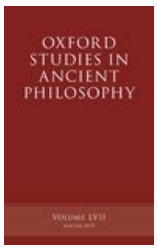

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CHAPTER

Plato on Why Human Beauty is Good for the Soul

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Abstract

This essay examines Socrates' Palinode in the *Phaedrus* in order to understand why the experience of another person's beauty plays such a central role in Plato's account of moral development. I argue that the answer depends in part on his account of the human soul as having a nature in common with, but also falling short of, divine soul. This anthropology allows for a conception of moral progress as a matter of becoming more perfectly what one in some sense already is. The answer also depends on Plato's conception of beauty as being, in general, the manifestation or appearing of goodness, and of human beauty in particular—both beauty of soul and beauty of body—as the splendid manifestation of godlikeness. When the lover is struck by the sight of the beloved's beauty, he is therefore reminded of who he is and what he should aspire to become.

Keywords: beauty, soul, love, human nature, godlikeness, self-knowledge, good, appearance, reason, appetite

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IN several dialogues, Plato has Socrates present the wondering, erotic apprehension of human beauty as a necessary step in moral education. In the *Republic*, for example, he suggests that children who have been fed a diet of good music—songs of good people sung in the narrative voice typical of good people—will, when they grow up, have eyes to see the genuine beauty in the people around them. The beauty he has in mind is specifically human beauty, the beauty of beautiful human bodies but, more important, the beauty of virtuous human souls. Since 'what is most beautiful is also most loveable' (τό γε κάλλιστον ἐρασμιώτατον), these musical guardians will fall in love (3, 402 D 6). At this point, Socrates says, his account 'has ended where it ought to end, for it ought to end in the love of the beautiful' (οἶ γοῦν δεῖ τελευτᾶν, τετελεύτηκεν· δεῖ δέ που τελευτᾶν τὰ μουσικὰ εἰς τὰ τοῦ καλοῦ ἐρωτικά, 403 C 5–6).[1] Attraction to beauty is not a side effect of the moral-poetic

education of the guardians of Kallipolis; it seems to be the very point of it. From this foundation some of them, at least, will be educated into fully virtuous philosopher-kings.

We find similar claims in Plato's erotic dialogues. In the *Symposium*, Socrates says catching sight of a
p. 26 beautiful young man[2] is the first ↳ step in a journey of ethical progress culminating in 'giving birth to true virtue' (τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ, 212 A 5–6). (At least it is the first step if one has the right sort of soul and if one is led by a 'leader who leads correctly' (ὀρθῶς ἡγῆται ὁ ἡγούμενος, 210 A 6–7).) And in the *Phaedrus*, which will be my focus in this paper, Socrates says that, for certain (relatively uncorrupted) people, the amazed sight of a beautiful young man sets off an intellectual and emotional revolution: in looking with love at his beautiful beloved, the lover has taken the first step towards a better way of life, one involving right relations to his own body, to other people, and to the cosmos.

Why is sensitivity to the beauty of another human being a significant and perhaps necessary step in moral development? There are several facets of this question that I want to explore. First, why does Plato emphasize attraction to a person's beauty, rather than to his goodness? Second, what is it about the beautiful person that is so arrestingly beautiful? In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates insists that we can literally see another person's beauty, suggesting that the beauty in question is bodily, a matter of the way the other person literally looks. But as I will explain in a moment, there is also good reason to think what attracts us are features that most properly belong to the other person's soul, admirable qualities of character. Is the soul beautiful too? And if (as I will argue) it is, what is the relationship between bodily and psychic beauty? Finally, I want to understand why it is *human* beauty—the beauty of an embodied human soul—that is a
p. 27 catalyst for moral development, rather than beauty in other ↳ things, such as the lovely landscape through which Socrates and Phaedrus walk. Ultimately, of course, Socrates presents contact with forms, including the form of the beautiful, as a source of virtue. The values that inform the best human life are not themselves specifically human. But in all the dialogues I've mentioned, the route to the form of the beautiful begins with an appreciation of human beauty. Why?

So far I have been talking about 'sensitivity', 'appreciation', and 'attraction' to beauty. Socrates talks about the longing, astonished gaze of *erōs*, with all the obsessiveness that is typically associated with that condition. (Following convention, I will mostly translate *erōs* as 'love', but—at least ordinarily—*erōs* refers to a more restricted range of phenomena: 'falling in love', romantic longing, and lust.) So I will need to discuss what Socrates thinks about love. His account(s) are extraordinarily rich, and I do not intend to offer a complete interpretation of even one of them. In particular, I will not address a problem that has dominated the literature on this topic for decades, namely whether conceiving of love's value as essentially educational is adequate to its moral significance. (I do make some remarks on this topic in the appendix, however.) Instead, I will be concerned with the anthropology in light of which Socrates makes his claim for the power of gazing with love at a beautiful person. Socrates believes that *erōs* is a desire for happiness that erupts against a background of essential human imperfection (*Phdr.* 251 C–252 B; cf. *Symp.* 200 E). The look of love—the wondering apprehension of beauty in another person—is important both because it excites that desire and because it helps us satisfy it. So we must examine Socrates' conception of human beings as needy creatures. It is in part because he offers such an extended account of our nature in the *Phaedrus* that I focus on that dialogue. This will be my topic in Section 1.

I will also need to say a bit about his conception of *to kalon* or *to kallos*, which I have been translating as 'the beautiful' and 'beauty'. That will be my topic in Section 2 of this paper. Notoriously, these terms hover between moral and aesthetic senses. In the *Phaedrus*, I will argue, Socrates emphasizes its aesthetic dimension but in a way that presupposes a rather different conception of the aesthetic than we are used to. To give a brief and no doubt enigmatic preview: *to kallos* is the splendour or radiance that is a dimension of
p. 28 the goodness of things insofar as they are good. ↳ This means that a beautiful human being is one whose goodness shines and attracts attention. Since strictly speaking human beings are souls, their goodness is in

the first instance psychic goodness. So the question raised before about the relation between psychic goodness and physical beauty becomes all the more pressing.

Finally, in Section 3 of the paper, I will make a suggestion about what Plato thinks that the lover gets out of seeing beauty that is so necessary for moral development. I will also argue that the beloved also gets something out of being looked at in this loving way. Interestingly, Socrates' explicit account of how the beloved benefits from love is somewhat different from the account suggested implicitly by his speech.

1. Plato's anthropology

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that in order to show that love is a blessing, he must first give an account (λόγος) of the being (οὐσία) or nature (φύσις) of soul, not only of our human soul, but of divine soul as well (245 C 1 ff.; 245 E 2 ff.).[3] As we will see, our commonality with divine soul, as well as our distinctiveness, is central to Plato's account of *erōs*. The validity and structure of this argument have been much debated, but for my purposes I need only state two of its principal points. First, souls are self-moving and, for this reason, immortal. Second, souls are the origins or principles (ἀρχαί) of movement (κίνησις) in all other things; in particular, 'all body' (πᾶν σῶμα, 245 E 4). Not only do our souls move our bodies, but the generation, movement, and maintenance of the 'whole universe and everything that comes to be' (πάντα τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσάν τε γένεσιν, 245 D 8–E 1), depend on the self-moving activity of soul (cf. 246 B–C).[4] Socrates does not explain
p. 29 what this amounts to, but presumably he ↳ has in mind that divine souls are responsible for the movements of the planets and stars and for the generation of plants and (perhaps) certain animals.[5]

Socrates says that it is beyond his human capacity to give a proper account of this self-and-other-moving nature of soul—that would be a 'divine and lengthy exposition' (θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, 246 A 4–5). (This is our first hint that our human sort of soul is deficient: unlike the gods, we are incapable of knowing or saying fully what we are.) But he tells us to imagine soul as being like the 'naturally united power' (σύμφυτος δύναμις, 246 A 6–7) of charioteer and a team of horses covered in wings. We souls gallop along, pushing around our bodies, heading (in our case, more or less) in the direction commanded by the driver-element of ourselves. I say that we head more or less in the direction our driver commands because, according to Socrates, whereas divine souls are composed of 'horses' that are both good, one of our 'horses' is disobedient and disruptive (246 A–B).[6]

Evidently, Socrates' image must be read allegorically. The image says that the self-moving nature of soul—of *all* souls—is complex, constituted by the interaction among distinct aspects or parts. And since Socrates goes on to say that our souls differ from the souls of gods in that only one of our horses is good (246 A–B), we can read the image as saying that there is more differentiation or complexity within the human soul than there is in the divine soul.

We must try to understand what these elements of the soul are and how they relate to each other because, as
p. 30 Socrates has said, it is ↳ necessary for understanding the extraordinary value of the beautiful beloved to the lover. Socrates evidently intends the charioteer to stand for a rational element in the soul. (This is the part of the soul that 'sees' the forms and is therefore capable, by reasoning (λογισμός), of gathering many perceptions into one, 249 B 7–C 1; it also is the part that guides the soul in such a way that all its parts receive the 'nourishment' they need to remain healthy, i.e. it is the part that aims at the good of the all the parts and of the whole, 247 A–E.) By contrast, the horses represent non-rational motivation. They propel the chariot, but feed on nectar and ambrosia (247 E); their strength does not seem to depend even indirectly on sight of the forms.[7]

Finally, there are the wings. It is important to understand what these are, since it is their loss for which love is supposed to be the remedy. Presumably, they also represent a motive element[8] of the soul—they are what

keep the soul aloft and help it rise to the outer rim of the cosmos, beyond which lie the forms—but their relation to the charioteer is quite different from that of the horses. On the one hand, they are intrinsically linked to ('nourished by', to use Socrates' idiom) the charioteer's sight of the forms. In this respect, they seem to represent a sort of rational desire. On the other hand, whereas the horses (at least ideally) propel the chariot-soul forward to whatever specific place the charioteer directs, the wings lift the soul up in a
p. 31 manner independent of the charioteer's rational calculation. So if ↳ the wings represent a sort of rational desire, it is not the sort of rational desire that is the result of calculation (as is Aristotelian *prohairesis*, for example). Socrates says that 'it is the natural power of a wing to lead what is heavy upwards' (πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθὲς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα, 246 D 6–7). In the soul's life, associated with body as *all* soul is, the wings are a powerful drive away from body and towards a divine life of goodness, beauty, and wisdom (which is why Socrates says the wings are the most divine part of the soul, 246 D 6–E 1). This drive seems to function as a sort of propulsive ballast for the charioteer in his work of calculating and directing the non-rational horses. At least, when they are lost, the soul as a whole veers off course into a particular body. At any rate, Socrates' image in the *Phaedrus*, developed for the purpose of explaining the value of love, separates out two aspects of rationality which elsewhere (namely, in the *Republic*) he combines in a single, rational part of the soul: the longing for the genuine goodness of forms (i.e. of reality) and the ability to calculate specific courses of action on behalf of the whole soul.[9]

Let us return to the images of non-rational motivation. The good horse is naturally responsive to the charioteer's command. Socrates describes it as prone to shame (253 D–254 A), suggesting perhaps that its obedience to the charioteer is a matter of respect for authority. So perhaps the good horse stands for general attraction to whatever it may be that reason commands not *as* reasoned but as commanding, masterful.[10] By
p. 32 contrast, the bad horse has no natural inclination to obedience. This is not to say that it cannot be ↳ disciplined. But there is no intrinsic link between what it goes for and the command of reason. If reason manages to control this part of the soul at all, it does so through pain and force (whatever exactly that amounts to as a point about non-allegorical, intrapsychic reality, 254 C–E).

