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IS THERE AN ANSWER TO SOCRATES' PUZZLE? INDIVIDUALITY, UNIVERSALITY, AND THE SELF IN PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

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RÉSUMÉ. Cet article est ma contribution au débat sur la nature du moi idéal chez Platon ; débat commencé dans l'antiquité, mais qui se poursuit jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Les positions sont à peu près les suivantes. D'un côté, à la suite du platonicien Numénios, de nombreux interprètes (que j'appellerai universalistes) soutiennent que, puisque le moi chez Platon est un élément rationnel immatériel, ce ne peut être un moi personnel et individuel, mais il doit être impersonnel et universel. Dans cette perspective, l'âme contemplative n'est pas à proprement parler un moi ; elle se confond plutôt, selon les termes du *Premier Alcibiade* – un texte clé pour les universalistes – avec « Dieu et la sagesse » (*Alc.* 133c). De l'autre côté, quelques commentateurs (que j'appellerai individualistes ou particularistes) suivent Plotin et supposent ou affirment l'individualité du moi platonicien. Mais, à la différence de Plotin, les particularistes n'ont jamais reconnu qu'il y a là matière à controverse et n'ont jamais réellement affronté le problème de savoir *de quelle façon* le moi est individuel et *ce que* son individualité pourrait impliquer. C'est donc une nouvelle défense de l'individualité du moi que je présente ici. En outre, je suggère que son individualité n'est pas incompatible avec la sorte d'universalité qu'implique la contemplation et même qu'elle constitue une précondition de sa propre transcendence. Cependant, mon argumentation se tient dans les limites du *Phèdre* ; je ne prétends pas tirer de conclusions pour l'ensemble du *corpus* platonicien. Dans la première partie, j'expose l'aporie à laquelle est confronté Socrate, l'énigme qui motive l'enquête qui va suivre ; j'avance également l'hypothèse que les deux discours qui précèdent le Grand Discours de Socrate, sa palinodie – le premier étant censément composé par Lysias, le second par Socrate –, frayent la voie à la palinodie elle-même en avançant des conceptions rivales de l'amour-eros, de la connaissance de soi et de la rationalité. Dans la seconde partie, je défends une lecture particulariste de la palinodie et plus spécialement du mythe sur la nature de l'âme.

SUMMARY. *This paper is a contribution to a debate that has its origins in antiquity and still continues to this day, which concerns the nature of the ideal self in Plato and which takes roughly the following form. On the one hand, following the Platonist philosopher Numenius, many interpreters (which I call universalists) maintain that,*

since the self in Plato is an immaterial rational element, it cannot be personal and individual, but must be impersonal and universal. According to this approach, the contemplative soul is not, strictly speaking, a self, but rather, in the phrasing of the first Alcibiades which is a key text for the universalists, is indistinguishable from 'god and wisdom' (Alc. 133c). On the other hand, some scholars (which I call individualists or particularists) follow Plotinus in assuming or asserting the individuality of Platonic selves. But, unlike Plotinus, particularists have never acknowledged that the issue is controversial and have never really confronted the problem of how the self is individual or what its individuality might imply. Therefore I defend afresh the individuality of the self. Moreover, I suggest that it is not incompatible with the sort of universality involved in contemplation but, in fact, constitutes a presupposition for achieving transcendence. However, my argument is restricted to the Phaedrus alone and does not purport to draw conclusions regarding the entire Platonic corpus. In Part I I present Socrates' aporia, the puzzle which motivates the forthcoming search; also I suggest that the two speeches preceding Socrates' Great Speech or palinode, one supposedly by Lysias and the other by Socrates, pave the ground for the palinode itself by advancing competing conceptions of erotic love, self-knowledge and rationality. In Part II I argue for a particularist reading of the palinode and especially of the myth concerning the nature of the soul.

Plato's *Phaedrus* is a notoriously complex and intriguing work. It is cast as a conversation between Socrates and his friend Phaedrus taking place in the country outside the city walls – an unlikely location for Socrates, who tells us elsewhere that he never left Athens unless compelled by duty to do so (*Crito* 52d). Also uncharacteristic is Socrates' declaration that he is 'a man sick with passion for hearing speeches' (228b), and that he followed Phaedrus to the countryside precisely in order to hear him read a speech by the great Athenian orator Lysias on *eros*, love. As it turns out, *eros*, here homoerotic love between an older man who plays the role of the lover and the youth who is his beloved, is the first of the three apparently disconnected themes of which the dialogue consists. The first part contains three speeches on *eros*, one by Lysias and two by Socrates (227a-257b), while the second part concerns the correct composition and use of rhetorical speeches (257c-274b) and the third part draws the famous comparison between oral and written speech and explores the conditions for their proper use (274b-278e). Whatever the verdict on the vexed question of the unity of the *Phaedrus*,¹ arguably, one scarlet thread that runs through all three parts² is yet another issue articulated by Socrates in the prologue (229e-230a), namely the pressing need to understand the self.

That endeavour is most prominent and explicit in the first part of the dialogue, and especially in the so-called palinode, Socrates' so-called Great Speech composed in the form of both argument and myth, which famously compares the soul to a team of winged horses and their charioteer and suggests that the former correspond to lower, non-rational elements of the soul, whereas the latter represents the higher element, namely reason. Also, the myth of the palinode narrates the experiences of souls, human or divine, as they travel in the heavens, as well as the deeds and sufferings of human souls when they fall towards the earth and enter some body; and it

1. Scholars disagree as to whether the *Phaedrus* is a unified work or what its unity consists in. See, for instance, Baron 1891; Helmbold & Holther 1952; Rowe 1986; Heath 1989a, and also Heath 1989b; and Rowe 1989.

2. So Griswold 1986, *passim*. An extensive bibliography on the topic of self-knowledge in Plato is cited at the end of that volume. A more general treatment of the topic of self-knowledge in Plato is found in Ballard 1965.

advances a certain conception of the soul and the self through the allegorical analysis of a distinctly human phenomenon, love. The opening phrase of the *Phaedrus* indicates, I suggest, just where the centre of gravity of the entire dialogue lies: *ποῖ δὲ καὶ πόθεν*, where to and where from.³ Ostensibly, the question concerns Phaedrus, who answers it promptly. However, the two adverbs also foreshadow the narrative concerning the souls' travels at the heavenly place *from which* they come to earth and *to which* they desire to return.⁴ One central assumption of the story, as I shall argue, is that the soul is the self and, therefore, understanding the soul implies understanding the nature of the self and gaining the relevant kind of self-knowledge or self-understanding.

Similar claims are advanced or presupposed in other dialogues as well. In particular, the *Apology* emphasises the paramount moral importance of the soul and indicates the intrinsic relation between the soul and the self, whereas the *Charmides* and the first *Alcibiades*, in different ways, have appeared to move away from a conception of the self as something subjective, but try to define the self and self-knowledge in objective terms.⁵ Especially the *Alcibiades* has been considered to come closest to the formulation of the view that, ultimately, the self is not subjective and personal or individual, but rather objective and impersonal or universal. For not only does the dialogue identify the self as the soul, but also it maintains that knowing oneself is knowing the divine element in oneself which rules the body and, ultimately, transcends the individuality connected with the body either in an epistemic sense or in an ontological sense or both. For philosophical reasons, therefore, and regardless of whether it was authored by Plato,⁶ the

3. The same conclusion is suggested by Rowe 1986 on different grounds. On his account, the first two speeches of the *Phaedrus* prepare for the palinode, whereas the second and the third parts of the dialogue look back and comment on it.

4. On the philosophical significance of Plato's prologues and in particular the first words of each dialogue, see Burnyeat 1997.

5. See Tsouna 2001.

6. The authorship of the first *Alcibiades* or *Alcibiades Major* is notoriously difficult to settle and is still debated today. My confidence in its authenticity has been strengthened in the light of the considerations advanced by Denyer 2001, 14-26. As Denyer and others point out (cf. e.g. Annas 1985), in antiquity no one ever doubted that Plato wrote the *Alcibiades*, but the work was frequently read and frequently cited as « the gateway to the temple » of Plato's dialogues (see Denyer 2001, 14). Denyer persuasively rejects attempts to deny the authenticity of the dialogue on grounds either of similarities with other works by Plato or of differences from them (*op. cit.*: 15-17), indicates the insufficiency of stylistic tests for such purposes (17-20), and shows how developmentalist assumptions might lead one to question the authorship of the *Alcibiades* (20-24). However, my argument does not depend crucially on the assumption that the *Alcibiades* is by Plato. For, in any case, the *Alcibiades* clearly belongs to the Platonic tradition and has been read in antiquity as an

Alcibiades constitutes an important point of reference for my purposes. The same holds for the *Charmides* as well, which suggests that the self is identical with something impersonal and objective, *i.e.*, knowledge or the knowing element, although it subsequently raises doubts concerning the self-referential nature of self-knowledge. On the other hand, although the present study contains, inevitably, material pertaining to the psychology of the *Phaedrus*, it will not engage in depth with the literature on that subject or with relevant comparisons between the account of the soul in the palinode and the views about the soul explored in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.⁷ For these topics have been addressed in great detail in the literature and, in any case, the primary concern of this paper is less with psychology as such and more with questions pertaining to the metaphysics of the self and self-knowledge.⁸

The central thesis of this paper is that, although the Great Speech of the *Phaedrus* presents continuities with the *Charmides* and the *Alcibiades*, as well as with the *Phaedo* and other dialogues, concerning the self and self-knowledge, nonetheless it makes a fresh start by advancing, as I shall argue, the following positions. The soul is the self, conceived individually and not in some other manner. Each soul, human or divine, preserves its individuality both in its discarnate state in the heavens and in its incarnate state on earth. The individual and personal character of the soul is preserved in important ways even in the very act of contemplation, when the soul appre-

important commentary on the nature of the self and the importance of self-knowledge. Hence, I shall use it as a point of reference when I consider it useful to do so, in a way that is neutral regarding the vexed question of its authorship.

7. I assume with the majority of interpreters that the *Phaedrus* postdates the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and the *Symposium*. Moreover, it has been plausibly argued that the myth of the palinode is in important respects close to Plato's later views found, notably, in the *Laws*: see Bett 1986.

