pushed into a remembrance of perceiving its hyperuranian counterpart. And indeed, this turns out to be true according to Socrates, but sadly, "so dull are the organs wherewith men approach their images that hardly can a few behold that which is imaged" (250b). In fact there seems to be a direct relationship going on in this initial connection to the hyperuranian place: perception in this world of an imitation of one of the true beings instigates a remembrance of perceiving that same being itself when revolving the heavens as disembodied soul. Without having perceived a form (such as justice) when acting as a heavenly soul, the earth-bound soul would have nothing to remember, and so that particular perceptual avenue would be cut off.

³¹ The question might arise then as to how earthly souls can remember anything, as on my account they spent their time in the heavens with no perception of the forms (since this is the only way that a soul can fall to earth). Furthermore Socrates explicitly states that "For only the soul that has beheld truth may enter into this our human form" (249b). My response is that the souls regularly partake of a feast, as evidenced by the text, and so have repeated viewing of the forms. A fallen soul is one who has seen nothing during one feast; it then becomes possible for a soul to feed at one feast but miss out entirely at the subsequent banquet, and this soul would then fall to earth still having once seen the forms. It is this soul in particular that would become human, as it has both looked on truth while also missing a feast entirely, thereby starving its wings and losing its ability to stay aloft in the heavens.

It is as if one must have perceived the being itself beyond the heavens in order to have the perceptual apparatus necessary to perceive its imitation in this world. Without having original contact with the form of justice, we would look on a manifestation of justice without having our memory tweaked to announce that this kind of thing had been perceived once before. Hence the manifestation of justice would be passed over without further cause for thought, and the idea of justice itself would remain hidden. Recognition in this world of a thing as such thus comes about through a recollection of its corresponding form. In this way a soul's perception of a form provides the future ability as an imprisoned soul to recognize earthly imitations. For the person whose soul had had little or no apprehension of the form of justice, their faculties for recognizing its earthly imitation would be dull in the extreme, as they would have very little or nothing to be reminded of.

I do wish to limit this formulation somewhat though, as Socrates does say that when the lover comes very close to the beloved, the lover's mind is thrown back to a recollection of both beauty and temperance (254b). It seems that some imitations, in addition to causing a memory of their own form, will cause a memory of other forms as well. However, I would again assert that the other form must also have been originally perceived by the heavenly soul, as if it had not, then the imprisoned soul could not be said to "remember" it (notice how the passage emphasizes the fact that the soul transported by beauty sees her *once again* enthroned by the side of temperance).

It is with this interpretation of the recollection of forms that I shall enter into the debate about just what Socrates means by emphasizing the “brightness” of beauty in comparison to other forms (250b & 250d).³² The problem comes in deciding what the particular relevance of this “shining” modifier is. It is my contention that with this statement Socrates means to flag the fact that if a soul gets to feast on the forms, it at least gets a view of beauty.

Recall that when Socrates describes the heavenly souls’ interaction with the forms, his metaphors are all of a visual nature, even though he says the forms are “without colour or shape” (247c). The gods, climbing upon the back of the world, “look upon the regions without” (247c) where the forms are located. Souls alternately “behold” (247b, 248b), “discern” (247d, 248a), and “see” (248a) into the hyperuranian place. It is obvious that Socrates’ image of choice in portraying contact with the forms is the visual one. And when souls do get a look into the Plain of Truth, it is beauty that shines bright.

By using the brightness metaphor, Socrates is drawing attention to the fact that it is the bright object that attracts the initial attention of the viewer; when walking into a room, our attention is usually drawn first to its brightest contents. The souls coming after the gods are represented as having a rather tough time of keeping their balance to the point where a view beyond the heavens is possible; they have “much ado to discern those things that are” (248a). These souls get a fleeting glimpse, and it seems natural that their eyes

³² Ficino and Ferrari wish to go so far as to interpret the passage as meaning that beauty shines brighter than the other forms; Ficino bluntly titles one of his chapters “How beauty shines most” (Ficino, 174), while Ferrari gives a detailed exposition of grammatic reasons for believing such (Ferrari, 262-263, n.5). To this I would agree.

would be drawn first to the brightest object before them. That being the case, if Socrates is trying to make the claim that all souls who see into the Plain of Truth at least see beauty, then he would be well advised to extend his visual metaphor to the case of beauty and say that it shines most brightly. Because of its brightness, beauty attracts the soul into paying attention to it. Furthermore the bright thing is the one whose detail can be most easily made out, as it is not shrouded in darkness; it provides light enough to see its own features. "Beauty it was ours to see in all its brightness" (250b) says Socrates, causing one to think that a good mental image of beauty was preserved from the heavenly voyage. These factors combined lead me to hypothesize that souls who get to see into the Plain of Truth at the very least get a view of beauty, and since all humanity must have had some view of that place (249b), all humans possess the possibility for recollection through the perception of an instance of beauty.

This understanding places the weight of recognition squarely on the perceiver as opposed to the object that is an imitation of the forms, and there is a reflection of this hypothesis in the fact that the faculties required to notice instantiations of beauty are at least not as dull as the faculties required to perceive justice and moderation. Socrates says as much when he later vouches that "in this world below we apprehend it [beauty] through the clearest of our senses" (250d). Here a clear contrast to the usual "dullness" with which most of our senses are burdened is being underlined. Socrates further emphasizes the relative disparity of our faculties when he indicates that "sight is the keenest mode of perception vouchsafed us through the body"

(250d).

Souls gaze into the extraheavenly place and are fixated by beauty; this in turn gives them a greater awareness of it and ability to recognize it. Souls gain an understanding of beauty through this experience of it. No wonder then that on earth our faculties are most attenuated to the reception of beauty; it is the form most concentrated upon and most highly developed within us. Indeed, beauty is attractiveness itself, it is the thing which demands the attention of its perceiver. The situation in the heavens of souls being drawn to gaze upon beauty is repeated here on earth, where men are drawn to gaze upon the beautiful form of a boy. The compulsive force of beauty acts on both sets of viewers, drawing their attention to itself. Unfortunately in the heavens the view is not allowed to be exhaustive.

The lucky soul that gets an extra-heavenly view "sees in part, but in part sees not" (248a). Obviously then, all souls relegated to this world have had only a partial apprehension of the forms. Further, some souls see more than others. The text bears this out; in describing a soul's fall from heaven, Socrates relates nine different basic human archetypes which are divided according to the amount of true being they beheld as heavenly souls (248c-e). Those who have seen the most of the forms become seekers of wisdom, while those who have seen the least become tyrants (248d-e).

It is this gradation that will allow the philosopher to escape from the constant grasp of imitations of beauty, for while all earth-bound souls have at the least an original viewing of beauty, the philosopher's soul will also at least have seen some of temperance. Again, I quote the reaction of the true

lover's soul to a close viewing of the beloved: "At that sight the driver's memory goes back to that form of beauty, and he sees her once again enthroned by the side of temperance upon her holy seat" (254b). Notice how in this case recollection of beauty immediately entails recollection of temperance as well. This is no mere coincidence, as temperance is commonly understood to denote moderation of the natural appetites and passions.³³ In any event, some type of restraint is being called for.³⁴ Thus a revelation of beauty for the true lover is immediately accompanied by the recognition of the need to curtail its pursuit, i.e. a recognition of temperance.

But this is the case only for the true lover, and so discloses why a wide variety of responses to the perception of beauty is portrayed in the *Phaedrus*. For while all human souls have seen beauty, I wish to assert that not all human souls have seen temperance, or wisdom, or justice, or at least have not seen them to the extent that these forms are understood and can be appreciated. This I take to be the import of describing a gradation in the amount of being that earthly souls have seen. Some will simply have not seen temperance, or seen to little of it to be of use, and they will "surrender to pleasure" (250e). In contrast to this person, Socrates describes the lover who holds back from such surrender as one who "saw much of the vision" (251a). The implication that I want to draw out here is that these souls also got a view of temperance, which beauty causes them to also remember.

Thus philosophers do not devote themselves entirely to the pursuit of

³³ Interestingly, this (or anything close to it) is not the definition of temperance that Socrates' nonlover will give. I shall return to this discrepancy in my examination of his speech.

³⁴ Both Rowe and Nehamas and Woodruff translate the passage as "self-control" (Nehamas and Woodruff, 44, and Rowe, 77).

beauty because its perception awakens an awareness within them of a need to moderate one's appetite for beautiful objects. Individuals curtail their appetite for beauty in direct proportion to their understanding and recognition of temperance. Without it, they feel no inhibition, and proceed directly to "wantonness" with no "fear nor shame" (250e).

Taking this mention of temperance seriously provides the added benefit of explaining why an odd struggle within the soul plays itself out in the particular manner it does. Socrates ascribes to the two horses the moral qualities alluded to in the previous discussion of the effects of beauty; the white horse is associated with the soul's capacity for "temperance and modesty" (253d) while the dark horse is aligned with "wantonness" (253e). Upon first seeing the beautiful beloved the nobler parts of the chariot have a very rough time of it, and are at the mercy of the dark horse, who causes the whole soul to draw closer to the beloved. The natural appetites represented by the dark horse obviously have the upper hand in this "struggle" (254b), and are able to cause the other parts of the soul to "yield and agree to do his bidding" (254b). The temperate and moderate parts within this soul are seen as ineffectual against the more base desires. Then the recollection of 254b occurs, where the driver recalls beauty *and temperance* and suddenly the situation is reversed.

Now the driver finds it within his power to restrain those urges, as he is "compelled to pull the reins so violently that he brings both steeds down on their haunches" (254c). The dark horse still pulls towards mounting the beloved, but is always restrained from doing so until, "humbled in the end,

he obeys the counsel of his driver" (254e). It is my contention that this soul had once seen the form of temperance to the extent that it could bear fruit in that soul's behaviour when confronted with earthly beauty, and give the driver the power to restrain the dark horse.

Those souls that engage in wantonness (246e) obviously are deficient somehow at the intersection of recollection described at 254b; up until that point it would be difficult to tell apart the "true lover" (253c) from one whose "purity has been sullied" (246e, and notice how this person is never described by the Socrates of the palinode as a lover), as their behaviour would be the same. It is only after the momentous recollection that the true lover is able to pull back.³⁵ This difference can be described in terms of what was seen while looking out from the heavenly plain. The true lover got a good look, and saw temperance as well as beauty; the man who consorts with "wantonness" was not so lucky and missed out to some degree on the apprehension of temperance, and so lives in this world with an inability to recognize it. It is in this way that the transition from powerless to powerful is accomplished within the driver of the true lover's soul, and why no such infusion of power

³⁵ Here is the appropriate place to return to Rosen's choice to call even Lysias' nonlover a lover. I think that in the end, such a decision must rest on the conclusion that anyone affected by the beauty of a boy has been touched by Eros, and so may be said to be a lover of the boy. However, this seems to me to be an uninforming way of putting it, as I have tried to show that all humans have the ability to recognize beauty in some way. The far more interesting distinction comes at the apex of a person's reaction to beauty; "true lovers" pull back in recognition of temperance, while the others do not. I clearly think Lysias' nonlover belongs in this latter camp, and agree with Ferrari's description of him: there is a "magnificent audacity" (Ferrari, 92) to him that shows a complete lack of self-criticism or second thoughts (i.e. a sense that he has pulled back in the way that lovers do). In the sense which the palinode gives to the term lover, Lysias' man clearly does not deserve the adjective. Provocatively, Rosen even hints at my position here when he writes that "the defect of rhetoric as psychic medicine is suggested by the fact that it lacks moderation" (Rosen, 429). On this point I stand in line with Rosen, as we both are willing to ascribe to him only the most "base" (Rosen, 435) position possible. The difference is that for Rosen, this position indicates love, while for me it does not.

occurs within the less fortunate, for we must assume that those souls who surrender to desire never succeed in restraining the dark horse within at that critical juncture.³⁶

The contrast between lover and nonlover lies in the fact that the lover confronts his desires at their root, and tempers them so that do not control his every action. While Lysias asserted that his control lay in his ability to keep the satisfaction of his desires private, here control is given a whole new meaning. The lover of Socrates' palinode, even when sharing the couch with his beloved (255d), keeps the sexual appetite in check (256a-b). Ironically, the appearance of their respective situations runs contrary to the reality: in public the lover can be seen following the beloved all over town with what seems to be an obvious sexual interest in the boy (both 232a-b and 255b). Conversely, the nonlover will act indifferently to the boy in public, and the perception will be one of friendship (232b). In private though, the situation is reversed, with the nonlover, contra public perception, or even knowledge, giving full rein to his appetite for the boy, while the lover, whom the public thinks intent on private sexual satisfaction, remains modest and withdraws from erotic activity.

