

2 Torch-bearing Plato: why reason without the divine is not philosophy after all

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But they [Agamemnon and Cassandra] have not gone without their due reward: he is as he is, while she, after singing, swan-like, her final dirge of death, lies here, his lover...

– Clytemnestra, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 1441¹

And I think that I am myself a fellow-servant of the swans, and am consecrated to the same God and have received from our master a gift of prophesy no whit inferior to theirs [...].

– Socrates, Plato's *Phaedo* 85b (trans. Fowler)

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Socrates and Cassandra, disbelieved and unheard despite the resounding clarity of their messages, both attack the future of those who condemn them, invoking, as witness, Apollo as the god they serve.² In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, torch-bearing Cassandra provokes the messenger, Talthybius, by speaking the prophecy of Achaean doom, lambasting their moral lunacy and seeing herself as an infamous Erinys whose blood will enact revenge on the Greeks, particularly Agamemnon, for their – and his – shamelessness.³ Talthybius reacts in a rather Socratic tone, suggesting that Agamemnon errs in his choice of a raving bride:

If Apollo had not struck your wits awry, you would pay dearly for sending my generals from the land with such words. But it seems that those who are looked up to and considered wise [Agamemnon] are in no way better than those of no account.⁴

In short, Talthybius listens to Cassandra's predictions but she is not heard, she is dismissed and sent to her death. So, too, is this the case with Socrates. Explicitly invoking his prophetic abilities, he turns to his peers and makes a prediction that will also fall on deaf ears:

Now I want to prophesy to those who have convicted me, for I am at the point when men prophesy most, when they are about to die. I say

gentlemen, to those who voted to kill me, that vengeance will come upon you immediately after my death, a vengeance much harder to bear than that which you took in killing me.

(*Ap.* 39c, trans. Grube)⁵

One of numerous, but still beguiling, Socratic prophecies, the above passage, like Cassandra's mourning song to the Greeks before she sets sail to the House of Atreus, is an invitation to conversion, to live the moral life, to be otherwise than deaf to the voice of divine wisdom because, if you do not heed it, you will be bombarded with this very same message twice over. You will meet something worse than death – the due punishment for your moral arrogance. Socrates and Cassandra, as peculiar and, therein, unacceptable prophets, are gifted with more than a knowledge of the past, present and future but are given the sight of virtue and vice (and, at least in Socrates' case, the sight of beauty in the beloved [cf. *Phdr.* 244a–257b and *Symp.* 210a–212b]). They both see the persons before them for what they are and for what they deserve, a seeing that, for each, depends explicitly on divine power both as what inspires and as what guides their respective ways of life. Ultimately, because of the consistent reference to the divine, one can come to see how Socrates' defence speech is more than a simple rational exercise but a “Cassandra-like” moment wherein he will speak a divine wisdom that, for many, simply cannot be heard, is, for the most part, dismissed as the arrogant raving of a pompous busybody – sure, a frustrating gadfly, but no servant of the divine (cf. *Ap.* 30d–31c). In other words, what joins Socrates and Cassandra together is how their auditors, in their attempts to flee their own moral lunacy, empty the two protagonists of divine authority and weight, leaving only a(n) (ir)rational, but certainly effete, skeleton in its wake. Without divine authority, Cassandra becomes a mere frenzied woman and Socrates a dissembling sophist.⁶ In short, “those who do not have ears to hear” Socrates or Cassandra are those who hubristically dismiss their self-professed relationship to the divine, a relationship that saturates their uncanny prophetic abilities and moral sight.

Strikingly, this comparison between Socrates and Cassandra itself may strike a rather odd tone for some. Is Socrates not far from the manic, cursed and suffering Cassandra? Is he not a gifted bastion of “sober reasoning” who rejects the childishness of activities like prophecy? Perhaps most famously, Gregory Vlastos (1991) prominently rejected the value of the prophetic in the Platonic dialogues, arguing that texts like the *Apology* show how prophets and poets, or all such persons who depend on divine inspiration(s) for their so-called wisdom, were a group of “know-nothings.”⁷ Overall, Vlastos dismissed the possibility that Plato took seriously the value of prophetic foresight and divine inspiration. Indeed, for some time this was the standard song sung of Socrates; he, unlike Cassandra, is not mad, does not rave from possession but mocks such authorities as charlatans. Socrates, the quintessential philosopher, in his clear commitment to rational

activities, rejects divine authority in favour of sober reasoning and it is for this that he is sent to his death.

