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THE DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*

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In Plato's *Symposium*, Eros unifies the multiplicity of human goals by drawing the entire soul towards the desire for the good. Since, however, we cannot find anything explicit about the composite nature of the soul in this dialogue, the unifying power of Eros does not seem to extend from the soul's goals to its internal parts. This is all the more puzzling given that the *Symposium* is generally thought to be very close to the *Republic* chronologically. One may wonder, bearing the distinctions of the *Republic* in mind, whether someone whose character is mostly shaped by *thumos* will pursue happiness by identifying goals, and ways to attain them, that are intrinsically different from those identified by someone whose character traits are marked by reason or by appetite. In other words, if we assume that the soul is not monolithic, we can expect that the unifying force of Eros will allow for different overarching goals as well as for different modalities in which such goals will be pursued.

If we look at Diotima's speech closely enough, we find some indications that she might have in mind a distinction between three kinds of "goods" towards which three different kinds of character types can be moved by Eros. For example, after distinguishing between generic love and specific love, she offers at 205d three examples of activities spurred by generic love with their respective goals: money, gymnastics, philosophy. It is certainly not difficult to detect in this tripartition a prefiguration of the three classes in Plato's *Republic*: the money-making class, the guardian class mainly trained in gymnastics, and the class of the philosophers. The distinction between character types in the *Symposium* is further highlighted when Diotima explains that there are three fundamental modes of striving

for immortality. Those bound to the body will beget children; those fertile in their souls—moved by the desire to be honored—will generate beautiful speeches or beautiful deeds; but only those initiated into the Greater Mysteries will be able to generate true virtue and thus become truly immortal by contemplating eternal Beauty (212b1). As G. R. F. Ferrari points out, in the realm of the Lesser Mysteries love of honor (*philotimia*) is the highest aspiration, while “in the Greater Mysteries it will be philosophy that leads us to the ultimate goal (210d6). The transition from Lesser to Greater bears comparison, then, with the crucial shift of focus in the *Republic* from institutions grounded in the honor code (Books II–IV) to those derived from rule by philosopher kings (Books V–VII).”¹

Though the soul’s tripartition is not discussed in the *Symposium*, the dialogue provides the ground for a phenomenological account of the difference between the thumoeidetic and the rational manifestations of Eros. In the *Republic* itself, it is not easy to discern how the characteristics ascribed to *thumos* fit together in a coherent whole.² *Thumos* in the *Republic* is something in-between a raw drive (the sheer aggressiveness of the lion, 588d) and a cluster of complex emotional responses, such as anger when one is convinced of having being wronged or belittled (440c, 441bc), a longing for competitive success (φιλονικία, 548c, 550b) and strong desires for glory and honor (φιλοτιμία, 475a, 548c, 549a). If properly educated, *thumos* gives rise to the virtue of courage, ἀνδρεία (429c–30b, 442b–c). *Thumos* is ultimately a motivational source rooted in the agent’s self-image and emotionally linked to the esteem one earns from others. As the case of Leontion indicates, a thumoeidetic personality will be very sensitive to shame and inclined to embrace conventionally held beliefs and values.³ In this sense, someone driven by *thumos* will also be sensitive to injustice and ready to flare up in indignation at wrongs done. However, in contrast with

1 Ferrari 1992.256. Ferrari elaborates on a point originally made by Cornford 1971.123–26. Throughout, I use Nehamas and Woodruff’s translation of Plato’s *Symposium*—at times silently modified in minor ways.

2 One of the reasons is that, in this part of the soul, we find Plato’s condensed reflections on the central characteristics of the Homeric hero, *in primis* Achilles. On Achilles as a negative blueprint for *thumos* in the *Republic*, see Hobbs 2000.199–219. On *thumos* from Homer to Plato, see Frère 2004.

3 *Rep.* 439e–40a. For the connection between anger, self-esteem, esteem by others, and the values inculcated by education, see Cooper 1999.118–37. For the association of *thumos* with αἰδώς/αἰσχύνη, see Cairns 1993.382–92.

τὸ λογιστικόν, *thumos* does not strive towards universality. Judgment based on thumoeidetic motivations is thus often partial, relying on first appearances rather than on a well-examined state of affairs (at 440c, *thumos* is said to be enraged by the *opinion* of a wrong done and to start fighting for what *appears* to be just). Though, as Socrates states in Book 4 of the *Republic*, *thumos* is a natural ally of reason when it is not corrupted by a bad upbringing, in Book 8, we learn that *thumos* can be subordinated to ἐπιθυμία and, for example in the oligarchic man, is inclined to honor and admire only wealth and wealthy people (553d).

I see both Phaedrus's speech and Alcibiades' encomium of Socrates in the *Symposium* as exhibiting thumoeidetic traits. In order to show what is at stake in thumoeidetic desires, I will turn to Phaedrus's speech in praise of Eros—with its emphasis on the lovers' mutual desire for recognition, the exaltation of courage as the central virtue, and the emphasis on shame as the most fundamental key to virtue. I will then turn to Alcibiades' speech, which, in my view, gives us an account of the way someone essentially shaped by love of honor interprets the philosophical life.

PHAEDRUS'S SPEECH: LOVE, SHAME, *PHILOTIMIA*

In the *Symposium*, Phaedrus gives the first of six speeches in praise of Eros. Authoritative commentaries will tell you that the speech, being the first, is also the simplest and the most superficial. This account corresponds to the impression that one gets at a first reading. Phaedrus's speech is made up of roughly three parts. The first is a short proem in which Phaedrus, appealing to Hesiod, declares that Eros, one of the most ancient gods, is also the source of the best things for us. The second part argues that love, a private feeling, can surpass both family and city as an educator to virtue. Lover and beloved want so much to look good in the eyes of the other that nothing would be more painful to them than being seen by the other while performing dishonorable deeds. The virtuous circle that binds the two members of the relationship is so strong that it leads Phaedrus to propose the creation of an army of lovers, which would be unsurpassed in heroism. The third part of the speech illustrates what kinds of heroic deeds Phaedrus has in mind. He gives two examples of heroism and one of failure. The first heroic example is that of a woman, Alcestis, who was willing to die for her husband when even his parents refused to sacrifice their lives for him. The failure is that of Orpheus, who did not want to sacrifice his life for Eurydice and decided instead to descend to Hades alive. The gods

punished him not only by not allowing him to retrieve his beloved, but also by making him perish at the hands of women. The second and best example of heroism in Phaedrus's hierarchy is Achilles, who died for Patroclus even though Achilles was the beloved, not the lover, and even though Patroclus was already dead. To Achilles, Phaedrus concludes, the gods gave the highest recognition, since they sent him to the Isles of the Blessed, while they simply allowed Alcestis to come back from the dead.