While for Lysias love was a sickness that kept its host from keeping the affair private (and indeed, this is one of the effects of love), here love is characterized as the integration of both beauty and temperance into right conduct. Only the true lover, through the work of the charioteer, is able to

³⁶ At 253c Socrates states that "we divided each soul into three parts, two being like steeds and the third like a charioteer". Presumably then even souls that descend into wantonness have this tripartite structure, with the only difference being that the dark horse is never overcome by the charioteer.

marshall the forces within him and act in accord with both temperance and beauty. For after the crisis in the soul, Socrates mentions two defining characteristics of the lover: first, he follows the boy to the point of becoming an intimate friend (255a-e), and second that he does not indulge his sexual appetite (256a-b). His charioteer has found a course of action amenable to both the motivating factors within him, and he unifies them in the love he shares with the boy.

No End In Sight

Having explicated these two extremes of the lover and the nonlover, I wish now to look back at that odd figure that stands amidst them, the lover who pretends to be a nonlover. This individual gets his say appropriately enough between the other two, and, by straddling the two positions (both in order and in content), churns out a speech rife with contradiction. The immediate wonder is that this man can lay claim to being a lover at all.

But claim the title he does, and this leads to understanding him as one who also has been jerked back to the forms to witness some kind of former inspection of beauty and temperance. That he reacts to the beauty of the boy is obvious. Socrates makes a point of telling that the boy is “very handsome” (237b), and so serves as an adequate manifestation of beauty; furthermore Socrates’ nonlover is very obviously interested in the boy, as his speech is an

attempt at “pressing his suit” (237b) in the hopes of seducing the boy.

In regards to temperance, Socrates’ nonlover has a superabundance of it (though its exact nature is suspect), and this may very well be his problem with confronting the boy in his true persona. His first mention of temperance is to propose that it stands in direct opposition to “wantonness” (238a). Oddly, he then goes on to give a taxonomy of wantonness (238a-b), showing the many ways in which desire can “drag us irrationally towards pleasure” (238a). He is in effect cataloging his fears, as a man who knows the many ways in which temperance can be usurped.

It seems that for Socrates’ nonlover there is nothing but the opposition between the recognition of beauty and the recognition of temperance; having found something beautiful and being instilled with a desire for it, he is immediately required to forbear on this action, and collapses into the heap of contradictions that comes out in this speech. Notice that this is the man who first points out the fact that people can be in disagreement with themselves (237c), the implication being that a person can be of two minds on one issue.

Indeed, the first words out of this poor man’s mouth give what amounts to a self-portrait. He begins by warning the boy that if one is to “deliberate” about anything, then one needs to know just what that thing is; otherwise the deliberation is “bound to go utterly astray” (237c). In the palinode Socrates will reject this man’s account of love, saying that love cannot be the evil thing that the nonlovers present it to be (242e). In effect, the palinode will assert that this nonlover does not know what he is talking about, unmasking him as a victim of the very problem he enunciates.

For Socrates' nonlover deftly equivocates on the topic of knowledge; at first he insists that people must know what a thing "really is" (237c), but then moves to the position that this merely means having "an agreed definition" (237c) of the thing. The contrast between the thing as it actually is (and here lies a foreshadowing of the explication of the forms) and as we might hypothesize it to be is brought to the fore with the vicious characterization of the procedure to be followed in his speech: "we ought to agree upon a definition of love which shows its nature" (237c). In effect he is revealing to the boy that he doesn't know for sure just what love is; he can only speculate and rely upon agreement as to the true nature of love. As the palinode displays, his wariness at the beginning of the speech turns out to be well founded. "Now most people fail to realize that they don't know what this or that really is" (237c) warns the nonlover; in contrast he is quite aware of this problem within himself. This is a soul that has only fed upon opinion, who wonders if it is even possible to feed on being itself.

Socrates' nonlover continues his speech by examining the soul. Notice that for the true lover who has knowledge the soul is a tripartite structure while for this man it is only dual. The conception of the soul presented here is that it acts according to two principles: the first is an "innate desire for pleasure" (237d) and the other is "an acquired judgment that aims at what is best" (237b). When the first principle dominates, the behaviour it inspires is called "wantonness" (238a); the second principle inspires "temperance" (238a). This is a strange way to characterize temperance, as it usually means some form of self-restraint, but here it is equated to an acquired judgment for what

is best.

However, it may be that this acquired judgment is in effect an attempt at moderation, as the examples used by the nonlover illustrate. His first example is of the glutton. The glutton's behaviour is classified as a species of "wantonness" when his desire for food is "conspicuously present" (238a), i.e. is excessive, and obviously so. Similarly in the case of drink (238b). In fact all forms of wantonness earn the term by being engaged in to excessive degrees; Socrates says that these desires "rule within us" (238a). In the case of the glutton and the drunkard, what is normally a beneficial desire (we all need food and some form of drink in order to survive) has in fact been turned into a desire that works against the individual's well-being. In becoming excessive, these desires now harm the individual instead of helping. In realizing this, Socrates' nonlover shows off his understanding of temperance: temperance is the knowledge that simple pursuit of pleasure can lead to eventual pain for the individual. Thus temperance aims at "what is best" by attempting to avoid the vicious circle that pursuit of pleasure can entail. Here too may be some hint at why it is called an "acquired judgment". The immediate payoff in satisfying these desires is a benefit, as food and water sustain us; it is only upon reflection into the long-term effects of constantly satisfying these desires with no restraint that they are seen to be harmful. Hence one's acquired judgment for what is best would lead one to moderation in these matters.

Love turns out to be one of these many forms of wantonness, in this case an obvious and excessive desire for bodily beauty (238b-c). Accordingly,

the term "lover" is grouped in along with "glutton" and "drunkard" as a derogatory epithet. Of course, this nonlover's limited understanding of the soul causes him to see all desires in an opposed way, and leads him to his deficient description of love; it is ironic that the only definition explicitly stated as such (of love) falls prey to the problem of non-knowledge so clearly outlined in the introduction to his speech. His opinion of the nature of love is based on his soul's vision of the forms, a vision that was limited and vague.

Earlier I stated that this man qualifies as a lover, as he is obviously in the grips of both beauty and temperance; it is left to explain why then he would decide to pretend to be a nonlover. In reality he knows himself to be a lover, but to his limited understanding this means that he has an excessive desire for bodily beauty. Here lies his crucial mistake, in characterizing the lover as excessive rather than moderate. His conclusion at this point betrays his limited understanding of the soul, as his missing third part provides the essential ingredient to love, which can integrate the demands placed upon it by both beauty and temperance. Instead love is regarded as just another excessive desire which, if allowed control, will lead to eventual pain and harm, as was shown in the case of gluttony and drunkenness. Self-reflection leads him to the conjecture that if he allows his lover's nature to manifest itself, he will slide irrationally towards pleasure, and will not be guided towards what is best. Hence he cannot acknowledge himself as lover.

Instead, he must show a more moderate approach to his desire, and the only alternative before him is the nonlover. All the aspects of character

important to Socrates' man seem to be present in Lysias' nonlover; recall how Lysias trumpeted the nonlover's constant control of himself (thus it seems that this man is not ruled by his desires; a quality much appreciated by Socrates' man), and the emphasis he placed on his own rational ability (and Socrates makes a clear distinction between the "irrational" slide towards pleasure and the "rational" attempt at what is best). Furthermore even the lover of the palinode admits to continually following the boy with awe. There is still a basic desire for sex operating here, but to the muddled mind of Socrates' nonlover, it seems operative to the exclusion of all else in the lover and under control in the nonlover. Hence the pretense of being a nonlover; in this guise Socrates' man can pretend to be aiming for what is best.

Having set the terms of his speech, Socrates' nonlover now goes about filling it in, and begins this process by listing the faults of favoring the lover. In reality he is listing what he thinks are his own faults; as concealed lover he must be looking upon this list with some chagrin. There are two conceptions of "lover" at work in this scenario: what a lover really is (as set out by the palinode) and what this man thinks a lover is. Socrates' lover/nonlover is at best the very base-line of what it means to be a lover. He has seen beauty and temperance and very little else, and must make do with the conflict that occurs between these two phenomena. There is no third element here that might help bring these two warring factions together into some kind of harmony. Thus he resorts to trying to be a nonlover, in whom he thinks moderation wins out; it is left to the palinode to show that it is only within the true lover that moderation truly works in harmony with the desire for

beauty.

The problem is that this man knows of his ruse, and that at the end of the day what was done was done so that a lover could indulge his desires, and, the temperate man within being equal to the challenge, he abruptly breaks off the speech and ends his attempt at seducing the boy. The fact that the attempt is broken off should not be missed, for it excellently illustrates the conflict within: this nonlover's reaction to beauty causes him to engage in the pursuit of the boy, but the reaction to temperance causes him to withdraw before finishing it and indulging in the rewards. I take seriously Socrates' claim at the start of the speech that this man really is a lover (237b), and, given the description of the lover's actions in the palinode, that he will always refrain from consumation of the act. Notice too that this character is left hanging with the sudden break from the speech. Socrates never returns to inhabit him and give some resolution to his cause; instead he is left with the uneasy tension between his two contrasting principles.

The difference between this man and the true lover is that in the true lover the charioteer does finally wrest control of the soul's actions away from the dark horse: "And so it happens time and again [the battle for control between steed and driver], until the evil steed casts off his wantonness;

humbled in the end, he obeys the counsel of his driver" (254e).³⁷ In the chariot imagery while temperance and desire are given the same ontological status (both are horses) there is a driver able to control them and make them work in harmony; eventually the conflict subsides, and it is only after the charioteer has proven his domination of the team that "at long last the soul of the lover follows after the beloved with reverence and awe" (254e). The lack of resolution in the lover/nonlover's case is telling; he never comes to the point where desire is forced into harmony with restraint. In this man's soul temperance and the desire for pleasure usurp their normal roles in the chariot imagery and alternately replace the driver as the element that decides the soul's course of action. Without that third element, Socrates' nonlover is forced into a decision between two options, and either choice entails frustration of the other, simply because one of them is decisive of the soul's activity.

Earlier it appeared difficult to distinguish the lover from the nonlover (as represented by Lysias) because they both initially reacted to beauty in the boy and were given over to desire for the boy. It became apparent though that

³⁷ Here is where I must part company with Ferrari in my analysis of Socrates' nonlover. Ferrari's characterization (Ferrari, 95-102) is excellent, but in the end he fits this man into the imagery of the palinode by comparing him to an equal struggle between a white horse and a black horse, with no driver to speak of. While this does a good job of reducing the palinode to the two factors at work in this man's soul, it does some violence to the palinode itself. The battle in the palinode is always principally between the driver and the black horse; the white horse, while standing in for temperance within the soul, clearly takes his lead from the driver (at 253e he is said to be "driven by the word of command alone"; later he is "obedient" (254a)). This emphasis on the white horse/black horse dichotomy leads Ferrari to compare this man's situation to that of the timocratic man of the *Republic* and conclude that "Not really understanding *why* he should keep his appetite for pleasure in check, he simply represses it" (Ferrari, 101). On the contrary, I have tried to show that Socrates' nonlover does have an idea *why* he should repress his desire, and that his reasoning about gluttony and drunkenness shows it. My own portrait of this man remains true to the palinode, with the principal struggle still occurring between the driver and the black horse; this allows room for the reasoning part of the soul to operate within him, which it obviously does.

at the point when the initial effects of beauty climaxed, the lover, cognizant of temperance, pulled back, while the nonlover, with no such recollection, surged ahead in his hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. In this way the two showed their differences. Now the true lover has to distinguish himself from this base-line lover, and he does so in the exact opposite manner he used to distinguish himself from the nonlover. The lover is able to integrate the prescriptive forces within him into right conduct. The lover does move on to follow the boy, to the point of becoming an intimate, and so allows the effects of beauty to sway his actions, but he never gives final vent to his erotic appetites. His charioteer has come to a compromise between beauty and temperance that lives up to both their dictates, displayed in the two actions which Socrates ascribes to him after the crisis point: he follows the boy but refrains from sex.