It is with this in mind that a dichotomy is created, albeit, as will be argued, a false dichotomy, between those who submit to divine power and those who rely solely on the human authority of reason. This dichotomy, of course, is not foreign to the contemporary world, where the clashes between faith and reason or (confessional) theology/revelation and philosophy prevail. Socrates supposedly was always a champion of the latter, committed to overturning blind obedience to the gods. Yet, throughout his corpus, Plato continuously shows that moral failure results from those who would fall into either category. The impulsive diviner, like Euthyphro, is exposed as one who fails to do the work of questioning and testing their knowledge (cf. *Euthyphr.* 15c–d), while those who simply depend on “sober” reason without recourse to divine guidance or inspiration are depicted by Plato as ones who may wield the *elenchos* and other philosophical tools simply to win arguments, to overturn and dismantle established conventional truths, not for a good – nay, not even *the* good – but simply because they can. These are the sophists, the tyrannical despots, the misologists (*Phd.* 89b–91c) who use reason but only to serve all they know to be good: themselves and their reputations. This is the calculation of men like Thrasymachus or, on Cassandra’s side of the story, Odysseus, who wields a cleverness that convinces the Achaeans it is right to slaughter a toddler (*Trojan Women* 720–6). While Plato never invokes Euripides’ depiction of Odysseus,⁸ there is a strong sense throughout the dialogues that those whom Plato most distrusts are those who wield reason in such a way as to divorce it from its divine source, sustenance and end, and therein threaten to commit such heinous acts with impunity. These are the real clever busybodies for Socrates, and, moreover, these are the dangerous ones who wish to trade gold for bronze (*Symp.* 219a), the care of their souls for the puffing up of their reputations, for the power, pleasure and glory of winning. In contrast, to adhere to the Socratic way of life, the Platonic dialogues consistently reinforce the idea that philosophers must ask for what good they make an argument, a good not subject to human authority but to transcendent excess, to something more than human, to a vision of the beautiful that goads the argument towards a place one could not expect reason by itself to lead. In short, the Platonic dialogues demand a more appropriate wedding than the unfortunate marriage of Cassandra to Agamemnon or, as in the *Republic*, the bald technician who ravages the abandoned bride of philosophy in Socrates’ ailing city (*Resp.* 495c–e). Reason must be born of the desire for the good and therein guided by a divine light, if it is to say or *mean* anything at all. In other words, for Socrates, human wisdom left to its own accord is indeed worthless (*Ap.* 23b). In contradistinction, the human possession of or openness to divine mediation, to a reason oriented beyond the purview of human self-centeredness, births the philosophical life and, for Socrates, one cannot be a philosopher, one is only a sophist, a fool or a tyrant, if one does

not see such rational activity as a gift of and service to the divine. In short, on the one hand, sheer piety, that is to say, naked enthusiasm, without the corresponding work of examination or, on the other hand, “sober” reason alone, without divine inspiration or guidance, are two halves of a false dilemma as neither option comes close to the life advocated for and modelled by Socrates throughout Plato’s dialogues.

Ultimately, the goal of this chapter will be to argue that Plato conceived of philosophy as a spiritual activity resembling divinatory practices like enthused prophecy, telestic rituals like initiation into mystery cults and inspired poetry, and, as such, we will examine the dialogues like the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* that most prominently evidence this fact. Nevertheless, the central thesis will not simply be one of identifying the philosophical life with a life that resembles the divinely inspired, though that will certainly be a keystone of the essay. Rather, the larger argument will be about the kinds of relationships and the ways of life that ensue once reason serves the “more than human.” Unlike rabid Thrasymachus or disordered Alcibiades, unlike wandering Odysseus and pompous Agamemnon, unlike all those who see reason as a clever tool, but one that nevertheless only serves them, Socrates’ philosophical enterprise is an erotic, divine madness that intends to bring the lover outside oneself, forcing them to see the value of human relationships that care for the divine (*Phdr.* 244a–257b). In other words, Socrates’ “enthusiasm” inspires others to see how philosophical conversation is one of the few ways we can touch what is not only real itself but also real in others, constituting why philosophical activity is always about divine love, always about communing with the god, the absolute, both immanent and transcendent to our lives. Socratic inspired love or reason, married to the role of mediating and connecting the human to the divine, is a divinatory-like activity that is creative, playful and even devious in its ability to motivate and to bring what seems impossible together. It is this “service to the god” (*Ap.* 23b) that lights the fire of the soul (*Ep.* VII 341c–d), sows divine seed (*Phdr.* 248d) in the next generation and helps the young struggle, labour with the ideas that actually connect what is often fragmented in this world. For Plato, philosophy, as a rational activity, is not an end in itself but a means, nay, a service, to something higher than itself and, as such, Plato consistently utilises the language and imagery of divinatory activities to highlight this uncanny power and way of life wherein reason is not sober but inspired (*Phdr.* 244a–257b).

So, in this task, I implore, rather humbly, “Sing muse!”, so that we can hear, or better yet, philosophise with each other.

Beyond the epistemological thesis and towards the divine way of life

As Peter Struck (2016) and others have recently argued, divinatory activities and the language of divination are prolific throughout Plato’s corpus.