8. Authors generally agree that the human soul as depicted in the *Phaedrus* is marked by considerable tension between the higher, rational element and the lower, non-rational elements. However, they generate and interpret the tension in different ways and they draw different conclusions about the possibility for humans to resolve the conflict between the aims of the three parts of the soul and to live the philosophical life. For example, one interpreter proposes that the *Phaedrus* abandons the asceticism of earlier dialogues in favour of a fairly optimistic picture of the human soul, according to which the non-rational parts of the soul supply reason with the motivation to engage in philosophy as well as with important insights into the nature of Beauty, and it is possible for reason and the lower elements to work together towards achieving inner harmony (M.C. Nussbaum, « "This story isn't true": Madness, Reason, and Recantation in the *Phaedrus* », in Nussbaum 1986, 200-233). On the contrary, other interpreters argue that the tensions in the human soul are insoluble and the best humans can hope for is to suppress the non-rational elements and devote themselves to philosophy at the expense of the lower parts of the soul (see, most recently, Obdrzalek 2012).

hends Forms. However, the individuality of the soul *qua* soul (which I call metaphysical individuality) is quite distinct from the individuality typically associated with the body⁹ (which I call empirical individuality). Strictly speaking, I shall maintain, *only* metaphysical individuality designates the self; on the other hand, empirical individuality, which is related to the lower element of the soul, is not one of the constituents of selfhood. Moreover, I shall contend, the palinode strongly suggests that the individuality of the soul is a precondition or a presupposition for achieving transcendence. This latter notion is defined not in terms of the strict assimilation of the self with the Forms suggested in the *Alcibiades*, but rather in terms of the ability of the rational part of the soul to reach out and contemplate the Forms. Both individuality and transcendence are crucial to the explanation of the phenomenon that the palinode ostensibly aims to explain, namely *eros*.

In virtue of defending the above claims, this paper can be read as a contribution to a debate that began in antiquity and still continues to this day, which concerns the nature of the ideal self and takes, in bare outline, the following form. On the one hand, a large group of interpreters (I call them universalists) defend in different ways the thesis that, since the self in Plato is an immaterial rational element (the driver in the simile of the *Phaedrus*), it cannot be personal but must be impersonal or, as it is often put, it cannot be individual but has to be universal. For, the reasoning goes, since the self does not comprise the body and since individuality only pertains to the body, it follows that the self has no individuality but is something universal and abstract; or, considered in its contemplative activity alone, the soul is nothing distinct and independent from the universal objects of contemplation. In other words, the contemplative soul is not, strictly speaking, a self, but rather, in the phrasing of the *Alcibiades* which is a key text for the universalists, is indistinguishable from 'god and wisdom' (*Alc.* 133c), the divine mind and its contents. Numenius was probably the first to have defended this view, which has been revived in the last several decades by representatives of both the continental and the anglo-american traditions.¹⁰ On the other hand, a smaller group of scholars (I call them

9. *E.g.* this is the case with the *Phaedo* and also the *Alcibiades*.

10. Proponents of some version of the universalist view comprise, notably, Pierre Hadot (see, for instance, Hadot 1993, especially 38-41; Hadot 1995, especially 94-99, 102-103, 242-243); Brunschwig 1996; Duncan 1942; and, most recently, Fossheim 2010. A nuanced approach is found in Sorabji 2006, especially 33-35, 115-117. Narcy 2008 offers a most enlightening discussion of the issue whether and in what sense Plato has a notion of the self. Also, he argues that, in the *Timaeus*, the distinction between a mortal and an immortal kind of soul, as well as the identification of the immortal kind of soul with an immortal *daimon* within us, strongly suggests that the real self, namely what is immortal in oneself, is not

individualists or particularists) choose to follow Plotinus, who rejects Numenius' interpretation in favour of the view that the rational self is individual and gives his own reason for that thesis, namely that the self is individual because it exemplifies an individual form (*Enn.* V.7; cf. also IV.3, 1-8).¹¹ But even though the particularists assume or assert the individuality of Platonic selves, to my knowledge they never acknowledge that the issue is controversial and never really confront the problem of just how the self is individual or what this might imply. Therefore, I intend to defend anew the individuality of the self; and I also intend to suggest, as mentioned above, that the individuality of the self or soul is not incompatible with the kind of universality and transcendence involved in contemplation, but rather constitutes a presupposition for attaining it. However, my argument concerns the *Phaedrus* alone and does not purport to draw conclusions regarding the entire Platonic corpus.

The paper has two parts. In Part I, I present Socrates' *aporia*, the puzzle which motivates the forthcoming search; also I propose that the two speeches preceding the palinode, one supposedly by Lysias, the other by Socrates, pave the ground for the Great Speech by advancing competing conceptions of erotic love, self-knowledge, and rationality. In Part II, which constitutes the core of the paper, I argue for a particularist reading of the palinode and especially of the myth concerning the nature of the soul.

I

Socrates sets the philosophical agenda inadvertently, when he rejects for himself the usual endeavour of *sophoi*, wise men (229c), to give a rational account of myths and mythical figures (229c-e), stating that his chief problem is to understand his own self.

I have no time at all for such things. And the reason, my friend, is this. I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it

really *oneself* but rather an immortal principle given by God. Most recently, Fossheim 2010 outlines the central thesis of his paper in the following terms: 'What I am going to suggest is that a central topic of the *Phaedrus* is the human soul as *non-individual* soul. That is, whether or not there might be something like a world soul as a separate principle in addition to each individual human soul, the human soul is not simply the eternally moving principle of an individual entity. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato invites us to explore soul not as a principle of individuality, but of community and of identity over and above individuality' (49).

11. An excellent discussion of this position is found in Kalligas 1997, who engages with much of the relevant literature. However, particularists do not need to endorse the view that the self is individual because it exemplifies an individual form. Another way of individuating the soul could be to conceive of it as an individual set of causal powers. See also n. 63.

really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that. And so I do not concern myself with these matters and, accepting what is generally believed about them, as I was just saying, I investigate not these things but myself: Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typho, or am I a gentler and simpler animal on account of the fact that¹² some divine and serene lot is given to it by nature? (229e-230a).

Immediately before the speech competition, then, Socrates states his chief preoccupation, harking back to the *Apology*. In both places he dissociates himself from the *sophoi*, the wise men, and their intellectual pursuits, appeals to the Delphic command, and acknowledges the paramount importance of self-understanding over every other achievement that he might have aspired to.¹³ Differently from the way in which he conducts the search for self-knowledge in the *Apology*, however, in the *Phaedrus* he frames it as a *theoretical* enquiry concerning the nature of the human self. To understand who he is, Socrates suggests, he must understand what kind of animal he is. In fact, the two questions are presented as parts of the same enquiry: in so far as Socrates is a man, he will know himself if and only if he gets to know what kind of thing man is. As I understand the reference to Typho, the above passage outlines two alternatives, ontological as well as psychological: either man is a supremely complex and savage beast,¹⁴ or he is a simpler and gentler kind of creature on account of the fact, precisely, that he naturally has a share in something divine. So, the comparison emphasises not only that Typho is a three-part monster, ‘part-man, part-animal, feathered all over, much like the part-human, part-equine feathered souls of the palinode’,¹⁵ but also, importantly, that it is a *beast* most forceful and savage. If Socrates’ dilemma is to be settled, it will be necessary to provide some general account of the self and of human nature. As it turns out, he will do the exact opposite of what the *sophoi*, the wise men, do. While the latter rationalise the content of myths, Socrates will mythologise the answer to a philosophical problem.

12. Cf. the participle *μετέχον* (230a), which I take to have causal force. See my interpretation of the metaphor immediately below.

13. For later Platonists, this passage constitutes the reference text for the idea that the knowledge of oneself constitutes the necessary prerequisite for every other kind of knowledge. See, for instance, Olympiodorus in *Alc.* 10-11 Westerink.

14. Note the exact terms of the comparison in 230a: *Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεθυμμένον*, more complex and savage or furious than Typho.

15. Obdrzalek 2012, 83. Obdrzalek also suggests that Typho evokes the comparison of the soul to a man tethered to a many-headed beast in the *Republic* (588b-589b) and argues that, in the *Phaedrus* as well as in the *Republic*, these metaphors yield a pessimistic picture of the human lot.

At first glance, the two speeches that follow have no explicit connection with Socrates' puzzle. They appear to bear on an altogether different subject, *eros*, erotic love, or rather, to be exact, the alleged absence of *eros* in a suitor and the benefits that that absence will bring to the boy he is trying to seduce. In fact, I shall argue, they engage us gradually with the enquiry into the nature of the self, for they illustrate in turn two different conceptions of the self that underlie, respectively, the attitudes of their speakers towards *eros*. Each of these conceptions also involves certain assumptions about rationality, self-control and self-knowledge.

The first speech is attributed to Lysias (228d-e), but there is no doubt in my mind that, in truth, it is Plato's own composition.¹⁶ According to Phaedrus (227c), its principal merit lies in the paradoxical position that the speaker defends with some skill, namely, that it is better for a youth to give his favours to someone who, like the speaker himself, is not in love with the youth than to someone who is. Adopting throughout a tone both unemotional and pragmatic, the non-lover tries to convince the boy that the relation he proposes is to their mutual benefit (*cf.* συμφέρει: 230e): he will get what he needs (*ὧν δεόμεναι*: 231a; *cf.* also 232d), and the boy will receive in return his lasting friendship (*cf.* φίλοι: 233a) and his benevolent concern for the youth's future advantage (*ὠφελίαν*: 233c). Unlike any lover, the non-lover is not pushed into the relationship by the force of his feelings but freely chooses to enter it, and hence he does not repent for what he has offered to the object of his affection when his passion ceases to exist (231a). He does not neglect his own affairs, and then blame the boy for the damage (231a-b). He does not lose his mind nor does he experience his passion as a sickness from which he is going to recover (231d). He won't be indiscreet, thus exposing his younger partner to gossip and slander (231e-232b). He won't raise obstacles to the youth's education and improvement nor to his integration into society (232b ff.). He won't be fickle, unpredictable, or intolerant (231d, 233c), nor will he turn sour after the erotic relationship ends. But the opposite things apply to men who fall in love and who, therefore, are bound to be harmful to the object of their erotic passion (*cf.* 231a-233c *passim*).

16. For example, see Shorey 1933, who argues that the speech is a caricature of Lysias' style by pointing to evidence of conscious parody in the use of the particles. As Shorey points out (*op. cit.* 131), regarding the authenticity of the speech, the one side of the debate argues that Plato could imitate any style, whereas the other affirms that he would not have applied his criticism of Lysias upon an invention of his own. In fact, Plato often exercises his criticisms upon his own inventions: the refutation of Protagoras' 'Great Speech' in the *Protagoras* and the rebuttal of the 'subtler philosophers' in the *Theaetetus* are cases at hand.

