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Consider the following Platonic theses. First, the human soul necessarily contains non-rational elements.¹ Second, the best life is primarily directed towards contemplation. Their

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¹ In order to generate the tension I explore in this paragraph, this thesis need only be construed as the claim that the human soul necessarily contains non-rational elements insofar as it is embodied. This leaves open the possibility that the disembodied soul might be non-partite. *Republic* X (611 A 10-612 A 6) is often taken as making precisely this claim. However, as M. F. Burnyeat ('Recollection in the *Phaedrus*' ['Recollection'], (unpublished)) and A. W. Price (*Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* [*Love*] (Oxford, 2004), at 71-72) note, Plato in fact leaves open two options for the disembodied soul in this passage, that it is non-partite, and that it is partite and well-ordered. They observe that Plato explores the first option in the *Timaeus*, the second in the *Phaedrus* (in fact, as I shall argue, the disembodied soul of the *Phaedrus* is not always well-ordered, suggesting a greater pessimism in Plato's psychology). Attempting to reconcile the *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*, some interpreters, notably W. K. C. Guthrie (*A History of Greek Philosophy, Volume IV* [*History*] (Cambridge, 1975), at 422-25), discount Plato's portrayal of the disembodied soul in the *Phaedrus* as partite. Guthrie proposes that it is only

conjunction generates a problematic conclusion. Plato largely distinguishes the parts of the soul in terms of their overall orientation; the desire and capacity for contemplation characterize the rational element. The existence of non-rational parts of the soul therefore poses a difficulty for the philosophical life. If these are naturally drawn to non-philosophical ends, then they must clamour for their own satisfaction. The only option for the would-be philosopher will be to forcefully suppress these aspects of himself. He will never be able to fully devote himself to contemplation, as the attention of his rational element will be torn between the forms and the inner battlefield. This suggestion, that our inner life is a battlefield, that psychic harmony eludes us, and that the various aspects of our nature can never achieve simultaneous satisfaction, seems dire.

souls caught in the cycle of rebirth that are partite; through purification, we can come to resemble the gods, our souls merging into pure $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$. Burnyeat and Price rightly criticize Guthrie for discounting Plato's portrayal of divine soul as partite, and observe that the soul which follows god best does not lose its lower elements, so much as master them (see also R. Bett, 'Immortality and the Nature of the Soul in the *Phaedrus*', *Phronesis* 31.1 (1986), 1-26, at 20, n. 32). R. S. Bluck ('The *Phaedrus* and Reincarnation', *The American Journal of Philology* 79.2 (1958), 156-64) maintains that in the *Phaedrus*, the non-rational elements are accretions of mortality, acquired as a result of pollution during the soul's initial embodiment. However, as Price argues, Plato describes the soul as losing its wings prior to its first incarnation (71); given that the feathers belong to the whole soul (251 B 7), this implies that the soul was partite prior to its initial embodiment (see also D. D. McGibbon, 'The Fall of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*' ['Fall'], *The Classical Quarterly* 14.1 (1964), 56-63).

How might one reject such a pessimistic interpretation of Plato? Perhaps the solution lies with the *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue, Plato describes how all three parts of the soul—mythically depicted as a charioteer, dark and white horses—can be attracted to one object, a beautiful boy, and can thereby recollect the forms, grow wings, and ascend to the heavens. This might imply that the rational and non-rational parts of the soul can have coinciding desires and that, eventually, they can all be directed towards the forms. There are two ways in which one might locate an optimistic psychology in the *Phaedrus*. First, one might follow Nussbaum in maintaining that in the *Phaedrus*, the lower parts of the soul play a positive cognitive and motivational role in the philosophical life.² Nussbaum proposes that the *Phaedrus* contains a rejection of Plato's overly ascetic psychology of dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Republic*. She emphasizes that in the *Phaedrus*, the charioteer depends on his horses to ascend to the rim of the heavens and behold the forms. This indicates that the non-rational parts of the soul are necessary sources of motivational energy for philosophy; they also offer valuable insight into the nature of beauty. On Nussbaum's reading, conflict between the aims of the three parts of the soul is resolved because they can all be directed towards philosophy.

The second optimistic interpretation of the dialogue does not claim that the lower parts of the soul contribute to philosophical insight; instead, it makes the more restricted proposal, that in the *Phaedrus*, Plato describes how reason can train the lower parts of the soul to obey its command and achieve inner harmony. In a much-cited unpublished paper, Burnyeat argues that the image of the gods feeding their horses ambrosia and nectar indicates that there is a proper

² M. C. Nussbaum, "'This story isn't true': madness, reason, and recantation in the *Phaedrus*" ['Story'], in M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge, 1986), 200-233.

nourishment for the lower parts of the soul.³ Should we manage to grasp the forms, we will gain the knowledge required to properly educate our non-rational elements; as a result, our souls will become harmonious, resembling those of the gods. The difference between divine and human soul in the *Phaedrus*, Burnyeat maintains, is one of degree, not kind.⁴

In this paper, I argue for an opposing interpretation of the *Phaedrus*. Plato's aim is not to introduce a newly optimistic psychology, but to offer a careful examination of the tensions which inevitably characterize mortal existence. We therefore have reason to question the following theses as they pertain to the *Phaedrus*:

- i) Human soul differs from divine soul in degree, but not in kind.
- ii) There is a proper form of nourishment for the appetitive part of the soul.
- iii) The lower parts of the soul make a significant contribution to the philosophical life.
- iv) Contemplation supports psychic harmony in a manner which is direct and unproblematic.

While some of these claims contain partial truths, they need to be carefully qualified. Contemplation supports self-mastery, but the two relate in a manner which is complex and conflict-ridden; the only form of harmony available to us humans is paradoxically violent.

In what follows, I examine the conflict between reason's desire to contemplate and its obligation to rule, as it arises in the *Phaedrus*. For the purposes of stage-setting, I will briefly turn to this problem, as it arises in the *Republic*.⁵ It stems from two bifurcations in Plato's

³ 'Recollection'.

⁴ See also G. R. F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: a Study of Plato's Phaedrus [Listening]* (Cambridge, 1987), at 130 and 260, n. 29, who follows Burnyeat.

⁵ In what follows, I assume a rough correspondence between the tripartitions of the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*, and refer to the parts of the soul in the *Phaedrus* both as the charioteer, white horse

and dark horse, and as reason, spirit and appetite. There is considerable support for this hypothesis. In both dialogues, Plato treats reason as the natural ruler of the soul and characterizes it in terms of its unique ability to grasp the forms. In both, spirit is portrayed as the ally of reason, with an inchoate attraction to the good, and in both, appetite is drawn to the pleasures of the flesh, threatens to overtake the soul, and needs to be mastered by reason. Finally, just as in the *Phaedrus*, Plato signals the epistemic inferiority of the lower parts of the soul by portraying them as horses, so in the *Republic*, he represents spirit as a guard dog and a lion (440 D 2-3, 588 D 3), appetite as a many-headed beast (588 C 7-10). The assumption of correspondence between the psychologies of the dialogues is common in the literature—see, e.g., G. R. F. Ferrari, ‘Platonic Love’ [‘Love’], in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 248-76, at 264; C. L. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* [*Self-Knowledge*] (New Haven, 1986), at 96; Guthrie, *History*, 422; R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* [*Plato's*] (Cambridge, 1985), at 72; T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory* [*Moral*] (Oxford, 1991), at 239; Price, *Love*, 70; C. J. Rowe, *Plato* (New York, 1984), at 172; C. J. Rowe, *Plato: Phaedrus* [*Phaedrus*] (Oxford, 1986), at 177; G. Santas, *Plato and Freud* (Oxford, 1988), at 66; and W. H. Thompson, *The Phaedrus of Plato* [*Phaedrus*] (London, 1868), at 164-65.

However, R. Burger and Price note the following disanalogies. In the *Phaedrus*, the dark horse assumes some of the qualities of spirit in the *Republic*: it reproaches the other parts for cowardice (Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus: A Defense of a Philosophic Art of Writing* [*Plato's*] (University, 1980), at 141, n. 53), and it is boastful and angry (Price, *Love*, 80). While this observation is intriguing, it is not clear how much it demonstrates. In accusing its companions of cowardice, the dark horse may simply be attempting to persuade them to accede to its ends, just as in the *Republic*, unnecessary appetites establish democracy in a man's soul by calling

thought, the first pertaining to his analysis of moderation, the second to his treatment of the rational part of the soul. To turn to the first of these, Plato defines moderation two ways: it involves a hierarchical aspect, the rule of the better over the worse, and a harmonious aspect, their agreement as to who should rule (432 A 3-9). As Annas, among others, has argued, these two aspects of moderation are in tension.⁶ The hierarchical aspect of moderation is justified by the moral and epistemic inferiority of the lower parts of city and soul, but this renders the harmonious aspect, their agreement to the rule of the better, implausible. At points in the *Republic*, Plato is startlingly negative in his portrayal of the producers—for example, in Book IV, he describes them as having disorderly, immoderate desires (431 B 5-D 2), and in IX, he writes that those lacking knowledge rut in the muck like beasts due to their insatiable desires (586 A 1-B 4). Similarly, in Book IV, Plato describes the appetitive part of the soul as

moderation cowardice (560 C 6-D 6). Alternately, as Ferrari (*Listening*, 190-91) maintains, the dark horse may be betraying its assumption that the only reason why one might hold back from maximizing bodily pleasure is a failure of nerve. As for the reference to the dark horse as a companion of ἀλαζονεία (253 E 3), the word can mean *imposture* as well as *boasting*; Ferrari (*Listening*, 273, n. 73) argues that the context supports the former, since the dark horse will resort to any means possible to secure its ends. Ferrari (*Listening*, 185-95) points to another contrast between the tripartitions of the two dialogues: at 253 C 7-255 A 1, the charioteer is portrayed as resorting to violence, the dark horse to persuasion. Ferrari proposes that Plato deliberately subverts our expectations in order to indicate, first, that the charioteer feels a compulsion not to violate the forms, and, second, that means-ends deliberation is the only form of reasoning of which the dark horse is capable.