If in the *Republic* φιλοτιμία ("love of honor") and φιλονικία ("love of victory") are the central traits of a thumoeidetic personality, it ought to strike us that φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία are also central issues for Phaedrus. This is noticeable first of all from a terminological point of view: τιμή ("honor") and cognate words appear very frequently in his speech. Furthermore, from the very beginning, Phaedrus's encomium is framed by a competitive setting. Eros is not simply a great and marvelous god, he is *better* than other gods because he is among the most ancient (according to the authorities Phaedrus quotes, Eros was born before the Olympians), and this is a title of honor (τίμιον, 178b). When he turns to the effects for which Eros is most admirable, Phaedrus, again, makes his point by showing that Eros is stronger than other competing forces (family and city) for his effectiveness in producing virtuous behavior. Not surprisingly, the association with *thumos* is clear also with respect to the virtue Phaedrus extols—courage—and the vice he mainly blames—cowardice, with its typical connotations of unmanliness (ἀνανδρία, 178d) and weakness (μαλθακίζεσθαι ἐδόκει, 179d).

Competition and love of honor, in turn, are the means by which Eros, according to Phaedrus, prevails over family and city in the imaginary contest for education in courage: thanks to their erotic bond, lover and beloved feel shame at acting shamefully and love of honor in acting nobly (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνην, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαν, 178d). When he suggests that an army of *erastai* and their *eromenoi* would be unbeatable (an implicit reference to the Sacred Band of Thebes), Phaedrus explains that these men would not only fight beside each other, but also compete with each other for glory (φιλοτιμούμενοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 178e). The rivalry for glory between lovers and beloveds would be so effective that even a small number would win in competition with virtually all men.⁴

4 On the asymmetrical roles of lover and beloved in Athens, see Dover 1978, Halperin 1986, and Halperin, Winkler, Zeitlin 1989. On the competitive dimension of the institution of

Initially, all of Phaedrus's efforts seem to concentrate upon proving that a "decent," or "worthy" (χρηστός) lover can be quite useful to his beloved. Why Phaedrus thinks this is a point that needs defending is made clear later on by Pausanias, who addresses the many accusations raised against lovers in Athens as well as elsewhere. Furthermore, for those interested in following Phaedrus's career as a father of *logoi* across dialogues, it should be obvious that Phaedrus's initial skepticism about the utility of lovers is deeply rooted. In the *Phaedrus*, he fully endorses Lysias's negative view of lovers and shows enthusiasm for the suggestion that boys would do better to please sober non-lovers rather than trust lovers, who are admittedly out of their minds and hence totally unreliable as to their promises. Yet Phaedrus's argument, as if mirroring in style the ascent described in Diotima's final revelation, reaches higher and nobler planes as he proceeds to speak about the capacity of some lovers for heroic sacrifice and finally concedes that the beloved, too, is capable of extreme sacrifice for the sake of his lover. Selfishness, then, gives way in Phaedrus's speech to nobler and nobler examples of selflessness.⁵

Phaedrus is not primarily interested in explaining the nature of Eros, as later speakers will try to do. What he wants to prove is how great and unsurpassed the effects of Eros are on human beings (the effects of Eros on the gods are not addressed). Let us concentrate on the first claim: Eros is superior to public institutions, such as city and family, in its educational role. The virtuous deeds inspired by private erotic bonds serve the public good so well that if there were an army of lovers, it would be unbeatable in heroism. Phaedrus offers no reason why in the minds of lover and beloved the interests of the city would take priority over private interests.⁶ He claims that lovers will brave all dangers to rescue their beloved, but he

pederasty and the erotic metaphors applied to Athenian politics, see Yates 2005. For further references to giving and receiving honor in Phaedrus's speech, see 179d, 179e, 180a3, 180a8, 180b5, 180b7.

5 On the evolution from selfishness to selflessness in Phaedrus's speech, see Rosen 1968.51.

6 That Plato is, in fact, inviting us to move beyond the surface of Phaedrus's patriotism can be indirectly proven by a point made by Pausanias in the speech that follows when he claims that barbarians are opposed to pederasty as well as to philosophy and gymnastics because these three activities create powerful private bonds that interfere with public loyalty. The potential for rebellion, according to Pausanias, is especially obvious when the power of the city is in the hands of tyrants. On Pausanias in *Symposium* 182b–c, see Yates 2005.39.

does not explain why the members of each couple would want to risk their lives other than to save each other. This is obviously not the kind of heroism that would best serve the city in case of war.

It is also not clear why Phaedrus assumes that the lovers involved would want to put their lives at risk at all, as opposed to enjoying each other's company and staying as far away from danger as possible. In fact, Phaedrus's second example, that of Orpheus, is quite instructive. From the point of view of Eros as passionate attachment to the beloved, there is really not much to object to in Orpheus's desire to remain alive while attempting to bring his beloved back to life. Lovers, presumably, want to live together. Phaedrus's obsession with heroism, thus, betrays a fundamental tension between Eros as a passionate attachment that makes us desire to spend our life with another and Eros as a desire to shine in the eyes of the other even at the cost of death.⁷ Orpheus embodies a conception of love that will be better illustrated by Aristophanes' account.

Philotimia goes hand in hand with another thumoeidetic motivation in Phaedrus's speech: αἰσχύνῃ ("shame"). The fact that the speech is spoken by a beloved (Phaedrus is Eryximachus's beloved)—and with an eye to the interest of the beloved—switches the usual stress from the motivations of the lover (pursuing the beautiful beloved with the prospect of gaining temporary pleasure or long-term happiness in his company) to those of the beloved (being perceived, admired, and chosen for his youth and beauty by someone who is neither young nor beautiful but has other qualities that make him acceptable as a lover).⁸

The bond between lover and beloved is asymmetrical (the beloved is supposedly free from the power of Eros, as Phaedrus explains when speaking about Achilles), yet each partner desires to be admired by the other. They strive to perform honorable deeds so as to please each other,

7 Dorter 1969.217 points out that Phaedrus's condemnation of Orpheus's choice as cowardly is based on a preconceived preference for the beautiful over the good that leads Phaedrus to overlook the fundamental difference between Alcestis' situation and that faced by Orpheus: "Alcestis knew that the gods would spare Admetus' life in exchange for hers, but Orpheus, on the contrary, knew that Eurydice's only hope depended precisely on his remaining alive and taking her back with him to the realm of the living."

8 See Rosen 1968.52: "Phaedrus imitates philosophy by placing the individual above the polis. His imitation is defective because it replaces 'seeing' by 'being seen'; knowledge is replaced by opinion. In this respect Phaedrus anticipates Agathon's speech, or the dependence of poetry upon the applause of its audience. What 'shines forth' in *doxa* may be the genuinely splendid or noble, but the shine is dependent upon the eyes of the onlooker."

and they shy away from ugly deeds so as to avoid displeasing each other.⁹ At first, Phaedrus seems to claim that Eros has the power to transform the members of a couple to such an extent that they are made truly virtuous by the desire to appear in the best light to each other. Thus when he asserts the superiority of Love to high kinship, public honor, and wealth (178d), he might be interpreted as implying that the latter provide only external and transient motivations to the performance of noble deeds, while the former provides true guidance to living a noble life. Being in love with someone can easily make us desire to do all sorts of things to become better people. I can think of many goals we may want to achieve by trying to transform our character traits and habits or by trying to improve qualities we already possess. The attempt to transform oneself can be a way to show gratitude, to hope for recognition, to bridge an existent gap, or to simply make the other, and by extension the couple itself, happier. One can hardly attribute so much transformative power to the desire for wealth and public honor.