Oracles (*Ap.* 21a; *Cra.* 383b–84a, 396d–e), divinely sent dreams (*Phd.* 60d; *Cri.* 44b; *Phlb.* 20b), mantic/prophetic utterances (*Phd.* 84e–85b; *Cra.* 428c; *Ap.* 39c–d) or predictions about the future of someone’s disposition/actions (*Phdr.* 279a; *Tht.* 142c; *Symp.* 279a) as well as a variety of divine signs, including Socrates’ own appeal to his personal *daimonion* (*Ap.* 31c–e, 40a–c, 41d; *Euthphr.* 3b; *Phdr.* 242b–c; *Tht.* 151a; *Resp.* 496c; *Alc.* 103a–b),⁹ saturate the philosopher’s daily interactions. Analysing how Plato uses divinatory language throughout his corpus, Struck concludes that divination signifies a kind of intuitive or non-discursive form of knowledge, be it insight into virtue (*Lysis* 216d; *Chrm.* 169b; *Resp.* 431e, 443c) or law (*Leg.* 634e, 700b, 722d, 734e, 800a–c, 952d), intuitive grasps on or recollections of Form (*Phdr.* 249e–50a) or the good (*Resp.* 505e–6a), visions of the beautiful (*Symp.* 210e), insights into the desires of others (*Symp.* 192d) or even more corporeal estimations about empirical objects (*Resp.* 516d) and the uncanny ability of some to possess correct opinions without secure argument (*Men.* 99b–c; cf. 85c). Divination, in Struck’s estimation “is useful as an emblem for a kind of knowing that happens in a flash, without being able to account for itself” (2016, 61). It is a “certain kind of cognition that works via insight and not inference” (64). For Struck, Plato’s intent in his prolific appeals to divination and divinatory-like activities come from his desire to problematise the Athenian culture’s “overinvestment in oracles” – i.e. to subvert the arrogance and conceit that humans can know with surety what the gods want (52). In short, the *elenchos*, dialectic and the art of interpretation in general are meant to supplement such appeals to divination while undermining the epistemological hubris that traditionally resulted from regarding them with blind authority. While discussing Kathryn Morgan’s (2010) work on divination in the *Phaedo*, Struck summarises their mutual estimation of Plato’s goals, particularly in his consistent allusions to divination, mystery sayings, mystic doctrines and other such phenomena:

Their linking characteristic is that they derive their authority from the cultural prestige of divine speech and not from giving an account of themselves. In contrast to philosophical elenchus, which operates by doubt and is constantly forced to account for itself, divine discourse trades in surety, and does not deign to give its reasons. [...] Plato’s line of reasoning is exceedingly clever—he does not just argue for the superiority of *logos* over divine speech. He instead has divine language engaged in transferring its own authority. Just as much as he fashions Socrates’ philosophical argument, Plato carefully constructs the oracles to underscore the main message as death approaches: philosophical elenchus is the new highest standard of epistemological value.

(2016, 51)

Prima facie, then, it appears that Struck, like many scholars before him, regards Plato as advocating for the superiority of rational thinking over

divinatory pronouncements.¹⁰ Yet, Struck goes further when he turns to examining the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, observing an important nuance in Plato's erotic dialogues that suggests a value to non-discursive intuition over and against discursive analysis such as conceptual parsing or advancing a string of inferences. As most are aware, when attempting to rehabilitate the value of the lover, Socrates, in true dialectical mode, carves out a distinction between forms of divination wherein inspired speech is superior to augury insofar as the latter relies not on "what comes from god" but technical skill and sober thinking (244c–d). Here, Struck argues that Plato is not valorising the "ἄλογον ahead of the λογος" [the non-rational ahead of the rational] (2016, 62) but something altogether subtler:

Rather than understand this famous passage as a momentary enthusiasm for the irrational, then, we are more right to read him here raising the rather trenchant possibility that nondiscursive thinking might carry an intellectual weight, in certain circumstances, that exceeds discursive thinking. Plato uses the language of divination to enter this *consequential cognitive territory*.

(2016, 63, my own emphasis)

For Struck, this "consequential cognitive territory" can be a way of knowing the highest things, be it sudden flashes of recollection, visions of the Forms, e.g. Beauty in the *Symposium* or the *Phaedrus*, or even the unexpected onset of Socrates' divine sign. All of this helps show how divination, when applied to the life of the philosopher, can be descriptive of a kind of intuitive or non-discursive knowledge that assists in the project of philosophy. Overall, Struck concludes that one should not overplay Plato's view of divination itself (outside the purvey of the language that he uses to describe the kind of intuition or recollection of things like Form) insofar as within "his epistemological scheme [divination] is about as far down the ladder of reliability as one can get" (2016, 89).¹¹ Under Struck's auspices, then, divine utterances like oracles, prophetic pronouncements or inspired poetry ultimately must be married to reason, submit to reason and regard reason as the cognitive judge of their pronouncements, if they are to be responsible, and if they are to be valuable to the life of the sober philosopher.

At first, Struck's thesis seems altogether in line with Plato's dialogues. Doesn't Socrates model this "testing" of divinations (moments of so-called non-discursive wisdom or intuitions) in dialogues like the *Apology* or the *Phaedo* wherein he scrutinises the meaning of the oracle or his own visionary dreams? The philosopher is, above all, committed to the life of examination and, accordingly, he must investigate the oracle (*Ap.* 21b) or even reimagine the meaning of his reoccurring dream – one that told him to "make music and work at it" (μουσικὴν ποιεῖ καὶ ἐργάζου) (*Phd.* 60e). In the *Apology* Socrates' willingness to investigate the divine pronouncement that "no one was wiser" than Socrates (*Ap.* 21a) leads to the philosopher's own surety

that the life of recognised ignorance is better than double ignorance, the condition in which most of Socrates' kinsmen suffer, which ultimately causes most prominent Athenians to lead immoral lives (*Ap.* 22b). It is this willingness to test the god that ultimately leads Socrates to see himself as a servant of Apollo. Just after offering up his third interpretation of the oracular pronouncement wherein the philosopher concludes that human wisdom is to recognise ignorance, Socrates says:

Therefore I am still even now going about and searching and investigating at the god's behest anyone, whether citizen or foreigner, who I think is wise; and when he does not seem so to me, I give aid to the god and show that he is not wise. And by reason of this occupation I have no leisure to attend to any of the affairs of state worth mentioning, or of my own, but am in vast poverty on account of my service to the god.

