

The role of the partner in Plato's love

Yasuhiro WAKIJO

In the Palinode of Plato's *Phaedrus*, having successfully tamed the wicked horse of his soul, the true lover continues his relationship with the beloved partner. He is still with the same partner even when he finally reaches the victorious final stage that is regarded as the happiest life possible for a human being: the life of philosophical dialogue. But philosophical inquiry can be, and in an important sense should be, carried out alone and Plato seems to agree with this in some places. Why does the philosopher then in the final stage of his love need the partner for his philosophical activity?

First, the reason may be external. It may be out of personal love or ethical demand: he may well feel great love or think he owes a lot to the partner, since the partner is the very person who by his own beauty has lead the philosopher to the philosophical way of life, which he now deems supremely valuable. Or he may be following, just like Aristotle, the principle that human beings naturally want to share their aim of life with their friends.

Second, the reason may be rhetorical. The Palinode is presented as a specimen of true rhetoric, i.e. the true art of persuasion. It starts from one thing, and exploiting similarities between things, moves away from it little by little, finally arriving at the opposite thing. What the true art of persuasion persuades of is not necessarily true: it can be deceptive. The need of partner in the final philosophical life may be a deceptive piece of rhetoric used to persuade the particular interlocuter of the dialogue, Phaedrus.

The reason, however, may concern something essential for the philosophical activity itself. True philosophical dialogues involve sowing seeds of $\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\sigma$ and these seeds are said to be able to become immortal. Becoming immortal through producing children not of human beings but of true virtues is the key theme of the *Symposium*, and similar productive role of philosophical dialogues is also mentioned in the *Seventh Letter*. Presence of partners seems to be essential in these cases. If so, what is transmitted in philosophical dialogue is not so much the content of arguments as the ability to learn autonomously. Perhaps philosophy resembles music in that it needs someone else to share the art, and this is not surprising since philosophy belongs to $\mu\circ\nu\sigma\iota\kappa\circ\gamma$.