Upon reflection, however, we can see that Phaedrus does not really want to make the difference between private Eros and public desire for honor rest on the former's ability to shape a noble character in contrast with the latter's power merely to influence deeds. This becomes clear when one considers the point Phaedrus makes at the end of his description of the army of lovers: "As for leaving the boy behind, or not coming to his aid in danger—why, no one is so base that true Love could not inspire him with courage, and make him as brave as if he'd been born a hero" (179a7–8). Here Phaedrus suggests that there is a fundamental difference between someone truly virtuous and someone whose virtue stems from Eros. The lover does not need to be the best man by nature. He could be base (κακός) but act nobly when inspired by love.¹⁰

9 Phaedrus characterizes αἰσχύνη as a concrete fear of being seen while performing shameful acts. He employs visual images, but I would not take him to imply (with Strauss 2001.49 and Cairns 1993.378) that lover and beloved need the physical presence of the other in order to feel shame. Imagining the other's reaction to certain acts would be enough to prevent lover and beloved from performing them.

10 For this point, see Strauss 2001.49. On the same page, Strauss distinguishes between a sense of shame and love of honor, and claims that Phaedrus focuses on the former, not on the latter. I do not agree, since fear of shame and love of honor are correlative, and both concerns stem from the intersubjective nature of one's own self-image. This, I believe, is the point that Plato wants to highlight when he portrays characters like Phaedrus, Alcibiades, or Callicles—all thumoeidetic types. Phaedrus's speech ends with two examples of glorious deeds honored by the gods, and it is thus concerned with both shame and honor.

Phaedrus, of course, does not tell us here what will be repeated several times in Lysias's speech on behalf of the non-lover—his favorite reading in the *Phaedrus*. Lovers are fickle; their passion is bound to end. If love does not change a man's character and only inspires him to noble deeds while his passion lasts, then Eros's power to produce virtue is greatly limited. Furthermore, as is evident in the case of Orpheus, not all men are led to heroism by Eros. Given that, on Phaedrus's own account, the desire to appear admirable to the beloved is a fundamental trait of love, one may wonder whether Eros, rather than being truly transformative of a man's character, can at best create a gap between a lover's perception of his own base nature and his desire to impress the beloved with occasional acts of courage. To borrow a set of metaphors from the *Gorgias*, the virtue produced by Eros in this case would be more similar to the illusion of beauty achieved by cosmetics than to the authentic beauty gained by the body when properly trained in gymnastics.

A second kind of ambiguity is detectable in Phaedrus's account of Eros as a producer of virtue through shame. As I mentioned, he claims that Love inspires a "sense of shame (αἰσχύνῃν) at acting shamefully and a desire for honor (φιλοτιμίαν) in acting well. Without these, nothing fine or great can be accomplished" (178d). As I argued above, Phaedrus does not really believe lovers are made virtuous by Love. At most, their passion makes them do great things against their own base inclinations. Still, as Phaedrus's subsequent quotation of Homer suggests, there seems to be no question about the deeds being splendid: "When Homer says a god 'breathes might' into some of the heroes, this is really Love's gift to every lover" (179b). Yet, Homer's example notwithstanding, Phaedrus's stress on reciprocal shame does not really prove that the deeds inspired by Eros will be unqualifiedly virtuous. Admirable, maybe. But as the word suggests, the object of admiration is determined by who is doing the admiring, and Phaedrus leaves entirely open how lovers and beloveds choose their admirers.

As is the case with the Protagorean "man is the measure," Phaedrus's account allows us to construct different scenarios according to the different degree of relativism we want to attribute to him. There is nothing, in fact, to prevent us from reading his account of the relationship between lover and beloved as a completely self-sufficient circle that produces its own standards. If pleasing the lover is all that counts, the nature of the deeds produced by the desire to be admired depends solely on the relative power of the two individuals involved. Phaedrus's stress seems to fall on the lovers' desire to please their beloveds rather than on the beloveds' urge to

please lovers. Nothing prevents us from imagining all sorts of bad beloveds inspiring their lovers to please them by performing daring but far from virtuous deeds. The desire to please remains, the shame at looking bad in the eyes of the other remains, the courage to act against one's own inclinations remains, yet all of this need not produce deeds that anyone other than the beloved would admire. Phaedrus's account of the function of shame in the love relationship is thus consistent, in principle, with an entirely relativistic account of virtue. If pleasing the beloved is the rule, then pleasing a criminal with criminal deeds would be as glorious and courageous as pleasing a more conventional lover with more conventional noble actions.

Phaedrus's picture of the power of love does not really exclude these possibilities. However, I do not think that this extreme form of relativism reflects his intentions. These possibilities are at the same time too daring and too vulgar for Phaedrus. They are too daring because they entail a radical rejection of convention in the name of love, and too vulgar because they redefine nobility in terms that no longer fit at all the examples of glory Phaedrus wants to evoke. What is interesting in the portrait of Phaedrus is not the strength of his philosophical account—in fact, his account of love is fraught with contradictions—but the very nature of its weakness. Phaedrus is sufficiently close to sophistry to be able to distance himself from mere convention, and he can certainly appreciate the tension between satisfying one's desires and satisfying the demands of public appearance, but he is also not merely paying lip service to *nomos*. It would be wrong to identify his position on the role of appearance in public life with that expressed by Glaucon in the story of Gyges' ring. The holder of the ring is intentionally disguising his true nature as well as his actions. Appearance in his case is mere sham. In the case of Phaedrus, appearance is central to an account of love. The beloved who wants to be admired by the lover is not merely hiding behind a mask. Part of the pleasure of being admired is the desire to receive back from the other an image of oneself to which one can cling as if it were true—in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates will compare the condition of the beloved to “someone who has caught a disease of the eyes from another,” is unable to give an account of it, and thus clings to the image of himself that he receives from the other as if the lover were his mirror (*Phaedr.* 255d4–6).

Like the lover, the beloved is situated between wisdom and ignorance, but the lover, at least on Diotima's account, is possessed by the desire to transcend opinion and appearance and reach beyond them to truth. The beloved, however, is at home in the realm of appearance and has no special

urge to leave it, at least insofar as he remains confined to the asymmetrical role defined by the desire to be seen rather than by the desire to see. Why does the lover love the beloved? Because the beloved is beautiful. Why does the beloved enjoy being loved? Because he is vain. Vanity has the peculiar capacity to recognize flattery as flattery and, at the same time, enjoy it as if it were telling the truth. In the *Lysis*, Socrates points out to Hippothales, who, according to his friend Ctesippus, has written a deluge of poems and prose compositions eulogizing his beloved Lysis, that this flattery will greatly damage Lysis: “These handsome boys, when so praised and extolled, become full of pride and haughtiness: do you not think so?” (*Lys.* 206a3–5; trans. Lamb).