(*Ap.* 23b–23c, trans. Fowler)¹²

Here, we should emphasise that while this is a classic instance wherein Socrates tests or investigates the meaning of prophetic wisdom, there seems to be more at stake than merely understanding its cognitive import. Rather, the oracle serves to show how the philosophical activity of cross-examination highlights Socrates' way of life, a way of life that he regards as a divine service. In other words, the invocation of the god at Delphi as witness (*Ap.* 20e) to the source of prejudice against him during his trial is meant to radically transform the juries' perspective on Socrates' penchant for questioning and revealing ignorance. The divine witness is meant to show that the philosopher is no sophist, no mere busybody simply questioning others for the sake of puffing up his own reputation. Rather, the oracle is meant to cast him as a loyal servant to something more than human, something actually versus seemingly wise (cf. *Resp.* 357a–b). In other words, Socrates wants to show that he aims for some good beyond the human in his frustratingly consistent ability to uncover the ignorance in his peers and countrymen.¹³

As for the reoccurring dream in the *Phaedo*, originally supportive of philosophy, Socrates now wonders so near his death if the dream is to be understood differently. Was it really just a command to craft a hymn and a bit of verse (*Phd.* 60e–61b)? In this stunning moment, wherein Socrates is willing to entertain the possibility that his first interpretation is wrong, we witness something more than a mere testing of the dream. We see a devotion, to paraphrase the *Euthyphro*, “to follow the beloved wherever it may lead” (cf. 14c), to transform his entire way of life because he has been inspired by a dream. Overall, what should catch one's eye in these two Socratic encounters with the divinatory is not how they merely provide content for the philosopher to analyse, but, rather, how the oracle and Socrates' dream lead to a rethinking of the terms of his life, once at its onset and another near its end. Indeed, it is this commitment to the divine that marks Socrates'

entire way of life – a way of life marked by an always testing, an always doubling back and going down new pathways. In other words, due to his divine service, Socrates appears Protean, always shifting and changing his tactics, continuously looking for a new way to approach a problem, unpack a mystery. He is never content with any one definition of virtue – secure in the value of the aporetic but not wishing to remain there. He playfully accepts a hypothesis but is still willing to dismantle it, ready to clarify the starting points again and again. Socrates' way of life is not just atypical, but a-topical (*atopos*), as he is always wandering, unsettling and unsettled by the divine, but in such unsettling, he becomes the rousing gadfly, an uncanny gift from the god (31b). Confirming, rather earnestly, the divine source of his way of life, he reminds his fellow Athenians of the following: "I have been commanded to do this by the God through oracles and dreams and in every way in which any man was ever commanded by divine power to do anything whatsoever" (*Ap.* 33c).¹⁴

Overall, the divinatory at least in these two texts is less about the value of intuition or the non-discursive, and more about the transformative aspect of the divine on Socrates' entire way of life.

Divine versus human "sober" reasoning

In Socrates' commitment to always being unsettled or willing to be unsettled by the divine, he is not advocating for sophistry, relativism or a form of argumentation that serves his own needs. Socrates decries such a worldview as eristics [disputation for the sake of winning] in the *Meno* (81d) and misology [hatred of reason] in the *Phaedo* (90b–e). Such eristic use of reason only wields argumentation for power, seeing the debater's skill as a mere sleight of hand, a craft that one can use so as to aggrandise oneself and one's own desires. Such cleverness is a kind of speech, much like Meletus' accusations in the *Apology*, that does not care (*ameleia*) (25c, 26b) for the truth or even for the subjects or content of their arguments.¹⁵ This form of self-serving speech is also characteristic of Lysias' use of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* (231a–234c) insofar as Socrates clearly shows in his parody of Lysias' speech (237b–241d), as well as his own speech in praise of the lover (244a–257b), that the "sober reasoner" or the non-lover is merely the deceitful lover. In other words, Socrates exposes how Lysias only defends the gratification of the non-lover, who wields *logos* (sober reason versus mad passion), for the sake of dissembling, and winning Phaedrus.¹⁶