Indeed, it would be hard to imagine a more uninspiring and uninspired love-speech (λόγος ἐρωτικός: 227c).¹⁷ In fact, it does not seem to be about love at all, if *eros* implies what we are told it implies, *i.e.*, losing oneself to love (231d). Likewise, the rhetoric of the speech is anti-rhetorical in its effect.¹⁸ Neither the detached and business-like style nor the cost-benefit analysis proposed would be likely to convince anyone, let alone a very young person, to enter a relationship of this sort. The reason why the suitor does not use the language of love is simply, I suggest, that he feels no such thing. Nor does he give any indication that he is insincere regarding that disclaimer. On the contrary, there is ample reason to believe that, when he says that he does not love the youth, he speaks the plain truth. However, it seems difficult to square the non-lover's endeavour to satisfy his own needs (231a, 232d) with his assurances that he does not desire the boy's body regardless of his character (232e), that he does not think of immediate pleasure but rather¹⁹ of the boy's good (232b), and that he would act as a φίλος, a friend, towards the boy by advising him correctly and by improving his character (233a). For given that he is not in love, what reason might he have for approaching the boy other than sexual gratification? What kind of φιλία might he have developed? And, given his thoroughly utilitarian approach, why should we believe that he would give priority to the boy's benefit over the fulfilment of his own desire?

Overall, I suggest, the non-lover comes across as a pedestrian man, cold and calculating, arrogant about his own merits and deserts (*cf.* 232d-e, 233d, 234a), smug about his supposed excellence (232d-e) and his self-control (233c), ruthless about manipulating the boy's fears of social exposure and personal hurt (231e-232b, 234a-b), speaking frankly about his lack of *eros* but perhaps not so frankly about what it might entail.²⁰ Socrates implicitly points to some of these features in his criticism of Lysias' style, when he remarks that the non-lover repeats the same things several times over 'as if he really did not have much to say about the subject, almost as if he just were not very interested in it' (235a). Generally, we get the feeling that, contrary to the impression that he strives to create, in fact the non-lover focuses on his own desires and perceives the boy in an instrumental manner, as a means to his own pleasure. And since he suggests to the boy that *any* deserving non-lover will do for the boy's needs (*cf.*

17. See Hackforth 1952, *ad loc.*

18. See Rosen 1969, 432.

19. I take the *kai* as emphatic: see Nehamas & Woodruff 1995, *ad loc.* Compare the translation of Fowler 1914, 431: 'not with a view to present pleasure *only*, but to future advantage *also*' (my emphasis).

20. See the inconsistency mentioned in the previous paragraph.

233e-234b), we may infer that something similar applies to himself: *any* youth will do for his own needs, provided that he has the right age (ὥρας: 234a) and that there are no hedonistic or utilitarian reasons against that choice.

The above picture yields, I submit, a certain conception of the self. For the non-lover identifies himself primarily by reference to his sexual drives, his external qualities, and his social skills, in short, things that have to do with the body. Correspondingly, he views the boy as an object of sexual but not erotic desire,²¹ a potential receiver of profits in exchange for his favours, a partner in a relation of φιλία, friendship, as opposed to *eros*, mutually cultivated for the physical, material or social advantage of each member of the pair. His effort to remain dispassionate and objective regarding his self-presentation in the speech highlights, in a paradoxical manner, his individuality and egoism: a kind of individuality related to the body and its desires, and a concern for oneself of a sort that excludes genuine concern for the boy. Moreover, there is no trace of any wish or ability to transcend his individual point of view and the boundaries of physical desire.²² As to the boy, I suggest that in the eyes of the non-lover he is mainly his body. For there is no mention of any specific feature that would single out this boy from other boys of his age and would explain the non-lover's preference for him. It is striking that the suitor refers to the boy's *bloom* (234a, b), but not once does he mention his *beauty*. And although he talks in a general way about the boy's manner (232e) and character (233a), he never alludes to his *psyche*, soul.

Given the kind of self that the non-lover appears to be or to have, whatever self-knowledge he possesses must be of a very superficial kind. He knows that he is not in love and that he is in control of himself. He is aware of the profitable consequences of his self-control: *e.g.*, he is not likely to neglect his own affairs (231b), impair his practical judgement (*cf.* 233a-b), or behave in an indiscreet and indecorous manner (*cf.* 232a). Let us even concede that he knows that he will be generous and benevolent to the youth after he gains his favours, and that he will remain so after the relation ends. More importantly, the non-lover knows what he wants and one way in which he may be able to get it: he desires the boy and speaks well in order to seduce him. However, he shows no trace of self-awareness deriving from deeper reflection on the nature of his desire. Nor does he give us reason to believe that he could really account for it. Equally superficial is

21. On this distinction, and also on the reification of the boy, see Rosen 1969, 433.

22. For example, see Brunschwig 1996. In the second part of the present article, I shall suggest a different sense of individuality, which can pertain to the soul, discarnate or incarnate.

his view of what counts as a rational course of action, sound reasoning, or mental health (*cf.* 231d): *e.g.*, the arguments that he presents to the boy consist, in effect, of means-ends reasoning whose ultimate purpose is to attain the goal of physical desire.²³ Therefore, it would seem that, if *per impossibile* the non-lover were faced with Socrates' dilemma, he would have to conclude that he is closer to beasthood than to divinity.

A very different conception of selfhood emerges from Socrates' attempt to offer a counterspeech more complete and more valuable than Lysias' (*cf.* 235b) on the same subject (237a-241d). He too presents a non-lover trying to attract the youth of his choice (237b), and he too retains in his own speech Lysias' central assumption, namely that the non-lover should be praised for his sanity and self-control, whereas the lover should be blamed for the absence of these qualities (235e-236a).²⁴ Nonetheless, these similarities between Socrates' and Lysias' speeches are undermined, I propose, by the fact that Socrates' non-lover is actually a concealed lover (237b) who pretends that he is not in love with the youth for reasons that remain unstated. Hence the question arises whether he really *is* in his right mind (*cf.* σωφροσύνη: 237e) and how that state could be reconciled with his being in love. From the point of view of style, Socrates' speech displays precisely the artful characteristics that, according to Socrates, Lysias' composition lacks, notably, a systematic analysis and classification by means of collection and division, an orderly development of the reasoning, and a correct arrangement and organic unity of different parts (*cf.* 262c-264e).²⁵ From the point of view of content, I wish to argue, the concealed lover appears to conceive of himself and of the object of his affection in a entirely new way, which is related to his own definition of the nature and intentionality of *eros*.

From the very start, this speech has a pedagogical dimension. The concealed lover advises the youth²⁶ as to how to deliberate well about any matter including, of course, the present one (237b-c): the decision ought to be made on the basis of knowledge of, and agreement about, the true nature (οὐσία) of a given subject, for in the opposite case the discussants will end up disagreeing with themselves as well as each other (237b-c). Hence, he suggests, to settle the present issue, *i.e.*, whether a boy should befriend a

23. On many accounts, the lower parts of the city and the soul in the *Republic* can engage in this kind of reasoning: see for instance Kahn 1987; and Cooper 1999. A different view is advanced, notably, by Lorenz 2004.

24. Phaedrus' reformulation of that presupposition is weaker: 'I will allow you to presuppose that the lover is *more* insane than the non-lover' (236b; my emphasis).

25. Also, Socrates suggests that Lysias' speech does not express a clear attitude towards its own subject: it is not clear just what Lysias wants to achieve or how he wants to speak.

26. *Cf.* μετράκισκος, a very young man, to be distinguished from παῖς, a boy (237b).

lover or a non-lover, there is need to define ‘what kind of thing *eros* is and what power it has’ (237c). Namely, *eros*, love, is a kind of desire, which cannot be singled out, however, as the desire for beautiful people²⁷, for lovers and non-lovers both do desire beautiful people. Rather the relevant distinction is between two different principles in us, the one inborn and the other acquired, the former determined as a desire for pleasures, the latter as a belief or opinion (δόξα) which aims at what is best (237d-e). These desires often conflict with each other with the result that one of them prevails: when the former prevails it leads us unthinkingly to pleasure, whereas when belief gains control it guides us through reasoning to the good (237e-238a). The case of *eros* is, precisely, a desire of the former kind, which overcomes rational opinion and compels us to take pleasure in beauty (ἡδονὴν καλῶν: 238c), and which acquires additional force from its kindred desires for beauty in human bodies (ἐπὶ σωμάτων καλῶν: 238c).

In the sequel of the speech, the concealed lover relies on the distinctions drawn above to show to the boy the bad consequences of yielding to a lover intent on pleasure, as opposed to a non-lover desiring what is best. He argues that, precisely because the former is a slave to pleasure, he will endeavour to turn the boy into the kind of object that will give him as much pleasure as possible, *i.e.*, a weak and inferior creature unlikely to resist the demands of the older man (238e-239a). In particular, that kind of lover will raise obstacles to the boy’s proper physical development (239c-d); estrange him from his family and friends (239e-240a); envy him on account of his wealth or possessions (240a); disgust and suffocate the youth by clinging to him at all times (240a-d); and finally hurt and betray his beloved when he falls out of love (239a-241c). However, by far the greatest damage concerns the lad’s intellectual and psychological development: he will be kept away from worthy people and especially from ‘that which would do most to make him wise, namely divine philosophy’ (239b). For this reason above all, the pleasure-seeking lover should be judged to be ‘absolutely devastating to the cultivation of the soul, which truly is, and will always be, the most valuable thing to gods and men’ (241c).