As I mentioned above, in the *Gorgias* Socrates compares sophistry to cosmetics. His example is quite appropriate in the context of Phaedrus’s speech.¹¹ We could say that Love, like cosmetics, is a sophist who not only persuades others to admire the beloved, but also persuades the beloved that the makeup he is wearing is not really deceitful. Makeup is not a mask. If it is applied well, it blends with the features that it is meant to enhance so that they look credible—first and foremost to the person who is wearing it. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates compares rhetoric to cooking, sophistry to cosmetics, legislation to gymnastics, and justice to medicine. Sophistry and rhetoric impersonate the true arts and, by looking like them, they try to replace them. However, while the true arts aim at the good, the two fake arts aim only at pleasure and obtain it through flattery (*Gorg.* 463a6–65e2). Both sophistry and rhetoric are fundamental ingredients of the political life. As Socrates points out much later in the *Gorgias*, he does not really know any politician who is not a flatterer. The interesting feature shared by all politicians and lovers of honor, then, is not that they lie, but that they enjoy remaining situated in-between wisdom and ignorance, at the level of *doxa*. They may be aware that the image they project does not correspond to the truth, but once it comes back to them in the form of success and honor they are more than willing to lie to themselves. We will see below how these considerations apply to Alcibiades’ case in the *Symposium*.

Coming back to Phaedrus, public appearance is important for him, as it is important for politically ambitious individuals who strive for recogni-

11 Phaedrus is quoted by Eryximachus as referring to the numerous eulogies of “the worthy sophists” (τοὺς χρηστοὺς σοφιστάς) at 177b2. In the *Protagoras*, he appears among the followers of the sophist Hippias, together with Eryximachus (*Prot.* 315c3).

tion without being entirely naïve about the nature of politics. In the case of Phaedrus, glorious deeds are not mere disguise; they give a few exceptional individuals immortal glory. Phaedrus admires that. He probably imagines it would be great to emulate the heroes he evokes were it not much easier to merely speak about them—as is fitting for someone as in love with *logoi* as Phaedrus is said to be. I believe, then, that we would be better attuned to Phaedrus's conception of the function of shame if we did not take him literally when he claims that love is superior to the most important public institutions as an educator. A less radical account of his relativism can help us make sense of his stress on public recognition. Rather than claiming that Love is a better educator because it is powerful enough to produce its own standards, I believe Phaedrus wants to claim that Love, a natural force, is better than the city at enforcing those transient products of convention that the city provides as its own standards.

Public institutions mediate between lover and beloved by defining what is shameful and what is admirable independently of the personal idiosyncrasies of the two individuals involved. Lover and beloved not only do not want to find shame in the eyes of each other, they fundamentally agree on what they should consider shameful because each of them is also ashamed to displease parents, kin, and public institutions. These, and not the lovers, are the true sources of what is or is not deemed shameful. In other words, the lovers look at each other, but what really counts for them is pleasing an anonymous public eye. Hence there are not just two viewers involved in this account of Love. The two lovers please each other in so far as each of them can imagine the actions of the other being seen with pleasure by all the other viewers involved as relevant actors in public life. Kinship, public honor, and wealth are not just external motivators for action. Without them, lover and beloved would not know how to please each other. They would not be able to feel shame, nor would they desire any real approval from the other because they would not be able to identify what their actions should look like in order to acquire center stage and shine in splendor.

If this is what Phaedrus means, then he is, in his own way, right to claim that Love makes people loyal citizens in so far as it makes them all the more willing to shape their behavior to please conventional roles. This view is, however, problematic, as we can see if we consider it from the perspective of the *Republic*. Since, according to Socrates, *thumos* is malleable, thumoeidetic desires for honor and success, thanks to the fundamental role played by shame, can be educated to embrace moral standards determined by reason. The education of the guardians in Books 2–3 of the *Republic*

proceeds from the assumption that thumoeidetic characters can be educated to become good citizens if only one employs the right mixture of gymnastics and music and pays due attention to the role models that they are supposed to imitate. However, precisely because *philotimia* and αἰδώς depend for their content on the kind of dominant values that shape one's education, *thumos* can be made to serve values that reason by itself would oppose. This becomes evident when Socrates in Book 8 describes the degenerate forms of states and corresponding soul types. In the case of the oligarchic man, as we saw, *thumos* is made to admire wealth and the wealthy (553d). The would-be timocratic man, in turn, is led by his mother and home servants to despise his father, a philosopher, because he does not defend his interests aggressively enough (549c–50b). In sum, desire for honor needs to rely on external standards of nobility and shamefulness, but those external standards are, in turn, dependent on contingent factors. In a degenerate state, the role models that *thumos* will be invited to imitate will instantiate nobility in ways that reason would clearly find wanting.

The Socrates of the *Gorgias* provides us with a critical stance and a near parody of the double bind envisaged by Phaedrus between lovers, beloveds, and the city. When Socrates wants to point out to Callicles that his admiration for politicians and rhetoricians is misplaced, Socrates suggests that politicians, rather than being powerful manipulators, are at the mercy of the people they want to please. In order to get his point across effectively, Socrates combines Callicles' love for an individual called Demos and Callicles' love for the *demos* of Athens:

In the Assembly, if you are saying something and the Athenian *demos* says it's not so, you change and say what it wants. And with this fine young man, the son of Pylilampes, you're affected in other similar ways. For you're incapable of opposing the proposals and speeches of your beloved; and if someone were amazed whenever you say the things you say because of your beloved, at how absurd these things are, then no doubt you'd tell him, if you wanted to tell him what's true, that unless someone stops your beloved from saying these things, you'll never stop saying them either.¹²

12 Plato *Gorg.* 481e–82a (Irwin's translation). See also 513b4–8.

In light of this, we can go back to the question raised earlier concerning why, according to Phaedrus, lovers would want to sacrifice themselves in war other than to save their beloveds. The army of lovers remains problematic, but we can see now what justifies it. Phaedrus perceives that the eyes of the lover are not a sufficient mirror for the beloved. Instead of leaving the realm of appearance altogether, as Diotima proposes in her final revelation, he remains faithful to appearance and hence to his role as a beloved. However, by evoking the army of lovers, he enlarges the circle of viewers that surround the couple in love. And, in fact, the more the speech proceeds, the more one may wonder whether the love relationships Phaedrus has in mind are grounded on any private feelings at all. The army of lovers, of course, is presented as an entirely public arena for the performance and evaluation of glorious deeds. But even this public arena does not seem to offer enough of a public space for the actions of the lovers. As soon as he envisages more than one spectator, Phaedrus is moved to broaden the arena to include more and more spectators and, importantly, to improve their reliability as honor-givers. In the case of Alcestis' sacrifice, the public arena extends to "everyone in Greece" and comes to include the gods themselves (179b–d):