Similarly, in the *Phaedo* misology is paralleled with misanthropy (89d–e). It is a disease from the same source: a centrism of the human being and the *logos* it wields for its own ends. The misologist sees no "good" in argumentation, no "truth" guiding the human being in his or her thinking. The misologist recognises only power and therein sees how one can always argue on both sides or, more accurately, how reason can be twisted in any which way one likes. The duplicitous use of reason explains why the misologist/

misanthrope often becomes the sophist, the eristic power-hungry debater because, ironically, their hatred of reason makes them lovers of the human being versus a lover of that which is beyond the human, the lover of wisdom [the philo-sopher], or a truth or reality that grounds reason. For the misologist, or the “sober reasoner” like Lysias, the human is regarded as source and end and as such, the emptier reason qua reason appears. There is nothing higher, no real (read: divine) truth, beauty or justice, at which reason might aim. Reason is simply to be wielded so as to win or deceive, so as to set the human being up as that measure, reducing others to the collateral damage of becoming the source of their power. In Socrates’ estimation persons like Meletus and Lysias do not use reason in service of the other insofar as they do not care for the other. The *logos* and, by extension, other people become those which are there only to be subjected to one’s own will, subject to one’s own rhetorical force (cf. *Resp.* 327b–328c).¹⁷ The sophist’s or eristic’s business, then, is that which has a knack (*Grg.* 462c) or habit of wielding *logos* like a hammer, an axle, a tool that serves the desires of the human being rather than something leading somewhere else entirely. As Socrates warned in the *Republic*, these will be the technicians who cast reproach on philosophy via twisting her into something mechanical, something that pragmatically works so as to adorn (a) man with honour (495c–e).

In the *Meno* Socrates explicitly juxtaposes such eristic, careless reasoning, which makes one indolent and lazy (81d), with the wisdom of “certain priests and priestesses who have studied so as to be able to give a rational account of their practices” (81b, trans. Lamb 1924, with modifications: ...τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ ἱερείων ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἷος τ’ εἶναι διδόναι). The latter, more inspired theory regarding the soul’s immortality motivates and rouses, aiding the pursuit of knowledge regardless of one’s current ignorance, regardless of being stung by Socrates’ stingray. Indeed, it is this “mantic” or “priestly” wisdom that is also appealed to in the *Phaedo*. Rather than the materialist knowledge that would scatter the soul to the winds, or the scientific examination of causes that cannot answer why good things are the way they are (96a–99e),¹⁸ Socrates wields a kind of reason that motivates his companions to live the examined life themselves, to continue to have hope in the *good* of things (67b) such as the absolute nature of the soul so that, ultimately, they will practise philosophy even after Socrates’ death. In this divinely motivated pursuit Socrates inspires or touches others, those like Simmias, Cebes and Phaedo, who cannot stand the thought of separation from the light charging Socrates’ prophetic swan song (*Phd.* 84d). Indeed, the discussions of the *Phaedo* are explicitly marked by something that is “more than rational sober argument,” something that is more than what merely *seems* convincing (cf. *Resp.* 357a–b). Rather, Plato, in his depiction of Xanthippe’s grief, of Crito’s relentless concern despite his lack of understanding, of Phaedo’s silent tears, and of Simmias’ and Cebes’ fears that they are being inappropriate (84d), reveals how much Socrates’ *logos* has touched all those he has encountered. Having bonded them

together as a community, Socrates appears much like a magnet¹⁹ connecting not only the ones in the room but men like Echebrates, who listen to Phaedo, and by extension ourselves, who, through reading, eavesdrop on the final hours of Socrates' life. Paradoxically, while arguing for the hope of separation, the *Phaedo* makes abundantly clear a tie that binds, a kind of wielding of *logos* that connects us to that room that even death cannot sever. This is not the reason of the power-hungry eristic debater but the reason of the philosopher who needs the more than human, who knows where reason can lead if it only demands that the human is not the end. In short, Socratic rationality connects and mediates, binding the human to what is otherwise than the human, in the case of the *Phaedo* the beautiful hope of the immortal soul.²⁰ Of course, this connective or mediating function of Socratic philosophy – reason or philosophy is, as it were, but a middle term, a *terminus per quem* – saturates Plato's *Symposium*, where he seems inclined to steer readers' attention towards the daimonic, that spiritual power that secures communion between two extremes – between divine and human. As Diotima professes, the daimonic “is the means of all society and converse of human beings with gods and of gods with human, whether waking or asleep” for “God with human being does not mingle” (*Symp.* 203a).²¹ Here, it should be stressed that the daimonic or the erotic is that which allows for connection or contact with the good or the beautiful, an image that is explicitly contrasted with the preceding speaker in the *Symposium*: Aristophanes' myth, which highlights human erotic futility (189c–193e). In Aristophanes' tragic story, human beings are torn asunder by the divine without hope of reunion, so that eros is reduced to a mere escapist, momentary, carnal pleasure. The comedic playwright ultimately emphasises how all relationships between lovers begin and end in need without resource, without a divine power that can bring the human being outside of their own broken individuality (*Symp.* 188c–194e). In contrast, Diotima offers an image of the human being not severed but reconnected in its erotic/daimonic practices, somewhere between fragment and whole, between mortal and immortal, transporting and carrying human things to the divine and divine things to the human (202e3–5). Strikingly, Diotima presents this communion as a continual process of giving birth to immortal beauty via philosophical conversation that brings individuals round from particular beauty to absolute Beauty. Indeed, like the Eleusinian mysteries, which were explicitly concerned with mediating human concerns about life and death, so too philosophy, as both erotic bridge and as a service to the divine, mediates between being both a process of giving birth (*Symp.* 206c–211d) and also a practice of death (*Phd.* 64a), radically transforming his companions' comportment to the value of the philosophical way of life.