What is it about the bad horse that makes it so deaf to the command of reason? Socrates suggests that this horse is 'a companion of *hubris* and false pretence' (ὕβρεως καὶ ἀλαζονείας ἑταῖρος, 253 E 3).[11] This is a form of desire that sets more store by the efficacy of appearance than of reality; or perhaps that treats the sensible projection of value as the only genuine value there is. Note also that the bad horse is the element in the soul that draws it towards the body. Body as such, and beautiful bodies in particular, attract it in the way that a clump of clover distracts a horse from the path that his rider wants him to follow. Perhaps, then, the bad horse represents a form of desire experienced concretely as physical emptiness and that seeks a corresponding somatic experience of fullness. Given how *bad* the bad horse is, it is tempting to assume this element of the soul is deaf to any evaluative consideration at all, but this would be to ignore the crucial fact that, as we shall see, the bad horse reacts just as strongly to the beloved young man's beauty as the other aspects of the soul do. Its reaction, however, is lust, suggesting that it interprets beauty (and other values?) as being purely a matter of the visible and tangible body, without any spiritual dimension. The point would simply be that there is in us a tendency to experience lack and fullness in physical, perceptual terms and that this tendency is, for this reason, insensitive to rational command and prone to disorderliness. Exaggerated appearances of beauty just do attract us as the genuine article. We just do believe more fully when we see. And we just do feel more in possession of the things we value when we can literally hold them and feel their (apparent) goodness.

p. 33 Ideally, according to Socrates' story, we—our souls—are disembodied. We are presumably associated with bodies, since it is the nature of self-moving souls to move what cannot move itself, but ideally we direct them as something external to us (which I suppose means that we affect them without taking our sense of value from them in turn).[12] Divine souls, whose horses are both obedient and endowed with wings, always live this way. They parade around the cosmos, directing but unentangled with the heavenly bodies, using

their knowledge of forms presumably to shape those bodies in their image. We used to live this way too and would still, were it not for the disobedience of our bad horse dragging us off course. Its natural attraction to the bodily externalization of value means that it perpetually mistakes the bodies directed by soul for the genuinely valuable realities in light of which soul directs them. The natural deformity of our souls has dire consequences. Souls 'feed' on the sight of the forms of justice, temperance, wisdom, beauty, and so forth. (As I have already suggested, I take Socrates to mean that we need active knowledge of virtue in order to flourish in our psychic task of governing bodies.) Since forms are not bodily things, souls must 'journey' out of the cosmos to find their nourishment. But whereas the gods in the perfection of their souls make this journey without difficulty, for us it is a struggle. Our disobedient horse keeps straining against the bit and sometimes prevents us from catching a glimpse of the forms. Without the nourishment of knowledge, our souls must depend on merely 'believed nourishment' (τροφῇ δοξαστῇ, 248 B 5)—that is to say, the rational part directs the soul's self-motion on the basis of opinion, rather than knowledge; our souls 'lose their wings'—their impulse to remain 'aloft', independent of body; and we become embodied 'like an oyster in a shell' (ὀστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι, 250 C 6).

We will return in a moment to the dynamic relations among our soul's parts when we examine the effect on
p. 34 the lover of seeing his beautiful beloved. Let us first step back to consider the general ↳ anthropology embedded in this myth. For my purposes, two points are important. Notice first that Socrates emphasizes a kinship between divine souls and the souls of mortal, and in particular human, bodies. Human beings are like the gods in the sense of being members of the same genus: we, like the gods, are complex souls comprised of governing reason and some motive elements. (In other words, our likeness to the divine is not simply a matter of rationality, but extends further into the non-rational element of ourselves.) And moving body is characteristic work for us and for the gods as well. But despite this (and this leads me to my second point), we possess an intrinsic flaw—the disobedience of one of our horses—that prevents us from possessing our good securely or easily. The defect in our nature may be more or less pronounced—the bad horse may be more or less insolent—but that there is some defect is an ineradicable fact. So human beings are not just *another* kind of soul; they are an *inferior* kind of soul. Socrates expresses the hierarchical relation between human and divine soul in the myth when he figures the gods as leaders of the divine chorus and we human souls as their attendants. We can combine these two points by saying that according to Socrates, human beings are by nature deficiently godlike souls.

We should examine this notion of godlikeness a bit more closely. I have said that Socrates presents gods and human beings as belonging to the same genus, soul. That human and divine souls are furthermore distinct kinds of a common genus is suggested by the fact that the difference in their composition (good and bad horses vs. only good horses) is an eternal fact.[13] Because of our nature, there is no possibility that we—the souls that you and I are—will ever become gods.

However, although it is correct to say that Socrates postulates human and divine souls as distinct kinds, the question arises how to understand the ontological basis for the division. In particular, we might wonder whether the differentia which distinguish the human and divine kinds of soul are independent of each other, such that each soul-kind could in principle exist without the other and be understood without reference to
p. 35 the other. (For example, cookbooks and novels are two kinds of book, but beyond that, their ↳ accounts and existence are unrelated.) I want to argue that Socrates' image and account of love suggest exactly the opposite: our godlikeness is not merely a matter of having a genus in common, but extends throughout our humanity.

The difference between divine and human kinds of soul lies in the fact that we have a sort of non-rational motive element which gods do not have. Notice, however, that Socrates figures both motive elements as horses. That is to say, he represents them as animals of the same genus. Socrates' image at *Republic* 9, 588 B–E shows that he is perfectly capable of representing spirit and appetite with different animals—a lion and a multi-headed beast. But his imagery in the *Phaedrus* seems to draw a sharp line between reason and the

two non-rational elements, while highlighting—or at least allowing the implication of—essential sameness of those two non-rational elements to each other. So we are like the gods in *both* non-rational powers of self-motion. Moreover, the difference between our non-rational motive elements is figured as a difference in colour: whereas gods have only white horses, we have a white horse and a black horse. Now, by Plato's way of thinking, the difference between black and white is a matter of 'more and less'. There is a 'natural joint' along which to cut colour into these two kinds, but the difference it marks is fundamentally quantitative and not a matter of incommensurable, irreducible qualitative difference.[14] Thus Socrates' image suggests that the motive element represented by the bad horse is not something entirely alien to divine soul, but is rather a deficient version, differing from the 'white horse', and thus from divine soul, only in degree, e.g. degree of obedience.

The clearest cases of Platonic division involve dividing a kind according to attributes that are definitionally independent and on the same ontological par. So, for example, in the *Sophist*, craft is divided into productive-craft and acquisitive-craft (219 A–D). However, Plato's examples suggest that he was willing to allow for 'cuts' between kinds with more complicated ontological connections than this. A genus can be
p. 36 divided into kinds with interrelated ↳ definitions (e.g. pitch is divided into the kinds, high, equal, and low, *Phileb.* 17 B–C). More strikingly, a genus can be divided into kinds, some of which are so deficient that their claim to being a kind of that genus at all depends on their having only a tenuous likeness to the paradigmatic kind. (E.g. in the *Philebus* various forms of false pleasure are described as 'ridiculous imitations of true ones' (μεμιμημέναι τὰς ἀληθεῖς ἐπὶ τὰ γελοιότερα, 40 C 5–6); appearing more pleasant than they really are (42 B–C); and 'seeming to be pleasures, but not being so in reality' (ἡδονὰς εἶναι δοκούσας, οὔσας δ' οὐδαμῶς, 51 A 5–6). Likewise, certain practices of 'making lucky guesses that many people call craft', based on 'experience and a certain knack' (ἐμπειρίᾳ καί τινι τριβῇ, 55 E 6), are classified as an imprecise kind of knowledge, but a kind of knowledge nonetheless.[15]) What I am proposing is that Socrates presents the human kind of soul as definitionally dependent upon and ontologically derivative from the divine kind of soul. Human and divine souls are parts of the same kind; they have an account (immortal self-moving mover of body) in common. The point is that the respects in which we are distinctive are properly understood as deficient approximations to more perfect realizations of those very same qualities in the gods. Non-rational motive principles both in divine soul and in human beings are represented as horses, the same kind of animal. And Socrates characterizes both kinds as concerned with appearance. Cut off from knowledge of the principles of reality as they are, they are sources of desire for apparent good. But whereas the good horse is attracted to 'true reputation' (ἀληθινῆς δόξης, 253 D 7)—an appearance whose truthfulness in divine soul is guaranteed by the fact that in *both* human and divine soul this sort of motivation is naturally responsive to reason—the bad horse is interested in the mere appearance of power, regardless of genuine goodness ('a companion of *hubris* and false pretence', 253 E 3).

p. 37 Plato sometimes has Socrates describe this relation of approximation (or definitional and ontological dependence) in terms of the relation between image and paradigm or in terms of mimesis. And he does so in the *Phaedrus* to describe human godlikeness. Notice the way Socrates describes the lover's first encounter with the beautiful young man:

> ὁ δὲ ἀρτιτελής, ὁ τῶν τότε πολυθεάμων, ὅταν θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον ἴδῃ κάλλος εὖ μεμιμημένον ἤ τινα σώματος ἰδέαν, πρῶτον μὲν ἔφριξε καί τι τῶν τότε ὑπῆλθεν αὐτὸν δειμάτων, εἶτα προσορῶν ὡς θεὸν σέβεται, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐδεδίει τὴν τῆς σφόδρα μανίας δόξαν, θύοι ἂν ὡς ἀγάλματι καὶ θεῷ τοῖς παιδικοῖς.
>
> (*Phdr.* 251 A 1–7)

> A recent initiate, one of those who saw a lot then [viz., when he was disembodied], when he sees a godlike [θεοειδές] face or physique that has imitated [μεμιμημένον] beauty well, first he bristles and something like the former fears comes over him; then he looks with awe at [the young man] as a

> god, and if he weren't afraid of being reputed extremely crazy, he would sacrifice to the young man as to an idol [ὡς ἀγάλματι], a god.