Recall that in the base-line lover's conception of the soul, a third element was missing from his characterization of the soul. This lack is ultimately responsible for his inability to harmonize the forces at war within him; he has no charioteer to decide on an appropriate action, and instead is left to sacrifice one of his two urges for the other. His decision-making process is absent, leaving him to grapple with the two disparate elements of his soul. The truly temperate man, the man of the palinode, is able to overcome the conflicting desires in his soul and unify himself in his actions. The irony here is that the lover once again begins to resemble the lover as Lysias describes him, constantly following the boy and caring not a whit for societal conventions.

CHAPTER TWO: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

So far my analysis of temperance has been focused on the individual, and the individual's response to appetites. However, the discussion itself is not limited to an examination of the individual, and the time has come to broaden my outlook to the more social concerns that the *Phaedrus* applies its assessment of temperance to. Socrates ends the dialogue by offering up a prayer, in which he mentions a wish for "harmony of his outer life with his inner"¹ (279 b-c), followed by a desire to be temperate (279c).² This conflict I take to be the result of the dilemma that Lysias' conception of self-control is responsible for. Lysias' understanding of self-control leads directly to a clash between a citizen's public and private personas, and it is left to Socrates to offer a more accurate description of temperance in order to rectify the situation. Thus my goal in this chapter is to explicate this conflict as it arises out of the Lysian context, and then present the Socratic response to it.

"That Such Outward Things As I Have May Not War Against the Spirit Within Me"

In examining the contrast between public and private personas as it

¹ Jackson, 29.

² Hackforth writes that "the closing prayer has no special connexion with the context of the dialogue" (Hackforth, 168), but with this I cannot agree. Rather, I would wish to assert that each of the five clauses of the prayer indicates a major theme treated by the dialogue. In this chapter part of my aim is to draw these clauses together and show their relationships to each other.

was felt by the Athenians of this time period, it will be expedient to make mention of what has come to be called the “*physis/nomos* debate”.³ Ordinarily *physis* is translated as “nature” or “reality” and *nomos* as “law” or “custom”.⁴ Prima facie the debate revolves around the question of universality versus relativity, with the *physis* side holding that there are a set of universally applicable laws governing conduct,⁵ and the *nomos* side holding that laws are a product of human invention.⁶ But these terms need further fleshing out if they are to be of use in interpreting the speeches of the *Phaedrus*.

Physis and *nomos* represent the leading normative theories of the times in which the *Phaedrus* takes place.⁷ In the case of *physis*, the jump is quickly made to connect ethical standards to not just nature but human

³ The phrase is famous enough that it serves as a chapter heading in both Guthrie and Kerferd (see Guthrie, 55-130, and Kerferd, 111-131). That the two terms represented a conflict no one seems to much doubt; Guthrie writes that “in the intellectual climate of the fifth century they came to be commonly regarded as opposed and mutually exclusive” (Guthrie, 55). The trouble comes in trying to coax out what both sides actually mean by their terms.

⁴ Kerferd, 111-112, Guthrie, 55.

⁵ Kerferd: “Whenever and however it be that the antithesis of *nomos* and *physis* first arose, it did regularly involve a recognition of *physis* as a source of values and so as itself in some way prescriptive” (Kerferd, 114).

⁶ Guthrie lists the various fields which the *physis/nomos* debate moved into and scoped over (see Guthrie, 57-58); my interest here rests primarily with its influence on the question of morality and conduct as I think these are the ones that play a part in the makeup of the *Phaedrus*.

⁷ Here I must make some mention of the intractable problem of a dramatic date for the *Phaedrus*. For my purposes, it is only necessary to assert the safest of assumptions, that the dialogue occurred later on in Socrates’ adult life. For this Socrates himself provides some evidence when he exclaims in praise of Lysias, “I only wish he would write that it [the boy’s decision] should be to a poor man rather than a rich one, and an older rather than a younger man, and all the other things which belong to me” (227c-d, translation Rowe). This is (broadly speaking) the time period and place where the *physis/nomos* debate gets hot: Guthrie writes that *physis* and *nomos* were “catch words” of the fifth and fourth centuries which came to be regarded as “opposed” and “mutually exclusive” (Guthrie, 55), and the passages from Thucydides that I will make use of draw on the historical context surrounding the later portion of Socrates’ life. For my final thoughts on the dramatic dating of the *Phaedrus*, see the Appendix.

nature, in particular to human desires.⁸ All people have an appetite for food, drink, and even sex; it is human nature to try to satisfy these appetites. For the individual this translates into the freedom to pursue the satisfaction of one's appetites.⁹ For example, in trying to determine my conduct, I should inspect my nature; the appetites that I find there are real to me and it is natural that I try and fulfill them. In this way human nature determines human conduct.¹⁰

In the case of *nomos*, to say that ethical standards are derived from the laws does not seem to be saying much, as written laws are meant to uphold ethical standards. The crucial assertion here is that ethical standards need at least some degree of variable human theoretic input, as opposed to relying completely on a divine or natural source.¹¹ The *nomos* thesis gets a full sounding from Protagoras in the dialogue that bears his name, and two points are worth mentioning as they relate to the *Phaedrus*. First, Protagoras points out that nature alone as the *physis* camp describes it is incapable of supporting a group structure.¹² Clearly, if one's conduct is determined merely by trying to satisfy one's appetites, then as soon as appetites collide there will be intractable conflict, with no mechanism in place to rectify the situation. Laws,

⁸ Kerferd notes this in his analysis of the *physis* side; see Kerferd, 114-116.

⁹ Here I paraphrase Kerferd's analysis of Antiphon and the recovered fragment of Antiphon's *On Truth* (Kerferd, 115-116).

¹⁰ Kerferd notes a problem with the whole *physis* camp when he writes that "it is not easy to infer prescriptions simply from what is the case", but then goes on to say that this problem was not so great to the ancients "since the urgency of many of the demands that spring from our own natures seems to give them a clear prescriptive force" (both passages Kerferd, 114). Above I have tried merely to show how the reasoning behind such a position might have went.

¹¹ Kerferd points out this basic distinction; see Kerferd, 113.

¹² Kerferd, 126, draws this conclusion; the point is made in the *Protagoras* at 322b-c. Guthrie discusses Protagoras in much the same light (Guthrie, 63-68).

or *nomoi*, provide such a mechanism.¹³ In order to live in a group (and nearly all ancient writers engaged on this side of the debate agree that this is better than to live outside of one),¹⁴ the *nomos* defender asserts, one must have a set of laws that govern conduct.

Unfortunately the way laws accomplish this feat is by frustrating or suppressing the satisfaction of certain appetites on the part of the citizens that the laws govern.¹⁵ Hence the clear antagonism between the *nomos* and *physis* camps. The antagonism makes an appearance in the various forms of literature of the day, and, to show its presence in the minds of Athenians, a quick survey of the literature is on order. Dramatically, the problem appears on the stage in the works of Aristophanes and Euripides. In Aristophanes' *Clouds*,¹⁶ the Wrong Logic argues against "old established rules and laws" so that a boy might with free conscience indulge in licentious behaviour.¹⁷ Later, the Wrong Logic will "notice now the wants/ by Nature's self implanted"¹⁸ that must be serviced; it turns out that the Wrong Logic is merely supplying

¹³ The *Protagoras* discusses laws at 326c-e.

¹⁴ For instance, in the *Protagoras* it is hypothesized that human life would be wiped out completely were it not for the security that a city provides; see *Protagoras*, 322b. The common denominator here is a return to an animal state once civil society is lost. So warns whoever wrote the *Sisyphus* (the debate is between Euripides and Critias; see Kerferd, 141), and Euripides in the *Supplices* (201ff: Kerferd, 141). See also De Romilly, 120n.19. Something similar may be being offered in the *Phaedrus* itself when Socrates claims it is only those souls that had some viewing of the forms that are able to conjoin with a human body; the rest it seems, are doomed to enter into an animal body (249b).

¹⁵ Writes Antiphon: "The laws prescribe what we should see, hear or do, where we should go, even what we should desire, but so far as conformity to nature is concerned what they forbid is as good as what they enjoin" (Guthrie's translation, 109). Obviously the problem between *physis* and *nomos* starts when what seems good and desirable to nature is forbidden by the laws.

¹⁶ Aristophanes' *Clouds* had its theatric release at the Great Dionysia in 423 BCE (see Page et. al., 262), easily making it a contemporary of Socrates.

¹⁷ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 1019-1042.

¹⁸ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 1075.

the means by which the city's laws can be thwarted.¹⁹

Euripides also brings the conflict between *physis* and *nomos* to the stage. He writes in fragment 433 that "in a critical situation, there is no reason to respect law any more than necessity". Even blunter are fragments 840 and 920: "I possess judgment, but nature forces me", and "Nature decreed it-- nature, which has no concern for laws". It makes for good drama, as the conflict is a product of two principles which are both desirable. There is no cartoon enemy who easily presents good and bad in black and white; instead there is an internal struggle that plays itself out in terms that we can all identify with.

Thucydides places the argument within the historical context of the Peloponnesian War. In a speech designed to prevent the Mytilenians from being put to death, Diodotus excuses their behaviour by saying that "in short, it is impossible to prevent, and only great simplicity can hope to prevent, human nature doing what it has once set its mind upon, by force of law or by any other deterrent force whatsoever".²⁰ Similarly, when Corcyra falls into civil terror after being attacked by a Peloponnesian fleet, Thucydides writes that "In the confusion into which life was now thrown in the cities, human nature, always rebelling against the law and now its master, gladly showed itself ungoverned in passion, above respect for justice".²¹ With examples like these, Thucydides is adding some concrete evidence to the debate. For Thucydides, personal hedonism and civil society do not coexist; in Thucydides' history, wherever personal hedonism rears its head one finds a

¹⁹ Aristophanes, 1075-1080.

²⁰ Thucydides, 3.45.7.

²¹ Thucydides, 3.84.2.

city damaged or in the midst of some crisis. A healthy city has laws which are strong enough to curb the appetites of its citizens, and here the evidence seems to support a central tenet of the *nomos* thesis: human communities need restrictive laws in order to exist.

Antiphon, a contemporary Sophist,²² summarized the conflict in his treatise *On Truth*: "Justice in the legal sense is for the most part at odds with nature".²³ Kerferd, in his analysis of this text, is even more explicit: "The first step is thus to set up an antithesis: that which is required by law is contrary to that which is required by nature."²⁴ On first glance the fragments that have been preserved from *On Truth* read like a manifesto for the *physis* camp, but it is in no way agreed that Antiphon himself should be counted as a member of this movement.²⁵ Other writings attributed to him make him out to be far more hospitable to the *nomos* cause than this brazen little text would initially indicate.²⁶ Indeed, on closer inspection, even *On Truth* begins to look more like a sober analysis of the situation that any society governed by laws finds itself in. When considered from the perspective of the *Phaedrus*, several passages are particularly striking: first that

²² Guthrie indicates that virtually nothing is known about Antiphon's life, save that "he was obviously a contemporary of Socrates" (Guthrie, 286); Kerferd is willing to place Antiphon's dates from roughly 470 BCE to 411 BCE (see Kerferd, 50).

²³ The translation is Guthrie's; see Guthrie, 108-109.

²⁴ Kerferd, 116.

²⁵ Guthrie is decided in his opinion that Antiphon is an individualistic hedon (Guthrie, 113); Kerferd is not (Kerferd, 115). De Romilly is especially vehement in denying this of Antiphon (De Romilly, 121-126).

²⁶ For instance, this Antiphon is also supposed to have written a treatise titled *On Concord*, in which he states that "There is nothing worse for men than lack of rule. With this in mind men of old accustomed children to being ruled and to do what they are told so that when they became men they should not be confused in a great change" (Kerferd, 50). This seems to lie more in line with the *nomos* camp.

what belongs to the laws is an addition and what belongs to nature implies necessity; what belongs to the laws is reached through agreement, not by natural growth, whereas what belongs to nature is not a matter of agreement, but is natural.²⁷

and second that

if a man violates, against possibility, one of nature's arrangements, even if he evades all men's detection, the ill is no less, and even if all can see him, it is no greater; for he is not hurt on account of an opinion, but because of truth.²⁸

Antiphon is describing the lamentable case of the poor citizen torn between two guiding principles: on the one hand the citizen is driven to satisfy "natural" desires, and on the other he is forced (at least in public) to sabotage these desires according to laws "reached through agreement" which serve the greater good of being part of a community. By now the comparison that I wish to draw should be obvious: Antiphon's citizen bears a striking resemblance to Socrates' nonlover.