⁶ J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* [Introduction] (Oxford, 1981), at 116-17.

undisciplined and insatiable (442 A 5-B 3), and in IX, he compares it to a many-headed monster, which needs to be harshly disciplined (588 B 10-589 B 6). But if the lower parts of city and soul are so undisciplined and irrational, then it is unlikely that they will agree to be ruled by their superiors.

Perhaps this difficulty can be bypassed since the lower parts of city and soul are not completely irrational. Though they lack philosophical understanding, they can engage in means-ends reasoning;⁷ should they recognize rule by their superiors as in their own interest, then the harmonious aspect of moderation will be secured. In fact, in the pleasures argument, Plato writes that if reason rules the soul, then each part will be ensured its best and truest satisfaction (586 D 4-E 2). But even if this ensures appetite its truest satisfaction, it is unclear that this will coincide with its greatest satisfaction, nor that it will correspond to how appetite, perhaps mistakenly, conceives of its own satisfaction. If the appetitive part of the soul is, indeed, capable of means-ends reasoning, then it seems that appetite would be ensured greater satisfaction were it to assume command of the soul. Surely the democratic soul, which satisfies each desire in turn, offers appetite greater satisfaction than the philosophic soul.

Tragically, the same problem confronts the rational part of the soul. This emerges from the second bifurcation, that of reason's aims. Plato characterizes the rational part of the soul

⁷ See, e.g., Annas, *Introduction*, 129-30; C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast [Plato's]* (Oxford, 2004), at 243-45; J. M. Cooper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation' ['Plato's'], in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2* (Oxford, 1999), 186-206, at 194-99; T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics [Ethics]* (Oxford, 1995), at 214; and C. H. Kahn, "Plato's Theory of Desire" ['Theory'], *The Review of Metaphysics*, 41.1 (1987), 77-103, at 86. For an opposing view, see H. Lorenz, 'Desire and Reason in Plato's *Republic*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 27 (2004), 83-116.

both in terms of its capacity for practical deliberation regarding the good of the whole soul (441 E 4-5, 442 C 5-8) and its love of wisdom (581 B 9-10). The difficulty is that engaging in philosophy is potentially at odds with the obligation of the rational part of the soul to rule. Love of wisdom requires that it turn away from contingent reality and focus on the forms, but contingent reality is the realm of the practical deliberation employed in ruling the soul. Significantly, in the pleasures argument, Plato treats contemplation as reason's greatest pleasure (580 D 7-581 E 4), but never claims that it enjoys ruling.⁸ Plato deliberately raises and explores this difficulty on the level of the city. The guardians' true pleasure is philosophy and they view ruling as a burden; this makes them uncorrupt rulers. However, this also raises the question of why the guardians should agree to rule; Plato's answer, which many consider unsatisfactory, is that they will agree to rule out of a sense of obligation to the city. In the case of the soul, the rational part will agree to rule because it will be even less able to contemplate if it abdicates power to the lower parts of the soul than if it balances ruling with contemplation. However, such

⁸ Plato does claim at 441 E 4-5 that it is fitting for the rational part to rule, since it is wise and exercises forethought on behalf of the entire soul, and at 442 C 5-8 that an individual is called wise on account of the small part which rules within him and has knowledge of what is advantageous for each part as well as for the whole soul. However, both passages fall short of attributing a desire to rule to the rational part (*pace* Cooper, 'Plato's', 191-94; see G. R. F. Ferrari, 'The Three-Part Soul' ['Soul'], in G. R. F. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (Cambridge, 2007), 165-201, at 196-98).

balancing is not an ideal outcome; the best thing for the rational part would be if it were not tethered to the lower parts of the soul.⁹

What emerges is a tragic conclusion. The parts of the soul cannot share a joint aim, or even fully appreciate one another's aims. Plato alludes to this when he writes that each sort of person—philosophic, philotimic or appetitive—looks down on the pleasures of the others (581 C 8-E 4). The best outcome for all of the parts of the soul is a balancing act, in which reason, out of a duty to ensure the good of all of the parts, attempts to ensure the partial satisfaction of each, though these are not fully compatible. The best life for the soul turns out not to be the best life of any of its parts. This might seem to be enough; even if it is not the best life of any of the parts, it is, perhaps, the best life for the person, who is the composite of these parts. However, Plato takes the rational part of the soul to be more truly oneself than any of the other parts—it is only reason which is 'the man within the man' (589A 7-B 1); while in a sense, the lower parts of one's soul are parts of oneself, they can feel like an incursion, and only the rational part like 'the real me'. The best we can hope for, then, is either a tyranny of reason, a life overwhelmingly devoted to philosophy, which seem unjust, or the balancing of the desires of all of the parts, in which case one's true self will never be fully satisfied.

How does this problem arise in the *Phaedrus*? One way to broach it is to consider the question which Socrates asks early in the dialogue: 'Am I a beast more tangled and inflamed than Typho, or am I a gentler and simpler animal, partaking of a divine and modest nature?' (230

⁹ The literature on the return to the cave is formidable, and it would be beyond the scope of this paper to engage with it. At the conclusion of this paper, I offer a few considerations, based on the *Phaedrus*, against interpreters who maintain that ruling and contemplating are not sharply opposed and, hence, that the philosopher needn't sacrifice self-interest in returning to the cave.

A 3-6).¹⁰ The image of Typho looks forward to that of the soul as a three-part beast: Typho is part-man, part-animal, feathered all over,¹¹ much like the part-human, part-equine, feathered souls of the palinode.¹² But, assuming that the *Phaedrus* post-dates the *Republic*,¹³ Typho calls

¹⁰ In translating Plato, I have consulted A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff's (*Plato: Phaedrus* [Plato] (Indianapolis, 1995)) and Rowe's (*Phaedrus*) translations, and at points borrow their phrasings.

¹¹ See Hesiod, *Theog.* 820-28 and Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.6.3; Apollodorus' reference to Typho as winged, though late, is confirmed by earlier vase paintings, such as a mid-sixth century hydria, now in the Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich (Inv. 596).

¹² See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 39.

¹³ For the purposes of this paper, my only significant assumption concerning chronology is that the *Phaedrus* post-dates the *Republic* and *Symposium*; its dating relative to the *Theaetetus* and *Parmenides* is not directly relevant. This assumption is typically defended on stylometric grounds (see L. Brandwood, 'Stylometry and Chronology', in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 90-120, at 120, n. 71; and Hackforth, *Plato's*, 3); as well as in terms of content: the reference to tripartition suggests that Plato has already argued for this aspect of his psychology in the *Republic* (see Hackforth, *Plato's*, 4); the proof of the immortality of the soul has greater affinity to Plato's arguments in the *Laws* than in the *Republic* (see Hackforth, *Plato's*, 4-5 and Nussbaum, 'Story', 470, n. 5); and the discussion of the method of collection and division looks forward to later dialogues (see, e.g., J. M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis, 1997), at xvii; G. J. De Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* [Commentary] (Amsterdam, 1969), at 11; R. Kraut, 'Introduction to the Study of Plato', in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 1-50, at 42, n. 39; A. Nehamas, 'The *Phaedrus*', in A. Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity* (Princeton, 1999), 329-58, at

to mind another image Plato conjures of the soul. In Book IX, he compares the soul to a man tethered to a many-headed beast (588 B 10-589 B 6),¹⁴ Hesiod writes that Typho has a hundred dragons' heads emerging from each shoulder (*Theog.* 820-28). This image of the soul in the *Republic* is interesting on two levels. First, it is pessimistic: reason is chained to the lower parts of the soul, which are violent and potentially uncontrollable beasts. Second, it presents two opposed modes by which appetite can be controlled: some heads of the beast are severed, others fed and tamed. If the image of Typho looks back to the *Republic*, as well as forward in the *Phaedrus*, then this suggests that we must ask these questions of the *Phaedrus*, as well. Is reason trapped by the lower parts of the soul? In both dialogues, the three parts are said to be σύμφυτος, grown together by nature (*Phdr.* 246 A 6-7; *Rep.* 588 D 7-8); in both, Plato describes a risk that reason will be dragged (ἔλκειν) by appetite (*Phdr.* 254 D 4; *Rep.* 589 A 1-2); and in both, reason is called the best part of the soul, while appetite is burdensome and wicked (*Phdr.* 247 B 3; *Rep.* 519 B 1-3). And how is reason to master the lower parts of the soul? The *Republic* gives us two alternatives, but is feeding the beast an option which Plato pursues in the *Phaedrus*? Remember what happens to Typho—Zeus masters him by slaying his two hundred serpentine heads. In the *Phaedrus*, the rational part of philosophic souls is characterized as Zeus-like. Zeus feeds his horses ambrosia and nectar, but the Zeus-like element of our souls is never shown feeding his horses; instead, he masters the dark horse through violence. Who are we—Zeus or Typho? Are we to assume a double-vision, seeing ourselves as both Typho and Typho's slayer? Is the

354, n. 7; Nussbaum, 'Story', 470, n. 5; C. J. Rowe, 'The Argument and Structure of Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 32 (1986), 106-25, at 120-21; and Thompson, *Phaedrus*, xxv). For a contrasting view, see Guthrie, *History*, 396-97.

