



## Challenging Platonic Erôs

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► **To cite this version:**

Olivier Renaut. Challenging Platonic Erôs: The Role of Thumos and Philotimia in Love. Ed Sanders; Chiara Thumiger; Christopher Carrey; Nick Lowe. Erôs in Ancient Greece, Oxford University Press, pp.95-110, 2013, 9780199605507. <10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199605507.003.0007>. <hal-01322948>

**HAL Id: hal-01322948**

**<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01322948>**

Submitted on 29 May 2016

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## CHALLENGING PLATONIC *ERÔS* THE ROLE OF *THUMOS* AND *PHILOTIMIA* IN LOVE.

Plato's Dialogues continue to challenge our common definition of love. Whereas we commonly understand the primary meaning of love as an intense feeling addressed to an individual and attachment to his uniqueness - what we may call "personal love" hereafter -, Plato famously defines *erôs* as a force that drives each individual towards an object that appears to be rather abstract: Beauty (*kalon*). Platonic love provides the individual with happiness and leads him to virtue by knowledge of the Good. This intellectualized form of love goes together with a condemnation of sexual attachment and greediness, starting with the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* through to the *Laws*. It is therefore commonly argued that, for Plato, "personal love" cannot be an end in itself. As Vlastos has shown, love for an individual is a mere symptom of human deficiency, for the only thing truly worth loving is the Good, in a rather egoistic way.<sup>1</sup> It is then a small step from the condemnation of inferior love whose paradigm is sexual attachment to an overall rejection of "personal love", insofar as the lovers have not fulfilled the process of ascending the so-called "ladder of love" depicted in the *Symposium* (210a-212a).<sup>2</sup>

Real Platonic love, the only one of value, is the philosophical love for the Good.<sup>3</sup> What remains unclear, though, is whether real philosophical love represents a distinct kind of love, which has nothing to do with inferior kinds.<sup>4</sup> If this were the case, how would a non-philosopher understand that philosophical love is true *erôs*? And, if it is even possible, how could inferior kinds of love be used as means of experiencing love of Forms, and, even more so, the Form of the Beautiful (*kalon*)?<sup>5</sup> A way of rehabilitating "personal love" in Plato, and of organizing different kinds of love into a non-exclusive hierarchy, is to follow Socrates when he decides on a typology of *erôs* at the end of the *Republic*. As Socrates shows in Book IX of the *Republic*, there are three main types of desires in the human soul: bodily desires (thirst, hunger, sexual desires, and money as a means of buying whatever one desires), desire

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I'm grateful to the audience of the conference "*Erôs in Ancient Greece*", and especially Ed Sanders and Chiara Thumiger and Lee Brooks for their helpful remarks and objections. I also thank the "Institut de Recherches Philosophiques" (EA373) of Université Paris Ouest – Nanterre-La Défense for its support, Christopher Robertson and Lee Brooks for having corrected my English.

<sup>1</sup> Vlastos (1981).

<sup>2</sup> This opposition between an exclusive platonic love and a more common one has to be qualified. For an example of how love can be more inclusive, allowing sexual intercourse for instance, see Gill (this volume) on the stoic interpretation of platonic love.

<sup>3</sup> Vlastos's ground-breaking article has been much discussed. See first Nussbaum (2001), who opposes the *Symposium* to the *Phaedrus* (ch. 6 and 7) on the grounds that, in the latter, Plato acknowledges the importance of sensibility, passions and personality in the experience of love (p. 213-23). Price (1981) maintains, more accurately, that the conception of love in the *Symposium* is an "inclusive" one (the philosophical love contains the others), whereas the *Phaedrus* ends by discarding inferior forms of love, symbolized by the desires of the two horses. See also the critical notes by Rowe (1990). White (1990) shows in what sense "personal love" could fit the Platonic picture of philosophical love. Finally, see Gill (1990), who shows that the myth aims at educating the lovers to respect and esteem each other (p. 76-78) but that it is not an end in itself; the main goal is to unify one's soul in experiencing philosophical love, *i.e.* by submitting the desires to the rule of reason (p. 82ff.).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of Plato's strategy in transforming the common conception of love in the *Phaedrus*, see Cairns (this volume).

<sup>5</sup> See the recent attempt of Carone (2006) to combine universal and particular objects of love in the experience of the philosopher in the *Symposium*.

for honour and victory, and desire for knowledge. These three types of desire define three corresponding types of man: the profit-loving man (*philochrêmatos*), the victory and honour-loving man (*philonikos kai philotimos*) and the philosopher (*philosophos*) (*Resp.* IX, 580d-581b). The opposition between the first and the last character reaches its climax when Socrates depicts the similarities and differences between the violent *erôs* growing in the tyrant's soul, and the *erôs* of the philosopher.<sup>6</sup> Less attention has been paid to the other kind of love, *philotimia*, which arises not from the desiring part of the soul but from its intermediary part: *thumos*. The *philotimos* seems at first sight to be an unfamiliar image of a lover, but he is actually the only one who feels what we can recognize as a "personal" attachment to somebody, as well as care for the reputation and the image of his lover and of himself. Indeed, and contrary to the appetitive type of love, *thumoeidic* love as described in the *Phaedrus* is not easily discarded, insofar as a smoother treatment seems to be reserved to the *thumoeidic* lovers (*Phdr.* 256b-e).<sup>7</sup> This chapter aims to show that *philotimia* is seen by Plato both as a dangerous challenge to philosophical love and *also* as an opportunity to use the energy expended by the psychic function from which this love comes, *thumos*, in order to serve philosophical goals. I shall begin with an analysis of the role of *philotimia* in the speeches of Phaedrus and Diotima in the *Symposium*. Then, I shall explain, on the grounds of the tripartite soul in the *Republic*, how *philotimia* can be used as a lever for philosophical *erôs* in the *Phaedrus*, before concluding on its political use.