Both these characters have a positive force inciting them to action. Antiphon relies on the broad heading of human nature to describe this force while Socrates cites the narrower case of beauty and its effects. Both also have a restrictive force which curtails activity; for Antiphon this force consists of the laws necessary to keep a group cohesive, while for Socrates it is the "acquired judgment that aims at what is best".

Furthermore both characters cash out these forces in terms of nature

²⁷ Translation by De Romilly, 123; she stress that in this and what follows "The exact translation of the text involves great difficulties. Exactitude has been the aim here, not elegance" (De Romilly, 124). Is this a thinly veiled attack on Guthrie (see Guthrie, 108n.2)?

²⁸ Translation De Romilly, 123.

and artifice. For Antiphon, that causing us to act is natural and necessary; if we are human, then we have natural desires that cause us to wish to act in certain ways. Socrates' man calls this an "innate desire for pleasure", and his meaning for this clause cannot be far from that of Antiphon: if we are human then we have these appetites which demand satisfaction. This outwardly focused force which drives us to action and is natural is contrasted with the restraining force. The restraining force is not natural; Antiphon calls it an "addition" to what is called for of necessity and Socrates describes it as an "acquired judgment". It might be wondered whether any artificial law has the power to overcome one's natural inclinations; even if it does one would still be left feeling frustrated and repressed. However, dividing these two prescriptive forces along the natural/artificial boundary does open the door for the *physis* camp to an easy solution: abandon artifice (it really has nothing to base itself on anyway) in favor of obeying your nature. The natural/artificial distinction prejudices the issue, and when in the palinode Socrates offers a new conception of the soul, he will quickly abandon any such distinction.

Antiphon also describes the restraining force as a product of agreement. Here Antiphon flags the social nature of the *nomos* camp's project; while the hedonist works on a strictly individual nature, the lawmaker is of necessity existent in a social context and the laws are made to ensure the existence of the community. Unfortunately, as Antiphon is well aware, agreement is no substitute for truth (hence the contrast between "opinion" and "truth" in the second of Antiphon's fragments above). The Greeks of this time period were

being made increasingly aware of the relativity of laws; what was considered abhorrent to some communities was perfectly lawful in others,²⁹ and this made for the observation that laws, while perhaps necessary for the establishment of the community, had no basis in substance beyond that. Laws derived their content from the mere whim of their makers, with little, if any, grounding in nature. While a community may come to the agreement that pederasty is to be outlawed because they are of the opinion that this will help preserve the community, such a policy may in fact not serve its intended purpose. In this the community acts on conjecture, with the sole legitimating force behind laws being agreement amongst the lawmakers. Against this human nature is held up to be “truth”; after all, one knows what one wants.

Socrates’ nonlover has the same concerns. Notice how in his opening paragraph, Socrates slyly puts himself in league with the boy he is addressing: Socrates makes it appear as though they are on the same team. In reality, the situation’s conclusion is in the hands of the boy. The question, as Socrates puts it, is “whether one should preferably consort with a lover or a nonlover” (237c). Now, obviously, this is a question for the boy to answer, but Socrates casts it as a decision that they will make together: “you and I would do well to avoid what we charge against other people”, in deciding a question “before us” (237c). The problem for people tackling questions in this manner is that they don’t really know the true nature of the thing being discussed, and hence their whole discussion goes off-track (237b-c). To overcome this difficulty, participants must have an “agreed definition” (237c) of the thing up for discussion. However, as has been pointed out in regards to Socrates’

²⁹ Guthrie, 16. He cites both Herodotus and Thucydides as chronicling such differences.

nonlover, agreement alone will not substitute for truth. At best it can create a consistent account of the topic, with no assurance of any correspondence to the truth of the matter. Socrates' nonlover, like Antiphon, is well aware of the relationship between opinion, agreement, and truth.

Golden Temperaments

The question remains as to what is to be done, faced with the antithesis between laws and nature. One answer, readily observed by Antiphon, is to keep one's appetites private. In *On Truth*, Antiphon writes that "a man therefore can best conduct himself with justice if, in the company of witnesses, he upholds the laws and when alone, without witnesses, he upholds the edicts of nature".³⁰ A charitable interpretation of this statement would infer that Antiphon is calling for a bifurcation of each citizen into a public and private persona. Laws of the city are to be observed in public (as that is where they most properly apply), but in private, when the only presence to be felt is that of the individual, the city's laws count for naught. Whether a citizen ever truly escapes the influence of the city and becomes that solely private individual is a question left untouched by Antiphon, and it could be argued that one is never so far removed from society that one's obligations to society approach the vanishing point.

Another, far more utilitarian, interpretation of Antiphon's statement claims that it is enough merely to obtain an absence of witnesses before one

³⁰ translation De Romilly, 123.

has license to indulge one's appetites to whatever degree one can. Interestingly, the *Phaedrus* finds a mouthpiece for such thinking in the person of Lysias. It should first be noted that Lysias' speech comes down heavily in favor of pursuing one's own interest; at the outset of his speech, Lysias says of nonlovers that "they regulate their services by the scale of their means, with an eye to their own personal interest" (231a). This theme also forms a part of his closing remarks: nonlovers have "never been reproached for behaving to the detriment of their own interest" (234b). Indeed the whole speech is based on the assumption that the boy will act in accord with his own interest, and the benefit of the city at large is never considered.

The same perspective can be seen to be operating on Lysias' other, prior audience, that of the men who would actually try to use it on a boy. These men must also be convinced to act for the satisfaction of their own private wants, and so the speech has a double persuasion to effect. Recall that originally, Lysias presents it to a house full of men (227b), who, it is assumed, in turn would reproduce it to its younger audience. To these men Lysias must show that such a seduction can be accomplished, and with a minimum of risk on their part.

Within this context, Lysias' speech highlights the difference between public and private. This division is first mentioned as a source of possible shame to the boy. The lover will proudly proclaim his triumph to all and sundry, should the boy acquiesce to his advances (231e-232a). Because "established conventions" (i.e. *nomos*) look down on this kind of thing, the boy can expect public "odium" to follow his choice of the lover (232a).

Conversely, the nonlover will keep the affair out of the public eye (232a). The nonlover is thus offering the boy an opportunity to circumvent public morality in the satisfaction of private desires. The speech is even so cheeky as to claim that this secretive nonlover “will prefer to do what is best rather than shine in the eyes of their neighbors” (232a). To both audiences, Lysias is insisting that covert behaviour is superior to public display.

It should be made clear that the appetite for these kinds of erotic relationships was popularly believed to be present in the older male only; the boy was expected to take no pleasure from the act itself, whatever the reality of the situation was.³¹ The boy can expect the benefits of “friendship” from this relationship, as the nonlover constantly points out, and hence traditionally the boy has a choice between risking public censure and losing the advantages of friendship with the elder male. In fact, if the boy was a free Athenian youth, the consequences of the affair becoming known was a potential loss of citizen status.³² Thus Lysias’ nonlover offers a particularly attractive deal to the boy: by keeping the affair private, you will receive all the benefits with no fear of recrimination. The final thought that Lysias’ man leaves the boy with is that he should be chosen if the boy wishes to “keep your affairs concealed” (234c).

Here we have a clear example of behaviour considered disgraceful and corrupt by society at large, and yet privately desired on the part of the lover and nonlover. The interests of the city and the individual conflict on this matter, and Lysias’ solution is to conduct the affair in private. Much as in

³¹ see Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 53, 100-109.

³² see Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 31-34.

Plato's purposes he serves as the original owner of the building in which Lysias will present his "feast of eloquence" (227b). In terms of my earlier analysis of the speeches, Morychus is a man characterized by a lack of temperance, whose behaviour is wanton. Recall that in Socrates' initial analysis of the person ruled by appetite, the ruling appetite is "conspicuous" (238a), and lends its name to its owner. This person feels little of the conflict between public and private good; instead he throws himself fully over to the side of private satisfaction. Now, clearly Morychus is won over to base wantonness. He is a manifestation of the rule of appetites, and is famous for it.

With this understanding of the origins of Lysias' auditorium, it becomes clear how especially appropriate it is for Socrates to compare Lysias' speech to the epitaph of Midas (264c). The explicit point that Socrates makes is that the two discourses are similar in their lack of organic structure (264c-e).³⁵ Behind this comparison though lies the further similarity of character between those whom the two texts speak for. In this the house of Morychus is like the tomb of Midas. The tomb has its epitaph, the house has its speech. Midas gained his mythological fame chiefly from two events, one of which is relevant to our discussion. It seems that Midas once captured the satyr Silenus and then proceeded to release him to the care of Dionysus.³⁶ In thanks for this act, Dionysus granted one wish, which Midas filled by asking

³⁵ Ferrari indicates that "stripped of the saving irony with which it is presented, this criticism would surely border on the crass" (Ferrari, 47). Indeed I agree, but will add that the reference to Midas' epitaph not only provides another example of inorganic structure but also offers a comparison point in subject; the implication is that as the poem serves as an epitaph for Midas, so the speech might function as epitaph for the unsavories that Lysias addresses.

³⁶ Graves, 281.

that anything he touched be turned to gold. Soon Midas realized that the effects of his touch extended to include the food he ate, and in some versions of the story, even his daughter.³⁷

By referring to this character, Socrates is drawing attention to the classic example of the counterproductiveness of an infinite appetite. Midas' appetite for gold was so strong that it usurped even the need to eat. If Midas had not renounced his need for gold, he would have starved,³⁸ and an appetite for gold would have been the death of him. The epitaph, and its comparison to Lysias' speech (at 264c the speech is said to be "just like the epitaph"), serves to cue us to the presence of Midas surrounding Lysias' speech. Interestingly, Socrates concludes his prayer to Pan by asserting that "as for gold, may I possess so much of it as only a temperate man might bear and carry with him" (279c). Here Socrates shows himself to be well aware of the pitfalls invoked by not gaining control over one's own appetites. This goes hand in hand in the prayer with the ambition for peace between inner and outer, a goal achieved by the private suppression of one's private appetites.

In the *Phaedrus* Morychus' house is then passed on to Epicrates, and it might be expected that Epicrates symbolically inherits the glutton's position as well. In fact Epicrates turns out to have been a man who accepted bribes from the Persians whilst serving in the role of ambassador for Athens.³⁹ Thus, in this house, the glutton is succeeded by the man willing to sell out his city for his own personal gain. The conflict between public and private in the case of Epicrates is as clear as the choice he makes to resolve it. The health of the city

³⁷ Morford & Lenardon, 175.

³⁸ After this episode, Midas is said to have a "loathing for riches" (Morford & Lenardon, 174).

³⁹ Davies, 181.

means nothing in comparison to his own personal appetite for wealth, and so Epicrates attempts to sell the one out for the other. The real improvement that Epicrates makes (at least in the eyes of Lysias) on Morychus is to try to keep his affairs private: no becoming the butt of Aristophanes for him. Thus while Morychus' appetitive nature is made very public and incurs public censure, Epicrates keeps his indulgences private (or at least attempts to; while he was found out it would be impossible to imagine him intent on publicly selling out the city of Athens).

Epicrates then, will serve as an ideal audience for the type of behaviour being promoted by Lysias (and behind him, there lie the words of Antiphon): in public make the appearance of following public will, while in private follow your desires. The public perception of Epicrates was of an ambassador going off to serve Athens' interest in Persia and Sparta. In truth though Epicrates was intent on lining his own pockets through these discussions. In Lysias' speech, the point is made that if the boy is seen confabulating with the lover, everyone will expect them to be planning the fulfillment "of their desires" (232b), while if the boy is seen talking to the nonlover, "no one ever thinks of putting a bad construction on their association" (232b). Of course the truth of the matter will be quite the reverse, and much like in Epicrates' example, the public will be duped.