Set aside for the moment his use of mimesis terminology to describe the relation of participation between the beloved and the form of beauty. The crucial words for my purpose now are *theoeides* (god-shaped) and *agalma*, a devotional statue. Socrates seems to be saying that the beautiful beloved is godlike in the sense of being modelled on a god. In general, an image is determined to be as it is *by reference to* the paradigm; a proper account of what it is must make reference to the paradigm, but not vice versa; its features must be understood as attempts to approximate to something else. Socrates' point is not that the young man has tried to make himself look like a god or that anyone else has literally moulded him in the divine image. His point is rather that the lover can only make sense of his experience of wonder by conceiving of the beautiful young man as being like a god. In fact, this way of putting the point is too weak. An *agalma*, an idol does not simply represent some god—if that were all there were to it, the religions of the Bible would not have had such a problem with them. No, an idol houses the god; the god is supposed somehow to be present in it. To borrow Platonic technical language, an idol 'participates in' or 'has a share of' the god it images. And this is exactly how the lover experiences the beautiful young man. He is awestruck and wants to make sacrifices to the young man because it seems to him that the god is, somehow, present in him. (Later, Socrates will say
p. 38 that the ↳ lover also images or imitates the god and that he does so more the more he spends time with his beloved, 252 D.)

What I am arguing is that, according to Plato's image in the *Phaedrus*, human beings are by nature images or icons of divine souls, souls whose character can only fully be grasped by reference to divine soul which it 'follows' and falls short of. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates introduces the method of *dihairesis* only after the discussion of *erōs* and he does not elaborate much beyond saying that divisions must be 'carved at the joints' (διατέμνειν κατ' ἄρθρα, 265 D–266 B at 265 E 1). But interestingly later in the dialogue he does say (or strongly suggest) that there are different kinds (*genē, eidē*) of soul (271 A–D). However, the different kinds of soul in this passage are all kinds of *human* soul. And the distinctions it points to seem to hold at the level of divine soul too. At least, in the myth, Socrates emphasizes that there are twelve gods, all of whom have distinct characters, mirrored by the correspondingly distinct characters of their human followers (246 E–247 A; 252 C–253 B). Socrates may well believe that soul can be divided into qualitatively robust kinds, but these distinctions in kind are orthogonal to the distinction between divine and human soul as such. *That* distinction—the one between divine and human—is a distinction between paradigm-leader and imitation-follower.[16]

The theme of human godlikeness is familiar from other dialogues and has been extensively discussed. However, usually godlikeness is interpreted solely as an ethical ideal, an account of what we should aspire to be. In speaking of Plato's *anthropology* of godlikeness, I am trying to emphasize that godlikeness is also an
p. 39 account of what we all already are.[17] It might seem nonsensical to claim ↳ both that we *are* godlike and that we *should become* godlike. How can we aim to be what we already are? However, this is precisely the dynamic Socrates goes on to describe. When a person is struck with love by the beauty of a godlike young man, he goes to work on him—educating him—so as to draw that image out. But this is not a matter of moulding mortal clay into a divine form; it is rather to clarify, intensify, make more perfect a divine image that is already there. The lover reacts to the beautiful beloved as he does because he is *already* an attendant of Zeus (or of Ares or whomever) and has *already* assimilated himself to him. And he is struck by the beauty of this young man in particular because the young man is already an image of Zeus. Plato's anthropology and the logic of the image allows for the curious claim that moral training makes us more perfectly human, more perfectly what we already are.[18]

Human souls are inevitably deficient. Even when we were disembodied, we are made of worse stuff and lead our lives by attending and moulding ourselves in the image of some god or other. Of course, our situation as

we are now is necessarily worse than this, since inhabiting bodies prevents us from having any direct access to psychic nourishment—the forms—at all. We human souls here and now are both deficient and deformed
p. 40 with ↳ respect to the divine ideal we image. And in fact, most of us are still further removed from happiness. In Socrates' poetic rendering, falling into a body caused us to forget our disembodied existence and the nourishing forms. So, not only are we not able to attain to the (imperfect) godlikeness possible for us, most of us are so alienated from happiness as to be entirely ignorant of where it lies. Godlike but deficient, deformed, and oblivious to our plight: this is who we are when we are struck with love by the sight of human beauty.

Before I move on to explaining why the sight of beauty is so arresting to people like us, I want to try to bring this rather extravagant account down to the earth we stand on. Can we accept Plato's anthropology? First, let me translate his claim out of the idiom of godlikeness. In doing so, I do not mean to imply that Plato is not serious about the existence of the gods or that they are ultimately eliminable from his philosophy. My aim is only to locate a standpoint from which we—modern theist and atheist alike—may see the phenomenon Plato describes with the help of his theology.

So instead of asking whether we are icons of the gods, I want to ask whether we can accept the idea that we essentially are beings that aspire to a defining ideal which we cannot in principle achieve? Or to put it as I did above: can we accept a view of moral improvement according to which we become ever more like what we already really are? The question cannot be answered affirmatively simply by endorsing that there is a norm by which we are appropriately measured. The idea needs to be that we are human precisely because we are already conforming to that norm to some degree. Now obviously I cannot here argue that we *should* think of ourselves this way. I think Plato wants to appeal to the experience of love to show that we *do* think of ourselves this way. Because, as I will explain in a moment, the look of love—the wondering apprehension of the beauty of another person—is precisely this recognition.

But leaving love aside, it seems to me that we—or at least some of us—do think of human beings in these terms. I have in mind the morally relevant sense of humanity, the humanity which we think deserves moral respect, the humanity we honour when we praise someone as humane. Humanity in this sense is not exhausted by biological facts, though it is in some way or other connected to them. In the Kantian tradition, it is a capacity for rational action, setting our ends and choosing appropriate means towards them. However, I think it is a mistake to conceive of this capacity as a mere unactualized possibility. Respect and
p. 41 honour are attitudes we ↳ hold toward what is actually deserving, not towards what is—like an unformed lump of clay—merely potentially such. So the human rational will deserving respect must already be present in us as a way of actively being rational. Or, to put the point in more Platonic terms, the humanity we respect must at the very least be a matter of participating in reason. We respect humanity, we respect rationality, *as* something actual, not as merely possible. Of course, Kant thinks we cannot know whether we ever do will from the demands of reason; and indeed it is doubtful that we ever fully do, passionate, embodied creatures that we are. Still, to the extent that we do will at all, we are (according to the Kantian story) governed by a law that is legislated from within our own rational nature. That is to say, the ideal, which in Kant's view may be formulated as the categorical imperative, is actively generated as a norm *for* our willing *by* our willing to any degree rationally at all. What elicits respect is our *success* in being such a will, even if our room for improvement is vast. What I am urging, then, is that the humanity which matters for ethics may well be a matter of a definitive aspiration. That is to say, as moral subjects, we are essentially creatures that approximate a kind of agent more perfect than anything we can in fact become. Becoming a better person is simply doing a better job at approximating the ideal that already defines us.[19] We do not jettison the ideal simply because we suspect that, as a matter of empirical fact, it will be impossible for us fully to purge ourselves of selfishness, envy, desire to realize gratifying illusions, and other impulses to acting badly. We can do better.

2. Beauty

I have argued that in Plato's view human beings are godlike in the sense of having a nature in common with
p. 42 divine souls and differing ↳ by being deficient in the very features gods possess perfectly. In particular, whereas the non-rational soul is naturally responsive to reason's command, one of our non-rational elements inclines towards sensible and somatic fulfilment, indifferent to what reason commands as genuinely good. Related to this, unlike the gods who have stable knowledge, our deliberative and directive reason often relies on mere opinion; worse we tend to lose 'our wings', i.e. our longing for the genuine goodness and reality of forms.

After Socrates creates this image of soul, he puts it to work in explaining the value of love. Briefly, when a person sees a 'godlike face or physique that has imitated beauty well' (θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον … κάλλος εὖ μεμιμημένον ἤ τινα σώματος ἰδέαν, 251 A 2–3), an 'appearance flashing like lightning' (τὴν ὄψιν … ἀστράπτουσαν, 254 B 4–5), the lover is reminded of the form of beauty. His 'wings' start to sprout and he is driven to gaze at the young man's beauty at the expense of all else (252 A), so that his eyes may be flooded with nourishing particles of beauty (251 C). All parts of the lover's soul (πᾶσαν τὴν ψυχήν) are affected by the sight (αἰσθήσει) of the beautiful beloved (253 E 5–6): the charioteer is filled with longing but also fear and awe (254 B, E); the bad horse rushes forward with lust (254 A–B); the good horse, following the command of reason, resists in shame (254 C). Eventually, the lover is able to discipline his desires so that he can tolerate being in the presence of the beautiful beloved. The more he gazes at the god in his beloved, the more he remembers Beauty and the other nourishing forms (254 B). And the more he does that, at least if all goes well, the more his reason and his sense of shame prevail over his desire for sensual gratification, 'leading them [lover and beloved] to an ordered and philosophical mode of life' (εἰς τεταγμένην τε δίαιταν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν … ἀγαγόντα) and making them 'self-controlled and beautifully ordered' (ἐγκρατεῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κόσμιοι ὄντες, 256 A 7–B 2).[20]

p. 43 Why is it beauty that is the catalyst of this transformation? This is a story of recollection and it is no surprise that Plato believes recollection of forms leads to moral improvement. My question, though, is why it is the young man's *beauty* in particular which inspires and facilitates the lover's recollection.[21] To explain this, I need to say something about what Plato means by *kallos*.

In the *Symposium*, when Socrates talks about the form which is imaged in the beloved young man, he calls it *to kalon*—usually translated as 'the beautiful'. Notoriously, however, *kalon* can in other contexts be equally well translated as 'good', 'noble', or 'fine'; and its adverbial form, *kalōs*, often is indistinguishable from the adverbial form of *agathon*, which means good. Given this range of permissible translation, some scholars have argued that *kalon* means something quite generic, like 'commendable' or 'praiseworthy' which can, depending on context, refer either to what is morally praiseworthy or to what is aesthetically praiseworthy.[22] There is no such ambiguity in the *Phaedrus*, however. There, the form which the beloved images is called *to kallos*, which as David Konstan has recently shown, has almost exactly the same semantic range as our word 'beauty'.[23] And Socrates pays particular attention to its aesthetic dimension. Consider the following description of what it was like to contemplate the forms when we were disembodied:

p. 44

> δικαιοσύνης μὲν οὖν καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τίμια ψυχαῖς οὐκ ἔνεστι φέγγος οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς τῇδε ὁμοιώμασιν, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀμυδρῶν ὀργάνων μόγις αὐτῶν καὶ ὀλίγοι ἐπὶ τὰς εἰκόνας ἰόντες θεῶνται τὸ τοῦ εἰκασθέντος γένος· κάλλος δὲ τότ' ἦν ἰδεῖν λαμπρόν, ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῷ μακαρίαν ὄψιν τε καὶ θέαν, ἑπόμενοι μετὰ μὲν Διὸς ἡμεῖς, ἄλλοι δὲ μετ' ἄλλου θεῶν, εἶδόν τε καὶ ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν ὁλόκληροι μὲν αὐτοὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀπαθεῖς κακῶν ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρῳ χρόνῳ ὑπέμενεν, ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὃ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὀστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι.

