

Self-Knowledge, Eros and Recollection in Plato's *Phaedrus*

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates distinguishes between two kinds of people: those who are more complex, violent and hybristic than the monster Typhon, and those who are simpler, calmer and tamer (230a). This paper argues that there are also two distinct types of *Eros* (Love) that correlate to Socrates's two kinds of people. In the first case, lovers cannot attain recollection because their souls are disordered in the absence of self-knowledge. For the latter, the self-knowledge of self-disciplined lovers renders them capable of recollecting the Forms by ordering their souls naturally.

Keywords: Self-Knowledge, Eros, Recollection, Myth, *Phaedrus*

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INTRODUCTION:

The structural and thematic unity¹ of the *Phaedrus* has been a prominent topic among scholars. Most scholars divide the dialogue into either two² or three³ parts focusing on the subjects of Love (*Eros*) and Rhetoric (*Logos*)⁴ which, as I aim to show, are connected through the central myth of the dialogue.

In this paper, I suggest that Love serves as the thematic core of the *Phaedrus*; a subject which, based on my deductions, is developed at three different levels. In the first part of the dialogue (227a–243e), Love is presented as purely sensual; in the second part (244a–257c), it is equated with the fourth kind of divine madness which constitutes a soul process; and ultimately, in the third (257d–279c), Love is identified with the dialectic love of division and collection. Accordingly, I contend that the above gradations within the development of Love correspond to the cognitive process of recollection. Furthermore, I argue that self-knowledge constitutes a fundamental requirement for a lover to attain recollection. The main thrust of this paper is to illuminate how lovers' self-knowledge engenders unity and harmony within their souls and, thus, determines the type of Love that lovers espouse.

At the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates distinguishes between two kinds of people: those who are more complex, violent and hybriatic than the monster Typhon, and those who are simpler, calmer and tamer (230a). I propose that there are also two distinct types of Love correlating to Socrates's two kinds of people, namely, the hybriatic and the self-disciplined. In the first case, lovers have no self-knowledge in that they bestow control of their souls upon the inferior part thereof, i.e. the appetitive part of the soul. In such an instance, as evinced in the text (250e–251a),

lovers cannot perform the act of recollection. In the second case, however, lovers do have self-knowledge and may thereby repress the violence dwelling in the inferior part of their souls and cede control over the soul to its superior constituents: the rational and the spirited. Only thus may a lover attain recollection of the Forms and lead a life of moderation and fulfilment—the philosopher's life.

This paper proceeds through five parts. The first deals with the subject of self-knowledge in Plato's early dialogues and the *Phaedrus*. The second section presents the transition from sensual to soul love and subsequently to the love of division and collection in the *Phaedrus*. The third section elucidates the dipoles of the text and the mediating function of the central myth of the dialogue, and the fourth sketches the relationship between Love, recollection and mythology. Finally, the last section illuminates how Socrates's interpretation of the central myth connects self-knowledge with Love and recollection.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The concept of self-knowledge is both theoretically and practically examined in the Platonic corpus, which, according to Landa-zurri (2015, p. 128), shows that epistemology and ethics are combined in Plato's educational model. As Moore puts it, for Plato, to know oneself is to be aware of one's soul and character; a consideration which is primarily epistemological but practical as well, to the extent that this same consideration "can make oneself a better person" (Moore, 2014, p. 391).

Self-knowledge, as a Platonic concept, is mainly⁵ employed in Plato's early dialogues such as the *Apology*, the *Charmides* and the *First Alcibiades*. More specifically, in the *Apol-*

ogy (see *Ap.* 21b), Plato defines self-knowledge as the awareness of ignorance and presents it as a cognitive state which makes its owner virtuous and prosperous.⁶ In the *Charmides*, the philosopher enriches the definition of self-knowledge by defining it as “a science of the other sciences and its own self”⁷ (*Chrm.* 166c). Self-knowledge, in the *Charmides*, is a science that makes its owner capable of being aware of what one truly knows and what one does not, on the one hand, and of examining the knowledge of others, on the other hand. Furthermore, self-knowledge is a prerequisite for someone to be self-disciplined (*sôfron*) (see *Chrm.* 167a). However, the questions remain: what is the ‘self’ and how can knowledge of it be reached? The *First Alcibiades* answers these crucial questions, firstly, by “identifying the self with soul and not with the body” (Tsouna, 2008, p. 47), and, secondly, by claiming that self-knowledge is achievable through reflectivity (*anaklastikôtita*), when a soul reflects in another.