Overall, in practising a form of reasoning that “serves the divine,” Socratic philosophy or Socrates' way of life seems entirely otherwise than the life of the “sober reasoner” like Lysias, the careless prosecutor like Meletus or the sophistic interlocutor who only hopes to win. Rather,

Socrates' appeal to a form of philosophy that is inspired, daimonic or erotic is an invitation to wield reason as that which can do some good beyond oneself.

Reason as that which cares and lights fire

Returning to Struck's thesis (cf. 2016, esp. 60–61, 90) that divination is used by Plato as a “stand-in for a kind of non-discursive knowledge that cannot give an account of itself,” there are at least two concerns that have been raised. First, while Struck's interpretation allows for a kind of non-discursive thinking that may exceed discursive thinking, it empties that non-discursive thinking of its divine source. In other words, for Struck there is little sense in his account that the non-discursive is revered by Socrates/Plato or is essential in motivating/rousing one to the philosophical, or radically transformative (more than human/daimonic), way of life. Second, and perhaps more importantly, there is a strong sense that the structural analogy between non-discursive knowledge and divination that focuses on the epistemological lack of divinatory practices fails to acknowledge how divination also serves as a paradigm for a form of reasoning that sustains and fosters relationships and communities which serve something beyond the human being – virtues in themselves, the good, the beautiful and other such divine ideas. In other words, one of the most important aspects of the divinatory in Plato's dialogues is that it serves to remind readers that philosophical reason is contrasted to the eristic naval-gazing reason. Indeed, one of the most important features of this dichotomy is that the latter form of reason “speaks to no one in particular”; rather, it always appeals to the general insofar as it does not see the power of speaking to the individual souls of its auditors, since it only intends to serve itself. Contrariwise, philosophical reason or reason inspired by the divine seems to speak to individuals qua individuals. As Socrates says of the dialectician, whom he explicitly says he would follow as if a god (266b):

[The divinely enthused speaker] will classify the kinds of speech and of soul there are, as well as the various ways in which they are affected, and explain what causes each. He will then coordinate each kind of soul with the speech appropriate to it. And he will give instructions concerning the reasons why one kind of soul is necessarily convinced by one kind of speech while another necessarily remains unconvinced.

(*Phdr.* 271b, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff)²²

Interestingly, this moment in the *Phaedrus* exposes why Plato was committed to crafting individual characters as diverse as Phaedrus, Alcibiades, Simmias, Cebes and, yes, even Xanthippe (cf. Griswold 1986). Plato is not appealing to a “sober” reason, like Lysias' that makes his auditor the same, a speech that could be given to anyone as it is crafted to appear objective,

cold, dispassionate. The objective non-lover, or the sober rather than “divinely inspired” speaker, ultimately, appears to be reasonable but unfortunately fails to know or understand the needs of his audiences, a failure that results in merely wishing to seem wise. In contradistinction, as a good dialectician whose Protean nature allows him to speak in ways that seem almost incongruent, Plato crafts Socrates’ rational endeavours to be serving something other than reason itself insofar as reason cares for and tends to the unique soul of the person before him.

To further unpack this emphasis on the role of individualised care in Platonic philosophy and its connection to a care for what is other to human reason, consider Plato’s account of how the truly philosophic mind would respond to instruction in his *Seventh Letter*:

... For on hearing this, if the pupil be truly philosophic, in sympathy with the subject and worthy of it, because divinely gifted, he believes that he has been shown a marvelous pathway and that he must brace himself at once to follow it, and that life would not be worth living if he does otherwise. After this he braces both himself and him who is guiding him on the path, nor does he desist until either he has reached the goal of all his studies, or else has gained such power as to be capable of directing his own steps without the aid of the instructor.

(*Ep.* VII 340c–d)²³

Here, the true students of philosophy are those who possess a kind of divine devotion to the life of examination, a devotion that ends either in satiation or the obtainment of the power to pursue the wisdom they desire. Later, Plato describes this power as that which cannot be communicated via verbal expression but due to constant communion with the subject, the highest or divine study is “suddenly brought to birth, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, it is born in the soul and thereafter it nourishes itself” (*Ep.* VII 341c–d: γιγνομένης περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ συζῆν ἐξαίφνης, οἷον ἀπὸ πυρὸς πηδήσαντος ἐξαφθὲν φῶς, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γενόμενον αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ ἤδη τρέφει, slightly adapted). Here, Plato is definitely insisting that reason is a work of examination, dialectics and analysis, but, above all else, philosophers must also make themselves *like* the objects they study; they must make themselves as divine as possible if they are ever to come into contact with that which is beyond science, that which exists in “the fairest region one possesses” (*Ep.* VII 344d: ἐν χώρᾳ τῇ καλλίστῃ τῶν τούτου). The means for reaching “the fairest region” for Plato is to diligently examine our ideas,

proving them by kindly proofs and employing questionings and answerings that are void of envy – it is by such means, and hardly so, that there burst out the light of intelligence and reason regarding each

object in the mind of him who uses every effort of which humankind is capable.