Other Gods That Dwell In This Place

The only certain member of Lysias' audience is Phaedrus himself, and,

if truth be told, the historical Phaedrus was not an outstanding citizen. In 415 BCE, just before the Athenian fleet set sail on the famous expedition against Sicily, it came to light that a group of citizens had profaned the Mysteries of Eleusis.⁴⁰ Included in this group of profaners was our Phaedrus. Evidence to this effect comes from a group of stone tablets called the Attic Stelai which list the sale of property confiscated from the profaners.⁴¹ Phaedrus' official name appears on this list, and the fact that it must be the Phaedrus of Plato's dialogue is confirmed by Socrates' conspicuous announcement of Phaedrus' full name with deme at 244a.

Apart from being a member of the Socratic circle, Phaedrus' only fame rests on the fact that he took part in the profanation, and this connection might serve as a clue as to why Plato chose him to be Socrates' sole interlocutor on this occasion. Certainly any ancient Athenian reading the dialogue would be aware of this connection to Phaedrus, for the Attic Stelai were placed outside the Eleusinion (Demeter's temple in Athens), apparently

⁴⁰ Thucydides, 6.27-6.28.

⁴¹ For the Attic Stelai themselves, see Pritchard, 1953 and 1956, also Furley, 44-48, McDowell, 71-72, 74. Finally, Nussbaum, 96-98, 122, but there is much difficulty in accepting Nussbaum's account of the significance of Plato's choice of Phaedrus as interlocutor. Nussbaum blandly asserts that Phaedrus was "implicated, along with Alcibiades, in the impious mutilation of the Herms" (Nussbaum, 96). Indeed, such seems to be not the case, as the only evidence we have involves him in profaning the Mysteries. Thus Andokides' speech has Teucros ratting on Phaedrus in connection with the Mysteries (Andokides, 15), but *not* in connection with the Herms (Andokides, 35). Furthermore there is much to suggest that the Attic Stelai specifically refer to the selling of property of those convicted of profaning the Mysteries. There is reason to believe that the property sold as a result of the mutilation was recorded on stelai in the Acropolis. Phaedrus' name is listed on the Attic stelai, indicating that he was implicated in profaning the Mysteries, but the phrase *περι αμφοτερα* ("with regard to both"--presumably meant to indicate both a profaner and a mutilator) does not appear after his name, as it does with others. This seems to signify that Phaedrus did not commit both crimes, although some overlap between the two groups did occur. See Furley, 46-47, for a discussion along these lines.

as some sort of warning against further profanation.⁴²

The Mysteries were religious ceremonies that took place in Eleusis (an area in the countryside surrounding Athens). The celebrations consisted in the Athenian populace making the trek to Eleusis where rituals of initiation into the secret cult took place.⁴³ It was an odd sort of secret cult though, for, as Burkert writes, "Most, but not all, Athenians were initiated. Women, slaves, and foreigners were admitted".⁴⁴ In effect it seems that this was a very public secret cult, or at least a cult that all of Athens had access to. In a way the Mysteries of Eleusis bridge the gap between public and private, for while the Mysteries were a secret affair, which could not be repeated outside of the temple, they were open to everyone, even non-Athenians. For this reason the Eleusis cult provides an excellent historical example for Plato to use in contextualizing his dialogue, as it seems to display some sense of harmony between public and private. I shall return to this theme in investigating the significance of the central myth at work in the cult. The fact that these Mysteries were profaned adds to the drama that this reference invokes.

The crime consisted in mocking these ceremonies in the private homes of a few select Athenians.⁴⁵ Thus Phaedrus engaged in a double standard with the city of Athens. Publicly, Phaedrus and his cabal were seemingly upstanding citizens who upheld public morality. Privately though, this group thumbed their noses at public convention, by mocking the

⁴² This is Furley's and McDowell's opinion of the purpose in placing them there; see Furley, 45, and McDowell, 71.

⁴³ Burkert gives a good synopsis of the cult and its proceedings; see Burkert, 285-290.

⁴⁴ Burkert, 285-286.

⁴⁵ Although whether the Mysteries were actually mocked or merely performed is a matter open to debate; in any event it was enough merely for them to be performed outside of Eleusis for a crime to be committed. See Murray, 155.

Mysteries in various private houses.⁴⁶ Much like Epicrates, these men present one facade that the public deems acceptable, while in private engage in conduct considered illegal. What is worth noting here is that this affair was also meant to be kept quiet and out of the public eye. It was only after the mutilation of the Herms and the ensuing investigation that this practice was brought to light.⁴⁷

In the mutilation of the Herms private disregard for the virtues of the city suddenly became a matter of public knowledge. Hermes was the god of the *agora*, the common meeting place for Athenians.⁴⁸ An attack on the Herms was interpreted as an act “where a conspiracy to mock the gods was taken as proof of a conspiracy against the state”.⁴⁹ One way of reading the mutilation would be to see it as an act of a group of private citizens who thought themselves above public law, able to trample upon public symbols and standards. Significantly, Phaedrus’ lover, Eryximachus, was accused and convicted of mutilating the Herms.⁵⁰ Another character mentioned in connection with this club in the introduction of the *Phaedrus* (227b), Acumenus, father of Eryximachus, was also implicated in the profanation.⁵¹

But the most famous member of the group was far and away Alcibiades, implicated in profaning the Mysteries on no less than three separate occasions.⁵² This is the same Alcibiades who, with two other generals, was about to take control of the greatest amassing of the fleet that

⁴⁶ Ellis, 59.

⁴⁷ Ellis, 58-62.

⁴⁸ Parker, 81.

⁴⁹ Parker, 203.

⁵⁰ Davies, 462.

⁵¹ Davies, 462-463.

⁵² Parker, 59.

Athens had seen yet.⁵³ One of Athens' most daring and risky public undertakings was being put in the hands of a man suspected of ignoring city laws in favor of his own caprice. Thucydides' description of the relations between Alcibiades and the city of Athens just before the mutilation of the Herms took place is telling:

Alarmed at the greatness of the license in his own life and habits, and at the ambition which he showed in all things whatsoever that he undertook, the mass of the people marked him as an aspirant to the tyranny and became his enemies; and although in his public life his conduct of the war was as good as could be desired, in his private life his habits gave offence to everyone, and caused them to commit affairs to other hands (6.15.4)

The question remains as to why Plato would want to allude to such an unsavory crowd and affair in this dialogue, and my contention is that he does so because he wants the distinction they drew between public and private persona front and centre in the mind of his audience. With Alcibiades, the conflict between private and public interest is obviously reaching a crisis. This is the historical precedent that Plato wants in the minds of the readers considering the Lysian position. In divorcing himself from responsibility of controlling his own appetites, Lysias' nonlover forces an enmity between himself and his city which demands a sacrifice. Either the city wins out and frustrates the individual's desires, or the individual wins out, and the city's laws become meaningless. Thus one of the two causes is sacrificed for the other. Lysias' speech, true to its origins in an inability to moderate oneself, argues that the public persona means nothing in comparison to the private one, and so its audience members, made up of people like Epicrates, are

⁵³ Thucydides, 6.31.

willing to go out and sacrifice their public duties in order that private desires might be satisfied. Alcibiades himself is infamous for being motivated by purely selfish reasons, and indeed, when recalled by his enemies to stand trial, he promptly deserts to help the Spartan campaign.⁵⁴ In effect what is called for by Lysias, and what seems to have been present among some of the upper echelons of Athenian society, is a hiding of one's appetites from public display and hence from public retaliation. Wherever public sanction was no longer effective (and the most obvious place would be in a private setting), appetites were given free reign.

An eye to the profanation of the Mysteries has the added benefit of casting some light on the dramatic events of the dialogue. All commentators are struck by Plato's literary genius at work in the construction of the setting of the dialogue; Thompson goes so far as to write that it is a "dialogue in which his literary ability shines with greater lustre than perhaps in any other of his compositions".⁵⁵ What is far less agreed upon is the meaning of all that beauty. Specifically, commentators are struck by Socrates' appearance outside Athens' city walls. Nehamas in particular shows concern over Socrates leaving Athens, comparing him to Odysseus encountering strange new lands.⁵⁶

However, as other commentators have pointed out, Socrates is not in unfamiliar territory.⁵⁷ It is Socrates who knows the exact location where the rape of Orithyia took place (230c), as opposed to the (misguided) popular

⁵⁴ Ellis, 65-68.

⁵⁵ Thompson, xiv.

⁵⁶ Nehamas and Woodruff, x.

⁵⁷ For example, see Zwicky, 29-31, and Griswold, 1986, 34-35.

perception, and he who knows where the altar to Boreas is situated. Nehamas cannot be correct in his assumption of Socrates' virginity to the place. Ironically, it is Socrates who turns out to be the guide on this jaunt; Socrates, the man who always goes barefoot so as to be able to traverse the Illisus (229a), and who alerts Phaedrus to the presence and nature of the cicadas attending their discussion (259a-e).

My own first impression of the fact that the two men venture outside the city walls to conduct their dialogue would be to cast it in the light of the public/private debate that I have made use of so far. Certainly the context of the profanation of the Mysteries provides some interesting points of comparison. The intense religious atmosphere to the dialogue has been noticed by other commentators, most notably by Jackson and Dorter. Dorter indicates that "there are at least 18 religious allusions in the first two pages alone";⁵⁸ Jackson shows that the *Phaedrus* contains more prayers (four) than any other of Plato's dialogues,⁵⁹ and that the content of these prayers is substantially more involved than those of other dialogues.⁶⁰ What's more, prayers open and close Socrates' attempt at speech making; I shall try to draw some connections between these two speeches and the Lesser and Greater Mysteries, and the fact that Socrates' speeches are begun and ended by prayer adds to the religious referencing going on in them.

First then, Socrates' famous displacement into the countryside. Socrates' conspicuous journey outside the city walls is mirrored by the Athenians being required to make a trek out of their city through the Attic

⁵⁸ Dorter, 280.

⁵⁹ As the listing of prayers within the Platonic corpus indicates; see Jackson, 15.

⁶⁰ Jackson calls them "the richest prayers of the dialogues"; see Jackson, 23.

countryside in order to get to the temple of Eleusis. Mention is even made of the fact that the boundary between Athens and Eleusis was demarcated by streams, which, when crossed, were lined with masked figures who made fun of the initiates with “mockery and obscene gestures”.⁶¹ This action was meant as a dramatic re-enactment of part of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter which serves as the basis for the rituals of the Mysteries.⁶² In the hymn Demeter starts off the process mute; she is eventually cajoled into speaking through the joking of Iambe.⁶³ Thus the masked figures mock the procession. Socrates and Phaedrus too must cross a stream, the Illisus (229a). Both men also demur from giving their respective speeches straight off (Socrates at 236b & 2236d, Phaedrus at 228a); in either case the one has to cajole and taunt the other into producing a speech (and at 236c Phaedrus compares their situation to that of “vulgar comedians”). This homage is a parody of the actual Mysteries, with the two men freely exchanging the roles of Demeter and Iambe in these exchanges.

Then comes the ironic interplay of Socrates claiming to be a stranger to their resting place, with Phaedrus playing the role of the “perfect guide” (230c). Similarly, the Eleusinian procession was made up of two broad groups: “the *mystai*, who took part for the first time, and the *epoptai*, who were present for at least the second time . . . each *mystes* had his *mystagogos* who escorted him into the sanctuary”.⁶⁴ With the constant back and forth between the roles of leader and follower that the two men engage in,⁶⁵ it

⁶¹ Burkert, 287.

⁶² The translation of the Hymn that I have used is that in Morford & Lenardon, 228-241.

⁶³ Morford & Lenardon, 233.

⁶⁴ Burkert, 287.

⁶⁵ As Griswold notes, though with no reference to the procession to Eleusis; see Griswold, 29-31.

the nonlover, but also inhabits the role first portrayed by Demeter herself.

Socrates even goes so far as to break off in the midst of his speech to comment on the supernatural presence to their proceedings: "Well Phaedrus my friend, do you think, as I do, that I am divinely inspired?" (238c), and then, "truly, there seems to be a divine presence in this spot, so you must not be surprised if, as my speech proceeds, I become as one possessed" (238c-d). Here the religious reference is made explicit, with Socrates being possessed by the spirit of Demeter as she is portrayed in the Hymn.

