

Philosophy as the Science of Beauty  
Socrates' Palinode in Plato's *Phaedrus*

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Plato's *Phaedrus* is extraordinary compared with other his works. It is only natural that Diogenes Laertius reports that Plato's first work was the *Phaedrus*, and that Plato was a lover of Phaedrus. (D.L. III.38 1-2.III.31.) In fact, the *Phaedrus* is so vivid and impressive in its description of the philosophical lover that it gives the impression of being Plato's love letter.

In the *Phaedrus* (248d2-4), it is said that "the soul that hath seen the most of Being shall enter into the human babe that shall grow into a seeker after wisdom or beauty, a follower of the Muses and a lover." So translates Hackforth, adding: "The first life needs no comment, save that the philokalos, mousikos and erōtikos are not persons other than the philosophos, but denote aspects of him, the first two being virtual synonyms, while the third will find its best elucidation in the general content of the whole myth. (R.Hackforth, Plato's *Phaedrus*, p.83.)

If Hackforth is right, Plato is making here an unusual assertion that to be a philosopher one has to be a lover of beauty and also to be a lover of someone. To understand the meaning of this assertion and to understand the whole structure of the *Phaedrus* is one and the same thing.

We thus need to find out how Plato describes the situation in which we first find beauty and a beloved. It is said at 251a that by beholding a godlike face or bodily form that truly expresses beauty, we begin to love our own beloved. What does this "godlike face" mean? The only possibility suggested in the text is that a "godlike face" evokes an image of the twelve gods we once saw as we followed after them hoping to see the true Being beyond the heavens. So here is given certain order of beauty, i.e. Beauty, Zeus (god of philosophers), lover and beloved (or beloved and lover). By partaking in this order, philokalos, mousikos, erōtikos and philosophos each comes into being, becoming at the same time one and the same person. In this sense, the composition of the *Phaedrus* corresponds to that of the *Symposium*. In the *Symposium* the order of beauty, which is crucial to understanding the work, is: Beauty itself, Diotima (instead of the twelve gods in the *Phaedrus*), Socrates (self-proclaimed lover but beloved in reality), and those who were present at the symposium, including Alcibiades (prima facie beloved but lover in reality). Socrates' Palinode also sings of the subtle relationship between philosophical lover and beloved. This is actually depicted as a

relation of each soul to every other, in terms of the allegorical myth of the charioteer and two horses (good and evil) based on the tripartite theory of the soul in the *Republic* IV. The tripartite psychology is thus introduced, not only in the *Republic* but also in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus*, to make clear that men can philosophize only by finding out and partaking in Beauty through loving a beloved. Therefore the tripartite psychology is a device to make it possible for men to partake in philosophical life and other various kinds of life in accordance with the part of the soul that dictates each person.