¹⁴ See Rowe, *Phaedrus*, 140-41; and Thompson, *Phaedrus*, 9.

thought that we can only master ourselves by killing off a part of ourselves, a feat that, perhaps, we cannot even accomplish? And in implying that we are Typhonic by nature, is Plato issuing a warning, lest we be over-confident of our prospects of overtaking the gods, of achieving a divine state?¹⁵

The image of Typho sets us a question in interpreting the *Phaedrus*. In the *Republic*, appetite is not all bad—some of its heads must be severed, but others can be tamed. Is Plato's

¹⁵ There are several complexities to the Typho image which I have not addressed. First, as Griswold emphasizes, Socrates' question is whether he is *more complex and inflamed* or *simpler and gentler* than Typho (*Self-Knowledge*, 40-42). Griswold maintains that, in a sense, the answer is neither: a creature more complex than Typho would be absurd, while one simpler than Typho would not seek self-knowledge. At the same time, the answer is both: the soul is made up of both a hubristic and a gentle element, and is at once complex, being tripartite, and simple, having as its essence solely self-motion. Burnyeat also opts for 'both', on the grounds that the charioteer is simple, while the horses are complex ('Recollection'); while Nussbaum argues for neither, maintaining that one can be complex without being Typhonic and orderly without being simple ('Story', 223). Second, there is a certain ambiguity in how the image functions, which has not, to my knowledge, been noted by other scholars. Insofar as Typho is a savage, inflamed beast, he resembles the dark horse; on the other hand, insofar as he is part man, part beast, Typho represents the entire, tripartite soul. Rowe opts for the first alternative (*Phaedrus*, 140-41), Griswold for the second (*Self-Knowledge*, 39), but the image, in fact, functions both ways. This may solely be due to the mythical resource which Plato is exploiting; on the other hand, he may also wish to convey the sort of double-vision we frequently adopt in relation to the parts of the soul, at times identifying solely with one part (here, appetite), at times with the union of all three.

treatment of the lower parts of the soul even more optimistic in the *Phaedrus*? Quite the opposite. Consider Plato's initial partitioning of the soul:

Let us liken the soul to the grown-together power of a winged team and charioteer. The charioteers and teams of the gods are all good and from good stock, but those of others are mixed. To begin with, our ruler drives a pair; of the horses, one is beautiful and good and of such stock, while the other is opposite and from opposite stock. In our case, driving is of necessity tiresome and difficult. (246 A 6-B 4)

Plato tells us, first, that human soul differs from divine because it contains a bad element. Second, it has an inbuilt hierarchy, with reason ruling. Third, the lower parts of the soul are inherently opposed, and fourth, appetite is shameful and bad. The result of this psychic arrangement is that for reason, ruling the soul is *of necessity* exhausting and difficult. Not much grounds for optimism here.

Let us take a closer look at each part of the soul. As charioteer, the role of reason is to direct his horses in whichever direction he chooses. The charioteer is not in partnership with his horses; they are, rather, tools for him to reach his destination. Non-metaphorically, reason need not take the ends of the lower parts into account in determining the overall aims of the person. The goals of reason thus dominate the soul more harshly in the *Phaedrus* than in the *Republic*; the charioteer is never described, like reason in the *Republic*, as aiming at the good of the whole. As for the lower parts of the soul, towards the end of the palinode, Plato offers a more detailed account of their respective goodness and depravity:

The one horse is on the nobler side, correct in form and well-articulated, high-necked, hook-nosed, white in appearance, black-eyed, a lover of honour with moderation and shame, a companion of true belief, needing no whip, but driven by spoken command

alone. The other is crooked, big, randomly put together, with a short, powerful neck, flat-nosed, black-skinned, white-eyed, bloodshot, a companion of hubris and imposture, shaggy around the ears and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and goad combined (253 D 3-E 5).

Both horses are limited in their cognitive capacities: the white horse is a companion of δόξα (belief),¹⁶ while the dark horse is non-responsive to reason. Plato emphasizes throughout Socrates' speech that the charioteer alone is able to see the forms; it is therefore hard to see how the lower parts of the soul could value contemplation or contribute to our understanding of beauty.¹⁷ What about the moral natures of the horses? Plato's treatment of the spirited part is,

¹⁶ To my mind, Plato's use of δόξα at 253 D 7 is ambiguous between *belief* and *honour*. Hackforth (*Plato's*), Nehamas and Woodruff (*Plato*), and Rowe (*Phaedrus*) all translate δόξα as *honour* or *glory*; Hackforth argues that δόξα cannot mean *belief*, since it is meant to contrast with ἀλαζονεία, which denotes *boasting* (103, n. 1). However, Ferrari argues that, in fact, the context supports taking ἀλαζονεία to mean *imposture*, rather than *boasting* (see n. 4 above); in that case, the opposition can concern the epistemic orientations of the two horses: the dark horse is given to distorting the truth, while the white horse has an innate attraction to the truth, though it is incapable of full-blown knowledge.

¹⁷ The assumption that only the charioteer sees the forms is widely-shared; the only exception I am aware of is Thompson (*Phaedrus*, 167), who states, without argument, that, prior to incarnation, both the white horse and the charioteer grasp the forms. Nonetheless, one might take Plato's statement at 248 B 5-C 2, that the realm of the forms contains the pasturage for the best part of the soul, to imply that both horses see the forms; after all, grass is equine, not human, fodder. However, this would require us to take ψυχῆς τῷ ἀρίστῳ to refer the dark, as well as the

white horse, which is highly counter-intuitive. It is thus best to understand Plato's language here to be playful, and to follow De Vries (*Commentary*, 141) in taking ψυχῆς τῷ ἀρίστῳ to look back to 247 C 7-8, so that the part of the soul nourished by the forms refers to the charioteer.

Alternately, one might defend the epistemic capacities of the lower parts of the soul by pointing to 251 B 5-7, where Plato writes that the stream of beauty nourishes the roots of the feathers which lie beneath the whole soul (ὑπὸ πᾶν τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδος). However, the fact that the feathers belong to the whole soul, and are nourished through recollection, does not entail that the horses themselves see the forms. The wings represent the soul's capacity for transcendence (246 D 6-E 1), and when the soul reascends, all three parts are drawn up; this is compatible with only the charioteer's ever seeing the forms. Plato is quite explicit at 247 C 7-8 that the forms are only visible to the charioteer; this claim is echoed at 248 A 1-3 and 254 B 5-7.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that the dark horse is not thoroughly cognitively impoverished: its negotiations with the charioteer and white horse imply that it is capable of complex means-ends reasoning (for further discussion, see Ferrari, *Listening*, 187-88). Though I am in complete agreement with Bobonich's arguments that the horses cannot see the forms, to my mind, he goes too far in denying them basic reasoning capacities (*Plato's*, 297-315). Since Bobonich takes 249 B 5-C 4 to imply that ordinary language and thought require a grasp of the forms, and accepts that the lower parts of the soul do not grasp the forms, he concludes that they are confined to non-conceptual, animal-like cognition. He is thus forced to treat Plato's depictions of the dark horse as deliberating and as communicating with the charioteer as purposefully paradoxical (297). It seems wiser to follow D. Scott in taking δεῖ (249 B 6) to signify *ought*, rather than *must*, such that Plato is claiming that humans have an epistemological duty to understand what is said in terms of forms (*Recollection and Experience* (Cambridge,

perhaps, more optimistic than in the *Republic*—in his initial description of the soul, it is the white horse, not the charioteer, which he characterizes as good, and he goes on to describe it as a lover of moderation and shame. While these may be unreasoning moral responses, they also enable the white horse to be trained to aim at the moral ends which the charioteer sets, based on knowledge. But Plato's treatment of the dark horse is relentlessly negative. Though I have been referring to it as the dark horse, Plato does not tend to distinguish it by colour, but along moral lines;¹⁸ while the white horse is typically called the good horse, Plato uses a whole range of expressions to convey the depravity of the dark—it is ἀκόλαστος, κακός, πονηρός and ὑβριστής, undisciplined, bad, wicked and hubristic (255 E 5, 253 D 2-3, 254 E 6, 254 C 3). At no point does Plato provide a positive description of the dark horse; the best we can hope for is that if we beat it enough, it will respond with fear.¹⁹ In a sense, this is a natural extension of Plato's

1995), at 73-80), but not, more radically, that they must recollect forms in order to be capable of thought or language.

¹⁸ In fact, he only once refers to its colour, at 253 E 2-3.

¹⁹ Following Price, one might argue against me that 'it is perhaps for the sake of dramatic contrast that the horse of spirit is very, very good, that of appetite horrid' (*Love*, 79; see also Ferrari, *Listening*, 202 and Hackforth, *Plato's*, 107-108); in that case, perhaps I ought not to take Plato's harsh characterization of the dark horse to have general implications for his psychology. However, when Plato introduces the dark horse at 246 B 3, it is in the context of a completely general analysis of the soul. It is true that at 246 A 3-7, he states that this account is a mere image, but he makes a similar caveat at *Rep.* 435 C 9-D 5. While this indicates an awareness on Plato's part of the limitations of his account, it does not entitle us to dismiss what he says in either dialogue; in piecing together Plato's psychology, we must rely on the resources he

position in the *Republic*—if appetite is by nature powerful and oblivious to considerations of the good, then it will, indeed, resemble a dark and potentially uncontrollable beast. At the same time, in declaring that this aspect of our nature is grown together with reason for all time, Plato's view of the human predicament seems increasingly pessimistic.