Alcestis is proof to everyone in Greece that what I say is true. Only she was willing to die in place of her husband, although his father and mother were still alive . . . And when she did this, her deed struck everyone, even the gods, as nobly done (καὶ τοῦτ' ἐργασαμένη τὸ ἔργον οὕτω καλὸν ἔδοξεν ἐργάσασθαι οὐ μόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοῖς). The gods were so delighted, in fact, that they gave her the prize they reserve for a handful chosen from the throngs of noble heroes—they sent her soul back from the dead. As you can see, the eager courage of love wins highest honors from the gods (οὕτω καὶ θεοὶ τὴν περὶ τὸν ἔρωτα σπουδὴν τε καὶ ἀρετὴν μάλιστα τιμῶσιν).

From the example of Alcestis onwards, Phaedrus leaves the political realm altogether and turns to the gods as exclusive arbiters of honor and rewards. The gods apparently are quite pleased by extreme sacrifices and distribute their honors accordingly.

In his search for the best sources of honor, Phaedrus seems to

be driven by dissatisfaction, and we may understand why. He combines the psychology of the lover of honor with the psychology of the beloved. Once the beloved questions the right of the lover to supply him with the appropriate criteria for shame and admiration, the beloved is left with the dissatisfaction of an infinite regress. Aristotle, at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, explains why lovers of honor are not happy people (*EN* 11095a24–30; Ostwald's translation):

Honor seems to depend on those who confer it rather than on him who receives it, whereas our guess is that the good is a man's own possession which cannot be easily taken away from him. Furthermore, men seem to pursue honor to assure themselves of their own worth; at any rate, they seek to be honored by sensible men and by those who know them, and they want to be honored on the basis of their virtue or excellence. Obviously, then, excellence, as far as they are concerned, is better than honor.

We have already seen that the virtuous circle of shame must appeal to some external standard of excellence. Phaedrus provides it by invoking the many public institutions in front of which the noble lovers will perform their deeds. By moving from the city to the gods, Phaedrus implicitly acknowledges that honor satisfies all the more if it is bestowed by the most excellent. Of course, once one agrees that excellence is higher than honor, one could also argue that what is really needed is not a search for admirers but a search, both theoretical and practical, for excellence. I believe, however, that we misunderstand Aristotle, as well as Plato's intention in crafting Phaedrus's speech, if we assume that the lover of honor would accept this solution, because he would not see this as a solution to his problem at all. The lover of honor wants to shine up to an appropriate spectator, so we cannot help him by suggesting that he turn into a lover of wisdom. Wisdom is not interested in him.

In the ladder of love, Diotima will tell us that philosophers, properly guided, will reach higher and higher levels of universality in the search for what is truly beautiful. Lovers of honor, however, are left behind: they are confined to the Lesser Mysteries. Why? *Philotimia* is not the desire to possess particular objects (a beautiful body, a beautiful boy, etc.) but, ultimately, the desire *to be* someone worthy of love. In this sense it cannot provide, like *epithumia*, a starting point, however low, from which erotic

attachment to sensible objects can be transcended in a move towards intelligible objects.¹³ Of course, since, as Aristotle points out, the desire to be admired is spurred by doubts concerning one's true worth, one would like to be assured of one's worth by someone who, in turn, is admirable. But being admirable is in itself a relative term. So the doubt comes back: what if those who admire me are admired by unworthy people? A lover of honor thrives on appearance and opinion. In such a world, "admirable" means "admired," but admiration in itself provides no guarantee of stability or true worth. The lover of honor, as Aristotle points out, knows deep down that excellence is better than honor, but because he is who he is, he would not appreciate excellence unless it was itself the object of admiration. Trapped between the desire to be admired by admirable honor-givers, the awareness that their excellence, and hence the honor they bestow, is questionable, and the unwillingness to separate what is admirable from what just happens to be admired, the honor-lover is bound to an infinite regress.

In this context, Phaedrus's last example of sacrifice, that of Achilles for Patroclus, is very interesting. As Phaedrus points out, Achilles is the beloved, and hence he is not under the spell of Love. Puzzling as it may be, Phaedrus explains that this is precisely why Achilles received the highest honor from the gods. The gods acknowledge that lovers act, as it were, under necessity, while Achilles, not being possessed by Love, chose his death freely. This decision of the Olympian gods, however, should remind us that Phaedrus's speech began with the assertion that Eros is superior to most other gods since he is among the most ancient. Given this premise, it is surprising that the Olympians, who are younger and hence inferior to Eros, are, at the end of the speech, given the status of ultimate arbiters of honor.¹⁴ Even more surprising is that these admittedly inferior gods, called to judge actions inspired by the superior god Eros, give the highest honor precisely to those actions that were not inspired by him. This obvious contradiction exemplifies well the plight of the honor-lover who, on the one

13 See Ferrari 1992.256. In the Higher Mysteries, laws and human activities are objects of knowledge, while in the Lower Mysteries, they appear, in light of *philotimia*, as means to gaining immortal glory.

14 On this point, see Rosen 1968.46–49. Phaedrus's thesis is most emphatically reasserted in the last sentence of his speech: "Therefore I say Love is the most ancient of the gods, the most honored (*Ἐρῶτα θεῶν καὶ πρεσβύτατον καὶ τιμιώτατον*) and the most powerful in helping men gain virtue and blessedness, whether they are alive or have passed away" (180b).

hand, identifies honor with glory, but, on the other hand, cannot conceive of glory if not in terms defined by the honor-giver. Glory, it turns out, is bittersweet, much like love.

One may wonder what is left of Love in Phaedrus's account. It was Phaedrus who, according to Eryximachus, originally complained about the absence of speeches in praise of Love. Yet his speech is not exactly about love as much as it is about the glory that may stem from it. Indeed, from our analysis of Phaedrus's examples of self-sacrifice, we can conclude that what counts most for him is not the person one loves, but the courage one is capable of expressing in the name of love. Love is valuable insofar as it inspires lovers to noble deeds. Being ready to face death in order to save the beloved from death is the kind of noble deed to which Phaedrus comes back over and over again. It is striking, however, that whether, in the end, the beloved is actually saved or not does not really play a major role in the speech.