## ***Philotimia* as a wrong basis for love**

In the first praise speech of the *Symposium*, Phaedrus makes *philotimia* the sense of honour and shame, the most important lever of *erôs*, and the instrument of our own flourishing and self-construction through others.<sup>8</sup>

I cannot say what greater good there is for a young boy than a gentle lover, or for a lover than a boy to love. There is a certain guidance each person needs for his whole life, if he is to live well; and nothing imparts this guidance – not high kinship, not public honor, not wealth – nothing imparts this guidance as well as Love (οὔτε συγγένεια οἷα τε ἐμποιεῖν οὔτω καλῶς οὔτε τιμαὶ οὔτε πλοῦτος οὔτ' ἄλλο οὐδὲν ὡς ἔρωος). What guidance do I mean? I mean a sense of shame at acting shamefully, and a sense of pride in acting well (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχρόνην, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαν). Without these, nothing fine or great can be accomplished, in public or in private. What I say is this: if a man in love is found doing something shameful, or accepting shameful treatment because he is a coward and makes no defense, then nothing would give him more pain than being seen by the boy he loves – not even being seen by his father or his comrades. We see the same thing also in the boy he loves, that he is especially ashamed before his lover when he is caught in something shameful (*Symp.* 178c3-e3, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On *erôs* and the tyrant, see Larrivé (2005).

<sup>7</sup> See Nussbaum (2001), ch. 3.

<sup>8</sup> This speech has long been neglected by commentators as a quite conventional speech. However, it makes much more sense to take this passage as a first step towards a transformation of Homeric ethics to fit the Platonic conception of love: see Wersinger (2001) 243-248, and Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2005) 51-56, for an accurate analysis of this speech.

<sup>9</sup> There is some difficulty in translating *erôs* by love in this passage, for we certainly expect the word *philia* instead, conveying the idea of a deep attachment rather than a pederastic relationship including sexual attachment. But Phaedrus uses *erôs* here purposely, as it becomes clear with the examples he chooses at the end of his praise speech: Alcestis, Orpheus and Achilles.

For Phaedrus, *erôs* is the foundation of ethics. Through shame and *philotimia*, one becomes better, and better able to care for oneself. Phaedrus compares *erôs* to three other types of social relationships: *philia* (especially between members of the same family or *genos*), honour-based relationships (which may refer to a more extended sphere of social and political relationships), and wealth-based relationships. Faced with these three relationships, *erôs* remains the only one that leads the individual to real happiness (*eudaimonia*). According to Phaedrus, the sense of honour enables the lover to take up the challenge of showing grace, generosity and magnanimity in front of his lover.

It is tempting to say that Phaedrus's speech is a mere echo of popular morality and expresses concern for what people say. The value of the individual's behaviour and actions would then depend on the way witnesses evaluate it, according to existing social norms. There would only be a difference in degree between the shame experienced in front of the beloved and in front of any other individual. But this interpretation is misleading. The rule of construction of selfhood is assuredly heteronomous, insofar as selfhood depends on how a particular witness, the lover, considers it. But this does not mean that the values advocated by the parents, the *philoï*, and others in general, have the same function as the ones implied in a relation of love. Because the lover cares for his beloved far more than he does for his parents, friends and others, the beloved functions as a real motivation for the lover to show an ideal image of himself. For Phaedrus, absolute *timê* is achieved when one is ready to sacrifice his life, being entirely at the lover's behest.<sup>10</sup> In experiencing shame and *philotimia* in front of the beloved, one commits oneself to values, which one could have otherwise only superficially approved. In other words, *philotimia* and shame are, according to Phaedrus, means for the individual to experience the values he is committed to as *true* ones, and to seek new challenges for himself. However, it seems at first sight that Phaedrus is not really consistent in opposing a sense of honour and shame, which comes from *erôs*, and the attachment to social and political marks of honour (*timai*). There seems to be a contradiction in the fact that Phaedrus first points out the inanity of founding happiness on *timai*, and then makes *philotimia* the cause of becoming better. But we should assume here that Phaedrus gives the concept of *timê* different meanings.<sup>11</sup> In the first case, *timê* seems to refer to a kind of possession (civic honours, prerogatives, or even presents), whereas the latter, the one *philotimia* strives for, does not mean the product of the relation, but the value of the relation itself, so that selfhood is constructed through a sense of honour and shame, placing the other on a level beyond the possessions one can get from him.

Phaedrus's speech plays with a Homeric legacy. The persistent Homeric patterns, notably the mention of the hero's spirited force (*menos*) (178e3-179b3), and the use of the figure of Achilles as the paragon of courage (179e1-180b5), grace and sensibility at the end of the speech, are important clues of a link between *erôs* and *philotimia*, and even with their psychological seat, *thumos*. If we go back to Homeric epics, *erôs* is likely to be found in the

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<sup>10</sup> Self-sacrifice could first be thought to be an expression of perfect *philia*, as Aristotle states in *Eth. Nic.*, IX.8, 1169a18 ff., where he employs the same verb (*ὑπεραποθνήσκω*) to show how *philoï* are ready to die for each other (I am grateful to Ed Sanders for drawing this passage to my attention), as Phaedrus to describe the sacrifice of Alcestis and Achilles (*Symp.* 179b4, 180a1). Whether or not Aristotle has the *Symposium* in mind, it underlines the oddity of Phaedrus's speaking of *erôs* when we expect *philia*. However, it might also mean that for Phaedrus, *erôs* is even more inclusive than *philia*, for a perfect lover such as Achilles not only "dies for" Patroclus but "follows him in death" or "dies after" him (*οὐ μόνον ὑπεραποθανεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπαποθανεῖν τετελευτηκότι*, 180a1).