This might not yet be grounds for pessimism; perhaps in the *Phaedrus* we shall learn how the lower parts of the soul can be transformed and how reason can find joy in balancing contemplation with ruling. What weighs against this is twofold: Plato's account of divine nature and the contrast it provides to the human condition; and the story he tells of how humans can achieve some semblance of psychic harmony. I shall examine these themes by turning to a puzzle in the *Phaedrus* which has received little attention.²⁰ Plato writes that when a recent

provides us with, be they discursive, as in the *Republic*, or imagistic, as in the *Phaedrus*.

Alternately, one might maintain that Plato's treatment of the dark horse is so negative because the dark horse solely represents erotic desire—possibly lawless erotic desire—and not the appetitive part of the soul as a whole (see Hackforth, *Plato's*, 107-108). It is true that the context of the dialogue entails that Plato focuses solely on the erotic leanings of appetite. But there is nothing to suggest that Plato would have a kinder portrayal of the dark horse if he assigned it desires for food and drink as well as for sex. In the *Phaedo*, Plato describes disembodied soul as defiled by all three forms of appetite, and assigns responsibility to all three for dragging a soul towards embodiment (81 B 1-C 2, 81 E 5-82 A 1).

²⁰ Griswold (*Self-Knowledge*, 111) observes this distinction, though he develops it in a manner different from, though not inimical to, myself. In particular, he highlights the following disanalogies: while the boy's beauty is immediately visible and does not require cultivation, his god-like character must be carefully developed; furthermore, while the lover's god-like character

initiate sees a godlike face or a bodily form which imitates beauty well, he is overcome with fear (251 A 1-7). There is a detail to Plato's phrasing which merits closer scrutiny. He writes that the boy resembles the god (θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον), but also that he imitates beauty well (κάλλος εὖ μιμημένον). In what follows, Plato alternates between these: on the one hand, the lover chooses a Zeus-like boy and trains him to resemble his god; on the other hand, upon approaching the boy, it is the form of beauty which he recollects on its sacred pedestal. Which is it—is the lover attracted to beauty or to the god? I shall suggest that Plato alternates between these to represent two distinct ideals that the lover is attracted to. In seeing the god in the boy, the lover sees the possibility of a life in which all parts of the soul can receive joint satisfaction; correspondingly, he is drawn to the goal of self-care. In seeing the beautiful in the boy, the lover is consumed by a manic lust for contemplation. In the end, the lover will be forced to alternate between both objects of recollection and love, and through this, to forge a distinctively human form of inner harmony.²¹

mirrors the boy's, there is no indication that he is beautiful. The second contrast Griswold draws suggests the following: while the boy's divine potential, since it resembles the lover's own character, can serve as a conduit to self-knowledge and self-cultivation, his beauty, on the other hand, draws the lover outside of himself and, ultimately, to the form. Ferrari (*Listening*, 171-72), also notes the distinction, but maintains that there is no sharp difference between the two love-objects, since both are connected to a recognition of the boy's philosophic potential and a resolution to cultivate this potential, in building a life with the boy.

²¹ Plato focuses on the gods as objects of love at 252 D 1-253 C 6, and on the form of beauty at 253 C 7-255 A 1. Though Plato focuses on each object of love in two distinct, successive passages, I do not take him to be describing two chronological stages of love, so much as two

Let us turn, first, to the gods. Plato describes their lives as follows (246 E 4-247 E 6). Zeus, the great commander, drives his chariot first, and an army of gods follows, ordering and caring for everything. Once they have patrolled the heavens, the gods travel up to the heavenly banquet that is the sight of the forms. The journey is easy, for their horses are equally-balanced and obedient to the rein. When they reach the rim of the heavens, they are carried around by its rotation and feast on the sight of the forms, rejoicing. When the circuit is complete, the gods sink back down; returning home, they station their horses by the manger and feed them ambrosia and nectar. Plato's account is surprising, because it diverges from his depictions of the gods in other dialogues. While Plato typically presents divine soul as unitary and treats the lower parts of the soul as accretions of mortality,²² here the gods possess partite souls.²³ The image of the

aspects—while Plato separates these for purposes of explanation and analysis, in real life, they are often blended.

²² E.g. *Phd.* 78 B 4-80 B 10; *Rep.* 380 D 5 and 611 B 5-6.

²³ While the gods' souls are partite, it is worth noting that Plato is purposefully ambiguous concerning the number of their horses (*pace* Burnyeat, 'Recollection', who, in his attempt to assimilate human to divine soul, argues that the gods have only two horses). At 246 A 6-7, Plato depicts all soul as the union of a ζεῦγος and charioteer; then, at 246 B 1-2, in delineating how human soul differs from divine, he describes our charioteers as driving a συνωρίς. While συνωρίς typically refers to a two-horse team, ζεῦγος can refer to a four-horse team, as well; in fact, at *Ap.* 36 D 8, Plato uses ζεῦγος to denote a four-horse team, in contrast with συνωρίς. In what follows, I argue that Plato wishes to emphasize the gap between human and divine soul; in leaving open the possibility that the gods' souls have more than two horses, he allows for yet another area of divergence. I owe this observation to Jan Szaif; see also De Vries, *Commentary*,

gods as sporadically feeding on the forms is problematic as well. In both the *Symposium* (202 C 6-11) and *Republic* (380 D 1-381 C 9), Plato presents the gods as forever in the best possible condition; it thus incongruous that they should engage in merely episodic contemplation. Furthermore, presenting contemplation as akin to feeding implies that it provides restitutive pleasure, but in the *Philebus* (33 B 8-11) and *Laws* (792 C 8-D 5), Plato claims that gods are beings beyond pleasure, presumably because to undergo restitution would imply that they are not always in the best condition. Why should Plato offer such a discordant picture of the divine in the *Phaedrus*? The reason is that his goal in this dialogue is to illustrate what the ideal state would be for beings with partite constitutions. While the best state *simpliciter* might be one of changeless perfection, for beings such as ourselves, it would be one in which our lower elements were not sources of strife, and in which the choice between philosophy and self-rule would not be occasion for regret.²⁴

Zeus is therefore called a ἡγεμὼν (commander), highlighting his role in ruling the heavens, as well as his horses. The gods are externally just in the sense defined in the *Republic*, each does his own job; and their relations to one another are harmonious, they form a chorus. So, too, on the inside: the gods' horses are perfectly balanced and essentially identical; earlier, Plato calls them both good and of good stock. They are never a source of conflict, but naturally obey the charioteer and enable him to reach the rim of the heavens. At the same time, their horses are fed different food than their charioteers; this highlights the fact that even in divine

126, 127; Hackforth, *Plato's* 69, n. 3; McGibbon, 'Fall', 62; Price, *Love*, 68-69; and Rowe, *Phaedrus*, 177.

²⁴ Here I follow Ferrari, *Listening*, 131-32.

soul, the lower parts are incapable of philosophical insight.²⁵ Correspondingly, the task of feeding their horses is distinct from that of contemplating the forms—the two occur in different realms, and the former draws the charioteer away from the latter.²⁶ When the gods cease contemplating and return to the manger, Plato describes them as sinking (δύσα) back into the heavens (247 E 3).²⁷ This calls to mind the return to the cave: in both dialogues, the soul's progression towards philosophical insight is presented as an ascent to illumination, its return to the mortal realm as a descent into darkness.²⁸ In the *Phaedrus*, Plato writes that the home of the gods is not at the rim of heavens, where reason—the part with which they most deeply identify—

²⁵ This raises the difficult question of what it even means for gods to possess partite souls, with elements incapable of philosophical understanding (247 C 7-8). While I follow Ferrari (*Listening*, 129-32) and Griswold (*Self-Knowledge*, 97) in maintaining that Plato's primary purpose in portraying the gods in this manner is to provide an illuminating contrast to human soul, I am agnostic as to whether this reflects any more serious view about divine nature. Ferrari (*Listening*, 127) and Price (*Love*, 69) both propose that the gods' horses are connected to their activity in governing the universe; Guthrie (*History*, 423-24) and Rowe (*Plato*, 173), by contrast, insist that they are assigned horses solely for the sake of parallelism to human soul.

²⁶ See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 104.

²⁷ One of the primary senses of δύειν is to set or to sink into the sea, like the sun. Given that the gods are portrayed as celestial bodies, perhaps Plato wishes to call to mind the image of a sunset with its bittersweet connotations. On the gods as celestial bodies, see Hackforth, *Plato's*, 72-73.

²⁸ *Rep.* 514 A 1-516 E 6. For the forms as sources of illumination in the *Phaedrus*, see 250 B 5-D 3. The image of ascent and descent also has parallels to *Phd.* 109 C 3-110 B 1 and *Rep.* 584 D 3-586 B 4.

receives sustenance; instead, it is by the manger (247 E 4). However, this does not appear to cause the gods sorrow or regret; by contrast, in the *Republic*, Plato writes that one who has escaped the cave would prefer to 'work the earth as a serf to another, a man with nothing to his name' than to return below (516 C 8-D 7). Perhaps this difference reflects the fact that the gods do not experience the dilemma which confronts the philosopher-kings; their return to the manger is externally determined by the completion of the heavenly circuit. Just as the divine charioteers are never forced to battle their horses, so they are never faced with the difficult choice of whether to turn their backs on the best objects to devote themselves to the barnyard.