(344b)²⁴

In other words, the philosopher must care in such a way that their investigation is not an enterprise of the self, but tending to that which allows for a contact, and/or communion with what is beyond, what is wholly non-discursive but also what is prepared for in *benevolent* discursive activities with others.

So, what do these remarks about pedagogical and dialectical practices of care, particularly care of individuals, have to do with divination and Plato's consistent use of this theme throughout his texts? Clearly, in the *Seventh Letter* Plato is concerned with inspiring pupils to what he regards explicitly as a pathway to the wholly non-discursive, to what is beyond knowledge. He does this not by giving up on the rational enterprise, but by seeing the rational enterprise as that which serves something greater. This "teaching" is not something that can be put into words but is something that bursts into the soul, lights/kindles the soul, a spark that Plato describes in the *Phaedrus* (255b–c) as a kind of overflowing from lover to beloved. In short, Plato insists that philosophy establishes a connection that inspires and moves, and joins us in uncanny ways, and it is here that Plato, particularly in the erotic dialogues but also no less so in texts like the *Phaedo*, comes to see how divinatory practices can serve as a model not simply for a kind of knowing that may not be able to give an account of itself (Struck's argument that divination is a stand-in for a form of non-discursive knowledge), but, rather more strongly, a way of life, an enthused way of life that desires radical connection and constant diligence towards what is other than itself, be it the divine he serves or the divine in the individual souls of those he loves. As Plato insists in the *Seventh Letter* (340c) and as Socrates echoes in the *Apology* (38a), no other life is worth living.

So, in the end, the appeal to divination throughout Plato's dialogues is not simply an epistemological referent to a form of non-discursive knowing, nor does Plato believe that such divinatory influxes must submit to reason. Rather, reason is only philosophy in the Platonic sense when it comes to serve the divine and therein allows for mediation and connection between the divine and the human both qua individual before us but also as the very light that nourishes us in pursuing the philosophical life.

Divine madness and philosophy in the *Phaedrus*, *Symposium* and the *Ion*

The classic appeal to the value of divine erotics as that which characterises the philosophical life is, of course, Socrates' argument in the *Phaedrus*. Indeed, it is by taking a closer look at the other three forms of divine madness from the *Phaedrus* that the divinatory model between philosophy

and (1) prophecy, (2) telestics (ritual practices like initiation and purification) and (3) poetry (*Phdr.* 244a–245a, 265b) are clarified.²⁵ Like erotics, all three forms of divine madness do not merely *know* divine things (more than human wisdom) through a kind of non-discursive intuition, but they rather *model* lives that care or tend to what is “more than” themselves, more than the human.

First, in the case of the prophet, explicitly identified with the seers of Delphi and Dodona in the *Phaedrus* (244b), theirs is an enigmatic and *commanding* wisdom that, as Heraclitus said, “neither speaks nor conceals but gives signs” (DK 22B93: ... οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει). Due to this enigmatic appearance, subjects seeking to understand the sign must inquire into themselves and their actions both past, present and future, becoming an object for themselves if they are to be in accord with the prophetic utterance.²⁶ In short, the prophetic explicitly demands that auditors do a kind of interpretative work that forces them into a relationship with the prophet and that which inspired the prophet. As Socrates’ own case shows in the *Apology*, what begins as an enigma ends in the philosopher becoming subject to Apollo who, strangely and indirectly, demanded him to care for the highest things via his infamous elenctic activities. Similarly, Socrates famously casts the soul itself as prophetic in the *Phaedrus* (242c) just after invoking his notorious divine sign, a sign much like the oracle that does not straightforwardly command Socrates but simply holds him back (242c), preventing him from doing anything that would be against the gods:

[...] I thought I heard a voice from it which forbade my going away before clearing my conscience, as if I had committed some sin against deity. Now I am a seer (μάντις), not a very good one, but, as the bad writers say, good enough for my purposes; so now I understand my error. How prophetic (μαντικόν) the soul is, my friend!

(*Phdr.* 242b–c, trans. Fowler 1914)²⁷

In this indirect communication, the prophetic voice does more than give him something to rationalise or to test. Rather, it offers Socrates a chance to repair what may have been broken, helping him to restore communion with the divine through offering another speech. Here, the enigma of Socrates’ *daimōn* is the voice that insists one’s *logos* aim not at the desires of the human being but the gods. In the *Apology*, this appeal to his *daimōn* is why Socrates confidently makes his defence speech, rather obnoxiously ribbing his accusers and flouting their human belief that death is something to be avoided. At no time did his divine sign oppose him, signifying to him that something was amiss in his defence speech, and so he reassures those judges who voted for acquittal that “it is impossible that my familiar sign did not oppose me if I was not about to do what is right” (*Ap.* 40c). Here, the prophetic power of Socrates is appealed to not simply because it is a kind of knowing without justification but rather because it is a kind of knowing that

cares for the jurors and hopes to reassure them (Cf. *Lysis* 216d). As is the case in the *Phaedrus*, it is a voice that wishes to prevent Socrates from going astray, from traversing a path that buys honour among men by sinning against the gods (242c–d).²⁸