Unlike Lysias’ non-lover, then, the concealed lover acts more like a mentor than like a suitor. First, in addition to good oratorical form, his speech exhibits a method of sound deliberation which in fact overlaps, as Socrates makes clear later in the dialogue, with the proper composition of a speech. Namely, I propose, the concealed lover applies the method later identified in terms of ‘divisions and collections’ (266b), which is useful for

27. Given the context, I prefer to translate τῶν καλῶν (237d) as ‘beautiful people’, rather than ‘the beautiful’ (H.N. Fowler 1914) or ‘what is beautiful’ (Nehamas & Woodruff 1995).

instruction (265d) and serves here to individuate and also denounce 'the left-handed' kind of love (266a), as opposed to the 'right-handed' kind praised in the palinode (266a-b).²⁸ Assuming that 'divisions and collections' constitute the object of dialectic (*cf.* 266c), and given that the concealed lover appears reasonably well versed in it, he is either an expert 'dialectician', as Socrates would call him (266c), or at least a lover of 'divisions and collections', like Socrates himself (266b). Second, the concealed lover claims that the dialectical method is useful for decision-making because it conveys 'knowledge of the true nature of a particular subject' (237c), which constitutes the basis of the subsequent investigation. According to Socrates' commentary in the second part of the *Phaedrus*, this is at least the necessary condition of true rhetoric (259e, 260d), which Socrates identifies with philosophy (261a). Socrates' further specification, that the rhetorical art in its entirety is a way of directing the soul by means of speech to do the right thing on both public and private occasions (261a), matches the stated purpose of the boy's disguised admirer: to help the boy decide, on the basis of the truth about *eros* and by means of the speech that is being delivered, 'what benefit or harm is likely to come from the lover or the non-lover to the youth who grants them his favours' (238e). In the light of these remarks, one may be tempted to infer that the concealed lover is, or aspires to be, a philosopher in the sense indicated above. In any case, he does attribute to philosophy the greatest value, since he claims that the greatest harm caused by the pleasure-seeking lover will be that he will prevent his beloved from engaging in philosophy and improving his soul (*cf.* 239b, 241c). Third, the definition of *eros* that he gives is, clearly, of philosophical ilk: *eros* is a compelling desire to take pleasure in beauty (238c), only enhanced by the desire for beautiful people or things. Regardless of the exact referent of beauty in this context, the definition implies that *eros* is a desire for something universal, distinct from cognate desires for particulars which also have the property instantiated in the universal.

The concealed lover himself illustrates to some extent a tendency to move away from particulars and towards the universal. From a theoretical point of view, as indicated, he deploys a kind of reasoning which involves abstract concepts such as knowledge, agreement, deliberation, desire, and love; and he defends psychological claims that are supposed to hold universally for man, not only for some individual man. At a psychological and moral level, the concealed lover is of course an individual, and the erotic relation that he is seeking is a relation between individuals. But it seems to me that, unlike Lysias' non-lover, the concealed lover does not tie his indi-

28. It is not clear whether these belong to one genus or rather to two different genera.

viduality to matters of the body and does not treat the youth as an object of pleasure that is as good as many others, but rather the opposite holds true. For he does not try to manipulate the boy, but guides him to think for himself. He does not promise, implicitly or explicitly,²⁹ to the youth material and social advantages, but instead he stresses the importance of education and the care of the soul. Not once does he refer to his own needs or to his expectation that the boy will meet them. True, he is sensitive to the boy's great beauty (*μᾶλα καλός*: 237b). But his definition of *eros* implies that he is in a position to view his desire for the beautiful boy in the right manner, namely as auxiliary to a far more powerful and fundamental desire for beauty. In sum, according to the concealed lover's account, the *eros* of an older man for a young boy contains elements of both transcendence and individuality: the older man experiences simultaneously both the desire for (or pleasure in) beauty and the cognate desire for (or pleasure in) the beautiful youth. However, the concealed lover does not explain in just what manner the latter kind of desire lends force to the former or assists in its fulfilment.

We are now in a position to determine, at least in part, what kind of self-knowledge the concealed lover has. It goes well beyond his awareness of the attraction that he feels for the boy and the manner in which he may gain the boy's favours. He knows about good decision-making and advises the lad accordingly. He is well-versed in the method of 'divisions and collections' and, generally, dialectical discourse. He understands the incomparable value of philosophy and of the cultivation of the soul by means of philosophical education. He speaks with authority about different kinds of desire and about the nature of love. And since he offers a putative *definition* of erotic love, he can give a theoretical *explanation* of his desire for the youth and place it in a larger context. Regarding the concept of rationality pertaining to the concealed lover, it seems incomparably broader and deeper than the pragmatic calculations of Lysias' protagonist. It comprises sound deliberation and theoretical reasoning according to the rules of dialectic (237b ff.); concern for logical consistency and interpersonal agreement (237b-c); a systematic contrast between irrational desire and rational opinion, one's craving for pleasure and one's judgement of what is best (237d-238a); but also the intimation that, although erotic desire aims at pleasure, nonetheless it is somehow related to the apprehension of an intelligible entity, namely beauty. Even the enumeration of the harmful consequences of yielding to a lover has little to do with pragmatic means-ends

29. The second part of the speech is apotreptic and hence there is no occasion for the concealed lover to speak directly about the emotions, advantages, *etc.* of non-lovers including, apparently, himself.

reasoning. On the contrary, it is effected according to psychological and pedagogical considerations and reflects the concealed lover's care for the well-being of the youth.

Even so, Socrates makes a deliberate and persistent effort to distance himself from the contents of that speech. At the outset, he claims that he has heard a better speech somewhere, although he does not remember where and from whom (235c-d). He disavows having any knowledge of the subject (235c), but presents himself as the passive recipient of the ideas contained in a speech that fills him 'like an empty jar' (235d). Then he tries to wriggle himself out of the promise to deliver that speech by telling Phaedrus that he was only teasing him when he criticised Lysias, Phaedrus' lover; in fact he had no intention to try to match Lysias' speech with a better one (236b). Next, he describes himself as an amateur who is being asked to improvise on the same topics as an expert (236d). And before he complies with Phaedrus' request, he announces that he will cover his head while he will be speaking in order to avoid feeling shame (237a). At the very beginning of the speech he appeals to the Muses to 'take up [his] burden'³⁰ and grant their aid in the tale (237a). Towards the middle of his performance, he interrupts in order to confess to Phaedrus that he is probably possessed by some divine force, which he identifies as the Nymphs' frenzy' (238c-d). Finally, when he realises that he has offended *Eros*, a god, he informs his putative addressee³¹ that the speech was by Phaedrus, son of Pythocles, not by himself (244a).

Socrates specifies that his unintentional insult to the god of Love lies in the fact that he has endorsed in his counterspeech the fundamental concession of the speech of Lysias, namely that *eros* implies a kind of madness and that every kind of madness is bad (*cf.* 235e-236a). In the palinode, however, he will overturn that assumption in the most spectacular manner.

II

The palinode is a recantation that Socrates offers in earnest to the god of Love to purify himself from his earlier *hybris* and beg for his forgiveness and his blessings (243a, 257a-b). And although he ostensibly disowns this speech too by attributing it to Stesichorus (244a),³² in fact he makes clear

30. This is a quotation from an unknown source.

31. The 'beautiful boy' whom he addresses in the palinode is probably the same as the addressee of Lysias' non-lover as well as of the concealed lover in Socrates' first speech.

32. Socrates specifies that Stesichorus is the son of Euphemus from Himera, literally the Land of Desire (see Nehamas and Woodruff 1995, 27 n. 56). According to Socrates, Stesichorus delivered a formal recantation for an act of *hybris* that he had committed, after he had been punished for that *hybris* by the gods.

that he assumes full responsibility for its contents. For he says that he will give the same *kind* of speech as Stesichorus, *i.e.*, a formal recantation, but unlike Stesichorus he will recant *before* he gets punished for his offense (243b). He announces that he will deliver the speech with his head uncovered and no sense of shame (243b). And, in any case, he must endorse the speech completely, because otherwise he cannot hope for Love's forgiveness and favour (257a-b).

At the outset, I should like to address the controversial issue whether the myth that constitutes the core of the speech should be taken seriously as a philosophical text. For several interpreters doubt or deny that it should on various grounds. For example, one scholar assesses it as an example of the true rhetoric described later in the dialogue and ascribes to it positive value, but then retracts some of that value by suggesting that the speech is vulnerable to Socrates' later criticism against written texts.³³ Others maintain that myths may not be appropriate means of teaching³⁴ or that they do not constitute a philosophical way of defending a position as true. Yet others point out that the palinode and especially the myth contain ideas and theories found in Plato's earlier works but not in the later group of dialogues to which the *Phaedrus* belongs: paradigmaticism,³⁵ recollection, separatism,³⁶ and the tripartite soul are all doctrines that Plato has developed in his middle dialogues but that he transforms or abandons completely in his later works.³⁷ They conclude that 'the truth Plato accepts does not consist of the philosophical theories the speech contains. What if Plato simply wants to communicate instead the idea that philosophy is the most important part of life?'³⁸ On the other hand, there are also many interpreters who take seriously the philosophy contained in the myth of the Great Speech. For instance, one thesis advanced is that the Great Speech including of course the myth is also, essentially, a philosophical text

33. See Rowe 1986 and 1989. Rowe's position is more nuanced, however, than it might appear at first sight. For he argues that the palinode plays an essentially dynamic role in the sense that the reader's perspective on the value and seriousness of its contents changes as the conversation develops.

34. See Smith 1986.

35. *I.e.* the idea that the Form is the perfect example of the feature for which it stands: Beauty is beautiful and, in fact, it is the most beautiful thing there is – much more beautiful than the beautiful boy whose sight causes his lover to recollect Beauty.

36. Namely, the thesis that Forms are separate both from each other and from their instances.

37. See Nehamas & Woodruff 1995, xlii-xliv.

38. *Ibid.* xliv.

which enjoys the putative status of a spoken discourse.³⁹ A different approach argues for the philosophical credibility of the myth on the basis of the similarities that it has with the doctrines of Plato's later dialogues and also, importantly, its agreement with the argument for the immortality of the soul which immediately precedes it.⁴⁰ Since I side with this second group of interpreters, and since I intend to treat the myth as philosophy rather than rhetoric or literature, I ought to give my own reasons for doing so.

First of all, it is important to note that the tendency to question the philosophical seriousness of the palinode marks modern approaches only. On the contrary, ancient Platonists treat the myth as serious philosophy and devote much attention to its details.⁴¹ The central positions of the myth are also found in later dialogues and especially in the *Laws*, where they are stated in the form of philosophical doctrines or arguments.⁴² Also, assuming as many of us do that the palinode is the heart of the *Phaedrus*, it seems implausible to think that Socrates would retract from its philosophical value in the second part of the dialogue. The opposite ought to be expected: that the sections of the dialogue concerning rhetoric and writing would lend support to the philosophical credibility of the Great Speech. Besides, we should recall that the Great Speech consists of argument as well as myth. While the argument to the effect that the soul is necessarily always in motion and therefore is immortal is an unusually dense and rigorous proof,⁴³ Socrates indicates that myth is more appropriate for the task at hand. For, he says, while it would be very difficult and lengthy to give a proper account of 'what the soul actually is' and such an account may be even impossible for a human being (246a), it is easier and shorter to say 'what the soul is like'; this last goal is what the myth aims to achieve (246a).