Nevertheless, in the *Phaedrus*, self-knowledge is not associated – at least in an obvious way – with self-restraint (*sofrosýne*) and reflectivity. This is the first and only dialogue in which Plato connects, in a negative way, the concept of self-knowledge with the rational interpretation of myths.⁸ This correlation arises in the preamble of the dialogue when Socrates and Phaedrus arrive at the place where, according to the traditional myth, Boreas abducted Oreithyia. There, Phaedrus asks Socrates if he deems this myth real. Socrates responds that it seems ridiculous to him to investigate strange, inconceivable and portentous things, such as mythical monsters, since he is not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know himself⁹ (229c–e). The philosopher further points out that he prefers to accept the customary belief about

such matters, to spend his leisure time on self-investigation. Therefore, instead of attempting to interpret and explain traditional myths in a rational way,¹⁰ he would rather investigate himself to become aware of whether he is “a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon, or a simpler and gentler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature”¹¹ (230a). As Moore (2014, p. 414) correctly observes, the simile that Socrates uses pushes readers to think that knowing which of the two above-mentioned types one corresponds to constitutes a prerequisite for achieving self-knowledge, although it does not explain *why* Socrates does not know himself. In any case, “Socrates’ question does not exhaust or close his inquiry, but rather keeps it alive” (Nichols, 2010, p. 97).

Dorter (2006, p. 262) argues that the first type of self, i.e. the more complicated and more furious than the Typhon monster, correlates to the bad horse of the palinode,¹² that is, the appetitive part of the soul. The second type of self, that is, the simpler and gentler creature, tallies with the good horse, namely, the spirited part of the soul.¹³ However, if we accept Dorter’s interpretation, we will have to identify the self with only a part within the soul, not with the soul as a whole. Contrariwise, if we identify, as I suggest, the first type of self with what is described as *hybris* (excess) and the second type of self with what is depicted as *sofrosýne* in the first speech of Socrates, we might be closer to a more correct interpretation. At this point, it is pertinent to remember the relevant definitions. According to Socrates, there are two ruling and leading principles in each one of us; one is the innate desire for pleasure and the other is the acquired opinion that strives for the best. When the acquired opinion, which is true and guided by reason,

prevails, its power is called *self-restraint*, but when irrational desire dominates, its rule is called *excess* (237d–238a). Excess is depicted as multifarious and diverse; a depiction that, in my opinion, resembles the complexity of the monstrous self, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, makes the reader think that self-restraint, which is the opposite mental state of excess, should be simple, just like the second type of self is.

Griswold remarks that Socrates places Typhon amid two extreme self-types; the first one represents disorder, excess and destruction. Undoubtedly, such a monster, guided by irrational desire, cannot know itself because it is not capable of understanding its limits. Griswold argues that this monster corresponds to “the absolute tyranny of Eros deprived of intelligence” (Griswold, 1986, p. 41). The second self-type represents tameness and “seems to be a result of the domestication of an acquired recognition of *nomos* and *doxa*” (Griswold, 1986, p. 41), which makes one capable of not only knowing but also accepting one’s own limits. Below, I will endeavour to demonstrate that the first self-type corresponds to the hybriatic kind of Love, which is introduced in Lysias’s speech and, accordingly, that the second self-type corresponds to the self-disciplined lover, which is initially described in Socrates’s first speech and further illustrated in his second speech.

FROM SENSUAL TO SOUL LOVE AND THE LOVE OF DIVISION AND COLLECTION

Lysias’s speech sketches *Eros* as something hideous, as a mental disease (231c–d) which makes its owner paranoid and as a purely lecherous desire (232e–233a) that lasts as long

as bodily beauty lasts. Lysias claims that it is more proper to give one’s favours to a non-lover than to a lover, since only the non-lover is self-dominant and, therefore, self-disciplined (232a–b). The rhetorician alleges that lovers are jealous and jealousy often leads to enmity. Thus, lovers’ affection for young boys is harmful in that they obstruct the boys’ spiritual development. On the contrary, non-lovers are not driven by their passions, so they are more useful than harmful to the boys, in that they establish a long friendship with them and lead them to better education. As we can see, Lysias’s speech portrays Love as a completely sensual experience and degradation of reason, perceiving it merely as a servant of desire. Plainly enough, Lysias defines Love and the self-disciplined lover in a distorted way.

In contrast to Lysias’s definitions, as we have seen above, is Socrates’s definition of self-restraint in his first speech. Socrates defines self-restraint as a kind of love that occurs when the innate desire for pleasure is subjected to the acquired opinion which is true and guided by reason. In the *Republic*, we find a similar definition. There, Plato characterises the self-disciplined lover as one in whom the upper parts of the soul, the rational and spirited, cooperate to tame the appetitive part’s extravagant desire for pleasures (*R.* 410d–412a). Self-restraint is a harmonious and sober mental state, in which the rational and the appetitive parts stipulate that, by nature, the superior part must rule, and the inferior must obey. Moreover, self-restraint is opposed to extravagant pleasure, which is a madness of spirit (*R.* 402d–403b).