Burkert describes the proceedings of these Lesser Mysteries as a purification ceremony;⁷⁰ the actual hymn runs thus:

then Demeter sat down holding her veil over her face
with her hands. For a long time she remained seated with-
out a sound, grieving; she did not by word or action ac-
knowledge anyone but without a smile, not touching food
or drink⁷¹

Demeter purifies herself by fasting, an action that will be echoed by Socrates' nonlover. He too tries to consecrate himself through abstention. I accept Ferrari's characterization of the atmosphere surrounding Socrates' first speech as being "gothic and gloomy, and at times almost maudlin".⁷² This fits in very well with the mournful Demeter who has lost her daughter.

The Greater Mysteries were a festival proper, and they began with the gathering of the procession that was to march from Athens to Eleusis. The leader of the Eleusis cult, the hierophant, acts as leader to the procession, and

⁷⁰ Burkert, 286.

⁷¹ Translation Morford & Lenardon, 233.

⁷² Ferrari, 99.

he is joined by other religious officials. The marchers begin a fast that will not end until they reach Eleusis. The march itself "is pervaded by a mood of dancing, indeed, almost ecstasy. The rhythmic shout *Iakch' o Iakche* resounds again and again and articulates the movement of the crowd".⁷³ The march that Socrates and Phaedrus undertake is described by Socrates as a "frenzied dance" (228b),⁷⁴ in the style of the Corybantic rites, where initiates "danced themselves into an ecstatic state".⁷⁵ With this phrase, Socrates clearly compares his own walk with Phaedrus to that of a religious procession.⁷⁶ A further reflection of this procession takes place in the heavens of Socrates' palinode; there members of the "divine choir" (247a) line up in the train of gods, each soul "honouring the god in whose chorus he danced" (252c),⁷⁷ and make their way to the outside of the heavens.

Upon reaching Eleusis, the first religiously significant act the marchers perform is to take a meal. Burkert writes that "as soon as the stars became visible the *mystai* broke their fast".⁷⁸ Could the allusion be any plainer in the myth? Socrates also connects the act of looking into the beyond with feasting in his narrative of the heavenly procession (247c-d). Indeed, it is the reason that the souls make the trek. And the language that Plato uses to describe this

⁷³ Burkert, 287.

⁷⁴ Translation Nehamas and Woodruff; alternately "manic frenzy" (Rowe), "frenzied enthusiasm" (Hackforth), and "revels" (Jowett).

⁷⁵ Nehamas & Woodruff, 3.

⁷⁶ It might be argued here that the reference is to the Corybantic rites themselves, and that it is stretching the image beyond its capabilities in trying to get it to refer to the Mysteries of Eleusis. I agree that it is a reference to the Corybantic rites (and for an explication of this, see Linford, especially 134-136), but this does not preclude the possibility that it serves other purposes as well. I shall treat this matter more fully when I tackle the issue of why no direct reference to the Mysteries of Eleusis is made in the *Phaedrus*.

⁷⁷ Translation Nehamas & Woodruff.

⁷⁸ Burkert, 287.

were given the knowledge of just what the sacred things were that had been kept secret from them, and were supposed to be transported into religious ecstasy by them.

The Myth upon which the cult of Eleusis is based also has some interesting relevance and connection to the *Phaedrus*. The myth centres on the actions undertaken by Demeter after Hades has abducted her daughter, Persephone (or Kore, Greek for “girl”, as she is referred to by the cult). In the beginning, Persephone is at play with the daughters of Oceanus.⁸⁴ The God Earth produces a lovely narcissus flower, which captivates Persephone with its beauty. As she reaches out to pluck it, Earth yawns open, and Hades rushes out in his chariot⁸⁵ to snatch Persephone and kidnap her away to his own lands. Hades has decided that Persephone is to be his wife.

The similarities here to the Boreas myth that Socrates relates to *Phaedrus* are clear. Boreas too swoops down on an unsuspecting girl, Orithyia, who is playing with her friend, Phamaceia, and takes her off to be his wife. Both are cases of sexual appetites that have gone out of control, appetites which dominate the decisions of Boreas and Hades. River imagery is there in both stories,⁸⁶ as is play with a friend. Moreover the connection between the Boreas myth and the Mysteries of Eleusis does not end with this similarity of storyline. Orithyia is the daughter of Erechtheus, a king of ancient Athens and leader of the military expedition which subjugates Eleusis

⁸⁴ The Homeric Hymn runs thus: “Persephone was playing with the deep-bodied daughters of Oceanus and picking flowers”. To relate this part of the myth, I rely on Morford & Lenardon’s translation of it, 228-241.

⁸⁵ Here one can’t help but think of the chariot imagery of Socrates’ myth, with its similarly consuming desire to ravish the boy.

⁸⁶ Oceanus is the stream goddess; see Graves, 30.

to Athenian rule for the first time.⁸⁷ Orithyia bears Boreas a daughter named Chione, whom Poseidon falls in love with, and who eventually bears him the child Eumolpus.⁸⁸

Eumolpus is left to the care of Poseidon, and winds up living in the region of Eleusis. Here he comes into contact with Demeter searching for her daughter. After the deal with Hades is made, she shows him the performance of her holy rites and he becomes the high priest of the cult of Eleusis.⁸⁹ The future celebration of the Mysteries was in the hands of his family, the Eumolpidai, and they were responsible for filling the position of Hierophant.⁹⁰ Thus it turns out that Boreas is the grandfather of the original high priest of the Eleusinian cult.

In Eumolpus the cult has its first leader who can deliver the goods promised by Demeter. In function, the Mysteries insure the best fate possible for the initiates in the afterlife.⁹¹ Interestingly, at the end of his palinode Socrates will give to those who remember the forms and who combine temperance with beauty in their dealings with loved ones the best position in the afterlife (256b). They will shed their earthly burden and recover their wings (256b). Nonlovers though, forgetful or ignoring of the forms, “condemn” their souls “to float for nine thousand years hither and thither, around the earth and beneath it” (256e0257a), i.e. in Hades’ realm, since they have not the knowledge to avoid him. Eumolpus, by revealing the Mysteries, gives the initiate the proper tools and knowledge to overcome the terrors of

⁸⁷ Graves, 168-170.

⁸⁸ Graves, 168-170.

⁸⁹ Morford & Lenardon, 240, Graves, 168.

⁹⁰ Burkert, 285, and Morford & Lenardon, 244.

⁹¹ Burkert, 289.

death (Hades). Kore is led out of hell during the Mysteries,⁹² and the initiate is shown how Hades is overcome. This has two ramifications; first death itself is overcome, and with the prospects of rebirth (symbolized by Kore being led back out of Hell), one sense of immortality is made available. Demeter was a god of agriculture, and while crops must die in order to provide a harvest, that harvest provides the seeds necessary for the crops to grow again in the following year. Thus the cycle is repeated, insuring the continued existence of life, despite the imposition of death.

Secondly Hades' original act of stealing away Kore is overturned and set right by her eventual release from hell. His kidnap is a product of ruling appetites; by foiling his attempt Demeter asserts some control over those appetites and forces them into submission. Similarly, the Hierophant reveals the Mysteries of how she accomplished this feat to the initiates, symbolically revealing to them how outrageous appetites might be controlled. In this part of the reason for Plato alluding to the Mysteries of Eleusis becomes clear: on a symbolic level the Mysteries provide a method of dealing with an appetitive nature. The direct reference to Boreas serves to both highlight this problem and provide an oblique allusion to the solution the Mysteries proffer.

So much by way of cataloging the similarities between the dialogue and the Mysteries themselves. However, I wish to claim that Plato further has in mind the profanation of the Mysteries, and for this other evidence is required. Fortunately, the text is not lacking in references to religious impiety and profanation. The lesser Mysteries are meant to be a purification ritual, and this makes them the ideal opportunity for Socrates to carry out his own

⁹² Burkert, 288.

profanation, for in his lesser speech he speaks out against the god of love, Eros. With this act he solidifies his reference to the profaners. Having abruptly left off his first speech, Socrates gets up to leave the setting, but is compelled to stay by his inner *daimon*: "I seemed to hear a voice, forbidding me to leave the spot until I had made atonement for some offence to heaven" (249b-c). It turns out that the speech, and the theory that it detailed, were "blasphemous" (242d). Socrates had been duped into following the precepts set out by Lysias, and in this he follows the other profaners. His sin was to compose a speech against love, a position that results from the specious bifurcation between the interest of city and citizen that Lysias and the rest endorse. Socrates has profaned the god of love with his performance that follows in the footsteps of Lysias. For this Socrates has to "purify" himself (243a), and so sets out on executing the palinode. He further evinces a concern that Lysias should do the same (243d).

Phaedrus himself is not innocent in this regard, although he evinces little of the regret which Socrates does: throughout Socrates' self-castigation after the first speech, Phaedrus never joins in to pronounce his own disgrace for having spoken against the gods (242c-243d). In fact, Phaedrus' actions have shown him to be the very model of a profaner. Morford and Lenardon write that the essence of the Mysteries involved three stages: "a dramatic enactment (*dromena* [this is the procession process]), the revelation of sacred objects (*dieknymena*), and the uttering of certain words (*legomena*)".⁹³ Phaedrus will lead Socrates through a systematic mockery of each of these stages.

⁹³ Morford & Lenardon, 245.

Already we have seen Phaedrus and Socrates play with the structure of the Eleusinian procession, trading roles at will to the point of farce. The sacred objects were apparently kept hidden during the procession in closed *kistai*, with the central object being an ear of corn, revealed to the cult in the temple itself.⁹⁴ Similarly Phaedrus keeps his sacred thing, Lysias' speech, hidden under his cloak (228d although Socrates discovers its presence, and demands its display: "Come now, show it me" he commands Phaedrus at 228e).⁹⁵ The speech is revealed in an arbour which is "consecrated" (230b), and in which a divine presence resides (238c); in short, a holy place symbolic of the temple at Eleusis.

His utterance of course is the speech itself, but before he gives it, Phaedrus too plays coy about discoursing, and he must be cajoled by Socrates into performing the oration (228a-e). Of the Mysteries, Morford & Lenardon write that "the culmination was the awesome exhibition by the Hierophant himself of the holy objects, bathed in a radiant light in front of the Anactoron as he delivered his mystic utterances".⁹⁶ The speech of Lysias is both the physical object that Socrates must see and the sacred words that Phaedrus will deliver and which initiate Socrates into the profaner's club.

For Socrates is indeed initiated; after delivering Lysias' oration, Phaedrus enquires into its effect on Socrates (243c), who seems to forthrightly declare in the aftermath: "It's a miracle, my friend; I'm in ecstasy" (243d). He

⁹⁴ Burkert, 288.

⁹⁵ Hackforth wonders at this act: "What purpose is served by making Phaedrus keep the manuscript hidden, and suggest giving a summary of the speech?" (Hackforth, 26). His response is that it serves Phaedrus' vanity to show himself an able summarizer of the great orator Lysias. True enough, but I believe that Plato has set Phaedrus up with this action as the religious official who would carry the hidden sacred things to Eleusis from Athens.

⁹⁶ Morford & Lenardon, 246.

has been transported by Phaedrus as the initiates are transported by the Hierophant; notice that Phaedrus too is “radiant” in Socrates’ gushings (243d), much like the Hierophant and his sacred things in the celebration of the Mysteries.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, Phaedrus’ words speak against the god Eros, and through them Socrates has been initiated into a group of profaners who mock religious ceremony.

Socrates’ first act as an initiate is to engage in some religious mockery of his own, solidifying his position as member, comparing Phaedrus’ performance (in which he joins) to a Bacchic frenzy (234d). This hits a little too close to home though, and Phaedrus suddenly becomes thin-skinned upon receiving Socrates’ description of himself: “Come Socrates, do you really think you should joke about this?” (234d). In fact, joking and mockery are the names of the game in this club, and Socrates has a decidedly easier time of it than Phaedrus; he further taunts Phaedrus with his “Do you really think I am joking, that I am not serious?” (234d). The deeper issue involved is whether one should be mocking the gods in this way, though Phaedrus seems unconcerned with that. Phaedrus is quite convinced that Socrates is “not at all serious” (234e).