In Phaedrus's examples, the relevance of the beloved's life undergoes a significant transformation. Phaedrus first claims that lovers would want to save the lives of their beloveds if they fought side by side in an army of lovers. Saving the beloved's life is also what causes Alcestis' noble sacrifice. With Orpheus, we realize that Phaedrus admires the lover's sacrifice of death more than his willingness to save the beloved from death. In the case of Achilles, the life of the other becomes an irrelevant factor with respect to gaining honor, since, according to Phaedrus, Achilles' noble action was not motivated by the desire to save the lover's life. As we saw, Achilles did not literally die for Patroclus in the way Alcestis died to bring her husband back from the dead. Patroclus was dead when Achilles decided to face his own death. On Phaedrus's account, then, Achilles' sacrifice is not inspired by Eros because it is the free choice of a beloved, and it is not spurred by the desire to be with the lover, since there is nothing Achilles can do to bring Patroclus back to life. Achilles' sacrifice is, rather, an act of *τιμωρία* ("revenge"), performed after the death of Patroclus for the sake of avenging his name (179e; I will discuss revenge below in connection with Alcibiades). Avenging the death of the lover brings honor to his memory and, at the same time, will bring Achilles immortal glory.

In conclusion, to the progressively loftier examples of self-sacrifice there corresponds, for Phaedrus, a demotion of the object of love as a real motivation for sacrifice. Noble deeds and the honor they receive are, ultimately, the real focus if we follow carefully the trajectory of the speech. In this sense, Phaedrus anticipates Diotima's view that Eros is never disjoined

from the fundamental desire to acquire some form of immortality. Ambitious men manifest this desire by being concerned with how their own self-image is received and preserved by others—not just in this life but also after their death. Not surprisingly, Diotima explicitly treats Phaedrus's examples as cases of *philotimia*, actions done in the hope that future generations will provide their authors with immortal glory (207d–e).

COUNTERPOINTS TO PHAEDRUS'S SPEECH: ALCIBIADES

Thus far I have been reading Phaedrus's speech as Plato's reflection on the psychology of the beloved more than as a speech about Eros. The example of Achilles, in particular, seems to lead us away from love of someone to love of honor. If we now turn to the man, Alcibiades, who fully embodies love of honor in the *Symposium*, we can see how in his peculiar encomium of Socrates, we find significant counterpoints to Phaedrus's speech.

Traditionally, what Alcibiades reveals about Socrates is taken by interpreters at face value. H. H. Bacon's reading of *Symposium* 216e–17a3 (Alcibiades' discovery of the hidden treasures in Socrates) became paradigmatic for a whole line of interpretation: "This is the beauty that drags men from the shadows of the cave and inspires them to bring forth immortal children, Agathon's illusions enslave men to the shadows, Socrates' illusions set men free to 'engender and give birth in beauty.'"¹⁵

Bacon, like many others, did not notice that Alcibiades was not inspired to the philosophical ascent when he caught a glimpse of divine beauty in Socrates. Rather, he remained entrapped in his own main obsession, the struggle between master and slave. This is particularly evident when his response to the discovery of Socrates' interior beauty is not a love of philosophy but a readiness to submit to superior power: [the statues inside Socrates] "were so godlike—so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing—that I no longer had a choice—I just had to do whatever he told me" (217a). In other words, Socrates, not Beauty, remains Alcibiades' preoccupation, and this is worth remembering, especially if we want to understand Plato's views concerning educational failure in the context of Socrates' trial.

15 Bacon 1959.428. For recent interpretations of Alcibiades' speech that take into due account his rhetoric of ambition, see Ferrari 1992.261–62, Nightingale 1995.119–27, Hobbs 2000.254–61, Hunter 2004.98–112.

Alcibiades' whole speech is a reading of Socrates through the lens of ambition. However, the relationship he describes is not, as Phaedrus suggests, a circle of virtue, but rather a constant struggle to gain power over the other, and, in failure, a strong feeling of having become his slave. The role of shame, for example, comes back, but Phaedrus's claim that Eros produces virtue through shame is contradicted by Alcibiades' own words (216b1–7):

Socrates is the only man in the world who makes me feel shame—ah, you didn't think I had it in me, did you? Yes, he makes me feel ashamed: I know perfectly well that I can't prove he's wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways: I cave in to my desire to be honored by the crowd.¹⁶

Rather than having any virtuous consequences, shame in the eyes of Socrates does not lead Alcibiades to choose a life of virtue. On the contrary, the pain of shame is so overwhelming that Alcibiades wishes Socrates were dead (216c1). Meanwhile, he runs away in search of different spectators, and he finds them among “the many,” who, presumably, by honoring him as an effective politician, give him an acceptable image of himself. As we have just seen in the case of Phaedrus's speech, the honor-giver is very much a choice of the honor-seeker. The case of Alcibiades confirms that adulation, like cosmetics, does not replace truth—it is not as if the honor-seeker were entirely deceived by it. Alcibiades grants that Socrates is right about his many shortcomings; he implies that the many are wrong about his merits; yet even though he admits to Socrates that his political career is a waste of time (216a6), he confesses he still falls victim to the honor bestowed by the crowd. Adulation, then, is preferable to truth, not because the latter is cognitively unreachable, but because truth can be emotionally unbearable. Alcibiades seeks honor not as a replacement for truth, but as a balm to a wound.

Like Calicles in the *Gorgias*, Alcibiades cannot really conceive of

16 I modified Nehamas and Woodruff's translation of ἡττημένῳ τῆς τιμῆς τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν, “I cave in to my desire to please the crowd.” It is important to see that Alcibiades' attention here is on his need for honor rather than on the favors the crowd requests in exchange for honor.

Socrates as someone whose *logoi* primarily aim at truth.¹⁷ To Alcibiades, Socrates appears to be a powerful rhetorician. He compares his speeches to those of Pericles and does not find any qualitative difference between them, only a difference in the power to enthrall and overpower him (215e4–8). He also likens Socrates to Marsyas and the sirens, again examples of the extraordinary power that language can have on the emotions.

The example of Marsyas has ominous connotations, given that, according to myth, the satyr was flayed by Apollo. Alcibiades puts himself in the position of the Olympian against the quasi-bestial Socrates, since it is at this point that Alcibiades raises for the first time the charge that Socrates is hubristic. The legal language clearly reminds us of a public trial, as does the threat of bringing witnesses (215b–c):¹⁸

Now look at him again! Isn't he also just like the satyr Marsyas? . . . You are insolent, aren't you (ὕβριστής εἶ· ἢ οὐ;)? If you won't admit it, I'll bring witnesses. And you are quite a flute player, aren't you? In fact, you are much more marvelous than Marsyas, who needed instruments to cast spells on people.

Alcibiades repeats the same charge of *hubris* two more times (219c, 222a8). In the context of the failed seduction scene, he addresses his audience openly as “gentlemen of the jury,” and explains that his friends are here to pass judgment on Socrates' arrogance (ὕπερηφανίας, 219c).