<sup>11</sup> On the meaning of *timê*, especially in Homeric Epics, see Riedinger (1976) who resists the idea that *timê* is reducible to a mere ransom. For an opposite and resisting view, see Adkins (1982), who seems to acknowledge the traditional platonic criticism of *philotimia*.

character's *thumos*, together with *philia* and passions of the like.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, it is in their *thumos* that heroes feel anger, hatred or delight when watching their enemy perish.<sup>13</sup> Phaedrus is thus recalling a traditional link between *erôs* and *thumos*, the latter being the aggressive side of the former.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Phaedrus' speech mentions all the characteristics of the *thumos* that will be found in the *Republic*: an acute sensitiveness to what is good and just through a sense of honour and shame; marks of manliness; a spontaneous manner of showing one's commitment to the values one believes in; a propensity to *philotimia* and, more generally, to a competitive spirit, leading one to seek out new challenges. It is likely that in the *Republic*, Plato does not discard this Homeric legacy concerning the sensitivity to *timê*, which is rooted in the *thumos* of the auxiliaries.

Before we turn to the main criticism Diotima will make in her discourse against this *thumoeidic* ideology, we should compare this speech to its "echo" in Plato's dialogues, namely Lysias's speech in the *Phaedrus*. When reading Phaedrus's speech in the *Symposium*, we could have expected the word *philia* to occur instead of that of *erôs*, as if Plato were purposely transposing a Homeric model of personal relationships to fit artificially with *erôs*. As a counterpoint to Phaedrus's speech, Lysias's discourse in the *Phaedrus*, read by the same Phaedrus he is in love with, employs the same notions of shame and sense of honour as virtues.<sup>15</sup> But Phaedrus's speech is reversed, for Lysias praises the non-lover, and criticizes the incontinence and *hybris* of the lover. Thus, Lysias dissociates *philotimia* from *aischunê*, the first being related to envy and jealousy.

Now suppose you're afraid of conventional standards (τὸν νόμον τὸν καθεστηκότα δέδουικας) and the stigma that will come to you if people find out about this. Well, it stands to reason that a lover – thinking that everyone else will admire him for his success as much as he admires himself (οἰομένους καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ζηλοῦσθαι ὥσπερ αὐτοὺς ὑφ' αὐτῶν) – will fly into words and proudly declare to all and sundry that his labors were not in vain (καὶ φιλοτιμουμένους ἐπιδείκνυσθαι πρὸς ἅπαντας). Someone who does not love you, on the other hand, can control himself and will choose to do what is best, rather than seek the glory that comes from popular reputation (ἀντὶ τῆς δόξης τῆς παρὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων)(*Phdr.* 231e3-232a6, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff).

Unlike the lover, who is moved by *philotimia*, the non-lover is able to show reserve:

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<sup>12</sup> Numerous formulae indicate that *thumos* is that by which we feel a certain attachment to something. Such feelings range from kindness and *philia* between comrades, friends, or members of the family (*Il.* I, 196, 209; V, 243, 826; IX, 486; X, 531; XI, 520, 608; XIX, 287; XXIV, 236, 748, 762; *Od.* VI, 20; XIV, 146) to mere sexual attraction as in the episode of the seduction of Zeus (*Il.* XIV, 315) or enchantment as in the appearance of Penelope in front of her suitors (*Od.* XVIII, 212, 282), through to what we can call "love" between husband and wife for example, including both *philia* and a sexual relationship (*Il.* IX, 340-343, 398; *Od.* XVII, 553-555).

<sup>13</sup> See for instance *Il.* I, 196; I, 209; I, 562; V, 243; V, 826; IX, 341; IX, 398; IX, 486; XIV, 315; XIX, 287; XXIII, 548; XXIII, 595; XXIV, 762; *Od.* VI, 23; XIV, 146; XV, 20; XVIII, 212.

<sup>14</sup> Hesiod, *Theog.* 223-225, where we are told that *Philotês* is born at the same time as *Nemesis*, and *Eris* which affect the *thumos* (*karterothumos*). See also Sappho, fr.1 (West), where the poetess prays to the Divinity to strengthen her *thumos*, becoming the active, or even aggressive side of her deceitful *erôs*, whether her *thumos* is defeated by nauseous disease (l. 4), or succeeds in conquering her love (l. 18 and l. 27).

<sup>15</sup> Everything opposes the two discourses. However, Wersinger (2001) 248-257, has shown perfectly well that Phaedrus and Lysias defend an ideal of a relationship based on well-considered *charis* which implies the self-effacing of the individual. But this reserve (*aidôs*) does not preclude competitive behaviour for Adkins (1996).

O. Renaut, "Challenging Platonic *Erôs*. The Role of *Thumos* and *Philotomia* in Love", in E. Sanders, C. Thumiger, C. Carey & al. (ed.) *Erôs in Ancient Greece*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 95-110.

[No, it's proper, I suppose, to grant your favours] not to people who achieve their goal and then boast about it in public (οὐδὲ οἱ διαπραξάμενοι πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους φιλοτιμήσονται), but to those who will keep a modest silence with everyone (ἀλλ' οἵτινες αἰσχυνόμενοι πρὸς ἅπαντας σιωπήσονται)(*Phdr.* 231e3-232a6, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff).

In opposing Phaedrus and Lysias's discourses, Plato aims to criticize *philotimia* as a good motivation in erotic relationships. Later in the *Phaedrus*, giving his own version of Lysias's speech, Socrates playfully recognizes in the supposed non-lover a lover necessarily prone to jealousy (φοανερόν δὴ ἀνάγκη εἶναι, 239a7-b1). Moreover, the lover would envy his beloved's wealth and rejoice in seeing it all scattered (ἐξ ὧν πᾶσα ἀνάγκη ἐραστὴν παιδικοῖς φονεῖν μὲν οὐσίαν κεκτημένοις, ἀπολλυμένης δὲ χαίρειν, 240a5-6).