Paradoxically, the self-disciplined lover of the *Republic* seems to correspond to the *Phaedrus*’s ‘mad lover’, who is introduced in the central myth of the dialogue. As we read at 256a–b, when Socrates interprets his

myth, divine lovers “live a life of harmony and happiness”, in that the charioteer (the rational part of the soul) cooperates with the good horse (the spirited part of the soul) to restrict the bad horse’s extravagant tendency towards pleasure.¹⁴ As a result of the right order in their soul, those lovers become self-disciplined, virtuous and blissful. Counter to this kind of lover is the lecherous lover, who is corrupted and has surrendered to the innate desire for pleasures by giving control of his soul to the bad horse, the appetitive part of the soul (250e–251a).

In my opinion, two types of madness are introduced in the *Phaedrus*, respective to two kinds of *sofrosýne*, namely the humane and the divine. The first type of madness “is caused by humane illness, the other by a divine release from the norms of conventional behaviour” (265a).¹⁵ What is defined as ‘conventional behaviour’ in this case? As evinced in the text, conventional behaviour is the lecherous, hybristic love, or else the love of Lysias’ non-lover which, mixed with ‘mortal prudence’, breeds in the boy’s soul the quality of slavishness, which is commonly praised as a virtue (256e). Yet, we must define what ‘mortal prudence’ is and *why* that kind of *sofrosýne* raises slavishness in the soul. It seems that the description of mortal prudence matches the description of *sofrosýne* in Lysias’s account, that is, the utilitarian subjugation of reason to the innate desire for pleasure. In this way, the natural order in the lover’s soul is disturbed and, thus, the lover becomes a servant of the lowest part of the soul. Accordingly, divine *sofrosýne* corresponds to the divine madness of love, which makes its owner self-disciplined by enslaving “the part which allowed evil in the soul” (the appetitive) and by freeing up the part which is the source of virtue (the spirited) (256b–c). In other words, the divine lover gains divine

sofrosýne, in that their soul is naturally ordered; the superior part rules and the inferior part obeys. Now, let us consider how the order or disorder in a lover’s soul reflects the extent of the lover’s self-knowledge.

The only things a non-lover knows, according to Lysias’s account, are the object of their desire (Yunis, 2005, p. 112) and the means that are needed to conquer it (Griswold, 1986, p. 5). Such a “lover” does not have self-knowledge, and, further, does not teach us anything about theirs and our nature (Tsouna, 2008, p. 49–50). Lebeck (1972, p. 283) aptly points out that Lysias’s rhetoric, which is harmful and does not purpose for the truth, introduces an analogous kind of lover: an excessively and extremely passionate and suicidal person, who seeks a similar lover (Griswold, 1986, p. 20–21). On the contrary, the lover in Socrates’s first speech seems to have some kind of dialectical reasoning: the lover wants to know if love is something harmful or beneficial and also attempts to define the subject of investigation. In a few words, the lover cares for the essence of love (237c–d). After Socrates defines love as the desire for good things, he implicitly, yet certainly, distinguishes two types of love: the self-disciplined, which is good and useful, and the hybristic, which is excessive and harmful (237d–238c). Socrates declares that they will now investigate the hybristic type of love¹⁶ and argues that a hybristic lover is harmful to the boy who is desired by the lover because the lover prevents the boy’s engagement to philosophy; a divine engagement that could lead him to prudence (238b–241a). Furthermore, a hybristic lover contrives anything that could keep the boy ignorant of everything else (239b). Therefore, this lover doubly harms the desired boy, in that the boy is prevented not only from knowing himself but from knowing all other things as well.

But *how* does the divine Love of the self-disciplined lover guide its possessor to philosophy and knowledge? Socrates's second speech, the palinode,¹⁷ answers the above question. The myth begins as an attempt to depict the nature¹⁸ of the soul (246a). Every soul, humane or divine, consists of a charioteer (*logistikôn*) and two horses. In the case of gods' souls, both horses are good, but in the case of human souls, one horse is good (*thumoeidês*) and one is bad (*epithimitikôn*). This explains why gods' chariots confront no difficulties reaching the region above the sky, where "the colourless, formless, and intangible truly existing essence holds (...), visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul" which is nurtured by it (247c–d). Every other soul that is capable of following gods' chariots pursues the revelation and raises the head of the charioteer to gaze at the things we call realities: absolute justice, temperance, knowledge and every other similar thing (247d–248a).¹⁹ Every soul desires to reach the region above the sky and to be nourished by those things, but some souls lack strength and are left behind. Many of the souls lose their wings and become heavy because, through some mischance, they are filled with forgetfulness and evil. Thus, they fall to the earth without gaining a view of reality. These fallen souls, according to the Law of Destiny, are incarnated and start to feed upon opinion (248b–c). As indicated, the reality is divided into two different realms: the intelligible, at which souls are nourished by Forms and science, and the sensible, where incarnated souls are nourished by opinions, which according to Burger (1947, p. 57) are cultivated through arts. In other words, arts imprint acquired opinions on human souls. However, *how* are acquired opinions, art, love and soul interwoven in the *Phaedrus*?