The accusation of *hubris*, which in erotic contexts indicates a charge of sexual assault, has, of course, comical overtones in the case of the failed seduction scene. Alcibiades, after all, complains not because he was forced to sexually submit to Socrates, but because Socrates dared not to oblige

17 At *Gorg.* 482c4–83a7, Callicles accuses Socrates of having used bad rhetoric with Gorgias and Polus with the sole aim of prevailing over them. See also *Gorg.* 489b7–c2, 494d1–2, 495b1, 497a6, 499b4–9: Callicles constantly mistakes Socrates' interest in the subject matter for a desire to win in a competition with him. For a discussion of Callicles' ambivalence towards Socrates, see Fussi 1996 and 2006.183–247. When Alcibiades claims that both Socrates and his speeches, like statues of Silenus, contain divine things hidden inside, he takes truth as an object that can be possessed and exchanged with other things of value (his beauty, for example). I agree with Nightingale 1995.125–27 that this is a misrepresentation, not a revelation, of Socrates' philosophical nature.

18 Socrates criticizes the role of witnesses in the jury courts at *Gorg.* 471e–72a.

him.¹⁹ It is not difficult to see in which sense he finds Socrates' behavior hubristic. Alcibiades' attempts at seducing Socrates are not disjoined from his desire to gain power and honor. He views Socrates' wisdom as a good he could conquer in exchange for sexual favors (following the model proposed earlier by Pausanias). When Socrates refuses to accept the exchange,²⁰ he takes this as an offence against his honor spurred by an overwhelming sense of superiority on Socrates' part. The young man feels slighted and belittled by Socrates: "He showed such superiority to me (περιεγένετο), he scorned me (κατεφρόνησεν), he mocked (κατεγέλασεν) my beauty and humiliated it (ὑβρίσεν)" (219c; my translation).

Alcibiades behaves like a man whose pride has been wounded. We can understand his accusation in light of Aristotle's treatment of *hubris* as a case of slight (ὀλιγωρία) (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1378b23–31; Kennedy's translation):

The person who gives insult also belittles (καὶ ὁ ὑβρίζων δ' ὀλιγορεῖ); for insult (ὑβρις) is doing and speaking in which there is shame to the sufferer, not that some advantage may accrue to the doer or because something has happened but for the pleasure of it; for those reacting to something do not give insult but are retaliating. The cause of pleasure to those who give the insult is that they think they themselves become more superior [sic] by ill-treating others. That is why the young and the rich are given to insults; for by insulting they think they are superior. Dishonor (ἀτιμία) is a feature of insult, and one who dishonors belittles; for what is worthless has no repute, neither for good nor evil.

19 On this charge of *hubris*, see Bury 1909.157 and Gagarin 1977.

20 "If I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you can see in me a beauty which is really beyond description and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison. But, then, is this a fair exchange that you propose? You seem to me to want more than your proper share: you offer me the merest appearance of beauty, and in return you want the thing itself, 'gold in exchange for bronze'" (218d–19a).

It should be noted that Socrates leaves open the question as to whether he possesses the kind of knowledge that Alcibiades wants to acquire from him (most likely the golden statues of gods to which Alcibiades refers at 215a7–b3, 216e4–17a2, 221e1–22a6 represent metaphorically the kind of knowledge that Alcibiades attributes to Socrates); see Reeve 2006 for a discussion of the image of the golden statues in Alcibiades' speech.

As I mentioned, in Book 4 of the *Republic*, Socrates' main examples of *thumos* are cases of anger (Leontion's anger at himself, the anger of the man who believes he has been wronged and Odysseus's anger at the maids' offensive behavior). Aristotle's definition of anger in the *Rhetoric* is illuminating for our purposes: "Let anger (ὀργή) [be defined as] desire, accompanied by [mental and physical] distress, for conspicuous retaliation (τιμωρίας φαινομένης) because of a conspicuous slight (διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγορίαν) that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one."²¹

We can see that the relation between the agent's self-image and the image he receives from others is central to Aristotle's understanding of anger—as it is central in Plato's treatment of *thumos*.²² Because it is by its nature linked to social status and intersubjective relationships, anger entails that we believe we understand the intentions of others. We would not be angry if we thought that a person accidentally struck us, while we could become very angry if we thought that the blow was intentional and meant as a slight. The central point here is that we interpret others' intentions, not that we are accurate in doing so. When in Book 4 of the *Republic* (440c) Socrates states that *thumos* flares up when one *believes* one to be unjustly treated (ὅταν ἀδικεῖσθαι τις ἡγήται) and becomes an ally with what *appears* to be justice (συμμαχεῖ τῷ δοκοῦντι δικάϊῳ), he is making the same point.²³

The peculiar portrayal of Socrates given by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* should be read as a study of Alcibiades' concern with honor and victory rather than as a revelation of Socrates' real intentions. I do not want

21 *Rhet.* 2.2, 1378a31–33 (Kennedy's translation). Grimaldi 1988.21 observes: "As A. says at EN 1126a 22–25, τιμωρία puts an end to anger . . . In our own phrase this self-gratification is emphasized by the public character of the revenge—φαινομένης: manifest revenge—which itself is a response to what was in turn manifest disregard . . . By the act of retaliation the person asserts his personal value and his right to existence."

22 Aristotle, however, does not include anger at oneself in his treatment of ὀργή. The case of Leontion would probably be considered an example of αἰσχύνη ("shame"). See *Rhet.* 2.6; Belfiore 1992.181–225, Cairns 1993.381–431, Konstan 2006.91–110.

23 See Viano 2003.94 for a discussion of *thumos* in Aristotle as the "most likely candidate for that faculty of the soul that governs the competitive emotions, or at least those competitive emotions involving reaction and a reaffirmation of the self in the *Rhetoric* Book 2: anger, envy and emulation." On anger in the *Rhetoric*, see Konstan 2006.41–76. On Aristotle's theory of emotions as a response to problems raised in Plato's dialogues, see Fortenbaugh 2002.

to claim that what Alcibiades says is false. After all, he invites Socrates to correct him if he says something that is not true (214e) and Socrates never does. We have no reason to believe that the facts Alcibiades reports are false. However, what is prominent in Alcibiades' mixture of praise and blame is his interpretation of Socrates' behavior, and this is what we should not take at face value, since Alcibiades clearly reads the intentions of others in light of his own obsessions.

Alcibiades not only affirms that he believes Socrates *is* superior to him; he wants his audience to agree with him that Socrates is motivated by an extraordinary desire to *prove* superior—a clear case of *philonikia*—and towards the end of his speech, he openly says so: “He believes he has to win over me in every way” (οἷεταί μου δεῖν πανταχῇ περιεῖναι, 222e). Socrates scorned (κατεφρόνησεν) him: according to Aristotle, scorn (καταφρόνησις) is a form of slight (ὀλιγωρία). Socrates mocked his beauty (κατεγέλασεν); Aristotle points out that men tend to get angry with those who mock them (ὀργίζονται δὲ τοῖς τε καταγελῶσι) because mocking is an expression of *hubris* (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1379a29–31).²⁴ Alcibiades' pain at loving someone by whom he feels belittled at every turn not surprisingly express itself as a desire for open revenge (213d, 214e: ἐπιθῶμαι τῷ ἀνδρὶ καὶ τιμωρήσωμαι ὑμῶν ἐναντίον;).