39. See Heath 1989a. Especially, Heath argues that the palinode is philosophical in so far as it represents an attempt by Socrates to *teach* Phaedrus something 'about what is just, fine, and good, an attempt to sow seeds in his soul that will bear philosophical fruit' (*ibid.* 159; cf. *Phaedr.* 276e-277a). Hence it is a different kind of *logos* from those spoken 'in the manner of rhapsodes' (277e), which aim to entertain and persuade without teaching, and which 'are recited in public without questioning and explanation' (277e).

40. Bett 1986, 21.

41. See Anonymous. *In Plat. Tht.* 48.2-4 (= *Phaedr.* 249e4-5), edited by Bastianini & Sedley 1995; also Alcinous, *Didaskalikos*, especially 153. 5-6, 26; 155. 26; 157, 27-36; 165, 4-5. For Hermias, see the relevant parts of the text and commentary in Couvreur 1971; Bernard 1997. For Iamblichus, see Dillon 1973, *ad loc.*, frs. 6-7. For Proclus as well as Iamblichus, see two papers discussing relevant passages: van den Berg 1997; Sheppard 2000. On the relation between human souls and the World Soul see also Plotinus, *Ennead* IV.3 and 4 and Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, *ad Phaedr.* 246b, p. 130-131 Couvreur.

42. See Bett 1986.

43. See Bett 1986.

Furthermore, a myth may well be the best device available for exploring a subject which lies beyond the realm of ordinary reason and experience, namely the nature of the soul;⁴⁴ the same holds for explaining *eros* in terms of an extra-rational condition, a kind of madness (cf. 243a-245c). Turning to doctrinal matters, on the one hand, it is arguable that the palinode revives some views that may have been criticised in earlier dialogues or had disappeared long before. On the other hand, in some cases it is not certain that Plato has abandoned the relevant views on the basis of previous criticism, whereas in other cases the reemergence of certain positions in the Great Speech can plausibly be explained by reference to the dramatic and philosophical context. For instance, while it is true that paradigmaticism is criticised in the *Parmenides*, there is no decisive evidence that the *Parmenides* predates the *Phaedrus*. And in any case, assuming that the *Timaeus* was completed after the *Parmenides*, it constitutes strong evidence that paradigmaticism was not abandoned on the basis of the criticisms in the *Parmenides* which, as Parmenides himself says, *can* be answered. Besides, in the dramatic context of the palinode, paradigmaticism seems to be a fairly intuitive way in which Socrates explains to Phaedrus how love for a beautiful youth can lead towards Beauty, and the same consideration applies to recollection.⁴⁵ As for separatism, *i.e.*, the view that each Form is an independent object complete in itself and intelligible as a whole, it is difficult to ascertain whether it is either asserted or denied in dialogues earlier than the *Phaedrus*. In any case, the central claim of separatism appears perfectly suitable in order to describe the kinds of objects that the souls standing at the rim of heaven contemplate, whereas there is no occasion in the myth to talk about the relations between Forms – a topic investigated in other dialogues of the group to which the *Phaedrus* belongs. On another matter regarding the structure of the soul, it is true that the tripartite soul of the palinode does not exactly match the three parts of the soul in the *Republic*⁴⁶ or elsewhere. Importantly, there does not seem to be a one-to-one correspondence between the two lower parts of the soul in the *Republic* and the two winged horses in the *Phaedrus* and one difference is that in the latter dialogue the roles of the two horses remain underdetermined. On the

44. Cf. *Resp.* 377a, where it is mentioned that a myth may be false if considered as a whole, but nonetheless may lead towards truth. On the philosophical value of myths, see Partenie 2004: xviii-xix. See also Partenie 2009. The essays of that collection exhibit different ways in which myth and philosophy are essentially interconnected in various Platonic dialogues. A valuable comprehensible treatment of the subject is Brisson 1982. A short assessment of Plato's use of myth is Murray 1999.

45. As Nehamas & Woodruff 1995 remark (xliv), recollection never emerges again in Plato's later dialogues.

46. See, most recently, Obdrzalek 2012.

other hand, there does not seem to be any real *conflict* between the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* on this point. Moreover, as will become clear, the metaphorical imagery of the myth suits well its philosophical purpose. In particular, the partially defined roles of the horses and especially of the white horse successfully convey the idea that in erotic love impulse cannot be easily distinguished from appetite.⁴⁷

Of course, I do not wish to deny that the myth is a powerful piece of rhetoric as well as of philosophy.⁴⁸ In fact, the entire palinode pursues both persuasion and truth, and Socrates takes pains to emphasise both these aspects. On the one hand, he asserts that he is by divine gift an expert at love (257a), thus implying that he has the relevant kind of knowledge to be able to give a truthful or approximately truthful account of *eros*. On the other hand, he has a rhetorical goal, namely to *convince* Phaedrus to direct himself towards living a life devoted to *eros* and philosophy (257b). And also he is confident that his speech will ‘convince the wise if not the clever’ that *eros* is a gift sent by the gods (245b-c). As we learn from the second part of the *Phaedrus*, the only kind of rhetoric able to persuade the wise is truthful rhetoric, *i.e.*, philosophical rhetoric (*cf.* 261a); and only the expert orator knows how to convey truth convincingly, by choosing the right sort of speech for the right sort of audience on a given issue (271d). Socrates claims to know the truth about *eros* and at the same time follows the rhetorical convention of telling his audience that he will speak the truth. And although he disavows expertise in both rhetoric and dialectic (*cf.* 266b-c), nonetheless he does call himself a lover of speeches (228b) and ‘a lover of “divisions and collections”’ (266b) and his performance in the Great Speech confirms that he is familiar with both. Here is not the place to decide whether Socrates is the only true rhetor or whether he identifies

47. *I.e.*, it is debatable whether the white horse corresponds exactly to the spirited part and the black horse to the appetitive part. For example, the white horse does not seem to act in alliance with the charioteer in order to tame the black horse – hence the white horse does not perform in an obvious manner the function of *thymos* in the *Republic*. Moreover, the black horse appears to be the element mainly responsible for the amorous impulse of the soul towards the beautiful youth and also for forcing the lover to express his sentiments to the beloved and eventually cause reciprocal *eros*. But that kind of impetuosity seems closer to the spirit than to the appetite, although of course the black horse is also associated with bodily appetites and in particular sexual desire. I am grateful to Michel Narcy for his remarks on this topic.

48. On the main functions of Platonic myths, see Partenie 2004, xvii-xix.

philosophy and rhetoric. All we need to retain is that the Great Speech both instructs and captures, at least for a time, Phaedrus' soul.⁴⁹

On my account the palinode has two principal aims: to redress what Socrates said in his previous speech by producing a eulogy of *eros*; and to solve Socrates' puzzle. These two aims are related: understanding the nature of *eros* requires understanding the nature of man and every man. In other words, the enquiry into *eros* is an enquiry into the nature of the self and in particular the human self. From the start, Socrates rejects the assumption on which his previous speech was based, namely that *eros* is madness and madness is bad. On the contrary, he contends, there are sacred and beneficial sorts of madness (243a) and erotic love is 'such a sort of madness given by the gods for our greatest good fortune' (245b).

I shall now argue for my first contention, namely that the palinode identifies the self with the soul. Although the thesis that the real self is the soul is, by the date of composition of the *Phaedrus*, standard Socratic or Platonic doctrine, nonetheless it is not as explicitly stated in the palinode as it is stated, for instance, in the *Apology*, the *Crito*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Alcibiades*. Therefore I should like to defend it with regard to the Great Speech: the position that the soul is the self, I shall suggest, underlies Socrates' entire account in the palinode so that 'the truth about the nature of the soul, divine or human' (245c) is really the truth or an approximation of the truth about the nature of the self, human or divine. In the first place, that thesis gains support from the argument for the immortality of the soul and especially from the claim that the body appears to move simply because it contains a self-mover, the soul (245c-245e); it follows that the body is merely an instrument for psychic functions, whereas the soul is the only thing alive in us. Moreover, the simile of the team of winged horses and their charioteer is developed in such manner as to drive a sharp wedge between animate and inanimate substances (246b), reify the body (246c), and explain how the body of empirical living things constitutes a condition of their mortality (246c-d). Since the body is the thing that dies while the soul is the immortal survivor of that union, it is reasonable to infer that selfhood and personal identity reside in the soul, not in the body. The same inference is strongly suggested by the contention that the soul consists of higher and lower elements, of which the former (the charioteer of the simile) rules the latter;⁵⁰ one of the lower elements (the black horse of the

49. When the palinode ends, Phaedrus joins Socrates in his prayer that god grant him a life of *eros* and philosophy, and he also says that he has admired Socrates' speech from its very beginning (257c).

50. Whether or not the rational part actually has the *desire* to rule is a matter of controversy. For example, see Cooper 1999; Ferrari 2007. A different approach is sug-

simile which roughly corresponds to the appetitive part) pertains specifically to the body and its needs (*cf.* 246d-e); therefore, by ruling the black horse, the higher element of the soul not only animates but also rules the body. However, it must be noted that although selfhood pertains peculiarly to the ruling element corresponding to reason, nonetheless the two lower parts of the soul, the horses of the simile, are not irrelevant to the self. At the very least, they form a ‘natural union’ together with their driver (*cf.* *ξυμφύτῳ δυνάμει*: 246a). And while they (and especially the black horse) are very much associated with the body (*μάλιστα τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα*: 246d-e), first, they remain distinct from it and, second, they have a divine element, the wings, which enables the driver to lift up the chariot and to nourish the entire soul by gazing at the realities beyond (246e).

Moreover, Socrates identifies the soul with the self in the second half of the speech, when he refers in the first person plural to the philosophers’ souls in their discarnate state,⁵¹ as they follow the train of Zeus and see the Forms (250b-c). It is worth quoting the passage in full.