In the third part of the dialogue, Plato states that rhetoric is an art that "leads the soul by means of words" (261a–b). The art of rhetoric, which is charming and persuasive, is used by rhetoricians either to imprint harmful (false) or beneficial (true) opinions on human souls. A counterfeit rhetorician, who is ignorant of the truth and cannot distinguish similar things, deceives people with false discourses (262a–b), whilst a true rhetorician, who has knowledge and science and uses the dialectical methods of *division* and *collection*, imprints beneficial opinions on human souls (263b–c). Socrates admits that he has used the two above-mentioned methods in his speeches²⁰ (264e–265a) and calls himself a *lover* of these processes (266b). Socrates, clearly enough, distinguishes his philosophical rhetoric from the conventional rhetoric of Lysias, by implying that he – through his discourses – instilled true and expedient opinions, whilst Lysias's speech imprinted a false and harmful opinion on Phaedrus's soul regarding Love. Otherwise stated, "Socrates establishes that True Rhetoric is indistinguishable from Philosophy. The philosopher is the real rhetorician and the only man who arouses and makes love in the truest sense" (Lebeck, 1972, p. 283).

THE DIPOLES AND THE MEDIATING FUNCTION OF THE CENTRAL MYTH

Based on what we have discussed above, it is clear that the *Phaedrus* stands on dipoles.²¹ We first encountered the self-type dipole, that of the more complex and the simpler than Typhon selves; next, we encountered the dipole of the hybristic and the self-disciplined lovers; and finally, the dipole of conventional and true rhetoric. Kluge (2010, p. 347–371) sug-

gests that all of the dipoles could efficiently be consolidated into a single dipole, that of beauty and truth, which the central myth of the dialogue intercedes. Plato's poetic imagination portrays the bad horse's desire for sensual beauty pinioned with the charioteer's desire for real Beauty on the same chariot, inserting between those the good horse's desire for virtue and temperance (253d–e). Hence, the palinode sketches a mixed type of love, which mediates the lecherous, sensual love presented in the first part of the dialogue, and the love of division and connections illustrated in the third part of the dialogue. In other words, the myth adumbrates a kind of love that commences from sexual wistfulness whilst "its natural goal, as well its ultimate source, is communion with being" (Yunis, 2005, p. 113).

It seems that the central myth of the *Phaedrus* mediates all of the text's dipoles, intervening between the first and the third parts of the dialogue. It is placed in the middle of the *Phaedrus* because Plato employs it in an attempt to reconcile every above-mentioned dipole. The palinode, I argue, teaches us that true rhetoric interposes between the false rhetoric of Lysias and Socrates's dialectic method; that love as a divine madness interpolates hybristic love and love of division and collection; and, finally, that poetic imagery intervenes amid the discourses concerning the sensual and true beauty.

Further, what does the myth depict? Of which thing does it give us an image? As stated in the text, the central myth of the *Phaedrus* constitutes a plausible image, a likeness of the soul's nature (246a). According to Frentz (2006, p. 250), in Socrates's second speech, "most clearly in the famous chariot image, intellect and *eros* are fused in the pursuit of the truth about the soul". In this light, Socrates narrates this myth to depict the essence of the

soul and imprint a true belief on Phaedrus's soul regarding the true nature of the self. This myth, we could say, imparts the opinion that the order or disorder in each person's soul determines their self-type and, subsequently, the kind of love that they embrace. We and Phaedrus are challenged by Socrates to either accept or deny this opinion.

Waterfield (2002, p. xxii) highlights that the fact that we only have two options, either to be or not to be convinced by the myth, denotes the weakness of myth, "that it is necessarily dogmatic". However, as we have seen in the preamble of the dialogue, Socrates declares that he prefers to be convinced by myths rather than attempt to interpret them rationally, in order to take advantage of this spare time to explore himself (229e). In my opinion, Socrates's declaration functions as a note to us: If we want to become aware of ourselves, we must be persuaded by his myth, not waste time in rational interpretations and doubts. Only the rustic people disbelieve in myths (229e); the truly wise accept them (245c).