As a result of these multiple reversals, it can be argued that for Plato, and contrary to what Phaedrus and Lysias say, an erotic relationship which relies on either one or both *philotimia* and *aidôs*, is doomed to failure because of its attachment to an image of oneself, which is dependent on what others say. *Phthonos* will necessarily appear, transforming the erotic relationship into a theatrical scene, where the self is but an image of what his beloved wants him to be and, reciprocally, the beloved a potential opponent in the competition that leads to happiness.<sup>16</sup>

In response to Phaedrus' speech, Diotima's task consists in assuming the natural origin of *philotimia* in love without letting it fix the object of love on *timê*.

"Be sure of it, Socrates. Look, if you will, at how human beings seek honour (τὴν φιλοτιμίαν). You'd be amazed at their irrationality (θαυμάζοις ἂν τῆς ἀλογίας), if you didn't have in mind what I spoke about and if you hadn't pondered the awful state of love they're in, wanting to become famous and "to lay up glory immortal forever" (ἐνθυμηθεῖς ὡς δεινῶς διάκεινται ἔρωτι τοῦ ὀνομαστοῖ γενέσθαι καὶ κλέος ἐς τὸν αἰεὶ χρόνον ἀθάνατον καταθέσθαι), and how they're ready to brave any danger for the sake of this, much more than they are for their children; and they are prepared to spend money, suffer through all sorts of ordeals, and even die for the sake of glory. Do you really think that Alcestis would have died for Admetus," she asked, "or that Achilles would have died after Patroclus, or that your Codrus would have died so as to preserve the throne for his sons if they hadn't expected the memory of their virtue – which we still hold in honor – to be immortal (μὴ οἰομένους ἀθάνατον μνήμην ἀρετῆς περὶ ἑαυτῶν ἔσεσθαι)? Far from it," she said. "I believe that anyone will do anything for the sake of immortal virtue and the glorious fame that follows (τοιαύτης δόξης εὐκλεοῦς); and the better the people, the more they will do, for they are all in love with immortality (τοῦ γὰρ ἀθανάτου ἐρῶσιν)." (*Symp.* 208c1-e1, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff)

Phaedrus's edifying conception of love according to which the lover seems to be entirely at the disposal of his beloved is refuted by a psychological analysis of the lover's real motives. *Philotimia* is a contradictory desire: through self-sacrifice, the lover clearly seeks a greater good: to die for somebody is nothing else than to die as a hero, *i.e.* overcome death by gaining immortality in renown. Diotima uses Phaedrus's own vocabulary and examples in order to deny that the object of love could be anything other than glory and fame. Using the example of Codrus, whose motivations are not erotic but political, Diotima denies that the role of the beloved is more important than the struggle for *timê*.

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<sup>16</sup> See *Phlb.* 47e1-48a4, where *erôs* and *thumos* are ultimately related to *phthonos*. See Sanders (this volume), for a jealous woman driven by *thumos*.

A twofold conclusion can be inferred from Diotima's speech: Phaedrus is right in saying that *erôs* is the foundation of ethics and of a set of values that leads to the Good, but he is wrong in making *philotimia* its achievement. *Philotimia* is an irrational desire (*ἄλογος*), for it leads the individual to prefer death as a way to acquire renown through immortality. *Philotimia* is then dangerous for two reasons: first, it transforms love into an edifying affair, exalting dramatic emotions; second, it fails to understand what is really, in love, the object to be valued. The *philotimos* focuses selfishly on the capacity of others to make him good, beautiful and virtuous. In other words, Plato denounces the propensity of the *philotimos* to love being praised at any cost, regardless of the real and objective value of actions and behaviour. Thus, for Plato, the *philotimos* remains dependent on what people think and say (through memory and renown) and fails to recognize what the real object of *erôs* is.

However, Diotima does not entirely dismiss *philotimia* as a whole. As irrational as *philotimia* may be, it remains an expression of a longing for a real object of love, immortality. Contrary to Lysias in the *Phaedrus* when he criticizes cupidity and lust, or contrary to Socrates in Book VIII of the *Republic*, Diotima rightly points out the efficiency of *philotimia* as a lever for virtuous behaviour. Indeed, the three examples of Alcestis, Achilles and Codros are illustrious ones; what is therefore questioned is not the effect of *philotimia* but the way those heroes have misconstrued the image of the object of love. What is at stake, then, is how the psychological force of *philotimia* could be a lever to attain real immortality.

## Educating *thumos*'s force

If the *Symposium* presents the inferior type of love experienced by the *philotimos* as ambiguous, it does not explain how it can be used as a means towards attaining true philosophic love. The tripartite model of the soul might throw light on how *philotimia* can be diverted to this end.<sup>17</sup> In the *Symposium*, *erôs* is the name Plato gives to the fundamental desire which leads every single animal in the sensible world to seek its own good during its life, but the tripartite model can also be used in order to show both how different types of love could be classified on a scale of values, whose criterion would be their proximity to philosophy, and how philosophical love could proceed from a relatively inferior type of love. The link between the two intermediaries is *philotimia*.<sup>18</sup> In Book IV of the *Republic*, Socrates presents what is called the tripartite *psyche*. The *psyche* is divided into three "parts" or rather three "functions", each of which is responsible for a kind of action or passion: the rational part (*logistikón*), the desiring part (*epithumêtikon*), and the intermediary part (*thumoeides*).<sup>19</sup> The function of *thumos* is to value things, not evaluate them cognitively (which is the task of the *logistikón*, the rational part of the soul), nor desire them (which is the concern of the

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<sup>17</sup> It would be misleading to oppose, as an objection, a so-called "static" hierarchical model of the soul, *i.e.* the tripartite model with *thumos* as an intermediary, to the more dynamic and unified one which has been depicted in the *Symposium*. Whereas Brès (1973), 308 ff., tries to show that the tripartite model, a static and hierarchical model of the soul, is an impoverishment of a more dynamic psychology which is found in the *Symposium*, Robin (1964) has consistently shown that this opposition is not relevant, especially in the *Phaedrus*.