At this point it might be argued that I am drawing too much out of the dramatic content of the dialogue. If Plato had wanted to use the profanation of the Mysteries as a backdrop to this dialogue, then certainly he could have been more explicit in his references, and not left it to be teased out of the text

⁹⁷ In this whole passage I prefer the translation of Nehamas & Woodruff, who emphasize the religious context and the humour of the exchange. Rowe uses “beaming”, in accord with De Vries, who thinks there is a play on Phaedrus’ own name. I agree, but wish to add the connection this makes to the use of brightness in the palinode, as Phaedrus’ beaming face has grabbed Socrates’ attention and given him religious transport.

after much rereading and research. The use of the Boreas myth, the mention of Corybantic rites; surely these are only meant to go as far as references to Boreas and the Corybantic ceremonies themselves. Any further use that I am making of them is imagination on my part. Indeed, these references that I have cooked up are so obscure as to be left out entirely of the recent major texts published on the *Phaedrus*,⁹⁸ leaving me as the sole dog barking up this tree. Why should I be trusted on this matter when no one else makes use of it, and there is no text in the *Phaedrus* which explicitly directs the reader to connections to the profanations?

My response is to point to the very nature of the referent in this case. It was a sacred religious ceremony that was not to be revealed outside the temple. As Burkert writes, "the sources available to us, both iconography and texts, keep to the rule that only allusions are admitted".⁹⁹ Thus Plato's hands are tied; in order not to be guilty of profanity himself he must draw back from explicit references to the Mysteries. This in turn helps with explaining some of the difficulty in spotting his allusions in our own century. We have not the easy acquaintance with the Mysteries that Plato's original audience would have had, and only recently, with the discovery of the Attic Stelai, has the centre-piece of *Phaedrus* been properly exposed. The very thing that Plato is drawing our attention to (the profaning cabal) is a group that he himself will not join, and this means no direct mention of the Mysteries of Eleusis.

With these references in mind, the unique dramatic activity of the dialogue becomes a little clearer to decipher, for it in effect is presenting a

⁹⁸ Ferrari, Griswold (1986), and Burger, for instance.

⁹⁹ Burkert, 285.

parody of the parody of the Mysteries. By contextualizing the discussion this way, Plato is drawing the reader's attention to the events of 415 BCE, and the circumstances that caused them. Having made this reference, Plato then continues on by having Socrates deliver a speech that will atone for his past offence, and symbolically the reader can expect some response in what follows to the social problem of the profaners. For understood in the terms described by Lysias, the situation is left in a standoff. The blunt contradiction between public and private interests entails the sacrifice of either one or the other, and does not allow for their coexistence. It is at this point that Socrates will enter into the public/private conflict with his own understanding of temperance and try to rectify the situation.

Following The Muse

Socrates will achieve his purposes by subtly recasting both sides of the debate in a manner that will allow for coexistence. Concerning the private individual, this will entail an inflation of the nobility of human nature to something beyond being the mere instigator of base desires. On the other hand the laws will receive a corresponding deflation that sharply curtails their role in the preservation of civil society. Once these two conditions are met, then the functioning of society can go hand in hand with the functioning of the individual.

As expressed by Antiphon in the fragments from *On Truth*, human

nature is productive of urges and appetites than have a compelling effect on an individual's behaviour. These urges are consumptive and outwardly focused; they force a positive action of some kind. Restraint is not listed as a component of human nature, but instead is an artificial construct that is added from without. Hence the conclusion that laws will always act contrary to nature.

Socrates will oppose this position with the stance that restraint is as much a part of human nature as desire is. Recall that in the *palinode*, the true lover is brought back to a vision of both beauty and temperance, and that both of these forms have an impact on the makeup of his soul. Thus the true lover has temperance already within him. The true lover, according to Socrates, will have no need of laws in order to curtail his satisfaction of appetites. Instead, the curtailing force comes from within, and the true lover will accomplish moderate behaviour all on his own.

Farness claims to perceive in the backdrop to the discussion a "pastoral setting that highlights the oppositions between inside and outside, body and *polis*, city and nature".¹⁰⁰ With this I would agree, reading in these oppositions a play on the conflict between city and individual. The obvious symbolism (perhaps too much so, but for this one should fault those who see the problem in such simplistic antitheses) would be to associate Athens with public interests and the countryside with nature. Athens is governed by the rule of law, as is any city, and within it we find the likes of Phaedrus, Acumenus, Epicrates and the rest chaffing under the law's stifling weight. Meanwhile the countryside is inhabited by deities such as Boreas, who finds

¹⁰⁰ Farness, 151.

no compunction in descending upon and raping Orithyia (229b-d). Boreas, in terrain outside the influence of the Athenian walls, can give full vent to his appetites. Similarly the cicadas sing overhead; Socrates explains how these very same cicadas used to be men, but that they became “so thrilled with pleasure that they went on singing, and quite forgot to eat and drink until they actually died without noticing it” (259b-c). Thus the cicadas form another example of abandonment to hedonism. Much like the Midas myth, the cicada story also serves the prescriptive function of warning against following their example, lest their fate be shared. The countryside is a dangerous place where no laws exist to inhibit behaviour; surely this is where appetites get their fullest expression.

It is in this context that the developing relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus becomes extremely interesting to watch. All the signs are there for an impending seduction.¹⁰¹ First there is the general observation that these two men of unequal age go off alone together to enunciate speeches aimed at seduction. Indeed it turns into a contest to see who can produce the most effective speech. Griswold remarks on Socrates being “half crazed with the desire” to listen to Phaedrus recite Lysias’ speech and then “willing to discuss the matter at length with the rhetorician’s manifestly mediocre disciple”.¹⁰² Upon hearing the first discourse, Socrates admits that it was not so much the speech, but Phaedrus himself, who held Socrates’ attention (234d). There is also no lack of sexual allusions in the banter between the two men: there is a demand to be shown what Phaedrus has in hand under his

¹⁰¹ Here again others before me have noted this aspect of the dialogue; Burger writes of the “natural seduction scene taking place” (Burger, 14).

¹⁰² Griswold, 1986, 8.

cloak (228d), and Socrates' realization of something "welling up" within him (228d). For his part, Phaedrus quite willingly points out that "We are by ourselves in a lonely place, and I am stronger and younger than you: for all which reasons 'mistake not thou my bidding' and please don't make me use force to open your lips" (236c-d).

Griswold sees the two men as alternately playing at the roles of lover, nonlover, beloved, and nonbeloved.¹⁰³ Ultimately though, the palinode will require the two to settle down into the roles of elder and younger partner, taken by Socrates and Phaedrus respectively.¹⁰⁴ By the time the palinode is given, the two men are caught up in the very actions being described in the palinode of the true lover and beloved; the great speech itself is an example of the beauty that can flow out of a lover inspired by the presence of his beloved. There Socrates addresses Phaedrus directly as the "boy", and Phaedrus easily acquiesces to the part (243e). The tenderness of the exchange is obvious.

With these clues in mind, we might expect the scene to quickly decay into a satisfaction of the desires awakened within Socrates.¹⁰⁵ The hints to Socrates' sexual arousal are there, Phaedrus seems willing (with his statement of "Here he is, quite close beside you, whenever you want him" (243e)), the laws inhibiting fulfillment of appetites are absent, and the land he now inhabits is rife with examples of giving oneself over to pleasure. But the fact

¹⁰³ Griswold, 1986, 29-30.

¹⁰⁴ Griswold, 1986, 31.

¹⁰⁵ Burger in fact, directly associates Socrates with Boreas, and decides that, since the dialogue gives no evidence to a literal seduction taking place, "Socrates will soon try to 'carry off' Phaedrus with beautiful speeches" (Burger, 14). This goes too far I think, and upsets what I perceive to be the real reason for placing Socrates and Phaedrus in this carnal context: even with an absence of external restraint, and with temptation all around, Socrates is still able to control his desires.

remains that no such eroticism emerges.

With this result Socrates proves himself to be one of the true lovers described in his palinode. According to the Lysian casting of the public/private debate, there should be no reason why, if my reading of the situation is correct, Socrates should not fulfill his desires. But the fact is he does not, and he has only himself to blame for this outcome. In this situation, the restraint has come from within, with no need of assistance from city laws.

Citizens of this Socratic stature will thus not be presented with a difficulty in adhering to the city's need to constrain their activities. It must be kept in mind that the public/private debate as presented by the likes of Antiphon and Lysias centres around the problem of moderating one's appetites. Were he to accept that part of human nature entailed moderation, then Antiphon could not logically make the antithesis between laws and nature, for laws as a restraining force would then be acting in concert with the moderate aspect of human nature. In Socrates' account, the essential conflict is removed from the forum of citizen versus city and placed into the more personal arena of conflicting forces within the soul. There we saw that the forces of temperance and beauty were harnessed together in future conduct, in the same manner that a charioteer harnesses his team of horses into moving the chariot forward. In concluding his palinode, Socrates prays that Lysias' "loving disciple here [Phaedrus] no longer halt between two opinions, as he now does, but live for Love in singleness of purpose" (256b). The unity of love calls for temperance and beauty to be brought together, an option

unavailable to the Lysian context.

Some people then will have no problem living in society, as public dictates will be in accord with private ones. However, the vast majority are not so lucky as to be able to overcome their own appetites, and Socrates admits as much when he describes the various reactions among men to the sight of a beautiful boy. It is to those who respond with baseness, displaying wanton behaviour, that the laws are aimed. To them at least, the antagonism between law and nature is real.

Socrates responds to this allegation by giving a precise critique of the nature of laws and then accordingly deflating their role within the city as presupposed by the public/private conflict. In his analysis of writing (of which the writing of laws makes up a part), he relates to Phaedrus the myth of Theuth and Thamus (274c-275b). Theuth was the Egyptian god responsible for the invention of writing, and he revealed his invention to the god-king Thamus that it might be given to the Egyptian people for use. Theuth praises his invention as a "branch of learning that will make the people of Egypt wiser and improve their memories: my discovery provides a recipe for memory and wisdom" (274e). Thamus however is suitably unimpressed, declaring that the invention will have the opposite effect, as it will "implant forgetfulness in their souls: they will cease to exercise memory because they will rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks" (275a). This observation further causes the king to decide that the gift is deficient in the professed ability to bestow wisdom as well; for "it is no true wisdom that you

offer your disciples, but only its semblance" (275a).

When tackling this passage, most commentators reflect it back upon the dialogue itself, and confront the problem of how Plato could have placed this criticism of writing within a written text.¹⁰⁶ Oddly enough, little attempt has been made to connect this myth with the palinode, even though so much of the terminology overlaps (and I have tried to highlight some of that terminology in the direct quotes taken from the myth above). Yet it seems that this critique makes the most sense when placed within the metaphysical context outlined in the palinode.

In the palinode it is revealed that all human souls have had a view of the forms and it is from this act that a soul's knowledge of truth is garnered. A soul missing out on one of the feasts of the forms is condemned to a stay on earth. While on earth knowledge of truth is accomplished through a memory of the view of the forms. The amount of actual knowledge of truth that one has is dependent on the amount of viewing that one's soul had while in the heavens; souls resident on earth have their storage of truth within them.

The problem that Thamus is pointing out with writing is that a written document will tend to supplant the place of the forms as the original warehouse of truth. Instead of looking within for recollection of the Plain of

¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the most famous example of this this type of directed analysis is Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy"; other examples abound, for instance Burger, 2-7 (as with Derrida, this problem forms the backbone of her text), Ferrari, 204-222, and Griswold, 219-241. In all these texts the seductiveness of tackling the paradox of critiquing writing in a written document is too compelling to be ignored, and the "defense of writing" quickly turns into a "defense of writing Platonic dialogues". My own project is nowhere near as grand: I wish merely to show how I think the critique is meant to be applied to laws of the state, and what effect this will have on the *physis/nomos* debate.

Truth, writing allows for the option of looking without at “external marks” (275a). Thamus is explicit in comparing that which is remembered from within to that which is remembered from without (275a). The source for knowledge thus becomes the externally written word instead of the internal recollection. This is why Thamus first laments the fact that people will “cease to exercise” their ability to remember. He means remembering in the strong sense of remembering the forms, and knows that writing has the potential to make such activity seem obsolete.