> ταῦτα μὲν οὖν μνήμῃ κεχαρίσθω, δι' ἣν πόθῳ τῶν τότε νῦν μακρότερα εἴρηται· περὶ δὲ κάλλους, ὥσπερ εἴπομεν, μετ' ἐκείνων τε ἔλαμπεν ὄν, δεῦρό τ' ἐλθόντες κατειλήφαμεν αὐτὸ διὰ τῆς ἐναργεστάτης αἰσθήσεως τῶν ἡμετέρων στίλβον ἐναργέστατα. ὄψις γὰρ ἡμῖν ὀξυτάτη τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔρχεται αἰσθήσεων, ᾗ φρόνησις οὐχ ὁρᾶται—δεινοὺς γὰρ ἂν παρεῖχεν ἔρωτας, εἴ τι τοιοῦτον ἑαυτῆς ἐναργὲς εἴδωλον παρείχετο εἰς ὄψιν ἰόν—καὶ τἆλλα ὅσα ἐραστά· νῦν δὲ κάλλος μόνον ταύτην ἔσχε μοῖραν, ὥστ' ἐκφανέστατον εἶναι καὶ ἐρασμιώτατον.
>
> (*Phaedrus* 250 B 1–E 1)

> None of the splendour [φέγγος] of justice and temperance and the other things honoured by souls [i.e. forms] is present in their likenesses here [i.e. in our embodied world]. Rather, a few people come upon these images through their murky sense organs and with great difficulty see the original of the image. But back then beauty [κάλλος] was brilliant [λαμπρόν] to see, when along with the happy chorus—we were following Zeus, others were following other gods—they saw the blessed, spectacular [θέαν] sight and fulfilled what it is right to call the most blessed of the initiations, which we celebrated, being whole and not suffering the evils which in later times await us. The revealed objects [φάσματα, viz., the forms] were whole and simple and unmoved and happy and we, being admitted into the final initiation, were beholding them in a pure light [αὐγῇ] because we were pure and not buried in this thing which we now carry around and call a body, shackled to it like an oyster.
>
> Well, let this speech serve to gratify memory, because of which I spoke at some length in longing for the past. But about beauty [κάλλους], as we said, when it was among those things it was brilliant [ἔλαμπεν], and coming here we grasp it glistening [στίλβον] most gleamingly [ἐναργέστατα] through the most gleaming [ἐναργεστάτης] of our senses. For sight is the sharpest of our bodily senses, although it does not see wisdom. For it would instil terrible love if an image of that [form] entered sight gleaming [ἐναργές] in that sort of way, and the same goes for the other beloved [forms] too. But now this is the lot of beauty [κάλλος] alone, with the result that it is most vividly manifest [ἐκφανέστατον] and most desired [ἐρασμιώτατον].

p. 45 Notice how light-filled this description is: the splendid, brilliant forms gleam in pure light. Socrates draws our attention to how the forms 'look'. Now, all the forms are splendid, including the form of beauty. But Socrates says that beauty is the only form whose bodily images also shine. We can see wise or just actions, but we cannot see their wisdom or justice. By contrast, the beautiful young man's face 'flashes like lightning' (ἀστράπτουσαν, 254 B 5) precisely because it images the radiant form of beauty. I take this to indicate that to be beautiful just is (at least in part) to be radiant. All the forms shine, but only in the case of beauty does shining (in part) constitute 'what it is'. Or in other words, beauty is an aesthetic property. This explains why beauty in body is a sensible property. The point is not that *kallos* is inevitably sensible; Plato must countenance the possibility of intelligible splendour in order to accommodate the *kallos* of intelligible things such as souls and the forms.[24] The point rather is that *kallos* is a quality (an excellence, in fact) of appearing, manifesting, or showing.[25] For a body to have a share of this quality of shining just is for it to shine perceptibly. In the *Phaedrus*, then, *kallos* is intimately tied to intelligibility or more generally (so as to account for its perceptible images) to openness to the mind. This is not a passive property of being knowable or perceptible; it is an active property of catching the mind's attention.

But what is it *about* beauty that catches our attention? The more we emphasize the splendour of *kallos*, the more curious it becomes that Socrates attributes to it such a profound moral effect.

The key is to notice that the lover's seeing the young man as beautiful and seeing him as godlike are simultaneous: the first moment of love occurs when the lover sees 'a godlike face or physique that has
p. 46 imitated beauty well' (θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον … κάλλος εὖ ↳ μεμιμημένον ἤ τινα σώματος ἰδέαν, 251 A 2–3).[26] Saying that the lover sees the young man as godlike seems to be just another, perhaps more precise, way of saying that

he looks beautiful. No doubt Plato is drawing on the mythic commonplace that gods are brilliantly beautiful. But I suspect he has a more theoretically robust reason for associating the young man's godlikeness with his beauty, for in other dialogues he draws a tight connection between goodness and beauty quite generally. In the *Republic*, for example, Socrates defines both beauty (*kallos*) and virtue in terms of being functionally well-ordered:

> οὐκοῦν ἀρετὴ καὶ κάλλος καὶ ὀρθότης ἑκάστου σκεύους καὶ ζῴου καὶ πράξεως οὐ πρὸς ἄλλο τι ἢ τὴν χρείαν ἐστίν, πρὸς ἣν ἂν ἕκαστον ᾖ πεποιημένον ἢ πεφυκός;
>
> (10, 601 D 4–6)

> The virtue, beauty, and correctness of each implement, living creature, and action is related to nothing but the use for which each is made or naturally adapted (trans. Grube/Reeve, modified).[27]

He says also that the form of the Good is 'the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything' (πᾶσι πάντων αὖτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία, 7, 517 B 9–C 1). Similarly, in the *Philebus* despite a long argumentative pursuit, Socrates finds that 'the power of the good has fled into the nature of the beautiful [τοῦ καλοῦ], for measuredness and proportion everywhere become beauty [κάλλος] and virtue'.[28] The very features of a thing that make it good are also those that make it beautiful.[29]

This connection between beauty and goodness extends to what I have called beauty's 'openness to mind'.
p. 47 Recall that in the *Republic*, Socrates draws an analogy between the form of the good and the ↳ sun. Like the sun, the good is a source of intelligibility. It shines in the mind's eye and lights up other things as well. Echoing the connection we have seen in the *Phaedrus* between *kallos* and light, Glaucon responds to this image by saying that the form of the good must be exceedingly beautiful (6, 509 A). This suggests that we should not distinguish goodness and shining appearance as distinct elements of being *kalon*. Shining appearance is rather a dimension of or effect of goodness, its flashing out to the mind as an object of knowledge or perception.[30]

These links between *kallos* and goodness suggests a reason why the godlike young man is at the same time a brilliant image of beauty. The gods, as we have seen, are perfectly ordered souls, perfectly performing their task of moving bodies. Since, as we saw in *Republic* 10, 601 D above, functional order is the basis of both goodness and beauty, we should expect the gods to be beautiful too (as is indeed conventionally the case; n.b. also *Symp.* 202 C). So it is reasonable to suppose that human beings, to the extent that they are godlike—that is, to the extent that they are well-ordered—will be both good as souls and beautiful.[31] Interestingly, Socrates says in the *Republic* that the connection to godlikeness is already part of the conventional conception of *to kalon*:

> οὐ καὶ τὰ καλὰ καὶ αἰσχρὰ νόμιμα διὰ τὰ τοιαῦτ' ἂν φαῖμεν γεγονέναι· τὰ μὲν καλὰ τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, μᾶλλον δὲ ἴσως τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ θείῳ τὰ θηριώδη ποιοῦντα τῆς φύσεως, αἰσχρὰ δὲ τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ ἀγρίῳ τὸ ἥμερον δουλούμενα;
>
> (9, 589 C 7–D 3)

> Should we say that this is the original basis for the conventions about what is *kala* and what is shameful [αἰσχρά]? *Kala* things are those that subordinate the beastlike parts of our nature to the human—or better, perhaps, to the divine; shameful ones are those that enslave the gentle to the savage? (trans. Grube/Reeve in *Complete Works*, modified)

p. 48 A person who is governed by reason is godlike not only because the divine part of his soul (reason) masters and so transfers its character to the other, beastlike parts but also because the activity of mastering what is naturally subordinate is itself a godlike way of being. Socrates' point here is that people already have this intuition when they praise someone as *kalon*: they already agree with Socrates that human beings have

complex natures hovering between the divine and the bestial and that a *kalon* person is one whose best, divine part is masterful. If they nevertheless disagree with Socrates, it is because they disagree with him about which part of our nature is godlike and which deserve to be subordinate.

Socrates calls our attention to the splendour of *kallos* in the *Phaedrus* because he is interested in the way *kalon* things—in particular, *kalon* people—grab our attention and (if we are philosophical) remind us of the forms. But if I am right, what grabs our attention is just the (appearing) proportional order or goodness of the *kalon* thing. To experience something as beautiful is, according to Plato, to be astonished and enthralled by its display of outstanding perfection.[32] Still, in insisting that the object of love is beauty rather than goodness, Socrates is able to take into account the passivity of the lover. He does not go looking for goodness in the beloved young man; he does not reason his way towards it or contort his perspective to bring it into view. Rather, in the midst of ordinary life, he is struck by the sight of beauty or, to switch metaphors with Socrates, the stream of beauty flowing from the young man pours into his eyes (*Phdr.* 251 B–D). Furthermore, because beauty is a feature of the way good things appear or present themselves, it is a quality which—as Socrates insists—has sensible, visible instances. That means that beauty is a form whose participants can appeal to the lowest part of our soul, the part which pursues sensible fulfilment and what appears desirable, without regard for reason or the reality of goodness. Notably, it is the bad horse that repeatedly drags the charioteer into the presence of the beautiful young man, inadvertently speeding the
p. 49 growth of the ↳ soul's wings and the reorientation of the lover away from the body back to the forms.

The fact that the beautiful young man is attractive to the bad horse brings into view a complication, however. I have been arguing that the lover's experience of the young man as being an icon of the god is a more precise way of describing the fact that he finds him to be beautiful. The young man reminds the lover of the form of beauty because he also reminds him of the good-and-beautiful god he used to follow. However, the beauty which first strikes the lover as godlike is the beauty of the beloved's face and physique (251 A). Gods have big, beautiful bodies in traditional myth, but in Socrates' image, gods are precisely those souls that never are embodied. How, then, is the young man's beautiful body an icon of virtuously ordered (and so, according to the account I have been suggesting, beautiful) divine soul?[33] How can a beautiful body be the blazing forth of human goodness, if human goodness is a quality of soul?

Recall that it is the work of all soul to generate, grow, shape, and otherwise move body. Sometimes it does this by moving body from the outside, but in our case we move our bodies from within. This means that the beautiful body which astonishes Socrates' lover is one that has been generated and shaped by the soul within. It is reasonable to suppose, then, that its beauty is somehow a reflection of the beauty or goodness of the soul that animates it.[34]

We are likely to be suspicious of a view that links physical beauty so closely with psychic virtue. I do not want to argue away all sense of moral hazard in Plato's view, but I do believe several points make it more appealing than it might at first appear. First, although ultimately Plato believes that psychic virtue—the ordering of a soul that makes it good and beautiful—is moral virtue, we should not move too quickly to a moralized interpretation of physical beauty. It is uncontroversial that the growth and shape of our bodies is the effect of some vital principle within us; in Plato's way of thinking, it is the result of soul. When our souls
p. 50 function well in growing and shaping our bodies, the result is a healthy body, capable ↳ of doing the work soul will direct it to do. So a genuinely beautiful body is one that radiates health, which in part explains why Plato finds it so easy to follow his cultural trope of idolizing the beauty of young men engaged in athletic contests. The excellence of soul manifested in a healthy body is nutritive health. But this excellence takes on a moral dimension when we make the not unreasonable assumption that physical health depends on (even if it is not guaranteed by) having one's appetites under some degree of control.