<sup>18</sup> This potential link between the tripartite soul, especially *thumos*, and *philotimia*, is clearly presented by Cairns (1993) 381-9. It might then be tempting to outline analogies between *thumos* and *erôs* regarding their function as "intermediaries", as Souilhé (1919) has tried to show, but, despite the resemblance regarding their function, *thumos* is not necessarily the seat of *erôs*.

<sup>19</sup> *Erôs* as sexual appetite has been naturally associated with *epithumêtikon* in the post-platonic tradition. On this strong association and the physiological interpretation of what is understood as a *passion* in Galen, see Rosen (this volume).

*epithumêtikon*).<sup>20</sup> Angela Hobbs has brilliantly summed up its function, saying that “the essence of the human *thumos* is the need to believe that one counts for something, and that central to this need will be a tendency to form an ideal image of oneself in accordance with one’s conception of the fine and noble”.<sup>21</sup> Valuing things means for each individual to be committed to his own values (laws, habits, norms), which will arouse two opposite emotions in him: anger (*orgê*, or sometimes *thumos*) when these values are threatened or despised (440c7-d6), and shame (*aidôs* or *aischunê*) when he himself fails to enact them (439e6-440a3, 440c1-c6). Central to the definition of the function of *thumos* is the idea of honour (*timê*). As we’ve seen in Phaedrus’s speech in the *Symposium*, the greek word “*timê*” can refer to particular objects such as civic honour, special prerogatives given by public esteem, presents, etc. These objects are the expression of a complex network of social and political relationships, often referred to as the ideology of honour.<sup>22</sup> In this network, one is able to form oneself through others, what they think and what they say (see esp. 364a6-b2, 413e5-414a4). But *timê* also means simply the “value” the individual gives to something, which can be, potentially, anything.<sup>23</sup> *Timê* refers then to the way *thumos* gives something a value into [in] a particular context. This complex operation of valuing things makes *timê* ambivalent: it refers both to the act of “valuing something” and to an “object” which is actually the result of the process of valuing things in a given society which has its own set of values.<sup>24</sup> In that respect, *thumos*’s force is at once a threat and a potential auxiliary to reason’s rule.

In the *Phaedrus* the tripartite model of the soul is a means used by Plato to neutralize *philotimia*, focusing on its seat, *thumos*. The soul’s partitioning enables Plato to locate the causes of love and act on them in order to transfigure them. A close reading of the central part of the charioteer’s myth in the *Phaedrus* shows that *thumos* is actually the seat of many erotic effects<sup>25</sup>. It is then necessary to address a discourse to *thumos* in order to persuade it to care for the rational part of the soul, the “true self”, represented by the coachman. Plato keeps *thumos* as a mover, but *neutralizes* its propensity to corrupt intellectual love. In the last part of the myth, Socrates depicts the effects of love on the lover using a physiological vocabulary that is often related to *thumos*:

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<sup>20</sup> The interpretation of the tripartite soul is, of course, a much-debated issue. Here I take as given a minimal reading of the tripartite model, as an intentional trifunctional structure, in which each function (reason, *thumos* and appetite) is capable of only one kind of operation. Reason is a calculative function, appetite is a conative force, and *thumos* is a “valuing function”. Whereas book IV of the *Republic* presents each function as an autonomous agent, they are actually parts of an entire psychic structure in books VIII and IX. See, if I may, Renaut (2005) for such a reading, along with the relevant bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> Hobbs (2000) 30.

<sup>22</sup> Such an ideology is severely condemned by Socrates in the *Republic*. According to Socrates, *timê*, considered through its object, inevitably comes to focus on money, as if *philotimia* were only a mask for cupidity and the striving for wealth. The explanation runs as follows: in his quest for honour, one is surreptitiously driven to seek the means of acquiring it; as wealth could appear as a symbol of honour and public esteem, a *philotimos* could be easily corrupted into a *philochrêmatos*. See *Rsp.* 345a3-6, 390e9 where Socrates condemns Achilles for desiring a ransom, 547b7-549b9 where Socrates analyses how the *philotimos* is corrupted by love of money, and 550c11-553d7, which depicts the oligarchic man who only values money.

<sup>23</sup> See for example the democratic man, who considers that all things have the same “value” (561b8-c4).

<sup>24</sup> Many passages in the *Republic* compare the real and objective values with false ones: 336e8 on justice compared with gold, 485b6-8 on Forms compared to traditional objects of enquiry, 509a4-5 on the supreme value of the Good, 591b4-7 on the soul compared to the body, 595c2-3 on the respect which is due to truth compared to the respect due to a man.

<sup>25</sup> As Cairns (1993) 384-5 has shown.



Once he has looked at him, his chill (ἐκ τῆς φρίκης) gives way to sweating and a high fever comes over him, with sweat and unwonted heat (ἰδρῶς καὶ θερμότης ἀήθης); (...) Now the whole soul seethes (ζεῖ οὖν ἐν τούτῳ ὅλη) and throbs (ἀνακηκίει) in this condition. Like a child whose teeth are just starting to grow in, and its gums are all aching and itching (κνησὶς τε καὶ ἀγανάκτησις) – that is exactly how the soul feels when it begins to grow wings. It swells up and aches and tingles as it grows them (ζεῖ τε καὶ ἀγανακτεῖ καὶ γαργαλιζέται φύουσα τὰ πτερὰ) (*Phdr.* 251a7-c5, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff).