How does this play out when the lover falls in love with the godlike boy? The argumentative structure of Socrates' second speech is fragmented; he provides repeated descriptions of the experience of falling in love. At 252 D 1-E 5, he devotes particular attention to the gods as objects of *erōs*. Everyone honours the god in whose chorus he once danced, Socrates tells us, and, so, choosing his beloved from the beautiful, decorates him like a divine statue. The one who followed Zeus seeks that his boy should be δῖος, Zeus-like, both φιλόσοφος (philosophical) and ἡγεμονικός (capable of command). In this passage, what the lover is primarily drawn to in the boy is his resemblance to Zeus. While there may be many beauties, he chooses not the most beautiful, but the one who resembles Zeus best. The boy should be a philosopher and ruler, combining both of reason's aims, just as Zeus balances these two pursuits. In loving the god in the boy, the man is drawn to an ideal of psychic harmony, a life in which contemplation and self-care can be balanced without conflict or regret.²⁹

²⁹ Does this apply to those who follow other gods as well? The text is unclear. On the one hand, those who follow other gods are not described as seeking that their boy should be both philosophical and capable of command: the followers of Hera, for example, solely seek that he

Plato's description of the lover's relation to the boy contains a curious back and forth between the boy and the god as objects of devotion (252 E 1-253 C 2). The man initially falls for the boy because he is godlike; desiring to bring out the divine in the boy, he must gain knowledge of the god, and so follows the god until he takes on the god's qualities himself; he then pours his understanding back into the boy, making the boy not just like the god, but also like himself. The lover's attraction to the boy cannot be fully accounted for by claiming that the boy enables him to recollect the god, for the lover needs to recollect the god himself to make the boy resemble the god; the boy isn't so much a mnemonic device, as an image of the god the lover constructs once he himself becomes godlike.³⁰ The lover's motivation in caring for the boy becomes clearer if we look closely at Plato's language. The lover κατακοσμεῖ (adorns, orders) the statue of the boy (252 D 7), just as Zeus διακοσμεῖ (orders) the universe (246 E 5); he is without φθόνοϛ (envy) in caring for the boy (253 B 7), just as the gods are without φθόνοϛ in allowing us to follow them (247 A 7). While caring for the boy enables the lover to recollect the god, it is also an activity which expresses what he has recollected: just as the gods care for the

should be regal (253 B 1-2). Perhaps this signals that such lovers are not oriented towards philosophy. On the other hand, the description of the gods as alternating between contemplating the forms and patrolling the heavens applies to all the gods, and all humans are described as potentially following them in both regards (247 A 6-7, 248 A 1-5). M. Dyson thus proposes that the differences between the gods are merely meant to represent the divergent ways in which various characters can access the forms; those who follow any god are capable of achieving philosophical understanding ('Zeus and Philosophy in the Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*' ['Zeus'], *Classical Quarterly* 32.2 (1982), 307-11).

³⁰ On the ambiguity of this passage, see Burger, *Plato's*, 62-63; and Price, *Love*, 85-86.

heavens, so the lover cares for the boy. On the one hand, in building up the god in the boy, the lover constructs an idealized version of himself as he would wish to be, a creature both contemplative and self-nurturing. But in making the lover's care for the boy mimic god's providential care for the universe, Plato brings the theme of self-nurture to the fore. Plato builds up certain parallels between the boy and the white horse: both are beautiful (252 D 5-6, 246 B 2), in need of guidance (252 E 2-253 C 2, 253 D 7-E 1), and concerned with honour and shame (255 A 4-6, 253 D 6).³¹ Thus, in caring for the boy, the lover engages in an externalized version of his own self-care.³² This is in sharp contrast to what occurs when the lover is drawn to the form;

³¹ Burger, (*Plato's*, 65) also draws a parallel between the white horse and the beloved; I cannot, however, agree with her proposal that the dark horse represents Socrates.

³² Perhaps at this point it would be apt to say a few words about the Vlastos problem. Though G. Vlastos' seminal paper focuses on the *Lysis* and *Symposium*, his arguments apply to the *Phaedrus* as well ('The Individual as Object of Love in Plato' ['Individual'], in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, 1981), 3-42). According to Vlastos, Plato's treatment of interpersonal love is inadequate because i) the beloved is only loved to the degree that he resembles the form; ii) he is therefore not loved for his own sake, nor is he valued as an independent subject of experience; and iii) as a consequence, it is rational for the lover to abandon the beloved for a love-object who better exemplifies the forms, and eventually to bypass love of humans for love of forms. There has been considerable critical response to Vlastos' arguments, as they apply to the *Phaedrus*. In particular, interpreters argue that i) to love someone insofar as he instantiates valuable qualities is to love him for his own sake (notably L. A. Kosman, 'Platonic Love', in W. H. Werkmeister (ed.), *Facets of Plato's Philosophy* (Assen, 1976), 53-69); ii) the lover views the beloved as valuable, even if he merely imitates the form

while Zeus *επιμελεῖται* (cares for) everything (246 E 5-6), when the lover longs to recollect the forms, he *ἀμελεῖ* (neglects) the things down below (249 D 8). The forms do not care for anything, and when we are attracted to them, we wish simply to contemplate them; by contrast, when we are drawn to the gods, what we wish is to imitate their way of life, caring for the boy and for ourselves.

(especially F. C. White, 'Love and the Individual in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Classical Quarterly* 40.2 (1990), 396-406, at 397-98); iii) the lover does seek to benefit the beloved for his own sake, through educating him (Dyson, 'Zeus', 310-11; Irwin, *Moral*, 268-72); and iv) the lover's history with his boy imbues the beloved with an irreplaceable value (Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 128-29; Nussbaum, 'Story', 218; Price, *Love*, 98). I am in broad agreement with these responses to Vlastos. At the same time, I believe that many of Vlastos' objections retain their force, and that we should not whitewash Plato's treatment of interpersonal love. The following points are grounds for concern. i) There is no suggestion that the gods experience interpersonal love, nor that it plays a role for philosophic lovers once they succeed in escaping embodiment—this implies that the most perfect form of existence is devoid of interpersonal love, though it might include benevolent care for the *κόσμος*. ii) Even if the lover responds to potentialities already present in the boy, the fact remains that what primarily attracts him is the degree to which the boy resembles the form and hence facilitates recollection. iii) The primary benefit that Plato assigns to philosophic love is that it enables recollection (256 B 3-7), which suggests that the beloved is an instrument to philosophical enlightenment. iv) Plato's description of the lover's experience at 253 C 7-255 A 1 does not emphasize the lover's engagement with the boy; the lover's focus is on the forms and on his own struggle for self-mastery.

We may wish to emulate the harmony of the gods, but to what degree is this available to us? Throughout the *Phaedrus*, Plato uses startlingly violent imagery to depict the human soul; our inner life is a battlefield, not a chorus. Plato's purpose in presenting the divine model is complex; he not only wishes to illustrate what perfection would be for those with partite constitutions, but also to demonstrate how far we fall short. We see this in the contrast Plato draws between divine and human soul. After describing the lives of the gods, Plato writes that the soul which imitates god best, though distracted by its horses, raises its charioteer so that he barely catches a glimpse of the forms. Others rise and fall, jerked violently by their horses, while the least fortunate are maimed and, bereft of knowledge, fall to earth, where the greatest suffering awaits (248 A 1-B 5, 247 B 5-6). We are the offspring of these damaged, ignorant and discordant souls. The optimistic psychology which Burnyeat and Nussbaum uncover in the *Phaedrus* pertains to the gods, not us. Burnyeat is correct that the gods' horses are fed ambrosia and nectar, but these are not foods for mortal beings; Plato's purpose may be not to signal the divine capacity of the lower parts of our souls, so much as to indicate that the best nurture is unavailable to us. Insofar as the gods' souls lack a dark horse, their lives are harmonious; we, however, are forever tied to the dark horse. As a result of our inner chaos, we are not merely morally, but also cognitively deficient. While contemplation for the gods is static and effortless, we rise and fall, battling our horses to catch sporadic, partial glimpses of the forms. Since our charioteer is forever impeded in his pursuit of the forms by the disorderly nature of his horses, he must feel frustration at being forced to care for them.

How, then, are we to forge some sort of unity out of our divided souls? Surprisingly, Plato gives us his answer, not when he describes our recollection of the gods, but when he turns to the second object of love, the forms. At 253 C 7-255 A 1, Plato describes how all three parts

of the soul respond to the beauty they see in the boy. Subdued through shame, the white horse restrains itself, but the dark horse, uncontrollable, forces the others to proposition the boy. On seeing the flashing face of the boy, the charioteer's memory is transported to beauty, on its sacred pedestal next to moderation. Falling back in fear, he is forced to jerk the reins so violently that he slams both horses to their haunches. The dark horse, furious, extracts a promise to approach the boy later, but when the time comes, the others pretend to forget, and so the dark horse drags them to the boy. The charioteer topples back even more forcefully this time, bloodying the evil horse, grinding its haunches to the earth, and overwhelming it with pain. When it is punished many times over, the bad horse abandons its hubris, and when it sees the boy, it dies of fright.