Bear in mind also that although physical health, and the healthy looks that go with it, are important manifestations of psychic good condition, they are far from being the most important ones in Plato's view.

The soul does not merely grow and sustain the body, it moves it. Socrates does compare the beautiful beloved to a static *kouros* statue (251 A), but it is entirely in keeping with his account, and true to our experience as well, that what really strikes the lover as beautiful is the embodied person ready for action.[35] Even if we catch sight of him just sitting there, staring vacantly into space, we immediately imagine how he *would* move, what he *would* do. (He isn't staring vacantly; he's pensive!) And the aesthetic evaluation of action comes much closer to a moral one. We look with admiration at people whose actions are graceful, appropriate, and (to follow the Greek way of looking) manly. If we ourselves are good people, it is virtuous actions—and the people who look like they would do them—that will strike us as beautiful.[36] On the other
p. 51 hand, if we ↳ are more attracted to the 'nutritive' beauty of a youthful glow than to the beauty of a body ready to act or if the body in action that arouses us is behaving in a way that is profligate, haughty, or brutal, then that is a sign of moral disorder in our own souls.

This raises another important point. I have just suggested that our experience of beauty is determined in part by our own moral character. However, we should distinguish a person's experience of something as beautiful and its genuine beauty. Genuine beauty is an objective quality on Plato's account. It is the splendour of a thing's goodness showing itself to a spectator. But a good-and-beautiful thing may not look beautiful to the particular people we are if we occupy 'a perspective that is not beautiful' (τὴν οὐκ ἐκ καλοῦ θέαν, *Sophist* 236 B 4–5). That is to say—and this is a point Plato relies on in his idea that the astonished experience of human beauty is a first step in moral development—seeing someone genuinely beautiful *as* beautiful is itself a moral accomplishment. And on the other hand, it is possible to create a false appearance of beauty.[37] So it is no implication of Plato's conception of beauty that the experience of someone as beautiful is an infallible guide to his goodness.

Still, we may be less concerned about the bad boys who look so fine than we are by the decent ones who do not. Plato's emphasis on the visible manifestation of goodness in the beautiful body may seem to suggest that people who are not good-looking are somehow morally deficient. I doubt that this concern can be or should be entirely alleviated, even if we accept the argument I have been making that, on Plato's view, we should always maintain some scepticism about the correctness of our or our culture's aesthetic preferences. I argued in the section above that all human souls are actively, though imperfectly, godlike; this means that in some degree everyone is good, a view that harmonizes with Socrates's claim in the *Republic* that the good is the cause of being (6, 509 B). But if we conclude on this basis that everyone is genuinely beautiful to
p. 52 behold, we risk stretching the conception of beauty to meaninglessness. ↳ Through no fault of their own, the bodies of the diseased, the famished, the fatigued, the old, and—shocking to say—the poor often do not look good and that does not seem to be the distortion of our point of view. We do not for this reason deny their dignity or lovability. Is this not sufficient reason to abandon the Platonic project of linking moral goodness to beauty?

The possibility that there may be people who are in no way beautiful, whose sensible presence is not of a sort to be attractive, is chilling. Moral theories that deny the importance of human beauty therefore risk ignoring the importance of our embodied presence to each other. Plato's conception of beauty has the advantage of making good this felt significance, for it amounts to saying that there may be people whose sensible presence is not of a sort to manifest their worthiness to be loved. So it is worth remembering that there are senses other than sight. Plato's hero, Socrates, was notoriously ugly to look at.[38] Plato insists nevertheless that he radiated beauty, audible beauty. In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades compares Socrates to the *aulos*-playing Silenus, who is ugly on the outside, but whose intoxicating 'melodies' (ὑπὸ τῶν αὐλημάτων, 216 C 4) reveal the 'divine, golden, completely beautiful, amazing' statues within (τὰ ἐντὸς ἀγάλματα … θεῖα καὶ χρυσᾶ καὶ πάγκαλα καὶ θαυμαστά, 216 E 6–217 A 1). Human beauty flashes out not only through the visible body but also through conversation, a point that is surely important in the *Phaedrus* too, a dialogue whose overarching theme is the competing claims of rhetoric and philosophy to be practices of beautiful speech.[39] Beautiful souls who do not manifest themselves visibly may shine through the—perhaps superior—medium of *logos*.

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3. The good of love

After their initial encounter, the lover begins to adorn the beloved and sharpen the divine image in him. Followers of Zeus fall in love with young men who are naturally philosophical and then engage in conversations to draw out that innate ability. Followers of Hera, by contrast, love kingly young men and then do what they can to nurture their ability to rule (*Phdr.* 252 D–253 C). Socrates is here elaborating in a remarkable way the conventional belief that lovers benefit their beloveds by educating them. In his telling, loving education is a complex dance of imitating and counter-imitating. The follower of Zeus, for example, sees the image of the philosophical Zeus in the young man and immediately begins to practise philosophy himself, if he does not already. In other words, the lover's immediate reaction to seeing the splendid god in the young man is imitation. ('There is no way someone could consort with and wonder at another person without imitating him', *Republic* 6, 500 C 6–7.[40]) But it is also true that mirroring the divine image in the beloved causes the beloved in turn to mirror the god more faithfully, with the result that the lover is able to see the god more clearly. It is as if the lover seeks to ingratiate himself with the Zeus-in-the-young-man by engaging him in philosophical conversation and the young man, precisely because he *is*, unbeknownst to himself, an icon of Zeus, responds by acting more like Zeus than he had been before. (If the divine image is brought out in him through conversation, does the lover *see* it or does he rather *hear* it?) The young man for his part sees the mirror image of himself in the lover—that is to say, he sees the image of the god and of beauty—and is himself struck with love (*Phdr.* 255 C–E). The result is that he too begins to mirror this image. On Socrates' account, then, the education effected through love is not so much a conscious effort on the part of the lover as the spontaneous effect of the dynamics of imitation. Imitation is both a response to seeing beauty and a way of getting the beautiful young man to show himself more clearly by giving him an image of himself which he in turn will emulate. It is as if Socrates' lover says to the beloved young man to
p. 54 whom his ↳ Palinode is addressed, 'Let me show you what you are so that you can more perfectly be and show me what you are and, thereby, that I may see what you are more clearly.' Love is an eye disease, Socrates says, whose happy result is a virtuous cycle of ever more perfect godlikeness.

I want to try to say more plainly why in Socrates' view the look of love is so important, perhaps necessary, for moral development. Let's begin with the lover. The more he is doused with the outpouring stream of beauty in the young man, the more he is reminded of and nourished by the sight of the form of beauty which fed him in his prior, disembodied life. The benefit he receives from seeing the beautiful young man, then, is a certain kind of knowledge or more accurately remembering. Could he not be equally benefited by the image of beauty in anything else? The *Phaedrus* encourages us to ask this question, since Socrates both responds ecstatically to the beauty of the countryside through which he and Phaedrus walk and insists that it has nothing to teach him (230 B–D). Why does this landscape not serve the purpose of reminding him of the forms just as well as a beautiful human being? Immediately before this passage, Socrates has declared that he has no interest in learning about anything else until first he learns what he himself is (230 A). Could the idea be that seeing *human* beauty gives us self-knowledge?

It seems to me that it does, at least according to Socrates' account. The beloved's beauty is the blazing forth of his likeness to the god and the lover is by his own nature just as much an image of that god as is the young man. So in seeing the beloved's beauty the lover sees the specifically psychic ideal which constitutes his own nature as a godlike soul. Indeed, because the beloved's beauty is literally visible, it attracts his attention even in that very element of his soul (the bad horse) which tends to drag our souls away from intelligible nourishment and towards somatic appearance. The lover had forgotten that he was a follower of an ideal better than himself and had forgotten what that ideal was; in seeing the young man he is reminded. The memory is not at first comfortable—Socrates says that at first the charioteer falls back in *fear* (251 A, 254 B) —not only reminding him of his essential deficiency, but implying as it does how much further still he has
p. 55 fallen short.[41] It takes the painful ↳ sprouting of wings and the insistent lust of the bad horse to push him

to find a way of enduring the boy's presence. By contrast, a beautiful flowering tree or babbling brook might remind him of the form of beauty, but it would not remind him of the way of participating in beauty or any other virtuous form that is characteristic of soul, nor would he feel its splendour as a rebuke and a call to himself.

From a practical point of view, this is exceedingly important. Although my soul may swell with longing to imitate the beauty of a flowering tree, I do not have the first idea how to go about doing that. Indeed, I may be at such a loss as to doubt whether it is even appropriate to me to try. Perhaps the splendour I see shining out through a tree is so much better than my own nature that I should hold myself to a lesser ideal. As a matter of practical reason, it is not enough simply to recognize that there is an ideal manner of being. It must be the case that the ideal is *mine*, one appropriate and conceivable for me to pursue. This is something the lover gains through the apprehension of the beloved's beauty. He sees that the divine form of life is one in which human beings participate. It is a practical ideal *for* things like him and it is not utterly mysterious what it takes to live up to it.

Plato's anthropology according to which we are images is crucial to understanding why he thinks moral development requires recognizing human beauty. In this experience, our natural striving to be better than what we are takes a more specific and practicable direction.

I have offered a suggestion as to why it is so important to see human beauty. But we may wonder whether the good of love could not be achieved equally well by seeing godlike beauty in myself. Could not the look of love be narcissistic? Interestingly, Plotinus suggests as much, when he exhorts us to be better than Narcissus, looking not at the external, sensible reflection of ourselves, but rather within ourselves (*Ennead* 1. 6. 8). I am not sure that anything I have said rules out this possibility. But there is a distinct advantage in Socrates' claim that the lover wonders in the beauty of someone other than himself. The lover gazes at
p. 56 beauty from the standpoint of need. That is to say, although he is an image of god ↳ and thus inhabits the bizarre territory of neither being nor not being the god, his love springs from the fact that he falls short of the ideal. (In the *Symposium*, Socrates makes this point by saying that love is a desire and therefore a lack, 200 E.) The ideal is appropriate to him, but he does not yet embody it, at least not fully. This is precisely what the lover recognizes when he is struck by love: the happy life is something other than the life he is presently leading. This is why lovers look like madmen, altering their ordinary patterns of behaviour. The good which love gives to the lover is the knowledge of oneself as something *other* than oneself. Less paradoxically stated, the lover sees that the good human life is something other than the life he currently leads. Since the experience of beauty is the experience of the *presence* of the ideal rather than its *absence*, it is hard if not impossible to see how contemplating one's own beauty could ever provide the benefit of ethical reorientation.