In this description, it is the *whole soul* that endures the affections of love such as sweating, blushing, throbbing, and so on. But in other passages of the dialogues, these symptoms refer to the state of the *thumos*.<sup>26</sup> These symptoms are more particularly related to the emotion of shame.<sup>27</sup> Here, Socrates seems to speak by way of metonymy, using the word “soul” to refer to “*thumos*”, which is merely of part of the soul. Why so? Certainly because the feelings aroused by the encounter between the lover and the beloved are always mixed, never reducible to sexual or intellectual feelings. It is then the *thumos* which is at stake here, for it is an emotional centre from which arises, after reflection, two other poles, *epithymêtikon* and *logistikon*. As the passage continues, Socrates proposes a more precise explanation:

Now when the charioteer looks in the eye of love, his entire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire. As for the horses, the one who is obedient to the charioteer is still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame, and so prevents itself from jumping on the boy (ὁ μὲν εὐπειθὴς τῷ ἠνιόχῳ τῶν ἵππων, αἰεὶ τε καὶ τότε αἰδοῖ βιαζόμενος, ἑαυτὸν κατέχει μὴ ἐπιπηδᾶν τῷ ἐρωμένῳ). The other one, however, no longer responds to the whip or the goad of the charioteer; it leaps violently forward (σκιρτῶν δὲ βίᾳ φέρεται) and does everything to aggravate its yoke mate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex. At first the other two resist, angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are dreadfully wrong (τῷ δὲ κατ’ ἀρχὰς μὲν ἀντιτείνετον ἀγανακτοῦντε, ὡς δεινὰ καὶ παράνομα ἀναγκαζομένῳ). At last, however, when they see no end to their trouble, they are led forward, reluctantly agreeing to do as they have been told. (*Phdr.* 253e5-254b3, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff)

What Socrates describes in this passage is very similar to the psychic conflict Leontios endures in book IV of the *Republic* (439b-c). The verb “ἀγανακτεῖ”, used to characterize the entire soul in the previous passage, now refers specifically to the struggle between the charioteer and the good horse on the one hand, and the bad horse on the other. The good horse, *thumos*, resists by showing self-restraint. The use of the reflexive form “ἑαυτὸν κατέχει” is quite remarkable here, for Plato normally uses these expressions to refer to the way an individual represents himself, torn between several motivations.<sup>28</sup> Here, Socrates seems to refer to the individual not by metonymy, but by synecdoche. In other words, it is as if the good horse were referring to the whole individual, and not one particular part of the soul. Here *thumos* denotes the real “I”, showing self-restraint, representing the emotions as if they were in another part of the soul.

<sup>26</sup> See for example *Rsp.* 387b8-c5. Especially, the verbs “ζεῖν” and “ἀγανακτεῖν” Socrates uses to refer to *thumoeidic* character, or more precisely to *thumos* itself: *Cra.* 419e, *Phd.* 64a8, *Rsp.* 440c7 and 536c1, and *Ti.* 70b3.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Thrasymachus in *Rsp.* 350c12-d3. See also *Ti.* 84d2-e2. On the poetic legacy of the imagery of the charioteer and his symptoms in the *Phaedrus*, see Cairns (this volume).

<sup>28</sup> See for example *Rsp.* 430e-431a, in which Socrates analyses the meaning of the expression “to be master of oneself”.

Finally, Socrates gives us a hint in the following description:

At the sight he is frightened (ἔδεισέ), falls over backwards awestruck (σεφθεῖσα), and at the same time has to pull the reins back so fiercely that both horses are set on their haunches, one falling back voluntarily with no resistance, but the other insolent and quite unwilling. They pull back a little further; and while one horse drenches the whole soul with sweat out of shame and awe (ὁ μὲν ὑπ' αἰσχύνῃς τε καὶ θάμβους ἰδρῶτι πᾶσαν ἔβρεξε τὴν ψυχὴν), the other – once it has recovered from the pain caused by the bit and its fall – bursts into a torrent of insults (μόγις ἐξαναπνεύσας ἐλοιδόρησεν ὀργῇ) as soon as it has caught its breath, accusing its charioteer and yokemate of all sorts of cowardice and unmanliness for abandoning their position and their agreement (πολλὰ κακίζων τὸν τε ἡνίοχον καὶ τὸν ὁμόζυγα ὡς δειλία τε καὶ ἀνανδρία λιπόντε τὴν τάξιν καὶ ὁμολογίαν). (*Phdr.* 254b7-d1, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff).

At first glance, Plato seems to complicate the tripartite model of the soul in ascribing to each part of the soul some features that normally belong to another. The charioteer feels two emotions, fear (*deô*) and religious awe (*sebô*), that are traditionally linked with *thumos*. But, conversely, the bad horse feels anger (*orgê*), which is, of course, what the *thumos* feels in Book IV of the *Republic* (439e-441a). It can be argued that this blurring of symptoms is intentional. All these emotions are, up to a point, one and the same, but seen from different points of view: as in the previous passages, the *thumos* is made responsible for shame (*aischunê*); this very same feeling is felt in an intellectualized form by the charioteer (*sebas*), whereas the bad horse transforms this shame into anger. *Thumos*, in this description, is the focal point from which stems different perceptions of the beloved, gradually referring to different parts of the soul. To put it as briefly as possible, in these three passages, *thumos* is both the focal point of the description and the psychic intermediary between reason and appetite. The *thumos* plays a twofold role: as the first and immediate function of the soul to feel the effects of love, *thumos* is the main addressee of erotic discourses; but, as an intermediary, it defeats (or tries to defeat) sexual desires, builds a relationship founded on mutual love and respect, and helps give rise to philosophical love. In focusing the description of the effects of love from the viewpoint of *thumos*, Socrates tries to convert its motivational force into philosophy.