Beauty emerges as central in this account of love. The boy is described not as godlike, but as beautiful, and it is his beauty which causes the lover to recollect the form of beauty on its sacred pedestal (254 B 5-7); beauty has replaced Zeus as the god which the lover worships. The effect of the lover's recollection is imbalancing: he is, quite literally, toppled over. Non-metaphorically, his experience of beauty highlights the conflicting relations of the parts of the soul. Though all three parts of the soul are attracted to one object, the boy, their experience is deeply divisive. While the charioteer recollects the form of beauty and is drawn to self-restraint, the dark horse recollects sexual pleasure and becomes less controllable. Plato earlier describes the dark horse as hardly (μόγις) controllable by whip and goad (253 E 4-5), but upon seeing the boy, these no longer (οὔτε....ἔτι) control him (254 A 3-4). The white horse, in turn, αἰδοῖ βιαζόμενος (overcome by shame), holds back from accosting the boy (254 A 2-3); torn between conflicting urges, he reduplicates the psychic battle within himself.

At the same time, the charioteer's vision of beauty causes him to momentarily turn his back on the inner battlefield. This is suggested by a shift in the subject of the sentence from the charioteer to his memory (254 B 5): it is the charioteer's memory which is transported to the form of beauty, and, filled with wonder, falls back on the reins. The charioteer, his memory, and the lover have become fused, because his experience of the form is so overwhelming that the lover becomes solely identified with his rational element; in his moment of insight, the lower parts of the soul cease to exist for him. This evokes Plato's earlier depiction of the philosophical initiate as stricken from himself and no longer in himself when he sees a good likeness of the form (250 A 6-7). Plato's description of the charioteer's experience is astute: in moments of intense absorption, we can become so caught up something outside ourselves that we lose ourselves in the object; self-forgetting is what makes monomania so appealing. For the charioteer, this reinforces that contemplation, not self-mastery, is his true goal. It is their sight of the forms which makes the gods divine, and in following the gods, the charioteer's ultimate goal is to see the forms (249 C 5-6). Though self-mastery has value for Plato, in the end it is to be pursued for the sake of contemplation, not vice versa. There is a risk that in seeking to rule the soul, the charioteer will treat this as an end in itself, not a means to philosophy. As it were, the charioteer would become a mere groomsman. Being swept off his feet by beauty reinforces to the charioteer that this was his aim all along.³³

³³ It is important to recognize the complexity of the image of the charioteer falling back on the reins. As many commentators correctly emphasize (e.g. Ferrari, 'Love', 266), the charioteer's response at least partially expresses resistance to sexually accosting the boy. This is why it is relevant that he recollects the form of moderation as well as that of beauty—seducing the boy would violate moderation more clearly than beauty. Nonetheless, while this interpretation is

Plato's most intriguing suggestion in the *Phaedrus* is that, paradoxically, the conflicting ends of reason are mutually reinforcing. The charioteer initially tries to control the dark horse by whip and goad, then through negotiation and trickery, but is only able to master it when this is no

correct, it cannot be given full weight. (Here I oppose Nussbaum, 'Story', 217, who maintains, 'Appetite is curbed not by contemplative intellect, but by the demands of the passions it has awakened'.) The lover falls back immediately upon seeing the forms, and he is not described as deliberating about the effect of accosting the boy, either on the boy's wellbeing, or on the ordering of his own soul. It is his experience of the forms, not thoughts about seducing the boy, which, in a direct and unmediated way, evokes a response of fear and awe (ἔδεισέ τε καὶ σεφθεῖσα, 254 B 7-8). Note that Plato's word choice directly mirrors 251 A 1-7, where the lover, similarly, feels fear (δειμάτων) and awe (σέβεται) at the boy's beauty. In the earlier passage, there is no suggestion that the lover's response reflects aversion to assaulting the boy. In both passages, the use of σέβεσθαι connotes the sort of worshipful reverence which a man might feel towards a god. This reaction expresses an immediate, overwhelming sense of the god's greatness, and, correspondingly, of one's own powerlessness. So with the form: the lover is overcome by awe at the grandeur of the form; to the degree that he is even aware of himself at this moment, he experiences a corresponding sense of insignificance. Finally, as I argue in what follows, the lover's falling back not only expresses wonderment towards the form, but also fear of what he has undergone—when overtaken by the form, the lover becomes absorbed in something greater than himself and temporarily loses himself in this object. Insofar as he remains attracted to an ideal of self-mastery, this causes fear, though perhaps this will subside over time, as the lover comes to recognize that absorption in the form is the highest form of intellection a human can achieve.

longer his aim, when he becomes so absorbed in recollection that he falls back in wonder. Plato writes that the charioteer falls back in awe and at the same time, is forced (ἄμα ἠναγκάσθη) to pull back on the reins (254 B 7-C 3). The charioteer's subordination of the horse is not intentional: he pulls back on the reins at the same time as he falls, and his falling is the result of external force, not choice.³⁴ The charioteer is not aiming to punish the horses, but accidentally transmits his experience so forcefully that it overtakes them. Non-metaphorically, we can contrast two forms of asceticism. In the first case, an ascetic might choose to deny his appetites as a calculated means of lessening their hold. In the second case, the ascetic becomes so absorbed in contemplation that he forgets about his appetites altogether. Of course, this cannot be sustained—eventually it would lead to rebellion of the appetites, if not death. But on occasion, this might be useful, both to reinforce the primacy of contemplation, and to forcefully temper the power of the appetites. The picture here is complex. On the one hand, the struggle to control the soul, through nurture or oppression, is frustrating, and risks becoming all-consuming. Reason is in danger of losing sight of its true goal, contemplation. The charioteer's *erōs* for the forms reestablishes this goal, and, in his moment of recollection, he is compensated for his suffering in the psychic struggle. At the same time, *erōs* upsets the psychic equilibrium—the charioteer falls back and the whole soul is thrown off balance. But this destabilizing serves, inadvertently, to enable the charioteer to regain control of the soul.³⁵

³⁴ I owe this observation to Ferrari, *Listening*, 189.

³⁵ The suggestion is not that the charioteer ought always to ignore his horses. In the *Phaedrus*, we see Plato develop two models of how the charioteer controls the horses: intentionally, through whip and goad; and inadvertently, by falling back on the reins. Neither of these in isolation is an appropriate psychic arrangement for us humans. The former would deny the

What does this mean for the dark horse? There is, it seems, a proper nurture for the white horse. When Plato compares the achievement of self-mastery to victory in the Olympian contests, perhaps he means to suggest that the spirited part of the soul can learn to take pride in assisting the charioteer in prevailing in the inner battle (256 A 7-B 7).³⁶ But given how Plato characterizes the dark horse, as evil by nature, it does not seem that it can be diverted to better ends. Though Plato refers to the disastrous effects of failing to properly nurture the dark horse (247 B 3-5), he never describes what its proper nurture would be, and in the central passage where he depicts how it is mastered and inner harmony achieved, he only portrays the charioteer as punishing, never as feeding or caring for, the dark horse. This is appropriate: the aims of appetite are so opposed to those of reason that they must be starved, not redirected.³⁷ Thus, at

charioteer contemplative satisfaction and hence fail to realise the truest and best aspect of our natures; the latter would be impossible, given that we have irrevocably partite souls. The best life for us is one in which we alternate between total absorption in the forms and engagement with the lower parts of our natures; of course, this still leaves us with room to regret that we are not capable of a purely contemplative existence, or, at least, of a form of self-care which does not require inner violence and struggle.

³⁶ A. Lebeck has a helpful discussion of the image of victory at the games, as it occurs throughout the dialogue ('The Central Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*' ['Central'], *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 13.3 (1972), 267-90, at 270, n. 9).

³⁷ One might take 247 B 3-5 to imply that there is a proper nurture for the dark horse. It is perhaps this passage which has led interpreters such as Burnyeat ('Recollection'), Ferrari (*Listening*, 194) and Griswold (*Self-Knowledge*, 135-36) to maintain that the charioteer does not merely suppress the dark horse, but seeks that it should receive an appropriate form of

256 A 7-B 3, Plato presents us with a harsh either-or: a blessed, orderly life can only be attained by liberating the best part of the soul and enslaving the evil—reason cannot be free unless appetite is suppressed, and both parts cannot be fairly dealt with. Perhaps this is why the charioteer goes from negotiating with the dark horse to resorting to trickery: he cannot recognize any value in pursuing corporeal pleasure, and so compromise is unacceptable. This seems unfair; when we read of the charioteer pretending to forget his promise to the dark horse, there is a tendency to pity the horse and resent the charioteer's deviousness. Plato concludes our current passage by writing that if the dark horse is bloodied many times, eventually it ceases from its hubris and, seeing the boy, dies of fright (254 E 5-8). Though there is something uplifting about the promise of an end to struggle, this comes at the dark horse's expense. A mere four lines earlier, Plato refers to it as the hubristic horse (254 E 2); ὑβριστής is, in fact, Plato's primary

satisfaction. However, there is absolutely no evidence for this claim in the dialogue. Plato does not specify at 247 B 3-5 what it means to for the dark horse to be καλῶς τεθραμμένος; as I note below, 256 A 7-B 3 implies that when a soul is well-ordered, the dark horse is suppressed, not cared for. Nussbaum ('Story', 220) and Vlastos ('Individual', 39-40) appeal to Plato's references at 255 B 7-8 and 255 E 2-4 to the man touching his boy to argue that the life of the philosophic lover is not asexual, and hence that it does offer satisfaction to the lower parts of the soul. However, as Price notes, it is not clear that the lover will persist in such behaviour once he has recollected the forms of beauty and moderation, since it would imperil the control he has managed to secure over the dark horse (*Love*, 89-90). My own sense is that Plato includes these mentions of continued physical contact out of respect for Athenian pederastic convention. However, even if the lover continues to touch the boy, this is unlikely to satisfy the dark horse, so much as frustrate it, given that this touching never leads to intercourse.

epithet for the dark horse.³⁸ But if it ceases from its hubris, then does it cease to be itself? In that case, if we wish to achieve complete self-mastery, does appetite have to be extirpated? Plato suggests as much, when he writes of the dark horse dying of fright. But even if it would be best for appetite to be extirpated, or, at least, converted into something else, so that our horses would be matching, like those of the gods, this is not possible for us. The charioteer is σύμφυτος (grown together) with the dark horse, and even the best souls in the afterlife battle their dark horses. Is Plato again depicting what perfect harmony would be for humans, only to emphasize its unattainability? The thought that we could only achieve true harmony by killing off an essential part of ourselves is disturbing.³⁹

³⁸ 253 E 3, 254 C 3, 254 E 2; Plato's second-most frequent characterization of it is as ἀκόλαστος (255 E 5, 256 C 2), which carries much the same sense as ὑβριστής.