Socrates does find a place for narcissistic looking, however. The beloved falls in love with an image of himself, though allegedly he does not realize this. The narcissistic gaze is invoked to explain the goodness of love not for the lover, but for the beloved. This leads to the question of what the beloved gets out of being looked at with love. Socrates' official answer to this question is that the beloved gets the very same thing the lover gets. He sees an image of godlike beauty in the lover—the image is an image of his own beauty to be sure, but it is beautiful nonetheless—and so he receives all the benefits of seeing beauty in another. One appealing feature of this account is that it explains why *erōs* tends to be reciprocal (at least so we think nowadays).[42] The idea would be that loving makes lovers beautiful and thus worthy objects of love. But correct and appealing as this answer may be, it does not really explain why it is good for the beloved *as such* to be loved. It only explains the goodness of being loved by transforming the beloved into a lover.

I think Socrates does suggest an answer, however, if we take into account the rhetorical context in which the speech is given. Recall that Socrates is trying to persuade a beautiful young man to give his favours to someone who loves him, rather than to the non-lover (244 A). It is a seduction speech. Now it is quite

p. 57 unlikely that this ↳ speech will succeed if all Socrates has to offer is the promise that soon the young man will fall in love with the lover. The lover in the conventional scheme of things is old and not particularly attractive. It would be embarrassing to end up pouring love in his direction, even if we insist that what the young man loves is an image of himself. No, if Socrates' Palinode seduces the young man to whom it is addressed, then it does so for a rather different reason. What the lover has told him is: 'I just want to look at you, you are so beautiful! I can see from your face and bearing and mode of life that you used to be an attendant of the gods, indeed an attendant of Zeus! If you share your life with me, I will make you better, but your godlikeness is something I can see is present in you right here and now. That is why the sight of you is driving me crazy!' What seduces the young man, I propose, is simply that he is seen as beautiful. The non-lover may find him sexy, but only the lover sees the blazing presence of the god.

So far as I know, Plato does not ever claim that we need to be recognized as beautiful. Perhaps he is misled by his assumption that insofar as someone is beautiful and an object of love, he is—to that extent—perfect and has no needs. (See the *Symposium* 202 C–D.) Ergo the beautiful beloved *as such* has no need to be seen as what in fact he is. This line of reasoning may hold for a perfect soul, but we are now considering the beautiful *human* object of love. The beloved is an image of god, something which by nature falls short of the ideal with reference to which he is constituted. This is so even if his beauty reveals that he participates in that ideal as well. My point is that any human beloved will be lacking; the question is whether being seen as beautiful can in any way fill that lack.

If we look to the *Lysis*, we see Socrates advising Hippothales to quit writing adulatory love poems and learn the art of refutation. You don't win a young man by praising him but rather by cutting him down to size (206 A, 210 E). Sage advice, up to a point. If your beloved already has a healthy sense of his inadequacy, it is less obvious how useful this advice will be. As images, we all discover sooner or later that we are not as good as we pretend or hope to be. Whereas the soon-to-be lover's problem was complacency (he did not yet realize that happiness is a transcendent ideal), this soon-to-be beloved's problem is despair. (All the more so for the beloved in Socrates' story, a teenager who has yet to accomplish much of anything beyond the bloom of
p. 58 youth.) He knows that he ought to ↳ be better than he is, but the standard is so demanding that he likely will never attain it fully no matter how hard he tries. Why, then, try at all?

This despairing attitude is a failure of self-knowledge as surely as complacency is. If we are images, and especially if we are beautiful images, then we already are succeeding to some degree in being like the divine paradigm. Our being is *already* constituted by reference to the ideal. This self-recognition is what the beloved receives when his lover looks at him with the look of love.

The look of love—seeing another person as beautiful—is good both to give and to receive. It is good to give—or rather, to have happen to us—because the human ideal is other than and better than what we currently are. We need to be recalled to the otherness of an ideal properly our own in order to aspire to it. It is good to receive the look of love because the human ideal is also what we most truly are. In fact, to the extent that the word 'ideal' suggests a norm whose actual realization is entirely an open question, it is not an ideal at all. The good is already active within us, ordering us and making us (approximately) good. This is what the lover sees in his beloved when he sees him as a beautiful idol. For those of us who are bewildered because our sense of how to live has been refuted—by an argument or by life itself—the look of love helps us know that we are already something marvellous.

The Palinode is a story about recollection, but unlike the account of recollection in the *Phaedo*, in which recollection may be occasioned by *anything* sensible that participates in *any* form, the *Phaedrus* is a story about recollection that is occasioned by the sensible image of Beauty in a human being. This is efficacious of moral development because it brings with it self-knowledge of a sort not usually emphasized by Plato: knowledge of ourselves, not as the deficient creatures that we are, but knowledge of the ideal self in which

we already participate and which we may more fully realize, a self harmoniously ordered by a rational part that is well-nourished by knowledge of reality.

If we adopt Plato's anthropology or something like it, moral development is a matter of approximating ever more closely an ideal that in fact and perhaps (as Plato seems to think) inevitably transcends us. For this, we need both outrageous aspiration and good cheer. We get them out of seeing and being seen as beautiful.

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Appendix Does It Matter Whether Socrates is Talking About What We Call Love?

Is Plato really interested in giving an account of love at all? Many people have found the mythic accounts in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* to fail egregiously as accounts of love. There are two principal lines of complaint: (1) Plato analyses love as a response to beauty in the beloved, but some people object to the very idea of defining love as a response to a quality in the beloved that might in principle be instantiated by someone else. (2) Plato spends a great deal of time explaining why love is good for the lover—indeed, in the *Symposium* love just is a modification of the universal desire for one's own good. But, some people object, love is essentially a source of altruistic reasons and an account such as Plato's that ruminates exclusively on what the lover gets out of it is blinded to what is most characteristic of it.

Now, my concern in this paper has been to understand why Plato thinks the apprehension of beauty in another human being—the beauty of their body and, more important, the beauty of their character—is crucial for moral development. The explanation I have given is one I could offer without taking a stand on whether he is right about the nature of love or indeed without mentioning love at all. But it seems to me that Socrates' principal—perhaps his *only* explicit—argument in favour of his view is that it fits the phenomenon we call love. That is to say, if someone were to ask, 'Why think that this is why beauty is morally important?', the answer would be, 'Isn't that what it's like to love and be loved?' For this reason, I cannot ultimately sidestep the question of whether Socrates is giving an account of what we call love.

I cannot provide a complete discussion of this topic, but I would like at least to loosen the grip of the modern assumption that self-interestedness has no part to play in the attitude of love. First, I appeal to your own experience of love. When we fall in love, it does not seem like mere good luck if that improves the quality of our life. This is just what we expect love to be like. Yes, love hurts sometimes. But this is experienced as a disappointment of love's initial promise and is generally taken to be a sign that something has gone wrong in the love relation itself. The fact that destructive love calls for special explanation is, I think, an indication of our assumption that love is essentially good for the lover. By contrast, destructive enmity, enmity that harms the hater—or productive enmity, for that matter—needs no special explanation. If this is correct, then it is entirely appropriate for philosophers to ask what the good is which love provides and whether there is anything special about the way that lovers as such pursue it.

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In fact, and this is my second effort to loosen the modern orthodoxy, there is great philosophical interest in the question what is special about the way lovers pursue their own good. Although in the *Phaedrus* Socrates emphasizes the fact that the 'madness' of love benefits the lover, he plainly believes that it benefits the beloved as well. After all, this speech is presented as a seduction speech intended to persuade a beautiful young man to give his favours to someone who loves him. Like any good deliberative orator, Socrates takes it for granted that he must show the young man how going with the lover will be good for him, the beloved. The reason Socrates spends so much time showing that love benefits the lover is that, in addition to being a piece of seduction, his speech is also part of a contest. He is answering a previous speech given by a non-lover (or by a lover pretending to be a non-lover) who argued that the young man should instead give his favours to someone who does *not* love him.[43] The non-lover's argument is interesting for our purposes. His basic point is that the lover is insane; the lover's lust has made him lose all concern for his own—that is the lover's—well-being. Such a person is fundamentally untrustworthy; not caring for his own affairs, he has

no clear view of the beloved's true interest either. He may promise his beloved all sorts of things the beloved fancies, but as soon as he snaps out of his erotic madness, he will regret his promises. Notice that Plato presents both non-lover and beautiful young man as assuming that that it is the height of foolishness to enter a relationship with another person unless that other person is motivated by a desire for his own good. Pursuing one's own good is simply a matter of psychic health. If the lover truly suffers the *disease* of love, as one of the conventional *topoi* would have it, then all things being equal the beautiful young man would be wise to flee. Presumably, beautiful beloveds did not typically flee their lovers. But that does not belie the point I am making. At least among elite circles, it seems to have been taken for granted that all things were *not* equal. It was supposed that in principle pederasty could perform a socializing and educational function. But the moral-social improvement of the beloved was not so much a goal intrinsic to the very nature of love as an effect that might in the right circumstances be expected. It took some degree of social control—the watchful eye of the young man's relatives, the threat of shame—to ensure that the crazed attentions of the lover really did benefit his beloved. The conventional view seems to have been that the beloved and his relatives could make use of love, but that love itself was not reliably oriented to providing this benefit. The
p. 61 non-lover in the *Phaedrus* is able to make use of the merely contingent relation between ↳ *erōs* and benefit to the beloved. He argues that the benefit is not very reliable and that he, the sane and self-controlled non-lover is a better bet.

Socrates' response is to argue that although, in a way, love is a kind of madness, it is the madness of coming to one's true senses. In brief, what Socrates' lover says is: 'My love, I don't want sex. I just want to look at you and to help you become even more beautiful than you already are so that I can go on looking at you! Looking at you drives me wild, but it is the very best thing that could ever have happened to me!' The great innovation of Socrates' Palinode is that it recasts what had traditionally (at least according to one train of thought) been considered an unhealthy (for the lover) but potentially useful (to the young man, to society) obsession as a passion that essentially benefits lover and beloved alike.

From a Platonic point of view, the moral significance of love lies not in its being a source of altruistic reasons. Rather, it is significant because it *harmonizes* the interests of lover and beloved. Love is a manner of desiring and pursuing my own good that benefits another person too. Although love characteristically leads one to benefit the beloved (or at least to try to give the beloved what he wants), the essence of love is not this desire or disposition so much as it is the desire for or disposition to intercourse with the beloved: spending time together, touching, and in the case of romantic love, sex. Love is, in other words, the desire for community and its moral significance lies in this fact. From this point of view, our modern emphasis on love's desire to benefit the beloved distorts our vision by showing only part of the picture. The relevant question for philosophy is not how the lover finds reason to subordinate his own interests to those of his beloved, but rather how their pursuit of the good for themselves is something they undertake in common.