*Thumoeidic* lovers are consequently positively depicted at the end of the myth:

If, on the other hand, they adopt a lower way of living, with ambition in place of philosophy (ἀφιλοσόφῳ φιλοτίμῳ δὲ χρήσονται), then pretty soon when they are careless because they have been drinking or for some other reason, the pair's undisciplined horses will catch their souls off guard (ἀφρούρους) and together bring them to commit that act which ordinary people would take to be the happiest choice of all; and when they have consummated it once, they go on doing this for the rest of their lives, but sparingly, since they have not approved of what they are doing with their whole minds (ἄτε οὐ πάσῃ δεδομένα τῇ διανοίᾳ πράττοντες). So these two also live in mutual friendship (φίλῳ μὲν οὖν καὶ τούτῳ) (though weaker than that of the philosophical pair), both while they are in love and after they have passed beyond it (διὰ τε τοῦ ἔρωτος καὶ ἔξω γενομένῳ διάγουσι), because they realize they have exchanged such firm vows (πίστεις τὰς μεγίστας ἡγουμένῳ ἀλλήλοιον δεδωκέναι τε καὶ δεδέχθαι) that it would be forbidden (οὐ θεμιτὸν) for them ever to break them and become enemies. In death they are wingless when they leave the body, but their wings are bursting to sprout, so the prize they have won from the madness of love is considerable (οὐ μικρὸν ἄθλον τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μανίας φέρονται), because those who have begun the sacred journey in lower heaven may not by law be sent into darkness for the journey under the earth; their lives are bright and happy (ἀλλὰ φανὸν βίον διάγοντας εὐδαιμονεῖν) as they travel together, and thanks to their

love (ἔρωτος χάριτι) they will grow wings together when the time comes. (*Phdr.* 256b7-e2, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff)

Three points must be made on this rehabilitation of *thumoeidic* lovers.

First, their lives are provided with happiness. This happiness is of course less valuable, for it is understood as an intermediary between the regimen of philosophy and what the “ordinary people” would understand as true happiness. Their “friendship” is then weaker than that of philosophers, but nevertheless not to be underestimated (*ou smikron*). Moreover, this passage should not be understood as a mere hierarchical and static comparison, but as the second prize of a competition; *thumoeidic* love, made compatible with friendship, should be understood in terms of a mundane and promising temporality. In that sense, *philotimia* is a necessary intermediary that allows the transformation of a common and popular conception of love into a less bestial relationship.

Second, it seems here that an ideal form of *erôs* is to be found in mutual friendship (*philia*), challenging the issue of sexual intercourse in the relationship. Sexual intercourse is not absent, but only had seldom, if ever. Again, Socrates seems to stress here the anthropological origin and dynamic of this kind of love. *Erôs* is not discarded, but modified by the bonds of *philia* in weakening physical and sexual attachment.

Third, *philotimia* uses *thumos*' force as a “guard” (*phrouros*), using social and political bonds: judgments (*dogma*), marks of trust and confidence (*pistis*), under the guidance of a rule (*themis*). These three means are, again, derivative ones compared to reason's rule (and in that respect are “imperfect” ones), but are nevertheless an aid the philosopher uses to shape, as far as possible, human and personal love into a superior type of relationship.

## ***Restrained love in the polis***

If after all the *Phaedrus* does not deny the power of *thumos* in love, the persuasion and education of the *thumos* remains a difficult problem. This goal is reached in educating the *thumos* of individuals and using the very same feelings of shame and sense of honour to regulate erotic relationships in the *polis*: in the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws*, sexual and marital prescriptions are implied at the very beginning of a broader *paideia*, to prevent the individual from yielding power to bodily desires and also to a personal attachment that could lead to sexual intercourse.<sup>29</sup> But, more essential to this political program in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, is the way Plato transfigures *thumos*'s force in giving it a new object. Traditional feelings such as *aidôs* and *philotimia* are dissociated from the object they usually pursue and are used for the purpose of education, for example in the *Laws*. A famous passage of book VIII in the *Laws* about the regulation of sexual practices confirms it. As “guardians” of sexual appetites and pleasures (*aphrodision*), *theosebais* (a religious awe that inevitably recalls the *sebas* of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*), and *philotimia* (like *Phaedrus*' speech in the *Symposium*) help the individual both to resist sexual attraction and to intellectualize their object of love.

ATHENIAN: My point is that the appetite for pleasures, which is very strong and

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<sup>29</sup> On the subject, see the thorough analysis of Ludwig (2007), who shows that *thumos* in the *Republic* has a “vital connection” to *philia* and possessiveness (p. 223). I agree with Ludwig that *erôs* in the ideal state of the *Republic* should be disconnected from *thumos*, as far as the philosopher is concerned. But it seems slightly exaggerated to say that “there is a tragic paradox, since the *thumos* that enables citizen virtue also prevents the ascent to philosophic virtue” (p. 228), for if the citizen in question is definitely a non-philosopher, there is nothing “tragic” about it. But, in the pedagogical and psychagogic context of the *Phaedrus*, as I have tried to show, even if *thumos* is inclined to *philotimia* as such, the object which is valued can be modified.

grows by being fed, can be *starved* (you remember) if the body is given plenty of hard work to distract it. We'd get much the same result if we were incapable of having sexual intercourse (ἀφροδισίων) without feeling ashamed (ἀναίδεια); our shame (δι' αἰσχύνην χρώμενοι) would lead to infrequent indulgence, and infrequent indulgence would make the desire less compulsive (ἀσθενεστέραν ἂν αὐτὴν δέσποιναν). So in sexual matters our citizens ought to regard privacy – though not complete abstinence – as a decency (τι καλὸν) demanded by usage and unwritten custom (νόμιμον ἔθει καὶ ἀγράφῳ νομισθὲν νόμῳ), and lack of privacy as disgusting (αἰσχροῦν). That will establish a second legal standard of decency and indecency – not the ideal standard, but the next to it. People whose characters have been corrupted (they form a single group we call the 'self-inferior') will be made prisoners of three influences that will compel them not to break the law (περιλαμβάνοντα τρία γένη βιάζοιτ' ἂν μὴ παρανομεῖν).

CLINIAS: What influences do you mean?