According to Aristotle, as we have seen, the desire for manifest revenge (τιμωρίας φαινομένης) is the natural response to the pain at what was perceived as manifest disregard (διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν). If Alcibiades were not still in love with Socrates, he would feel entitled to anger. However, because he is still in love, he is torn between the belief that he was deeply humiliated, admiration for the extraordinary man who offended him, and the unsustainable pain at the thought that, if he vented his anger at Socrates, he might lose his company (219d).

His situation is that of a man who feels at a loss and enslaved (ἡπόρουν δῆ, καταδεδουλωμένος τε ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 219e). Like Marsyas's music, Socrates' words cast a spell on him so that he is brought to feel that, like the life of a slave (ἀνδραποδωδῶς διακειμένου, 215e), even his own life is not worth living (μὴ βιωτὸν εἶναι ἔχοντι ὥς ἔχω, 216a). Socrates' words attract him as a most powerful form of rhetoric, a rhetoric that he further compares to the song of the sirens. The sirens, of course, are

24 Alcibiades' fear of becoming an object of laughter is evident from the moment he enters Agathon's house (212e–13a). Cf. Hobbs 2000.255.

not merely seductive, they destroy those who listen to them. In what ways is Alcibiades afraid to be ruined by Socrates? He says that if he listened to Socrates long enough, he would be constrained to sit beside him until he dies (216a7–b1). This passage, too, should remind us of Callicles when he declares that “philosophy is a delightful thing, if someone touches it in moderation at the right time of life; but if he persists in it longer than he should, it is the ruin of men (διαφθορά τῶν ἀνθρώπων)” (*Gorg.* 484c6–10). As Callicles goes on to explain, a man who continues philosophizing beyond the right age is bound to become unmanly (ἄνανδρος) by keeping away from the centers of the polis where men acquire glory and fame (485d4–8). Presumably, then, Alcibiades is afraid that spending too much time with Socrates will seduce him into becoming as unmanly as those who, according to Callicles, are reduced to whispering in a corner with Socrates and do not know any longer how to speak to an assembly.²⁵ Callicles, too, despises slaves, and, in response to Socrates’ thesis that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, he claims, like Alcibiades, that “this is not what happens to a man, to suffer injustice; it’s what happens to some slave for whom it is better to die than to live” (*Gorg.* 483a).

From the perspective of Alcibiades, all Socrates does is understandable in light of power. Since power and manliness amount to what Alcibiades values most, even those parts of his encomium of Socrates that are less ambivalent focus on such aspects: Socrates’ courage in war and his almost superhuman endurance of hunger, cold, etc. take center stage. Given Alcibiades’ preoccupation with rivalry, he is, of course, sensitive to people’s feelings when they are attuned to his own. Not surprisingly, then, he reports that during the terribly harsh winter at Potidaea, when Socrates was walking barefoot on the ice and seemed totally unaffected by the cold, the soldiers “thought he was only doing it to spite them” (ὥς καταφρονούντα σφῶν, 220b).

As if to close the circle initiated by Phaedrus, Alcibiades narrates

25 As I mentioned above, the preoccupation with being a real man is central to the description of the genesis of the timocratic man in Book 8 of the *Republic* (549c8–50b7). Here the future timocrat is described as more and more preoccupied by the accusations of unmanliness that his mother, first, and then his servants, raise about his philosophically inclined father, who has clearly no interest in public recognition. Dover 1980.167 understands well Alcibiades’ association of Socrates with the sirens: “Men who heard the Sirens’ song stayed with them and died, and Alcibiades would have ‘died’ politically had he not stopped his ears as Odysseus stopped the ears of his crew with wax (Hom. *Od.* 12.37–54, 154–200).”

that Socrates refused to leave him behind in battle when he was wounded and thus saved his life (220d6–e9). By now we know that Socrates is not really Alcibiades' lover, so his heroism cannot be taken to exemplify Phaedrus's theory about the army of lovers. Yet Alcibiades follows a similar pattern when he mentions public recognition right after evoking Socrates' heroic deed. The role recognition plays this time, however, should strike the reader as an ironical reversal of the honors that were bestowed on Alcestis and Achilles according to Phaedrus. As Alcibiades reveals, the medal was given to him, who did not deserve it, and not to Socrates, who deserved it, because the generals were concerned with Alcibiades' higher social standing. As an afterthought to Phaedrus's speech, then, public honor is no proof of virtue, while, in turn, the best virtue is independent of love.

CONCLUSION

Though *thumos* is never discussed in this dialogue, we have seen that thumoeidetic emotions—love of victory, love of honor, a strong sense of shame, admiration of courage, and, in general, a keen sense of what could be taken as signs of disregard and unjust treatment—figure prominently in the *Symposium*. While Phaedrus highlights that side of Eros that inspires daring, Alcibiades shows what Eros can do to a thumoeidetic individual when the man he loves does not embrace the same goals and fails to give him the recognition he longs for.

Thumoeidetic desires are explicitly addressed by Diotima, who interprets Phaedrus's examples of sacrifice for the sake of love as attempts at gaining immortality by the performance of glorious deeds (208d1–e2). Diotima claims that Love desires to possess good things forever, and this translates into a desire for immortality that, in the case of the honor-lovers, gives rise to various forms of irrational behavior (208c):

Look, if you will, at how human beings seek honor. You'd be amazed at their irrationality (θαυμάζοις ὅν τῆς ἀλογίας), if you didn't have in mind what I spoke about and if you hadn't pondered the awful state of love they are in, wanting to become famous and "to lay up glory immortal forever."

After reading Alcibiades' speech, we should not be too surprised that Diotima's stress falls on irrationality when she approaches *philotimia*.

There is an interesting analogy between Phaedrus's and Alcibiades' speeches, on the one hand, and Socrates' treatment of *thumos* in Books 4 and 8 of the *Republic*, on the other. Phaedrus, like Socrates in Book 4 of the *Republic*, shows the positive side of *thumos*: it can inspire courage, it is malleable with education, it can side with reason. However, the genealogy of the timocratic man in Book 8 of the *Republic* reminds us that allies do not necessarily share the same goals and can easily become estranged from each other. In the *Symposium*, the rhetoric of thumoeidetic virtue in Phaedrus's speech finds its counterpoint in Alcibiades' obsession with competition, the failure of shame to inspire virtue, the farce of honors bestowed on those who do not deserve them, and the systematic misunderstanding of what it is that philosophers truly want. Alcibiades' portrait of Socrates, as I hope to have shown, reflects Alcibiades' main concern: the desire to prevail. If Alcibiades is right, then philosophy is indistinguishable from rhetoric, Socrates' desire to know a badly disguised desire for power, and every insight gained into the truth a matter of trading gold for bronze.

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