I want to emphasize this point. It is often pointed out that *philia*, friendship, is the Greek name for a relationship of reciprocal loving. *Erōs* by contrast, is not expected to be a reciprocal relation. The *erastēs*, a man in his prime, desires the younger, beautiful *erōmenos*, but does not expect to be desired in return (and might even be scandalized if he were). But the fact that *erōs* does not ideally expect to be returned *in kind* does not imply that *erōs* does not aim for contact and relationship. At least as long as his passion persists, the *erastēs* wants to spend his time with the beloved. The good he seeks—sex? something else? (as Socrates believes)—is inherent simply in being together and he understands full well that the beloved will not hang around unless there is something in it for him too. The harmonization of interests of the lover and beloved may be different in kind from that found in *philia*, but it is a (socially and philosophically) important aspect of the experience nonetheless. Socrates' famous Palinode in the *Phaedrus* is dedicated to explaining precisely this. Through an elaborate myth of the human soul and its place in the cosmos, Socrates tries to
p. 62 show that the good pursued by the lover gives him reason to promote the true ↳ well-being of the beloved. Love aligns the interests of lover and beloved essentially, not merely contingently.

I have not yet said anything about what is special in the way that love harmonizes the lover's and beloved's pursuit of their good. Contractual relations are a way of harmonizing the interests of free people; is that the sort of harmonization characteristic of friendship and love? We might be inclined to think not, though it is worth remarking that in the Bible the exemplary forms of love—God's love for his people and the love between a husband and wife—centrally involve contracts, though of course there is more to it than that.[44] I mention this not to advocate for any particular view, but rather to demonstrate that the question how love harmonizes the lover's and beloved's pursuit of their own good—whether, indeed, there is only one form of loving harmonization—is a topic of great philosophical and moral significance. But we can take it up only if we first acknowledge that love is good for the lover and that our impulse to love is a manifestation of our more general impulse to what is good for us.

I don't have anything to say about what the specifically erotic form of harmonization is. My task has been the more narrow one of explaining what, in Plato's view, the lover gets out of seeing the beloved's beauty; and also why it is good for the beloved to be seen in this way. In a proper treatment of love, the questions of what benefits love provides and the special manner of its doing so would likely be connected. I suspect that Socrates's Palinode is not ultimately adequate as an account of the nature of love. But for my purposes—understanding the moral significance of human beauty—it is enough if we can agree that seeing another person as good for me is not in itself antithetical to the look of love.

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Notes

1 The Greek is taken from the most current OCT editions, and all translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

2 I have chosen to refer to the *erōmenos* (the beloved) as ‘the young man’ rather than as ‘the boy’, as it is common in scholarship to call him. In part, this is a more accurate translation. Although the *erōmenos* is called a *pais* or ‘boy’, this is an ambiguous term which may refer to a young child, a fully grown teenager, or any age in between (K. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) at 85–6). Socrates disambiguates at the beginning of his first speech in the *Phaedrus*: ‘Once there was a *pais*, or rather a *meirakiskos*’ (ἦν οὕτω δὴ παῖς, μᾶλλον δὲ μειρακίσκος), i.e. a boy in the eighteen-/nineteen-year-old age class, the class taking the first steps towards manhood (237 B 2; cf. H. Yunis, *Plato:* Phaedrus (Cambridge, Mass., 2011) at 112 ad loc.; J. Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love* [*Greek Love*] (New York, 2007) at 97). Admittedly, my translation implies an anachronism, insofar as it may suggest that the beloved is a man *as opposed to* an adolescent. He was not. The *erōmenos* is in a decidedly younger age set than the *erastēs* (the lover). There is reason also to think that he was physically adolescent, since the Greeks went through puberty later than people do now (Davidson, *Greek Love*, 92–3). There is no avoiding the uncomfortable fact that, in the Greek imagination, erotic attraction is not excited by a person one regards as a peer. Nevertheless, Plato is not talking about sexual attraction to children and I do not want to suggest that he is by using the English word ‘boy’. This is especially important in a work of philosophical scholarship that attempts to make Plato’s views plausible.

3 ψυχὴ πᾶσα, i.e. all soul or every soul. Either way, his point is to refer to soul as a whole, i.e. to the genus which he is hereby collecting (cf. M. Burnyeat, ‘The Passion of Reason in Plato’s *Phaedrus*’ [‘The Passion of Reason’], in id., *Explorations in*

Ancient and Modern Philosophy (Cambridge, 2012), ii. 238–58 at 243–4). He is in other words engaging in the first step of dialectic (265 D).

4 Reading πᾶσάν τε γένεσιν at 245 E 1, with BT. Alternatively, 'all the heavens and the whole earth' (πάντα τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσάν τε γῆν). Notice that here and in the image which follows, Socrates presents the business of moving body simply as something soul does; it is a given aspect of soul's nature. There is no suggestion that any soul—divine or human—might decide to spend all its time contemplating forms and never descend to its cosmic task.

5 I say only certain animals, since at 249 B he says that some but not all animals are ensouled by undisciplined human souls. Are the other animals animated by divine soul or by another sort of soul entirely, one which has 'never seen the truth' (μήποτε ἰδοῦσα τὴν ἀλήθειαν, 249 B 5–6)?

6 It is unclear whether divine souls should be imagined as having two horses or only one or perhaps four. At 246 A 7, when Socrates first introduces this image of soul, he suggests that all souls are composed of a charioteer and 'a winged team' of horses (ζεῦγος). A few lines later, when he distinguishes human souls from divine souls, his first point is that our charioteer must command a 'pair of horses' (συνωρίς, 246 B 2), implying that the gods' charioteer drives either fewer or more than two. Presumably Plato is drawn in two directions by the differing logics of the image and what it signifies: the gods' souls shouldn't have fewer horses than ours, because then they would be less powerful; but since they have only one (good) kind of motive principle, there is no need for more than one horse to represent it. See Burnyeat, 'The Passion of Reason', at 244 n. 7 and S. Obdrzalek, 'Contemplation and Self-Mastery in Plato's *Phaedrus*' ['Contemplation'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 42 (2012), 77–107 at 89 n. 23 for discussion.

7 It is tempting to interpret the trio of charioteer, good horse, and bad horse as equivalent to the tri-partition of the soul found in the *Republic* into reason, spirit, and appetite. However, in the *Republic*, Socrates is interested only in human souls, and he develops his psychology on the basis of a comparison to a city. It is not clear that this political analogy would do an equally good job of revealing the parts of a divine soul, which the charioteer image of the *Phaedrus* is explicitly meant to do. (For example, does it make sense to imagine divine souls as having a spirited element, when in the *Republic* spirit's function is to be reason's 'ally' in 'fighting' against appetite, a part of the soul which gods in the *Phaedrus* do not have?) So even if the two psychological theories are ultimately coherent, as I suspect they are, we should not simply use now-standard interpretations of the *Republic*'s tripartite psychology (such as that found in John Cooper's seminal paper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 1 (1984), 3–21) as a key for interpreting Socrates' image of the soul in the *Phaedrus*. That image must be interpreted on its own terms first.

8 Although Socrates seems not to think of them as a separate element on a par with the charioteer and two horses, since at 253 C 7–D 1 he claims to have divided the soul into *three* not four. Perhaps this is because the wings can be lost, but the other elements cannot be?

9 Obdrzalek, 'Contemplation' follows Chapter 3 of J. Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* [*Platonic Ethics*] (Ithaca, NY, 1999) in seeing these two rational activities as potentially in conflict, giving rise to a tragic predicament. But I see no sign of any conflict between charioteer and wings in the *Phaedrus*. On the contrary, healthy wings—which I have interpreted as the intuitive desire for the intelligible reality of the forms—make it possible for the charioteer to direct the whole soul in whatever direction he chooses, whether that be to contemplation or to the task of directing body. To put it another way, it is because it is 'lifted up' by wings that the charioteer is able to command the lower parts of the soul (and thus the body) rather than being 'pushed off course' by them.

10 This may coincide with the *Republic*'s conception of spiritedness. There, Socrates says that most people conceive of the *kalon* as what expresses the subordination of the bestial to the human or divine (9, 589 C–D). That is to say, they associate the *kalon* with the masterfulness of what is naturally superior. If the spirited part of the soul is especially concerned with the *kalon*, then this is as much as to say that it is especially attracted to what is naturally and appropriately masterful. R. Singpurwalla, 'Why Spirit is the Natural Ally of Reason: Spirit, Reason, and the Fine in Plato's *Republic*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 44 (2013), 41–65, argues that it is for this reason that spirit is the natural ally of reason.
There is another reason to associate the good horse with the *Republic*'s spirited part of the soul: it is a 'lover of honour with self-restraint and shame' (τιμῆς ἐραστὴς μετὰ σωφροσύνης τε καὶ αἰδοῦς, 253 D 6). See Obdrzalek, 'Contemplation' for further discussion.

11 By contrast with the good horse, who is 'a companion of true reputation' (ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἑταῖρος, 253 D 7).

12 I am in other words interpreting separation from the body in the way suggested by 'evaluative' readings of the *Phaedo*, according to which the point concerns whether our evaluative attitudes are undisturbed by our bodies (R. Woolf, 'The Practice of a Philosopher', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 26 (2004), 97–129). The possible difference between the two dialogues would be that in the *Phaedrus* it is possible for certain souls, viz. divine ones, to be connected to bodies without being disturbed by them, whereas in the *Phaedo* this is perhaps not the case (66 B).

13 *Contra* Burnyeat, 'The Passion of Reason', at 245, who takes the isomorphism of divine and human soul to indicate that our bad horses were at one point good.

14 *Timaeus* 67 D–E. Cf. Aristotle's distinction in *Parts of Animals* 1. 4 between analogous differentia that establish 'distance' between kinds (e.g. feathers vs. scales) and differentia that are a matter of 'more and less' (e.g. longer feathers vs. shorter feathers) which distinguish different species of the same kind.

15 Recently the claim that Socrates performs a collection and division of pleasure in the *Philebus* has come under attack (see e.g. E. Fletcher, 'The Divine Method and the Disunity of Pleasure in the *Philebus*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 55 (2017), 179–208). I cannot discuss this question in the detail it deserves here, but I would like to suggest it cannot be fully settled until we confront Plato's propensity to treat paradigm, copy, and mere appearance all as members of the same kind, e.g. Socrates treats the form of the couch, the crafted couch, and the painted couch as 'three kinds of couches' (*Republic* 10, 597 B), although we would be inclined to say that a painted couch isn't a couch at all, but only a representation of one.

16 It may be helpful to consider a distinction A. Ford, 'Action and Generality', in A. Ford et al. (eds.), *Essays on Anscombe's Intention* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 76–104, makes among three genus-species relations: (1) 'accidental species', which are to be analysed in terms of a common genus and independently knowable attributes; (2) 'categorical species', whose differentia cannot be articulated without presupposing knowledge of the species in question; and (3) 'essential species', such as pure gold, which are definitive of their genus. The *Phaedrus*' idea that humans differ from gods in the quality of one of their 'horses' and the *Timaeus*' idea that humans differ from gods by being made of deficient soul-stuff both suggest that gods, by being 'pure souls', are what Ford calls an 'essential species' of the genus soul.