We must also consider that myth, in this case, constitutes a helpful instrument for Socrates's rhetorical art, which is true and inspired unlike Lysias's. After all, rhetoric is the art of persuasion (260a) that speaks not for the truth but for the probable (*eikôs*), not for the actual facts but for the likely-to-be-done (272e). *Eikôs*, Socrates contends, is persuading in that it looks similar to the truth. Moore (2014, 413) aptly points out that Socrates presents *eikôs* as compatible and not in opposition with the truth. Unlike those who attempt to interpret myths rationally, adjusting their opinions to *eikôs*, people who are interested in learning about themselves adjust their opinions to the truth (Moore, 2014, p. 412). It appears that the purpose of Socrates's mythological narration is to provide a plausible image of the truth; a true

belief for the investigated object, which is love, but also a commensurate consideration of what the self really is. Given that self-type is directly related to the type of love that a lover espouses, Tsouna (2008, p. 49) claims that the understanding of love, humans and self, aggregate different aspects of the same philosophical inquiry.

Waterfield (2002, p. xxii-xxiii) observes that the incomplete picture of myth falls short of the absolute truth, in that it offers partial and, consequently, only temporary views of the truth. Alternatively stated, the true opinions that the myth instils in souls constitute imperfect pictures of the truth itself, in that they are only temporary if not fastened with truth through dialectic reasoning. Concerning the dialogue's context of recollection, I propose that the central myth of the *Phaedrus* has a function analogous to that of earthly beauty: it constitutes a copy of the absolute truth, in the sight of which the divine lover, through the cognitive process of recollection, ascends to the intelligible realm. From my perspective, Plato uses myth deliberately to imprint a true belief, that is – as we know from *Meno* – the prerequisite cognitive state for someone to attain recollection. However, myth as a dialectical instrument (Kluge, 2010, p. 359) is expedient only if addressed to those who are meant to be philosophers, since only they, as we will see, are capable of recollecting Forms.

LOVE, RECOLLECTION AND MYTHOLOGY

According to Socrates, when souls fall to the earth, they forget the realities that they contemplated in the region above the sky; some of them slightly, others considerably and some others completely. To obtain recollection of these realities, a human being “must²² under-

stand a general conception formed by collecting into a unity²³ by means of the reason the many perceptions of the senses” (249b). Only a philosopher's soul could attain recollection, for a philosopher's mind is always in communion with those things through memory and thus has wings (249b–c). Such a man is inspired by the fourth kind of madness,²⁴ the divine love, which makes him capable of remembering true beauty when he sees beauty on earth (249d).

Lovers of this category love beautiful things and, since they are recently initiated to the view of realities when they face a truly beautiful and godlike face, they are occupied by the passion of madness and cannot control themselves. Being in this condition, these lovers do not clearly perceive the cause of their passion (250a–b). The fact that, in this phase, lovers cannot rationally explain what happens indicates, I contend, that they are in the cognitive state of true belief. If we attempt to interpret the *Phaedrus* with the theory of recollection from the *Meno* in mind, we could assume that this type of lover is at the second of the three recollection stages.²⁵ The cognitive state of these lovers may reflect their endeavours to be eventually in communion with the Form of Beauty through reason and not just the automated way of true belief.

Dorter (2006, p. 266) correctly indicates that the madness of the *Phaedrus*'s lover corresponds to the blindness of the liberated prisoner in the allegory of the cave found in the *Republic*. In both cases, Plato depicts the transition from the sensible to the intelligible realm; a transition that cannot be achieved smoothly and without pain, as the two realms are so substantially different. According to Dorter (2006, p. 266), the transition from the hazy, empirical and physical world to the explicit world of Forms is signified by the ascension and the total turning of the soul to light and reality in the *Republic* (see *R.* 517c;

521c), whilst the same transition is denoted with recollection in the *Phaedrus*.

Socrates declares that only a philosopher who rightly employs the ‘reminders’²⁶ is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and becomes truly perfect (249c–d). What are the ‘reminders’ and how should they be used in order to be beneficial to dialectical inquiry? In the third part of the dialogue, Socrates states that myths composed by dialecticians function as reminders, as they are beneficial to those who have written them when they come to the forgetfulness of old age, as well as to those who will follow the same path, namely future philosophers (276d–e). The discourses of a mythmaker who employs the dialectic method and, thus, has knowledge of the good, the just and the beautiful, become fruitful when they are being planted in a fitting soul. The sowing and the continuous reproduction of those intelligent words “make their possessor happy,²⁷ to the farthest possible limit of human happiness” (276d–277a).