³⁹ The view that the human soul can never achieve true harmony is occasionally resisted by pointing to 250 B 5-C 6, where Plato refers to a time when our souls were whole (ὀλόκληροι) and pure (καθαροί). Thus Griswold, for example, maintains that we can recapture this state through recollection (*Self-Knowledge*, 112-13; see also Nussbaum, 'Story', 216; and Guthrie, *History*, 425, who goes so far as to propose that our souls can attain a divine state and cease to be partite, merging into νοῦς). However, if, as McGibbon ('Fall') persuasively argues, Plato is describing a pre-incarnate state of the soul before an original fall into embodiment, it is not clear that it can ever regain its primordial state of purity and wholeness. Furthermore, Plato's description of the souls which succeed in following the gods does not suggest that they cease to be partite or, for that matter, to experience inner conflict (see 246 B4, 247 B 2-5 and 248 A 1-B 5). Alternately, one might follow Price's suggestion (*Love*, 82-4), and maintain that when Plato describes the dark horse as dying of fright, he has in mind a process of sublimation, such as that

If the dark horse is such an impediment to the charioteer, then is it merely a tragic necessity that he is forever tethered to it? The answer is more complicated than that. Thus far, I have emphasized how the dark horse distracts the charioteer from contemplation, but I have ignored the one, positive contribution it makes to the soul. It is the dark horse, in its moment of sexual hubris, who drags the charioteer towards the boy and enables him to recollect the form.⁴⁰ But why must the charioteer be dragged; if proximity to the boy enables recollection, shouldn't the charioteer steer the soul in his direction? Perhaps the dark horse is on to something when it accuses the charioteer of cowardice (254 C 7-8). In fact, when the charioteer approaches the boy, the boy's face is described as flashing, ἀστράπτουσάν (254 B 5); this suggests that it both

described at *Rep.* 485 D 6-E 1, through which appetite is transformed so that it supports the ends of reason and spirit. However, as Price himself observes, even if the *Phaedrus* envisages the sublimation of appetite, this will never be complete; 255 E 4-256 A 1, for example, suggests that the dark horse will not cease to demand sex, and hence to require forceful subordination at the hand of the charioteer.

⁴⁰ It is sometimes thought that only the horses are winged, and hence that they not only pull the charioteer forward, towards the boy, but that they also enable him to fly up to the rim of the heavens. However, Plato is clear at 251 B 7 that the wings belong to the whole soul, not just the horses; see Burger, *Plato's*, 55; J. de Romilly, 'Les conflits de l'âme dans le Phèdre de Platon', *Wiener Studien* 16 (1982), 100-13, at 105, n. 12; De Vries, *Commentary*, 126; Ferrari, 'Love', 264; Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 93; Hackforth, *Plato's*, 69, n. 1; and Rowe, *Phaedrus*, 177.

Thus, the special contribution of the dark horse lies in dragging the charioteer towards the boy; in fact, as Plato suggests at 247 B 3, the dark horse's heaviness frequently impedes the upward motion of the soul.

offers illumination and threatens danger. Upon recollecting the form, the charioteer falls back in fear, ἔδεισε (254 B 7), just as earlier, he shivers and is overcome by terror, δειμάτων (251 A 4). What the charioteer fears is not just assaulting the boy; he is also afraid of his overpowering attraction to the forms.

We see this more clearly if we consider certain parallels between the erotic *mania* (madness) of the philosophic lover and that of the tyrannical soul of Book IX of the *Republic* (572 E 4-576 C 3). The tyrannical soul is generated when *erōs* grows within it; other desires nurture *erōs*, implanting the spur of longing, πόθου κέντρον (573 A 7-8). *Erōs* then adopts *mania* as its bodyguard; abandoning all its old beliefs about the noble and the good, purged of moderation, it throws aside mother and father for some new beloved. Significantly, each stage of the tyrant's descent to madness is replicated in the philosophic lover. When the charioteer looks in the eye of love, he, too, is stung by the πόθου κέντρον (253 E 5-254 A 1).⁴¹ The lover abandons all the old proprieties in which he took pride, and forgets about family and friends in his longing to recollect the forms (252 A 1-7). He renounces merely human moderation and is overcome by *mania* (249 D 4-E 4, 256 E 4-5). We can now see why the charioteer fears *erōs*, even in its best form. The natural role of the charioteer is to rule the soul, but when pierced by the πόθου κέντρον, he no longer wears the spurs, but is driven by an external force—the beauty of the boy and the form. Philosophic *erōs*, as a kind of *mania*, involves loss of control; reason, trained to act as prudent ruler of the soul, fears such an incursion.

⁴¹ The image of the κέντρον recurs throughout the palinode; as Lebeck notes ('Central', 277), Plato's use at 253 E 5-254 A 1 is foreshadowed at 251 D 5-6. For further discussion of the κέντρον image, see also Ferrari, *Listening*, 186-87.

Thus, the reason that the charioteer needs to be dragged by the horse is that, while appetite is uninhibited in the pursuit of its desires, reason has a tendency which requires correction: it can become so caught up in its ruling capacity that it forgets that it has another ultimate end, contemplation. This end is threatening, because it involves loss of control, when reason is taken over by the form. In pursuing a life of reason, often what we are attracted to is an ideal of self-control; being consumed by anything—appetite or philosophy—can be threatening, because it feels as though our autonomy has been disrupted. What the charioteer does not yet realise is that this madness offers him his best chance of achieving true control of the soul; though possessed by *erōs* for the forms, this is actually a liberation of reason in its contemplative capacity.⁴²

⁴² We are left with the following puzzle. In the *Phaedo* (74 A 9-D 2) and *Republic* (523 A 10-524 D 5), Plato conceives of how more banal objects—sticks and fingers—can prompt us to recollect the forms. These paths to philosophy are less fraught with risk: while one's attraction to a boy can lead to loss of control, this is hardly likely in the case of sticks or fingers. What, then, redeems the erotic journey to enlightenment which Plato describes in the *Phaedrus* (and *Symposium*)? I speculate that it is significant that the boy's beauty forcefully awakens appetite; while this generates psychological risks, it also offers attendant benefits. If we posit that the response of one part of the soul can bleed into that of another, then appetite's state of overpowering arousal transmits some of its motivational force to reason. The result is that the philosopher not only recognizes the existence of forms, but also feels love for them, and is compelled to center his life around them. Just as appetite's forceful attraction is transmitted to reason, so too its *mania*. Though I do not have the space to defend this claim, I believe that what links all of the forms of *mania* which Plato describes—poetry, prophesying, philosophical love

In concluding this paper, I would like to return to the comparison of the moral psychologies of the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* with which I began. According to Nussbaum, the *Phaedrus* reflects a development in Plato's psychology, away from the asceticism of the *Republic*, and towards a greater valuation of the contributions and needs of the lower parts of the soul.⁴³ We are now in a position to appreciate that the situation is, in fact, exactly the reverse. This can be clarified by contrasting four means by which appetite might be controlled: improvement, transformation, eradication and enslavement. On the first, appetite is directed, under the guidance of reason, towards better objects. On the second, its desires are transformed, to the point that it is no longer, strictly, appetite—for example, it might go from pursuing bodily pleasure to seeking understanding, albeit under a different guise than reason.⁴⁴ On the third, it

etc.—is that they are states of ἐνθουσίασις and ecstasy, that is to say, states in which one is possessed by the divine and thereby exits the self. In the case of the philosophical lover, part of the significance of his mad response to the boy is that it enables him to be possessed by and lose himself in the best objects, the forms. But his *mania* has value beyond serving as a conduit to philosophy. When absorbed by the forms, he ceases to be aware of himself, and hence no longer experiences dissatisfaction at his own imperfection and finitude. While humans are incapable of becoming perfect and divine, this loss of self offers a partial resolution to our sense of incompleteness. I defend this claim more fully in relation to the *Symposium* in 'Moral Transformation and the Love of Beauty in Plato's *Symposium*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 48.4 (2010), 415-44.

⁴³ 'Story'.