Justice and Temperance and the other objects which are precious to souls do not shine through their images here on earth; only a few people, approaching the images through the murky senses, are able to contemplate, though with difficulty, the form of what they imitate. But Beauty was radiant to see at the time when the souls, in the company of the blissful chorus – we (*ἡμεῖς*) following in the train of Zeus while others following in the train of some other gods – saw the blessed sight and vision and were initiated into the mystery that is rightly called the most blessed of all. This we celebrated being ourselves (*αὐτοὶ*) wholly perfect and untouched by those evils that awaited us (*ἡμᾶς*) in the time to come, being initiated into and gazing at sacred apparitions which were perfect, and simple, and unshakeable, and blissful, in pure light, pure ourselves and not buried (*καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμεντοι*) in this thing that we are carrying around now and we call a body, imprisoned in it like an oyster in its shell (250b-c).

According to this passage, ‘we’ philosophers are the philosophical souls, who see Beauty and the other Forms as they follow the god of their choice

gested, most recently, by Obdrzalek 2012, who engages to some extent with the two works previously mentioned.

51. Nehamas & Woodruff 1995 (39 n. 93) point out that Socrates’ confident claim ‘we (*scil.* the philosophers) were with Zeus’ is uncharacteristic of Socrates and especially of his portrait in the *Phaedrus* and conclude that we should be cautious or even reluctant to attribute directly to him the views that he is made to express in the speech. Rather, in their opinion, Socrates is projecting here an image that *Phaedrus* may find appealing. For my own part, I agree that the image has considerable rhetorical force but, as I indicated above, I do not think it follows that Socrates may not subscribe to the philosophical views expressed in the palinode.

in heaven, and who must carry about their human bodies so long as they live on this earth.

I turn now to my next contention, in virtue of which I join the camp of the particularists: the souls are individuals, and they retain their metaphysical individuality both on earth and in the heavens. If this contention is correct, the palinode differs in that respect from the *Alcibiades* and perhaps also the *Charmides*⁵² for, unlike those dialogues, it suggests neither that the individual self eventually becomes one with universals such as wisdom and god (cf. *Alc.* 133c) nor that the individual self is identical with wisdom understood in some entirely objective manner (*Charm.* 166c ff.).⁵³ To my knowledge, the contention that the souls retain their individuality on both earth and heaven has not been debated in the literature.⁵⁴ Therefore, first, I should adduce some textual evidence to support it.

It is reasonably clear, it seems to me, that Socrates intends everything he says about the soul to apply to every individual soul *qua* soul. And something similar holds for the characteristics that the myth ascribes to the eleven choruses of souls following the eleven gods as they patrol the heavens: the features differentiating each chorus apply to each and every soul in that chorus. One possible explanation can be that Socrates uses 'soul' (ψυχή) to indicate, collectively, a single kind of thing, of which individual souls (or individual souls of a certain chorus) consist, so that everything that holds true of the soul will also hold true of individual souls.⁵⁵ In the proof of the soul's immortality, the ambiguity between 'all soul' and 'every soul' (cf. ψυχή πᾶσα: 245c), and also between 'all the soul' and 'every soul' (πᾶσα ἡ ψυχή or ψυχὴ πᾶσα: 245b)⁵⁶ seems to me to confirm this reading: since the soul is the kind of thing that always and necessarily moves itself and hence is essentially immortal, every individual soul will have these characteristics (245c-e);⁵⁷ and since the soul is the kind of thing that cares for everything soulless while patrolling the heavens, individual souls will be engaged in just

52. See Tsouna 1997.

53. See also below, 227-229.

54. The idea that the soul is individuated from the start is noted (but not defended) by Griswold 1986, 100-101. On the other hand, Fossheim 2010 argues for the presence and importance of non-individuality of soul in the *Phaedrus* mainly on two counts: the soul is a non-individuated force, a basic principle of the cosmos; moreover, the view of the soul advanced by the *Phaedrus* belongs to a broader social and political context, in which Plato stresses unity and collectivity at the expense of individuality.

55. See Bett 1986, 12-13.

56. The mss. differ, but *pace* Bett 1986 (14 and n. 23), the presence or absence of the definite article does not seem to make a difference concerning the denotation of the phrase.

57. On the concept of self-mover, see the classic study of Furley 1980. See also Demos 1968.

that activity (246b).⁵⁸ The fact that Socrates has in mind both the soul collectively and souls as individuals becomes more evident as the myth develops. Every soul has the form (*cf.* ἰδέας: 246a) of a charioteer yoked to a team of winged horses, which are thoroughly good in divine souls but mixed in the souls of other creatures (246b). Socrates describes the soul's supra-celestial movement and supervisory activity by using the singular with or without the definite article (*cf.* 245b), and he also uses the singular with the definite article to refer to the soul that has shed its wings and falls earthwards until it hits upon a solid body (ἡ δέ: 246c). Also, he marks individuality by using the plural to refer to 'both the horses and the charioteers of the gods' and to those 'of other creatures' (246a-b). Surely, the fall of the soul and its insertion into a body makes best sense if we take 'the soul' (ἡ δέ: 246c) to be an individual: a particular soul loses its plumage, heads downwards, enters a particular body which appears to move because of the soul's power, and *this* soul together with *this* body constitute a whole (ξύμπαν: 246c), namely a mortal animal. In sum, to speak of the experiences and deeds of the soul there is need to focus on the soul as an individual. And since the soul is the self, the myth narrates the travels and travails of the self considered individually more than in a collective manner.

Metaphysical individuality is highlighted by other features of the myth as well. The gods, who are driving their winged chariots each leading his or her own procession, are each identical with himself or herself, *i.e.*, with his or her own soul.⁵⁹ They bear names, are distinct from each other, and each has his or her own peculiar characteristics: Zeus has dignity and nobility (252c-e), Ares can turn murderous (252c), Hera is of a kingly nature (253b), and so on. As mentioned, the characteristics of each god are also shared by the souls who have chosen to follow him or her in the heavens, and especially by those who attend closely the god of their choice, making themselves most godlike (248a). The souls are further individuated by reference to their experiences during the supra-celestial procession. While the god's chariots climb easily to the high tier of heaven because of the excellent condition of their teams, the other chariots may or may not make it to the high rim on which the gods stand to be carried around by the circular motion of the rim and gaze at the Forms (247b-c). The extent to which each of these chariots is carried around and able to see Forms varies from one chariot to another, from one soul to another, and it depends on

58. Although Bett's reading of this passage differs in places from mine (*cf.* Bett 1986, 14 and n. 23), nonetheless we are in agreement that ψυχή παῖσα does not refer to the World-Soul. I would add that the same conclusion can be drawn even if we accept the alternative ms. reading παῖσα ἡ ψυχή.

59. The immortal gods do not have a body: 246d.

the soul's tendencies, the behaviour of the horses (the soul's lower elements) , and the ability of the driver (who, as mentioned, represents reason) (248a-b). The degree to which each soul contemplates the Forms also depends on accidental factors, which may burden the soul to the point of bringing it from the heaven down to earth (248c). So, while some souls fly high enough for the charioteer to keep his head raised and take a look at the realities beyond the heaven (248a), others see Forms only intermittently (248a), and many do not see Forms at all (248a-b). This last group of souls can be differentiated further in accordance with the opinions that each of these souls holds, mistaking them for knowledge (248b). Thus, unlike the gods all of whom lead a similar kind of life in heaven, each of the other souls has its own supra-celestial history, which is determined by a set of factors relevant only to that soul. These factors also influence the lives that each soul lives on earth during the reincarnation cycle. At least in the first incarnation (*cf.* 248d), the kind of person into which the soul will enter is chosen according to how much of the Forms the soul has seen (248d-e). In other words, an individual soul's supra-celestial history determines the starting point of its first earthly life. Moreover, a soul's individual choices so long as it is on earth determine both the type of beings that the soul will join and the duration of its incarnate existence (248e-249c).

However, the universalists could still press their case. For they could insist that, even if the soul can be individuated in the above respects, nonetheless it becomes non-individual and impersonal *in the very act of contemplating the Forms*; for contemplation, they could maintain, involves the assimilation of the knowing soul to its object and hence the abolition of what we commonly consider the self. To meet that objection I wish now to argue that, in fact, individuality constitutes a necessary presupposition for both the contemplation of the Forms in the heavens and their recollection by embodied souls on earth. Recall that the avowed purpose of the palinode is to praise *eros* and that Socrates has defined *eros* as a most beneficial kind of madness that the soul of an older man experiences when it sees a particular instance of Beauty, a beautiful boy, and begins to recollect Beauty itself. Assuming that the lover's soul has looked upon Beauty recently and got a clear vision of it, his recollection of the Form is so powerful that he is overcome and literally loses his mind to Beauty forgetting everything else in his earthly life and pursuing the boy who reminds him of that Form. According to this picture, the capacity of an incarnate soul to fall in love is causally determined by the experiences of that soul in heaven: the more and the better it has gazed at Beauty and the other Realities, the easier it can bring them back to memory. And the converse, which holds for most men: their souls have not seen much of the Forms in their discarnate state and therefore are unable to see the Form of Beauty in a

particular, so they are unable to truly fall in love.⁶⁰ The metaphor of the regrowth of the wings conveys not only the universal elements of that extraordinary experience but also its highly individual character. On the one hand, all true lovers have a common experience in so far as they see the Form of Beauty in the particular object of their *eros* (cf. 249c);⁶¹ feel fear and reverence at that sight (251a); have psycho-physical symptoms, such as sweating and fever, because of the stream of particles that flow from the beauty of the beloved and enter the lover's eyes (251b); feel a kind of seething and throbbing in their soul (251b); and suffer excruciating pain when their beloved leaves their sight, but pleasure when they see or remember his beauty (251d). On the other hand, *eros* also remains a powerful desire of one individual for another. Unlike Lysias' non-lover who gives us reason to believe that he would readily exchange one boy for another,⁶² the philosophical lover of the palinode treats his beloved as both a divinity and a particular human being peculiarly suitable to the lover's own preferences and tendencies. 'Everyone chooses his love after his own fashion from the ranks of those who are beautiful and then treats the boy like his very own god, building him up and adorning him as an image to honour and worship' (252d-e). Moreover, Socrates' panegyric account of the *eros* obtaining between philosophers (256a-b) and also between lovers of honour (256b-d) points to the personal ties between the members of these couples and to their abiding companionship.