17 An exception is D. Sedley, 'The Ideal of Godlikeness', in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul* (New York, 1999), 309–28, who explains that the literalness of the advice to become as much like god as possible is grounded in the fact that (according to Timaeus) the gods and our rational soul are made of the same stuff. However, Sedley's project is to show that *homoiōsis theōi* (*kata ton dunaton*) is the Platonic *telos*, a state to which we should return; he does not emphasize that 'becoming godlike' is also an account of what we already are. As will become clear below, I agree that 'becoming like god so far as possible' is the ethical *telos*, according to Plato. This aspect of his ethical theory is emphasized in the *Theaetetus*, when Socrates councils Theaetetus to escape the evils of human life by becoming as much like god as possible (176 A–C). It is suggested also in the *Republic*, when the philosopher-kings are described as like sculptors fashioning citizens (via eugenics and musical education) into 'the divine form and likeness' (6, 501 B). However, these passages do not make clear what I think is highlighted in the *Phaedrus* (and also the *Timaeus*): the advice to become as godlike as possible is not (*contra* Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, at 53, 57–8) a recommendation to transform ourselves into something other than what we already are.

18 The approach in the *Timaeus* is similar, but more complicated: our rational part is made by the Demiurge from leftovers of the very same ingredients from which he made divine souls (41 D); the mortal parts of our soul are made by the gods in an act of creation that is itself an imitation of the Demiurge's model of soul-craft (41 C, 42 E, 69 C); and the whole human soul —rational and non-rational parts alike—leads a life that is ideally an imitation of the divine, embodied world soul and cosmic souls. See G. Betegh, 'Plato on Illness in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and the *Timaeus*' ['Illness'] in C. Jorgenson, F. Karfík, and S. Spinka (eds.), *Plato's* Timaeus, Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium Platonicum Pragense (Leiden, forthcoming), for discussion of the last point in particular.

19 Kant's conception of rational personhood differs significantly from Plato's in ways that may affect one's views about which phenomenal experience constitutes recognition of humanity in another person. See S. Buss, 'Respect for Persons', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 29 (1999), 517–50, for an interesting account, inspired by but differing from Kant, that gives this phenomenal role to shame. Her idea is that when we feel ashamed, we experience the other person as having a certain moral standing (as occupying a perspective from which our own moral worth may legitimately be judged); we experience them as having that standing, even if we also believe that their own moral failures prevent them from seeing us truly.

20 Obdrzalek ('Contemplation', 92) astutely points out the parallelism between the gods' activity of ordering and the lover's ordering of the beloved young man. But what is the divine activity of ordering? She seems to believe it is primarily (or exclusively?) an activity of *self*-ordering; for this reason, she interprets the lover's treatment of the beloved as an *externalization* of the divine activity of self-care. However, although divine charioteers do care for their horses, what they are described as *ordering* is the cosmos. So if there is any externalizing of self-care, it is something the gods do too. The lover's activity is *mimesis* of the divine. This parallelism casts doubt on Obdrzalek's argument that, in the *Phaedrus* as in the *Republic*, only human beings are torn between the good of eternal contemplation and the need to order something else (whether it be lower parts of the soul or the city). The gods' activity of directing the heavenly bodies ought to be as much a 'descent' as is the philosopher-kings' activity of governing Kallipolis. However, there is no suggestion in the *Phaedrus* that the gods resent their lot or that they would rather contemplate forms all the time. (In this respect, Plato's picture of divine soul anticipates the account in the *Timaeus* of the world soul and cosmic gods, who lead tranquil, embodied lives of contemplation (see Betegh, 'Illness'). Plato treats as given that moving body is what soul does, needing no further explanation or justification (see n. 3). Socrates' depiction of the lover may suggest, however, a reason why

divine souls decide, in moving the heavens, to *order* them into a *kosmos* (and why philosopher-kings decide to order the city): the gods imitate the forms because, like human lovers, they cannot help but imitate what they marvel in (cf. *Republic* 500 C).

21 Similarly, at *Symposium* 206 D beauty is compared to Eileithuia, the goddess of childbirth, because being in its (quasi-divine?) presence causes the 'pregnant' lover to 'give birth'.

22 T. Irwin, 'The Sense and Reference of *kalon* in Aristotle', *Classical Philology*, 105 (2010), 381–96 at 395–6.

23 D. Konstan, *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Idea* (New York, 2014).

24 How do we know that, in the *Phaedrus*, there is such a thing as intelligible beauty/splendour? We can tell by examining Socrates' description of the way disembodied souls are affected by the form of *kallos*. It, like all the forms, is radiant *to behold*. Since the beholding in question is a disembodied beholding, the radiance in question must be a purely intelligible radiance. Likewise, when we say that the (Platonic) gods are beautiful, we refer to a beauty their souls manifest directly to intellect, not to the senses via whatever body they direct. There are many questions one might raise about the coherence of the idea of 'intelligible radiance' or 'intelligible appearing', which I cannot address here. But I agree with A. Kosman, 'Beauty and the Good: Situating the *kalon*' ['Beauty'], *Classical Philology*, 105 (2010), 341–57 at 354–5 that the first step is an investigation of Plato's conception of appearing and its relation to being.

25 As Kosman ('Beauty', 355) says: 'the *kalon* … is the splendid virtue of appearance'.

26 *Contra* Obdrzalek, 'Contemplation'. *Contra* C. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's* Phaedrus (New Haven, 1986), godlikeness is as much a feature of the young man's visible body as his beauty is.

27 In J. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* [*Complete Works*] (Indianapolis, 1997).

28 64 E 5–7: νῦν δὴ καταπέφευγεν ἡμῖν ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δύναμις εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν· μετριότης γὰρ καὶ συμμετρία κάλλος δήπου καὶ ἀρετὴ πανταχοῦ συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι.

29 See G. Lear, 'Plato on Learning to Love Beauty' ['Learning'], in G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's* Republic (Malden, MA, 2006), 104–24, for further discussion of the *kalon* in the *Republic*. The close association between the beautiful and the good raises the question of their difference. I attempt to address that question in G. Lear, 'Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's *Symposium*', in J. Lesher et al. (eds.), *Plato's* Symposium: *Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 96–123.

30 Note also *Philebus* 65 E–66 A, which suggests that beauty is associated with the way things appear: Socrates asks Protarchus to determine which of knowledge and pleasure is more beautiful and Protarchus says that knowledge is beautiful by contrast with pleasures, which are 'ridiculous' and which we try to 'hide'. G. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's* Phaedrus [*Listening*] (Cambridge, 1990) at 146 interprets the 'brightness' of beauty as the fact that a beautiful thing 'announces itself … as an object of concern'. My interpretation is similar in that I, too, read Plato as saying that beautiful things catch our attention with their (apparent) perfection, but whereas Ferrari emphasizes the effect beauty has on our 'concerns', I read brightness as in the first instance a cognitive metaphor.

31 Socrates seems to equate a well-ordered soul with a virtuous one in the *Phaedrus* at 256 B.

32 We should not think that the experience of shining perfection must involve a grasp of what it is about the beautiful person that is (or appears to be) good. The young man 'looks good', but it is not part of the content of that experience that he looks like someone with a well-ordered soul. Rather, the experience of someone as beautiful shapes our intuitive sense of what goodness 'looks like' and may, if we are philosophical, prompt us to inquire into its basis (Lear, 'Learning').

33 As Ferrari, *Listening* at 169–72 has pointed out, Socrates seems here to be conflating what, in the *Symposium*, he treats as distinct stages: attraction to a beautiful body and attraction to a beautiful soul.

34 Plato may even think that shaping the body is but one way the functional goodness of soul manifests itself, one way it 'shines'.

35 I thank Elizabeth Asmis for suggesting to me that the paradigmatically en-souled body is the body in action. I was at first inclined to say that the acting body is *more* likely to strike us with its beauty than the body in repose, but then a friend pointed out to me that the centuries-old tradition of painting nudes belies that claim. I have here tried to retain what I take to be the truth in Asmis's point, while accommodating the testimony of art.

36 See A. Nehamas, 'Beauty of Body, Nobility of Soul: The Pursuit of Love in Plato's *Symposium*', in D. Scott (ed.), *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford, 2007), 97–134 at 102–7 for discussion of the way aesthetic experience has social and ethical overtones. Cf. *Republic* 6, 492 B–C; 8, 560 C–E for discussion of how cultural values shape our sense of the *kalon*. At *Republic* 5, 474 D–E Socrates pokes fun at lovers who praise *all* young men, regardless of the fact that they have quite different bodily features, for looking 'regal', 'divine', and 'manly'. I hesitate to use the term 'manly', since it reflects a current in our tradition of believing the human virtues to be most fully instantiated in men. Still, the advantage for our purposes is that 'manliness' is a quality both of moral praise and erotic attraction, and thus evidently exemplifies the point which I believe holds more generally.

37 See *Gorgias* 465 B 5–6, where Socrates excoriates cosmetology for its knack of making 'people assume an alien beauty and neglect their own, which comes through gymnastics' (ποιεῖν ἀλλότριον κάλλος ἐφελκομένους τοῦ οἰκείου τοῦ διὰ τῆς

γυμναστικῆς ἀμελεῖν, Zeyl trans. in *Complete Works*). Although I cannot defend this claim here, his criticism of sophistry and rhetoric is similar: it makes people and actions appear *kalon*, when in fact they are merely pleasant, but not also good.

38 Or at least, Plato depicted him as being ugly. See M. L. Catoni and L. Giuliani, 'Socrates Represented: Why Does He Look Like a Satyr?', *Critical Inquiry*, 45 (2019), 681–713, who argue that the familiar image of Socrates is not a realistic representation of his looks, but a solution to the problem of how to portray him without conforming to the conventional canons of *kalokagathia* of the Athens that condemned him to death.

39 There is of course a lengthy literature debating the questions whether there is an overarching theme of the *Phaedrus* and, if so, what it is. See J. Moss, 'Soul-Leading: The Unity of the *Phaedrus*, Again', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 43 (2012), 1–23 for a useful summary and compelling argument in favour of answering: yes, soul-leading.

40 ἢ οἴει τινὰ μηχανὴν εἶναι, ὅτῳ τις ὁμιλεῖ ἀγάμενος, μὴ μιμεῖσθαι ἐκεῖνο;

41 The good horse also pulls away from the boy out of shame and seems especially to be horrified by the bad horse's disobedience (254 A, C). Its shame cannot be explained by a memory of the form of the beautiful, since it has never seen it. Might it be explained by a memory of divine souls, whose horses easily obey their driver? Alternatively, the good horse's shame is purely conventional.

42 See D. Halperin, 'Plato and Erotic Reciprocity', *Classical Antiquity*, 5 (1986), 60–80, for discussion of how unusual Plato is in this regard.

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