Commenting on the above-mentioned passage, Dorter argues that dialecticians provide acquired opinions to their students through their myths. The seeds of the philosophers are transformed from opinion to knowledge *only* when a student understands the teachings thoroughly. The theory of recollection, which is initially introduced in the *Meno*, makes this transition possible, in that it indicates that we can discover truths that our senses alone could not discern. This is possible because those truths, which are inherent but forgotten, can be activated “by the right kind of reminders” (Dorter, 2006, p. 270).

Furthermore, if we combine two claims by Socrates when closing his myth, the possibility of the central myth of the *Phaedrus* being such a reminder seems more than plausible. Socrates, firstly, contends that he as a philosopher was initiated in the perfect mysteries of memory, in that he was following “in the train

of Zeus” (250b7). Secondly, he claims that his mythological account was spoken “in honour of memory” (250c8). As we know from the Orphic hymn to the Muses,²⁸ Zeus (the king of the Gods) and Mnemosyne (the goddess of memory) were the parents of the Muses, who, according to the *Phaedrus*, are the inspirational goddesses of poetic madness. We could safely assume that these words of Socrates intimate that Plato considers this myth to be a divinely inspirational poem, as much as a reminder to *Phaedrus* about the nature of the soul and love.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CENTRAL MYTH AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOVER

The depiction of the soul as a complex entity that constitutes a unity despite its division into three distinct parts, admittedly, does not sufficiently illuminate the question of *what* the self is, which Socrates introduced at the beginning of the dialogue. Nevertheless, the manner in which Plato interprets his own myth outlines, in my opinion, two contrasting self-types corresponding to two lover-types. The first is the self-disciplined lover who is inspired by divine madness and gives control of the soul to its superior part, the rational, which is by nature designated to lead. This lover is capable of transitioning from the sensible to the intelligible realm, as a result of the lover’s recent initiation into the perfect mysteries through which the lover is always in communion with the absolute beings or the Forms. The second type, contrariwise, is the hybristic lover, who yields to lecherousness and seeks unnatural pleasures. In this way, the hybristic lover concedes control of the soul to the appetitive part of the soul.

Since a lover of this type is corrupted and not recently initiated to the most blessed of mysteries, when looking at a beautiful person, they cannot perceive that earthly beauty is just a likeness of the absolute Beauty and do not revere it (250e–251a).

These two lover-types differ in the way that each soul is organised. The self-disciplined lover seems to know – even with the automated way of true belief – at least two things: Firstly, that beautiful bodies and faces are images of the absolute Beauty and, secondly, that the superior part of the soul must govern, since this part is by nature appropriate for the task. Knowing both the quality of each soul-part and how they interact with each other, a lover of this kind acquires self-knowledge. Tsouna (2008, p. 55) remarks that for someone to know himself is to know what soul substantially is and how it is organized. This kind of knowledge, namely self-knowledge, renders the lover capable of attaining the recollection of absolute Beings, whilst facilitating the transition from sensual and bodily love to the dialectical love of divisions and collections. Professedly, the psychic composition of the self-disciplined and virtuous lover looks similar to that of what Socrates has called the “simpler and tamer than Typhon animal” (230a) in the dialogue’s preamble. Accordingly, the hybristic and lecherous lover, who does not know the two things that the self-disciplined lover knows, seems to correspond to the so-called second self-type that Socrates refers to, “the more complex, violent, and hybristic than Typhon beast” (230a). Due to ignorance, this type of lover bestows control of the soul to its inferior part, which constantly seeks excessive carnal pleasures. As a result of this disorder of the soul, this kind of lover is occupied by an external and frenetic *mania* that makes the lover offensive, violent and impertinent across beauty.

Only a lover who at least has a true belief regarding which soul-part is by nature equipped to lead and which is by nature constructed to obey – a lover who has self-knowledge – is capable of recollecting Forms in the gaze of their images. After all, there are two sorts of images that trigger the process of recollection for someone who is innately a philosopher and recently initiated to the mysteries of memory—beautiful bodies and beautiful discourses, which both participate in the real and absolute Beauty. Socrates’s myth seems to be such an image through which the philosopher attempts to incite recollection in the soul of Phaedrus. The poetic beauty of the myth, says Lebeck, functions like the lover gazing upon the beloved: the lover is excited “by the iridescence of the language (...) and is initiated an experience which could be crowned with insight” (Lebeck, 1972, p. 290).