To take stock: what I called the metaphysical individuality of each and every soul, and especially each and every human soul, consists in the following features. Every soul is numerically distinct, the same as itself and different from every other soul. It is marked by its own tendencies and makes its own choices. It has its own history and its own experiences. It determines its own future and in particular the nature and duration of the reincarnation cycle. It has the power of recollection, and it can be transported by love. In virtue of these last two features, I shall now maintain, it has also the power to transcend itself.⁶³ To understand how this is possible, we

60. See Scott 1999. Compare, for instance, the earlier study of Irwin 1974.

61. This is the main reason why, according to Vlastos, Platonic *eros* is essentially objective and impersonal and misses something important about that kind of human attachment: Vlastos 1981. A good summary of the leading critical responses to Vlastos is found in Obdrzalek 2012 n. 32. They include Ferrari 1992; Kosman 1976; Griswold 1986, 127 ff.; Nussbaum 1986, *passim*. On this subject, see also Santas 1982; Gould 1963.

62. See also *Phaedr.* 256e, which draws a final contrast between the narrow-minded familiarity of the non-lover and the blessings of genuine love.

63. However, the myth may invite the objection that the factors mentioned above *presuppose* rather than *determine* the individuality of the soul. If one assumes that numerical identity serves as the principle of individuation, one would have to face the problem of

need to turn briefly to another kind of individuality pertaining to human souls, namely what I have labelled *empirical* individuality.

According to the myth, empirical individuality has to do with the black horse of the simile and its interactions with both its white peer and the driver.⁶⁴ The first thing to emphasise is that the two winged horses are components of *the soul* and hence essential aspects of the self: in the terms of *Republic* IV, not only reason but also spirit and appetite are parts of who we truly are.⁶⁵ According to a standard (and, I believe, correct) interpretation of the picture, these elements create an inherent tension within every human soul: while the rational element, hopefully aided by the spirit, strains the soul upwards towards contemplation, the appetitive element (the black horse of the metaphor), because of its very nature, forces the soul earthwards and into some body. The peculiarly close association of the black horse with some individual body is conveyed by the description of its properties. Unlike the white horse which is beautiful and good (καλὸς τε καὶ ἀγαθός: 246b) and of noble descent, the black horse is ugly and bad and of poor stock;⁶⁶ hence it is responsible for the mixed character of human teams (cf. μέμικται)⁶⁷ as well as the inevitably painful and difficult task of driving the chariot of a human soul (246b). Moreover, we are told that the black horse is heavy and tends towards the earth on account of its weight (ρέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων: 247b). The missing link here is supplied by the *Phaedo*, which explicitly connects heaviness with bodies: souls who have lived too close to the body and have served its desires are weighed down by

explaining numerical identity without any connection to matter. In my view, the myth leaves open this problem, which finds one solution in Plotinus' doctrine of individual forms: in outline, Socrates' soul is different from Callias' in the sense that Socrates' soul is an ideal entity logically different from the soul of Callias. As mentioned (n. 11), another way of individuating the soul could be by reference to its causal powers.

64. Since the psychology suggested by that picture has received much attention in the literature, I shall concentrate only on aspects of the simile directly relevant to my argument.

65. Concerning the differences as well as the similarities between the accounts of the tripartite soul in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* see, most recently, Obdrzalek 2012, who also offers a brief survey of the relevant literature.

66. Moreover, the white horse stands on the right and nobler side, is upright, has good limbs and joints, a high neck, a regal nose, dark eyes, and it is a lover of honour, possesses modesty and self-control and also is a lover of true glory and is guided by words of command (253d). On the contrary, the black horse stands on the left side, is crooked, has bad legs and joints, a short and thick neck, a flat nose, dark colour, grey and bloodshot eyes, is full of insolence and pride, deaf and shaggy around the ears, obedient not to words but to the whip and that even barely (253e). These features are important for the psychological account of the boy's capture (253c-256e).

67. It is not clear whether τῶν ἄλλων (246b) refers only to humans or to other creatures as well. In any case, I shall be concerned only with human souls.

the corporeal element, which is 'burdensome, heavy (βαρὺ), earthly, and visible' (81c); and they are bound to wander in the physical region until they are reincarnated again to become part of some inferior man (81b-d). The upshot is that appetite makes it difficult to drive the soul upwards towards the Forms. For appetite can find its full expression and fulfillment only if the soul lives the life of the body and caters to its needs.

Empirical individuality is foreshadowed in the allegorical narrative of the struggle of the souls to gaze upon the Forms. One soul tries to follow closely the god of its choice and manages to have a view of these Realities despite the fact that the horses⁶⁸ cause disturbance (θορυβομένη: 248a). Another sees the Forms only partially and only intermittently, because its horses are unruly (βιαζομένων: 248a).⁶⁹ But many souls do not manage to see the Forms at all. They are carried round beneath the surface of heaven, jostling, falling upon one another and trying to get ahead of one another amidst great noise, rivalry, and toil; many become lame and many break their wings (248a-b). The intense physicality of the scene points to the kind of life that such souls will lead when they enter human bodies – a life full of confusion, competition, and pain. Although they are still in heaven, their lower element has got its way;⁷⁰ their individuality is already very much determined by reference to the body.⁷¹ However, there is no doubt that the association of the black horse with the body becomes particularly powerful *after* the first incarnation takes place. And that situation acquires additional poignancy when human beings fall into the throes of *eros*. Here too the physicality of the language is unmistakable. While the noble lover

68. Cf. the two occurrences of the genitive plural τῶν ἵππων in 248a.

69. Concerning human souls, since the white horse is supposed to be thoroughly good and obedient to the charioteer (cf. 253d-254a), the disturbance and unruliness should be attributed to the black horse alone or, alternatively, should be taken to point out that the two horses pull in opposite directions and thus cause the soul to lose its balance and control. Contrast the divine teams, whose horses are well-matched (εὐήγνια) and therefore the chariots are balanced (cf. ἰσορροπῶς) and move upwards easily (247b). There is disagreement as to how to interpret the differences between divine and human teams. On one view, these differences yield an irremediably pessimistic view of human nature (see, most recently, Obdrzalek 2012, especially 85-86, 97-99), whereas on another the conflict within human souls can be resolved and all three parts can function in harmony in order to live the philosophical life (e.g. Nussbaum 1986).

70. *I.e.*, it has brought the soul in such condition as to force it eventually to submit to the constraints of the body. Ultimately, the reason is both psychological and epistemological: the drivers have been incapable of disciplining their horses and lifting the chariot up to gaze upon Reality; therefore the teams under discussion are nourished by opinion, which they mistake for proper nourishment, *i.e.*, truth (248b).

71. In the spirit of the *Phaedo*, we might say that every one of them lives the life of the body even before entering some individual body on earth.

pursues the beautiful youth of his choice because he sees Beauty in him and that sight causes the wings of his soul to grow (cf. 251b-252b), the black horse in his soul forces him to approach the youth and ask for sexual favours (τῆς τῶν ἀφροδισίων χάριτος: 254a). The black horse heeds neither 'the pricks nor the whip', 'it springs wildly forward', and 'it causes all manner of trouble to both his mate and the charioteer' (254a). Nor does it give up when the charioteer pulls back the reins violently and makes it bleed – not until it extracts the promise to get its own pleasures sometime later (254d). Again, when time supposedly comes, it struggles and neighs and pulls and, getting near, 'it lowers its head, raises his tail, takes the bit in his teeth and pulls shamelessly' (254d-e).⁷² Even when it subdues itself eventually to the charioteer (254e), its capitulation is not definitive, for after the courtship is properly conducted and the boy eventually reciprocates, the black horse asks again for its dues (255e-256a). Only the philosophers-lovers are able to subordinate it entirely. Even the lovers of honour (the second best kind of lovers) must yield somewhat to its urges (cf. 256a-e).

What of the charioteer? What of reason? This question brings us back to our starting point: the issue of transcendence and the debate between the universalists and the particularists. The position that I wish to advocate is this. Reason must retain its individuality because it is yoked together with the non-rational elements of the soul and hence cannot become entirely Form-like. But it also must break, albeit temporarily, its own boundaries in order to seek its proper sustenance. (Socrates alludes, I think, precisely to the relevant kind of transcendence when he poses the question whether there may not be something divine in us). The degree to which each incarnate soul can transcend its own boundaries varies. Mostly, it depends on the causal history of the soul before birth and, to a lesser extent, on the training of the lower elements. To substantiate these claims and, especially, to clarify further that concept of transcendence I propose to revisit the myth of the palinode for one last time.

At the outset, however, it is useful to supply some context for that concept by outlining the positions of two dialogues mentioned earlier, the *Charmides* and the *Alcibiades*, which have been taken to suggest in different ways that the highest achievement of the rational soul is to surpass one's individual self and become connected somehow with elements of Reality. The *Charmides* develops its central contention, that *sophrosyne* is a kind of knowledge, on the grounds of an apparently unwarranted shift from something individual and personal, the self, to something universal

72. On the violence exercised by the ruling element to the black horse, see the insightful discussion of Obdrzalek 2012.

and impersonal, knowledge. Although Critias defines initially *sophrosyne*, temperance, as knowledge of *oneself* (ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ: 164d, 165b-e), he subsequently modifies that definition into knowledge or science of *itself* and the other sciences (cf. ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτῆς: 166c). One way of explaining the switch from knowledge of the self to knowledge of knowledge is to suggest that, for Critias as well as for Socrates,⁷³ the correct understanding of a virtue, *sophrosyne*, as well as of the self possessing that virtue, implies reconfiguring these concepts in some objective manner: *sophrosyne* is not a feature of some individual self, but rather a feature of the knowing faculty whose principal object is knowledge without qualification.⁷⁴ The *Alcibiades* argues in a more direct and explicit manner for the view that genuine self-knowledge entails some sort of transcendence. Namely, Socrates first urges the young Alcibiades to take care of himself by endeavouring to know himself (128a), but then moves on to an analysis of the concept of the self as something entirely different from what we ordinarily take it to be (129b ff.). To wit, he first identifies the self with the soul and demonstrates that knowledge of oneself is knowledge of the soul, not the body (128c-130c). Subsequently, he removes from the self every element that has to do with the individuality related to the body and maintains that the one-to-one dialectical encounters leading to self-knowledge are encounters between individual souls (129b-130c). Next, in a passage whose meaning is much debated (130d), he distinguishes between the self itself (αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτὸ) and each individual self (αὐτὸ τὸ ἕκαστον) and indicates that, for present purposes, it suffices to enquire in a provisional manner into the latter without exploring also the former.⁷⁵ What follows confirms, in my view, that the self is considered individually, not in a universal manner. For, using the famous image of the mirror (132d-133c), Socrates argues that the individual soul, aided by its dialectical interaction with another soul, gets to know itself by transcending the limits of its own individuality and contemplating Reality, *i.e.*, wisdom and god (133c). It remains open, I think, whe-

73. Socrates does not object in the least to the transformation of knowledge of oneself into knowledge of itself. The fact that he remains silent about this matter can be interpreted as a dialectical move or, alternatively, as a tacit endorsement of the suggestion that, in the end, the self is simply knowledge of some sort.