This interpretation of Thamus’ warning lines up well with Socrates’ own curious pronouncement at the end of his analysis of good and bad writing:

any work, in the past or in the future, whether by Lysias or by anyone else, whether composed in a private capacity or in the role of a public man who by proposing a law becomes the author of a political composition, is a matter of reproach to its author (whether or not the reproach is actually voiced) if he regards it as containing important truth of permanent validity. For ignorance of what is a waking vision and what is mere dream-image of justice and injustice, good and evil, cannot be acquitted of involving reproach, even if the mass of men extol it. (277d-e)

According to the palinode, important truths of permanent validity are existent only in the forms; to pretend that they might reside in law would be to usurp the place of the forms. Notice too that Socrates here has recourse to reapply the visual imagery in the perception of justice. He contrasts the “waking vision” of the thing with the “dream image” of it, just as in the palinode the form of justice was said to have its “likeness” here in this world (250a-c). The writer is worthy of reproach because he or she confuses the

image and the original. In terms of the palinode, the writer has confused the written image of justice (in the form of a law) with actual justice itself, for now, instead of having to look inward for guidance in behaviour and conduct, the writer supposes that one need merely look to the law. Thus my interpretation that on Socrates' account, the Lysian assessment of the public/private debate offers a gross inflation of the place of law, confusing it with the place of justice itself.

Thamus' second point is that people will not get true wisdom out of writing. Instead, writing generates only the "semblance" of wisdom. Here he seems to be referring to the fact that in all cases except when an author looks at his or her own work, the source of the writing comes from someone other than the reader, and is hence not reflective of the reader's own knowledge of truth. Readers have the words of the written document, but not necessarily an understanding of the meaning. Hence a reader can parade the words, and Thamus says that they "will seem to know much, while for the most part they know nothing" (275a). If the knowledge is not inborn, then having a written copy will not substitute for it, for the reader is left without an understanding of how it could be so.

With this criticism Thamus is anticipating Socrates' further observation that a text, much like a painting, cannot respond to inquiry (276d). Suppose a man with limited recollection of truth were to read a text written by someone who exercised a far greater memory. It is possible that the first man would come across passages that were beyond his scope of comprehension, and he might naturally be curious as to their meaning.

However, the words would not resonate with anything within him, and he would have to take it on faith that they spoke the truth. The text itself would offer no aid to his task of comprehension, instead silently repeating what had been read before. The question before us is whether or not the man would find the words compelling when his own understanding contravened what was written. Within the reader, the contrast is between what is known and what is unknown, and it seems fair to say that the reader would trust to what is known.

In this way Socrates reveals the problem with a written document; it “drifts all over the place” finally being read by “those who have no business with it” (237d). It can hardly be expected that a thing not understood will have any persuasive power of its own, though this is in effect what is being requested of the laws by those who subscribe to the traditional assessment of the *physis/nomos* debate.

That Socrates means to include the laws in his account of the written word is made explicit on two occasions: at 258d Socrates sets as his task the determining of good and bad writing “whether in the field of public affairs or private”, and at 278c, when Socrates decides that a message must be conveyed to the three basic types of writers: “first to Lysias and all other composers of discourse, secondly to Homer and all others who have written poetry whether to be read or sung, and thirdly to Solon and all such as are authors of political compositions under the name of laws.” Written texts like laws cannot assume the responsibility properly resident within the forms themselves, and any attempt to base a society on such a misuse is bound for

failure.

Having deflated the importance of texts in this world, Socrates has now left his city with a power vacuum. Those citizens with a less than perfect recollection of the forms are still there, still wanting to satisfy their desires any way they can. At least in the public/private context there was the construct of the laws to place some kind of check on these people, even if the construct was artificial. By deflating the laws, Socrates has removed the restricting force within the city. His further task is then to supply some additional force at work in the city which can curb the appetites of its less than philosophic citizens.

Socrates' appointment for this role is, somewhat surprisingly, the orator. However, the orator that Socrates has in mind is a far cry from the Lysian example before us, and Socrates will give a detailed account of just what a proper orator is made of. Really his choice of the orator is quite appropriate, considering that his critique of the written word goes hand in hand with praise for the spoken word as the one "legitimate" (276a) force "that goes together with knowledge" (276a). Furthermore the idea of a citizenry following the path laid out by its orator stands in line with other examples of the personality-following phenomenon that is repeatedly depicted in this dialogue.¹⁰⁷

In examining the orator's role in society, Socrates first states that rhetoric is an "influencing of the mind through the use of words" (261a), and

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, "following" is a leit motif of the dialogue, as Phaëdrus and Socrates initially follow each other, heavenly souls follow their gods to the heavenly feast, lovers of the palinode follow their beloved, and Socrates follows the dialectician "in his footsteps where he leadeth as a god" (266c). My understanding of this phenomenon is that it is a further example of the imitation so important to Plato's metaphysical narrative.

“oratory is in fact to influence men’s souls” (271c). The true rhetorician is described as the “master of persuasion” (269d). The use of the word “master” here implies a strong sense of persuasion; the example of a weak persuasive force is given by the laws as described in the Lysian context, where individuals may grudgingly abide by the laws, but are not convinced of their expedience. Instead, the strong persuasion evinced by the true orator indicates that his or her audience will be convinced of the path laid out in the oration, with a personal conviction instilled in them to follow it through. Orators, because of their ability to handle all types of souls (as described by the method related at 271d-272b), can bring them all together in singleness of purpose, and unify a city of disparate members.

In this way orators have the potential to be great unifying forces within the city. The individual will no longer feel at odds with the city itself, as the goals and desires of the individual can be made to coincide with those of the city. A plurality of people can all be brought under the same rubric, and kept from disagreeing with each other, by giving them a congruent outlook on life. Interestingly, the process the orator must go through in order to attain this ability involves a thorough investigation of human nature.

Socrates cites three ingredients necessary to the making of a successful orator: an innate capacity for rhetoric, knowledge, and practice (269d). In regard to knowledge, Socrates goes on to narrow his meaning to include knowledge of the nature of the soul (270e). The rhetor must know the various types of souls, and what kinds of speeches are most likely to have a persuasive effect on those various types (271b). This reference to a need on

the rhetor's part for knowledge of the soul's nature drags the first three speeches again back into focus. The three broad formulations of human nature presented there are true to the process described here by Socrates that every oration should be based on an understanding of the soul. Lysias works from the assumption that human nature is purely appetitive, Socrates' first speech adds a more moderating influence, and the palinode delivers a tripartite structure in which a harmonization of the soul's parts is attempted. However, there is a warning given that this investigation of the soul must stand in accord with truth (270c), and the emergence of the palinode's description of the soul over that of the first two speeches gives it the final claim to accuracy for Socrates. The true orator will be armed with this conception of the soul, and will base all discourse upon it.

This entails that temperance be reckoned as a force within each individual, rather than as an artificial construct of the state, and, if the orator is truly convincing, a force that must be given its due. It is in the individual's best interest that temperance be taken heed of and brought into conjunction with the rest of the soul; the alternatives are the self-destructive impulses of Lysias' audience or the continual contradiction of Socrates' first speaker. With these examples in mind, a citizen should readily attempt to harmonize forces acting within, without being forced into this behaviour by the laws of the state. The laws are a mere adjunct or reminder of what the citizen should desire in its own right.

APPENDIX: THE DRAMATIC DATE OF THE *PHAEDRUS*

Much speculation has made its way to print in regard to the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus*; it is not my aim here to solve the dilemma, as I believe the problem to be intractable. However, I do think that consideration of the Profanation of the Mysteries adds an interesting light to the dating debate, especially if the dialogue really cannot be given a specific date, and that these two factors combined leave a significant impact on how the dialogue is to be interpreted. The essential question hangs on whether our dialogue occurred before or after Phaedrus' involvement in impiety, with the fact that the question cannot be answered leaving the Socratic agenda as I have outlined it open to doubt.

First then, I shall try to demonstrate that the *Phaedrus* really should be left in limbo when the dialogues are ascribed a dramatic date. Here I stand in accord with the majority of scholarly opinion, which has for a long time recognized this problem with the *Phaedrus*. Obviously Socrates' death in 399 BCE sets one limit to the debate. It appears that this limit can be pushed further back to 404 BCE by the text at 257b: "turn him [Lysias] toward the love of wisdom, even as his brother Polemarchus has been turned." This statement indicates that Polemarchus is still alive at the time the dialogue occurred; since Polemarchus died in 404 BCE the conversation must have been concluded before then. At the other end of the spectrum it seems that Lysias lived in Thurii from the time of his early youth till he was banished for democratic sympathies in 412 BCE.¹ He arrives in Athens, apparently for the first time, in 412 BCE, and thus 412 BCE is the absolute earliest date that

¹ For the dates on Lysias and Polemarchus, see Lamb, ix-xx.

the dialogue could have occurred in, as at 227a it is revealed that Lysias is in Athens. However, there is reason to doubt that the time-region of 412 BCE should be taken seriously; Lysias already has considerable fame as a speech-writer by the time of the *Phaedrus* (as is evident from the text at 228a, where Phaedrus calls him “the ablest writer of our day”); presumably this title would not be conferred on him as he stepped off the boat, so to speak.

So far this leaves an eight year window for a possible dramatic date, from 412-404 BCE. Unfortunately Phaedrus himself was in exile from 415-404 BCE, as Nussbaum points out (although I cannot accept her bland pronouncement that it was for mutilation of the Herms,² his flight as indicated by Andokides is solely for profaning the Mysteries,³ as also seems to be indicated by the records of the Attic Stelai, and the case for assuming he took part in both profanation and mutilation is extremely slim⁴). Phaedrus’ exile thus scopes over the entire window, leaving Rowe to conclude that “There is no *possible* dramatic date for the *Phaedrus*”.⁵

Since this thesis attempts to draw a connection between the affair of the Mysteries and the *Phaedrus*, the immediate question before me is whether to place the dialogue before or after the profanations. The question is relevant because the debate as I have described it is based on the conflict between the Socratic and Lysian positions, and the dramatic climax of the dialogue comes in determining which path Phaedrus will finally follow: at 257b Phaedrus is depicted as having a choice between “halting between two opinions as he now does”, and living “for Love in singleness of purpose with the aid of

² Nussbaum, 96.

³ Andokides, 1:15.

⁴ Furley, 41-48.

⁵ Rowe, 13.

philosophical discourse". At 261a, Socrates calls on the muses to push Phaedrus into the philosophic way of life. Indeed, the dialogue is begun by Socrates alerting the reader to Phaedrus hanging between two options, with his question of "Where do you come from, Phaedrus my friend, and where are you going?" (227a).

On grounds internal to the dialogue, Phaedrus comes from Lysias and goes to Socrates. The veracity of this statement becomes important in establishing the merits of one of the conclusions I draw from the *Phaedrus*: that a discourse of true rhetoric would be able to persuade an individual towards moderate behaviour and give up the artificial distinction between public and private interests. Should the dialogue be placed after the Mysteries affair, then there is room to think that Socrates' own attempts with Phaedrus in this dialogue were successful, and, in the words of Hackforth, "that the devotee of clever but hollow oratory has become one in heart and mind with the lover of truth".⁶ Perhaps Phaedrus was convinced by Socrates' extraordinary rhetorical effort in the palinode, and turned himself towards the philosophic sort of life. Certainly, we have no evidence of crimes against the state being perpetrated by Phaedrus after the affair of the Mysteries.

If we could only be sure that the *Phaedrus* deserves a placement after 415 BCE, then this very dialogue could well serve as a proof of its own hypothesis concerning the role of rhetoric in society. But the fact is that hints to dramatic dating dropped within the dialogue keep us from ascribing it to any specific date; it remains firmly entrenched in the realm of fiction, and this forces the reader into the disturbing consideration that the *Phaedrus* may also have occurred before the profanations.

⁶ Hackforth, 169.

This later option leaves the reader to confront the fact that Socrates' words were unconvincing to Phaedrus, despite the greatness of prose conveyed in the palinode. In this other possible chain of events, Phaedrus remains loyal to his initial feelings towards the Lysian discourse, and takes up the cause against his own city. These circumstances force the reader to question the ability of orators to carry out the task Socrates has set for them; after all, he himself has failed in his attempt to persuade Phaedrus. The enigmatic quality of the dramatic date keeps both of these options alive in the reader's mind, and final judgment lies suspended: it is left up to us as readers to determine how the battle goes, both in Phaedrus' life, and in our own.

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