Besides, the central myth of the *Phaedrus* seems dissimilar to traditional myths, as it is already interpreted by its own narrator, such that it does not “need a great deal of leisure” (229e). Unlike traditional myths which delineate strange and inconceivable natures, such as Centaurs, Chimaeras, Gorgons and Pegasi (see *Phdr.* 229d) Socrates’s myth imprints an image of the nature of the self or the soul. In particular, the interpretation of this myth delineates how the organisation of a lover’s soul is closely related to the kind of *Eros* they engender and embrace.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Due to the thematic and structural diversity of the *Phaedrus*, many commentators argue about the unity of the dialogue. See on this: Hackforth (1952), Plass (1968), Heath (1987), Rowe (1987), Brisson (1992), Werner (2007), Moss (2012) and Werner (2012). According to Werner, the so-called problem of the *Phaedrus* “has in fact been voiced ever since antiquity” and “this can be seen in Hermeias’s discussion of the issue, as well in the plurality of subtitles that were given to the *Phaedrus* in ancient times” (Werner, 2012, p. 237). Nichols claims that *Phaedrus* “seems to fall short of the standard for good writing that is articulated in the dialogue itself” (Nichols, 2010, p. 91).
- 2 See, for example, Lebeck (1972), who assumes that the *Phaedrus* has the form of a diptych, particularly that of *Eros* and *Logos* around which the whole dialogue is constructed. See also: Yunis (2005), Larsen (2010) and Lorkovic (2014).
- 3 See, for instance, Tsouna (2008), who suggests that the dialogue is divided into three parts. The first part includes three speeches about homoerotic love; the second deals with the composition and the use of rhetorical discourses; and the third one deals with the comparison between oral and written discourses.
- 4 Larsen points out that “the first part of the dialogue seems preoccupied with the topic of *Eros*, the second with rhetoric and *logos*” (Larsen, 2010, p. 73). Larsen also claims that if we find a way to unite these parts, we might find the “overall question of beauty” (Larsen, 2010, p. 73). In this paper, I suggest that these two thematic parts of the dialogue are connected through the central myth of the dialogue.
- 5 Landazurri (2015) presents an interesting approach regarding the development of the self-knowledge concept in the Platonic corpus. By examining passages from the *Charmides*, the *First Alcibiades*, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, he suggests that the concept of self-knowledge, though introduced in the early Platonic dialogues, is refined and articulated with the tripartition of the soul in the *Republic*. Regarding the topic of self-knowledge in early Plato, see Tuozzo (2012) and Leigh (2020). For the relationship between *aporia* and self-knowledge in Plato, see Nightingale (2010).
- 6 Nightingale claims that the “self-reflexive awareness” (Nightingale, 2010, p. 11), which is presented in the *Apology*, is a kind of wisdom.
- 7 Translation by Lamb (1955).
- 8 Four myths are presented in the *Phaedrus*: one is borrowed from traditional poetry – the abduction of Orethia by Boreas – and three are Platonic compositions, namely, the palinode, the cicadas myth and the Theuth and Thamus myth. Werner suggests that the unifying theme of the dialogue is myth itself, in that “both by using myth throughout the dialogue and by offering an ongoing discussion about myth, Plato provides multiple layers on thematic and structural continuity to the text as a whole” (Wener, 2012, p. 238).
- 9 There are many interpretations about what ‘self’ actually is in the dialectical frame of the *Phaedrus*. According to Moore, “recent scholarship is split between taking it as one’s concrete personality and as the nature of (human) souls in general.” (Moore, 2014, 390).
- 10 According to Lorkovic, “Socrates who elsewhere expresses unconventional views about myth, including incisive criticism of mythic poetry and original storytelling that draws on but significantly transforms established myths, here suggests in passing – as if it were obvious – that he believes traditional myth and does so, even more strangely, out of convention” (Lorkovic, 2014, p. 464).
- 11 Unless otherwise noted, I am using Fowler’s 1925 translation of the *Phaedrus*.
- 12 For a summary of the palinode see the next section. For an extensive account of the central myth of the *Phaedrus* see Lebeck (1972).
- 13 For a similar interpretation regarding the tripartition of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, see Lebeck (1972, p. 282).
- 14 Since Plutarch’s *Platonic Questions* Ix.1, the prevailing interpretation of the tripartite soul’s chariot in the *Phaedrus* is that the charioteer is the rational part of the soul, the good horse is the spirited, and the bad horse is the appetitive. However, there are many alternative interpretations. See, for instance, Carelli, who suggests abandoning the traditional interpretation and claims that “the charioteer and horses should be taken to represent the parts of the rational, disembodied soul” (Carelli, 2015, p. 97). Carelli’s interpretation relies on his argument that the black horse’s representation, specifically, in the *Phaedrus* cannot be matched with the depiction of the appetitive part of the soul in the *Republic*, since, in the former, this soul part is sketched as entirely bad, whilst in the *Republic*, it has also a good role in the soul when well-nourished. See also Ferrari (1987, p. 185–201) and Belfiore (2006, p. 187–194), who deny an exact correlation between the tripartite soul in the *Republic* and the tripartite soul of the *Phaedrus*. However, Belfiore (2006, p. 191) claims that all three capacities of the human soul, in the central myth of the *Phaedrus*, share divine and bestial characteristics as well.
- 15 Translation by Waterfield 2002.
- 16 See also *Phaedrus*, 266a, where Socrates states that his first speech “continued to divide this until it found among its parts a sort of left-handed love, which it very justly reviled”.
- 17 According to Werner, there are “multiple palinodic discourses in the *Phaedrus* and the dialogue as a whole has a palinodic momentum” (Werner, 2012, p. 246). Specifically, Socrates’s second speech super-