74. A variant of this interpretation is defended by Tsouna 1997. However, it is still a matter of controversy how to understand the underdefined concept of 'the knowledge of itself or knowledge of knowledge'.

75. I defended this view in Tsouna 2001, 50-56. Other commentators defend the opposite view, namely that Socrates proceeds to enquire into the nature of 'the self itself', although there is disagreement as to whether or not that expression involves some reference to Forms. To my knowledge, the strongest defense of that interpretation is Brunschwig 1996. Useful remarks are also found in Annas 1985.

ther the soul which effects this transcendence preserves its own individuality or, alternatively, becomes one with divine wisdom.

Returning to the myth of the Great Speech, we should recall the image of the ruling part of the human soul (*cf.* ἄρχων: 237d), the driver of the team, as he tries to make the winged structure ascend towards the rim of heaven while the inferior parts, the horses, pull in the opposite direction. There is no doubt that every team remains the same as itself whether it is moving upwards or downwards – in other words, it retains its own individual identity. The difference is that the climb upwards leads to a vision of true beings (ὄντως ὄντα: 247e), which also remain the same as themselves (*cf.* 247c-e), whereas the fall of the soul downwards leads to its incarceration in bodies which do not remain the same as themselves but are subject to change. However, when the charioteer manages to pull the entire team up to the rim of heaven, the Forms are not seen by the entire individualised soul, but only by its driver: only he can engage in contemplation, whereas the other two parts of the team cannot.⁷⁶ As Socrates points out in non-metaphorical terms, ‘the colourless, shapeless, and intangible essence, what really is what it is, with which all true knowledge is concerned, is visible only to the mind (νόη), the soul’s steersman’ (247c); the mind alone is naturally capable of receiving⁷⁷ the Forms and of being nourished (τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ: 247d; *cf.* also 248b-c) by them. And given that the Forms are in outer space, the driver must stretch his head *up and out* in order to have a view of them (ὑπερῆρε εἰς τὸν ἔξω τόπον: 248a). From the standpoint of the individual, then, the contemplation of Forms can be said to involve a movement of the mind *up and outwards*: *up* with regard to the earth and the concerns of the body; *outwards* perhaps with regard to accepted views that one tends to presuppose without (further) reflection.

Additional features of the myth highlight other important aspects of the concept of transcendence. First, transcendence presupposes the cooperation of all three parts of the soul. Whether the lower elements are gently induced to align themselves to the goal of reason⁷⁸ or violently compelled to do so,⁷⁹ the fact is that reason cannot see Forms without them. Consider the simile: without the winged horses the soul’s ascent would not be at all possible, notwithstanding that the black horse naturally opposes that ascent. Second, the gods alone can effect completely and perfectly the act of transcendence which consists in contemplating the Forms, whereas hu-

76. Most scholars hold this view, but there are a few exceptions as well: see the discussion in Obdrzalek 2012 n. 17.

77. *Cf.* δέξεσθαι: 247d. Note, however, that certain editors bracket the entire phrase.

78. So *e.g.* Nussbaum 1986.

79. As contends *e.g.* Obdrzalek 2012, especially 97-98 and n. 37.

man souls can perform that act partially and imperfectly in various degrees depending on their individual condition. As mentioned, even the human souls that are godlike cannot have a full and unimpeded view of the Forms but *barely* see them (cf. *μόγις*: 248a), while the other souls may not see them at all (248b). Divine intelligence (*θεοῦ διάνοια*) feeds on mind and pure knowledge, whereas every other soul can take only what befits it (*τὸ προσήκον*) (247d).⁸⁰ The reason is not that god is all mind, whereas humans have extra-rational elements, but rather that the gods have two *good* horses, whereas humans have a good horse and a bad one. Third, while the metaphor of nourishment might point to some sort of assimilation of the mind with the Forms, as I indicated, that possibility is precluded by several elements of the myth. In fact, the myth preserves all the way through the distinction between the knower and the objects of knowledge, and that distinction holds for the souls of the gods as well as for the souls of men. Each divine soul contemplates the Forms so long as the circular motion of the heaven allows it to do so, but after the soul has beheld these eternal entities and has feasted on them (*ἐστιασθεῖσα*) it passes down again within heaven and goes home (247e). And even if the mind were assimilated to the Forms, the other parts of the soul would not be able to do so, for they do not feed on Forms. The horses of the divine souls feed on nectar and ambrosia (247e), which are divine substances to be sure, but not Forms. As for the horses of the human souls, the metaphor suggests, I believe, that there is a kind of nourishment appropriate for them too which, however, does not consist in Forms.⁸¹ It follows that the kind of transcendence envisaged by the *Alcibiades*, according to which the individual self eventually becomes *absorbed* into ‘wisdom and God’, is ruled out by the myth of the *Phaedrus*. Fourth, the black horse is both an obstacle to and a precondition for transcendence, as is shown by the analysis of *eros*. For, on the one hand, it frustrates the lover’s pursuit of Beauty in the beloved by clamouring for the pleasures of sex.⁸² On the other, it is rarely noticed in the literature that

80. Cf. Hermeias’ plausible interpretation of the relevant claim: p. 143, 7-11 Couvreur.

81. Pace Obdrzalek 2012, especially n. 37. On this point, see also Griswold 1986, 134-136; Ferrari 1987, 194; Nussbaum 1986, 220; and Vlastos 1981, 39-40. These references are also cited by Obdrzalek 2012 n. 37.

82. Consider again the dynamic process by which the philosophical lover captures the beautiful boy that he loves. At first, the lover’s reason beholds ‘the love-inspiring sight’ (*ἐρωτικὸν ὄμμα*: 253e) which fills the soul with desire, but nonetheless reason followed by the element corresponding to the white horse refrains from going close to the boy. On the other hand, the element corresponding to the black horse becomes totally unruly and eventually forces the lover to approach the youth (*ἵέναι πρὸς τὰ παιδικά*: 254a) (254b). As soon as the lover looks upon him, the youth’s beauty brings back the memory of Beauty and of Self-Control standing next to it (254d254b). The lover feels such fear and awe that he

the black horse is the force which *compels* the lover to approach the boy (254a) and enables him to begin his recollection of Beauty and the other Forms by bringing him in the close vicinity of the beautiful particular.⁸³

To conclude: the palinode of the *Phaedrus* does not concentrate on the tension between the soul and the body in a general manner, as the *Apology* does; nor between objectivity and subjectivity, as the *Charmides* suggests; nor yet between an individual self and its universal or cosmic counterpart, as the *Alcibiades* implies. Rather, I have maintained, the palinode determines the area of tension *within one's self*, between the higher, ruling part and the lower parts constituting one's immortal soul. The explanation of *eros* shows *how* the struggle between these two elements is severe and *why* the stakes are so high. If the worse element gets its way, transcendence is impossible: the lovers will live the life of animals (*cf.* 250e) and then their souls will 'pass into darkness and the journey under the earth' (256d), taking the full ten thousand years to return to their disembodied state (*cf.* 248e). If, on the other hand, the better element controls the worse completely or almost, transcendence is possible and the better souls can have access to the Forms. They lead godlike lives on earth and will be able to journey upwards to the heaven much sooner than other souls (256a-d). As Socrates remarks, 'neither human temperance nor divine madness can confer a greater good than this upon man' (256b).

Self-knowledge consists, precisely, in understanding fully that truth in the light of the account provided by the palinode. Moreover, there emerges a new conception of rationality, which focuses on the transcendental activity of the mind, and also makes room for certain conditions that fall outside the realm of ordinary reason. *Eros* is the most beneficial of these conditions, a form of madness uniquely capable of aiding reason to recollect Beauty and the other Forms. According to this enhanced conception of rationality, the truly rational person is one who is capable of losing one's mind: becoming oblivious to earthly concerns and pursuing with single-mindedness and devotion the vision of transcendental Realities. As the palinode makes clear, the only persons who have that ability are the philosophers, the lovers of beauty, or those with a musical and erotic nature

pulls back violently overcoming the resistance of the lower elements. As mentioned, the process is repeated several times over until the persistence of the element corresponding to the black horse is entirely overcome and both the non-rational parts of the soul learn to obey reason. What enables reason to achieve that feat is, precisely, its power to transcend individual beauty and perceive Beauty in the boy. Moreover, when the beloved returns the lover's *eros* and their souls both grow wings, another kind of transcendence becomes also possible, namely the final liberation of the soul from the body and the return of the soul to its discarnate state (*cf.* 256b-d).

83. Obdrzalek 2012 makes a similar point but in a different philosophical context.

(248d). Whatever the relation between these categories, it must be an intimate one. For Socrates' final prayer to *Eros* is that Phaedrus 'may simply devote his life to Love and philosophical discussions' (257b).

At long last a solution can be given, at least provisionally, to Socrates' puzzle. We are both beasts and men, both more complex and simpler, both human and divine. Our humanity is eminently related to the activity and rule of the divine element in us, whereas our body pertains to our animal nature.⁸⁴ The irreducible tension between these elements is the peculiar characteristic of the human condition. From a philosophical point of view, it is difficult to assess just what this view implies for personal identity. In the end, are we divided personalities in which (ideally) the rational element subdues by force our other psychic components, as the brutal treatment of the black horse might seem to suggest? The answer depends in crucial ways, I think, on how much importance we ascribe to the myth's suggestion that not only the charioteer but also the horses have their proper nourishment, and also on how seriously we take not just the differences but also the similarities between divine and human souls. On the interpretation offered above both these factors carry much weight. Accordingly, the picture that emerges is optimistic as well as realistic. By ensuring that each part of the soul develops in accordance with its own nature, we may aspire to ease the struggle within us and acquire a psychic balance – a kind of dynamic equilibrium between the different parts of ourselves, but not the elimination of our spirited and appetitive aspects in favour of reason. In fact, the total suppression of spirit and appetite could never be achieved. For, as Socrates' palinode suggests, the contemplative activity of the rational element presupposes the function of extra-rational elements as well. Contemplation and impulse go together in all rational beings, human or divine.⁸⁵

84. This may be viewed as an important departure from the *Alcibiades*, in which Socrates contrasts the humanity of our body with the divine character of the soul.

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