⁴⁴ Cooper suggests that in the democratic soul, appetite may be attracted to philosophy, not out of a love of truth, but out of an enthrallment with the manipulation of words, the surprise of

ceases to exist or, at least, to have any motivational pull. And on the fourth, it retains its desires, but these are denied satisfaction. While Plato considers all of these (with the exception of transformation) in the *Republic*,⁴⁵ in the *Phaedrus*, only the last two are raised as options for human soul. Plato's description of the dark horse as dying of fright suggests the possibility of its eradication, though this seems, at best, an ideal to aspire to—the charioteer is, after all, σύμφυτος (grown together) with the dark horse for all time, and 255 E 4-256 A 1 suggests that, even when tamed, the dark horse continues to desire sexual gratification. Ultimately, then, it is only enslavement which is explored as a serious means of controlling appetite—the dark horse is mastered through repeatedly being denied satisfaction, and Plato explicitly refers to its enslavement (δουλωσάμενοι) as the soul's greatest victory (256 A 7-B 7). This mode of psychic mastery diverges significantly from the ideal of ὁμόνοια and συμφωνία (unanimity and concord) which Plato identifies with virtue in Book IV of the *Republic* (431 E 10-432 A 9; 443 C 9-444 A 2); it comes closer to the quasi-moderation of the oligarch, who masters his desires through

discovery etc. ('Plato's', 198-99; he does not, however, propose that appetite can be transformed such that it no longer aims at bodily pleasure).

⁴⁵ Improvement is suggested at 586 D 4-587 A 1, as well as by Plato's more general discussion of early education and censorship; eradication is implied by the hydraulic metaphor (485 D 6-E 5); passages such as 554 C 11-D 3 and 442 A 4-B 3 call to mind enslavement. Though I do not believe that Plato ever conceives of the possibility of transformation, I include it in my list because interpreters such as Guthrie (*History*, 425) and, qualifiedly, Price, (*Love*, 82-84) attribute it to Plato in the *Phaedrus*. (Price does take the *Republic* to describe the transformation of appetite, proposing that the hydraulic metaphor of the *Republic* suggests 'a transformed appetite that is no longer appetite at all' (84)).

force, not persuasion (554 C 11-E 5). This suggests that Plato has become increasingly pessimistic about the degree to which appetite's aims can be aligned with those of reason and the extent to which it can be persuaded to willingly accede to reason's rule.

At the same time, this characterization of the two dialogues as sharply opposed is somewhat misleading. While Plato focuses on virtue as harmonization of the soul throughout the *Republic*, the dialogue also contains a more violent and oppressive streak, and the *Phaedrus* can be seen as an outgrowth of this tendency. Thus, Plato writes in the *Republic* that reason looks down on the pleasures of the other parts and would have no need for them if they were not necessary for life (581 D 10-E 4), implying that reason recognizes no intrinsic value in satisfying the desires of the lower parts of the soul. In distinguishing necessary from unnecessary desires, Plato proposes that we should get rid of unnecessary desires, since they are an impediment to thought, and includes among them such basic desires as the appetite for food not required for subsistence (559 A 3-C 6).⁴⁶ This extermination of appetite recurs in Book X, when Plato writes that appetitive and spirited desires ought to wither, not flourish (606 D 1-7), and it reaches its apogee in Book IX, when Plato writes that while reason tames some appetites, it kills others (589 B 1-3). Our study of the *Phaedrus* has revealed why Plato should be drawn to such a harsh role for reason: the aims of the appetitive part of the soul are discontinuous with those of reason, and lack value from its perspective. If we ought primarily to aim at contemplation, then reason's

⁴⁶ Interestingly, 559 C 6 implies that there are necessary, as well as unnecessary sexual desires; presumably necessary sexual desires aim at appropriate objects and/or benefit us by producing offspring. Thus while Plato conceives of a healthy form of sexual activity in the *Republic*, this possibility is not raised in the *Phaedrus*—once again, the latter is harsher towards bodily desire than the former.

motivation in caring for the lower parts of the soul will be largely instrumental; this may be served by offering appetite some degree of satisfaction (571 D 6-572 B 1), but it is equally likely that this is achieved by starving appetite to the degree possible (442 A 4-B 3). This strand in the *Republic* has been dismissed by recent interpreters, who are drawn to an ideal of reason as balancing the needs of all of the parts of the soul, rather than selfishly prioritizing its own ends,⁴⁷ that Plato chooses to develop this theme in the *Phaedrus* suggests that we should take his asceticism more seriously.

Some interpreters, wishing to reconcile reason's desire to contemplate with its obligation to rule, maintain that the two activities are, in fact, continuous, and that reason is therefore not subject to conflicting desires. Thus Irwin argues that ruling the soul involves a holistic outlook which satisfies reason's desire for deliberation; Cooper and Kraut propose that both ruling and contemplating are means by which reason aims to maximize instantiations of the good in this world; and Kahn contends that reason's cognitive and desiderative aspects are essentially unified, constituting a desire for the good, a desire that is at once theoretical and practical.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁷ Notably Irwin (*Moral*, 236-7, 242-43); for an opposing view, see M. C. Nussbaum, 'The *Republic*: true value and the standpoint of perfection', in M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge, 1986), 136-64.

⁴⁸ Irwin, *Ethics*, 292-95 (for a similar line of argument, see also Ferrari, 'Soul', 196-200); J. M. Cooper, 'The Psychology of Justice in Plato', in J. M. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, 1999), 138-49, at 145-48; R. Kraut, 'The defense of justice in Plato's *Republic*', in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 311-37, at 327-29; Kahn, 'Theory', especially 84-90. Note that, while Cooper and Kraut's arguments can be applied to the question of self-rule, they only explicitly address the philosopher's motivation to rule the city.

Republic already gives us reason to doubt that contemplation and self-rule can be so neatly aligned—Plato calls learning, not ruling, reason's greatest pleasure (580 D 7-581 E 4); if ruling were continuous with contemplation, then surely the philosopher-king would not feel regret at being compelled to rule. This is confirmed in the *Phaedrus*. In the *Phaedrus*, we see clearly that ruling the soul and contemplating the forms occur in different realms and are directed towards different objects. The charioteer is distracted from philosophy by the need to tend to his unruly horses (248 A 1-B 1); even if his horses were better-behaved, governing them would, metaphorically, require him to look down, while contemplation directs his vision upwards.

This is not to say that in the *Phaedrus* the charioteer's sole reason for tending to his horses is instrumental. It is true that the instrumental motivation is the only one to which Plato directs explicit attention—if our horses are unruly, we will be unable to contemplate, and living a life of injustice diminishes our memory of the forms (250 A 2-4). Nonetheless, we can read a more attractive motivation into the dialogue: the charioteer rules his horses because this is a mode of emulating the divine. But even if this confers intrinsic value onto self-care, this value will always be secondary to that of contemplation. We cannot contemplate all the time, and as beings with irrevocably partite constitutions, it behooves us to tend to them. Ultimately, however, it is their sight of the forms which renders the gods divine (249 C 5-6), and we follow the gods in order that we, too, may see the forms and actualize our divine potential. While living

Kahn does not explicitly take up the conflict between contemplating and ruling; however, his article has been highly influential in maintaining that there is not a sharp divide between reason's practical and theoretical functions. There are many other noteworthy pieces on the topic which I do not have the space to discuss; the papers I cite are simply intended as representative examples.

justly enables us to earn a blessed afterlife, it is only clearly grasping the forms which offers us the hope of transcending the cycle of rebirth (248 C 2-8).

In opening this paper, I listed four claims about the *Phaedrus*, which I intended to contest; I will close by returning to these. i) Human soul differs from divine soul in degree, not kind. In fact, human soul differs from divine in its very constitution, through the presence of the dark horse, and this difference is insurmountable; even when the charioteer masters the dark horse, it remains a source of strife. ii) There is a proper form of nourishment for the appetitive part of the soul. It is significant that, while Plato assigns an ideal form of nourishment to the horses of the gods, our charioteer is only depicted as punishing, not caring for his horses. If Plato's view were that the dark horse can be given proper nurture, and that the charioteer is obliged to see to this, then surely he would include this in his detailed depiction of the soul in the *Phaedrus*. The reason he does not is that the ends of appetite are opposed to those of reason, and cannot be transformed to as to directly support contemplation. iii) The lower parts of the soul make a significant contribution to the philosophic life. Though there is truth to this proposal, it needs to be carefully qualified. Appetite does not contribute by offering insight into the nature of beauty, nor even, as in the *Republic*, by ceasing to obstruct reason's ends. Its contribution lies in the fact that, in dragging the charioteer towards the boy, it enables reason to become possessed by the forms. Thus, Plato's striking and paradoxical proposal in the *Phaedrus* is that it is precisely in virtue of its unruly, corrupt nature that appetite supports philosophy, overcoming reason's resistance to philosophical *mania* and enabling it to fully realize its contemplative nature. Of course, we should be careful not to overstate matters; while the dark horse's passion facilitates reason's recollection of the forms, it also causes the soul to sink from the sight of the forms and back into embodiment. iv) Contemplation supports psychic mastery in a manner

which is direct and unproblematic. Again, this contains a partial truth. It is only when gripped by the forms that the charioteer forgets about the lower parts of the soul, ensuring his dominion over them. Thus, reason does not master the soul by directly applying its insight into virtue to ordering the soul but, rather, by temporarily ceasing to care about psychic ordering.

Are these four claims grounds for pessimism? My interpretation is darker than those of Burnyeat and Nussbaum, insofar as I maintain that the dark horse can never be transformed, only suppressed, and insofar as I argue that tending to the lower parts of the soul never ceases to be violent for us humans, nor to distract us from contemplation. But of course, judgements of pessimism or optimism are perspectival—one might equally maintain that the proposal that we can master the dark horse, achieve a partial vision of the forms, and forge lives in which we combine contemplation with self-care, actually expresses a deep and abiding optimism about human nature.

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