- sedes the two earlier speeches, that of Lysias and the first of Socrates. Then, “the palinode itself is superceded by the discussion of rhetoric and dialectic; and that discussion – insofar as it is contained within a written dialogue – is superceded by oral, live dialectic” (Werner, 2012, p. 246).
- 18 Plato uses the term “ιδέα”; a fact that raised many controversial interpretations concerning the possible existence of a Form of the Soul. On this subject see Griswold (1981) and Griswold (1986, p. 5–7). I follow scholars who suggest that Plato uses the term broadly in order to speak about the essence, i.e. the nature, of the soul.
 - 19 Ionescu correctly observes that passages 247d5–e2 and 254b5–7 of the *Phaedrus* indicate that the Forms “are not isolated independent of one another, but rather in some kind of network” (Ionescu, 2012, p. 6). In other words, Ionescu asserts that Forms are intrinsically related to one another, so if a Form is recollected, every other Form is possible to be recollected as well; this is a point of view that we first encounter in the *Meno*, 81c9.
 - 20 Socrates claims that his two discourses conceived the madness of love as one principle (through the process of collection), whilst – using the method of division – the first speech conceived a harmful love which was “very justly reviled”, and the second found a divine love which was correctly praised.
 - 21 In a more composite interpretation of the *Phaedrus*, Dorter (2006, p. 263) detects the seven following dipoles: (1) natural world versus humanly constructed city, (2) savage beast versus tame animal, (3) Dionysiac divine madness versus sobriety under the auspices of Hera, (4) natural tendency to respond to love with sexual passion versus the ‘citized’ behavior that calculatingly trades sex as a commodity, (5) natural appetites versus acquired opinions, (6) natural tendency to hybris versus the effort to acquire self-control, and (7) natural living conversation versus artificial products of the acquisition of writing that are devoid of life.
 - 22 Scott (1995, p. 79) remarks that the word ‘must’ in this passage is of high importance, in that it indicates that not every human being is capable of achieving recollection of Forms although they *ought* to.
 - 23 Ionescu (2012, p. 8) argues that the passages 265d3–5 and 265e1–3 intimate that division is the complementary part of collection, since collection is the method of perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, and division is the method of dividing Forms along natural joints without breaking any part. In a different but equally interesting interpretation, Greene (1918, p. 60) suggests that collection is the lower form of dialectic and constitutes the antechamber for the higher form of dialectic which is division. According to Greene, the method of division presupposes the method of collection, provided that collection is the gathering of the dispersed particulars to conceptual unities which a philosopher uses in order to be initiated to the mysteries of perfection through the method of division.
 - 24 The other three kinds of madness are: the gift of prophecy from Apollo, the mystic rites from Dionysus and poetry from the Muses. See *Phaedrus* 265b.
 - 25 Scott (1999, p. 98–99) summarises the recollection stages in three parts: during the first phase, the student that is guided by the dialectician (in this case, Socrates) realises that the student’s beliefs/opinions about the researched subject are not true. In other words, at this level, the student realises their ignorance. Progressively, in the second stage, the student is shifted from the mere realisation of ignorance to the acquisition of true belief(s) regarding the researched subject. Finally, in the third stage of recollection, the student manages to convert true opinion to knowledge, after interlacing a true opinion with a rational explanation.
 - 26 The word in the ancient text is *hypomn mata*. Many translators use the term ‘memories’ but I follow Kanayama (2012) in using the term ‘reminders’, which is closer to the meaning of the ancient Greek word and is used again and explained later in the same dialogue.
 - 27 Lebeck (1972, p. 288) notes that the spoken *logoi* have the same effect with the true *Eros*: each makes its possessor *ευδαίμων*.
 - 28 For the English translation of the hymn, see Athanassakis and Wolkov (2013, p. 261).