ATHENIAN: Respect for religion, the ambition to be honoured, and a mature passion for spiritual rather than physical beauty (Τό τε θεοσεβῆς ἅμα καὶ φιλότιμον καὶ τὸ μὴ τῶν σωμάτων ἀλλὰ τῶν τρόπων τῆς ψυχῆς ὄντων καλῶν γεγονόσ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ). 'Pious wishes!' you'll say; 'what romance!' Perhaps so. But if such wishes were to come true, the world would benefit enormously. (*Leg.* VIII, 841a6-c8, trans. Saunders)

The Athenian uses shame and *philotimia* as an ideological way to attain a "second degree of rectitude" for the community's behaviour. For it is not by means of the erotic skills of Socrates that a legislator of a city could lead the citizens to real and philosophical virtue, but instead through the promotion of unwritten law and internalized norms. In this passage, the same feelings which, for example, threatened the philosophical success of Socrates when educating Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, are used to counteract bodily desires and lust. There is indeed a political and pedagogical use of *philotimia* in preventing the city from corruption. But this use is ultimately founded on philosophical grounds, according to which *thumos*, the intermediate part of the soul, can be used as a force for the conversion to philosophy. Plato's task could be summed up as follows: a) given a human nature prone to *thumoeidic* affections, and b) given a function of the soul that is absolutely central to valuing things, the individual should be educated in a way that c) *thumos* and generally speaking *philotimia* should be purified from his concern about *timê*, and d) *thumos* should not be an obstacle to seeing the real object of love.

Aristotle himself, in book 7 of his *Politics*, seems to confirm this interpretation, asserting that Plato is well aware of the traditional link between *thumos* and *philia*. Recalling how the Guardians in the *Republic* are organized in a community based on mutual friendship, Aristotle makes *thumos* the function of the soul whereby we feel *philia*:

For as to what is said by certain persons about the character that should belong to their Guardians – they should be affectionate to their friends but fierce towards strangers – it is spirit that causes affectionateness (ὁ θυμός ἐστιν ὁ ποιῶν τὸ φιλητικόν), for spirit is the capacity of the soul whereby we love (αὕτη γὰρ ἐστιν ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς δύναμις ἣ φιλοῦμεν). A sign of this is that spirit is more roused against associates and friends than against strangers, when it thinks itself slighted. Therefore, Archilochus for instance, when reproaching his friends, appropriately apostrophizes his spirit: 'For 'tis thy friends that make thee choke with rage' (*Pol.* VII.7, 1327b38-a5, trans. Rackham).

The expression "the capacity of the soul whereby we love" inevitably recalls the way Socrates introduces the three functions of the soul in book IV of the *Republic* (436a8-b3).<sup>30</sup> For here,

<sup>30</sup> See also *Phd.* 96b3-8, *Th.* 184c4-7. For a clear discussion on the use of this formulation (instrumental dative + verb), see Macé (2006), 89-90, 189.

Aristotle plays on two meanings of *thumos*: as a psychic function, and as *pathos* akin to anger. The more one feels *philia* for someone, the more one feels anger in finding oneself betrayed. In a way, *thumos* as *pathos* is a negative sign of *philia* and thus *thumos* as psychic function can be seen as the seat of *philia*. However, this passage raises two problems. First, Aristotle does not seem to speak about *philia* in the broad sense of affectionateness, but in a narrower sense which does not include *erôs* as physical and sexual attachment.<sup>31</sup> So we might wonder if, in Plato, *erôs* would essentially be linked with *thumos* as a function of the soul. Second, what is rather odd in this passage is that Aristotle quotes Archilochus and Euripides as evidence of the traditional link between *philia* and *thumos*, not Plato. Actually, Plato did not use this formulation in any dialogue, even in book II of the *Republic*, which is certainly the passage Aristotle has in mind, in which Socrates says that the *thumoeides* should not be aggressive towards relatives, balancing its violence with reason's softness (*Rsp.* 375b-e). But Aristotle seems to take for granted that Plato followed the tradition in placing affectionateness, or more precisely the *philia* that characterizes the bonds of the Guardians, in *thumos*. Why so? The reason for such confidence in placing *philia* in *thumos* is that the latter is, in Plato's dialogues, the seat of *philotimia*, a feeling that bonds people (whether citizens or soldiers) together through shared values of mutual assistance and reciprocal esteem. We can now understand why it is important, as Aristotle would claim for *philia*, to make *thumos* a central function for love. Even if Plato never said it explicitly, *thumos* could be the function of the soul whereby we "love", specifically, the seat of the reflexive emotions of shame and the sense of honour which, when they are felt repeatedly in pedagogical training, can defeat a popular and vulgar representation of love.

## Conclusion

Platonic love, embodied by a philosophic way of life, must be understood as a model, a new horizon by which other forms of love can be judged and measured. In that respect, *philotimia*, which may be for us today more akin to "personal love", is certainly criticized as being founded on a wrong image of what deserves to be loved. Nevertheless, *philotimia*, as the tripartite model of the soul shows, is still an intermediary, more human, maybe less abstract love, through which those who are not philosophers can experience, even imperfectly, some characteristics of philosophic love. Even if the *thumoeidic* lovers are second in the scale of love, they appear to be a major concern from an anthropological and political perspective. As a psychic guardian, *thumos* must then be educated to transform the energy of *philotimia* to restrain physical and sexual desires. Thus, "personal love", even if it is not a valid form of love, remains a starting point before philosophy transforms it.

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<sup>31</sup> I thank C. Gill for having pointed out this issue to me. This chapter of the *Politics* is entirely devoted to the way the Guardians of the *Republic* live together. Hence the insistence on the military context of the poetic quotations from Archilochus and Euripides. However, insofar as the community formed by the Guardians in the *Republic* implies a reform of sexual regulations, we may wonder whether the word "*philêtikon*" does include more erotic relationships. It is certainly the case in Aristotle's view, but not in Plato's. On this topic, see Leontsini and Gill (this volume).

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