The second form of divine madness in the *Phaedrus* is the telestic form of divination (*Phdr.* 244e), that of the mystagogue who initiates or the healer-purifier who cleanses and purifies.²⁹ Both roles emphasise the work of one who clears the obstacles obstructing one from entering into another form of life as well as the role of one who leads, guides and/or reveals the ineffable mysteries. This form of divination provides a model as to how philosophy is a pathway that can only be traversed by one who makes themselves ready and prepares themselves with others, letting the mystagogue expose imperfections and inabilities, not to belittle or obstruct but to allow one to enter the sacred temple, to see what is so readily apparent and worthy of reverence for those initiated. Indeed, is the *Phaedo* not a text markedly concerned with purification, a passage towards death that cleanses the soul from the body?³⁰ Moreover, in the *Symposium*, does not Diotima perform an unusual form of cleansing? She, rather Socratically, refutes Socrates' original beliefs regarding eros. Put otherwise, she purifies him of the particularly problematic condition of double ignorance.³¹ Here, the refutation is not for the sake of the refuter, as it is for the sophist. Rather, like a mystagogue who cleanses the initiate, refutation is an initial, purificatory step, a "being made ready" for the mysteries that serves the one who desires to enter – that is to say, the "refutée" who is thus unsure of where they are going.³² Unlike the eristic form of dissembling, of reducing the interlocutor to self-contradiction, the *elenchos* wielded by Socrates or Diotima becomes a process of excising and purifying that reveals not just human need but also human resource.³³ Having become a witness to our own need, we are then ready to do the work of philosophy, of that which extends beyond. Philosophy is, of course, not a state but a desiring, a yearning and, hence, a pursuit. And so, Diotima acts as a mystagogue who initiates Socrates into the erotic rites (209e), guiding his desire towards what it actually wants, revealing the mysteries of what it means to be human in pursuit of that which is transcendent.³⁴ Here, the wider cultural connection between the mystery cults and the whole of Diotima's speech, particularly the movement to the vision of the beautiful, has not gone unnoticed by scholars. As Nancy Evans (2006, 19) writes:

In Diotima's rites of love, one is led to an experience as one is led to the vision of the mysteries at Eleusis. Both revelations, the Eleusinian and the Platonic, are notably passive; one is brought by a familiar and trusted person to the specific spot where learning about the divine can take place. Just as Demeter first initiated the Eleusinians, and each Eleusinian initiate (*mustes*) had a mystagogue, so Diotima serves as a mystagogue for Socrates, and, by extension, Socrates serves as

mystagogue for the others at Agathon's symposium, and even for us. When the more advanced *epoptai* and the first-time Eleusinian initiates (*mustai*), accompanied by their mystagogues, all met together into the Telesterion on the night of the Mysteries, all saw something that forever changed their conception of the world and their place in it. The experience at Eleusis was something above all intensely visual, and certainly passive. The initiates (*mustai*), the mystagogues, and the watchers (*epoptai*) took part in the Eleusinian rites, and saw something that took the terror out of human mortality. Likewise with Diotima's initiation of Socrates.

Similarly, the myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus* is explicitly depicted as an activity of the divine leading the soul to a supercelestial vision (*epopteia*), again, explicitly couched in the language of the mystery cults:³⁵

But at that former time they saw beauty shining in brightness, when, with a blessed company—we following in the train of Zeus, and others in that of some other go—they saw the blessed sight and vision and were initiated into that which is rightly called the most blessed of mysteries, which we celebrated in a state of perfection, when we were without experience of the evils which awaited us in the time to come, being permitted as initiates to the sight of perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions, which we saw in the pure light, being ourselves pure and not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in a shell.

(250b–c, trans. Fowler)³⁶

To be sure, telestic practices also model the value of an uncanny form of seeing, both of the mystagogue but also of the initiate. With the mystagogue there is, of course, the premier seeing that discerns whether the initiate is worthy, diagnosing what they desire and need before entering the sacred Telesterion. Much like the inspired lover who sees their leader god in the character of their beloved or the dialectician who can diagnose the needs of the soul before him, the mystagogue's divine enthusiasm gifts them with the power not simply to intuit things about the other before them but to care appropriately for the person before them. It is this sight that leads to a tending, a care, which begins often with a purification but then leads to a revelation on the part of the one tended to. Consider Socrates' remarks on the care given to the lover who is of philosophical stock, those who follow Zeus:

The followers of Zeus desire the soul of him whom they love be like Zeus; so they seek for one of a philosophical and lordly nature, and when they find him and love him, they do all they can to give him such a character. If they have not previously had experience, they learn then

from all who can teach them anything; they seek after information themselves, and when they search eagerly within themselves to find the nature of their god, they are successful because they have been compelled to keep their eyes fixed upon the god, and as they reach and grasp him by memory they are inspired and receive from him character and habits, so far as it is possible for a man to have part in God. Now they consider the beloved the cause of all this, so they love him more than before, and if they draw the waters of their inspiration from Zeus, like the Bacchants, they pour it out upon the beloved and make him, so far as possible, like their god. [...] Thus the desire of the true lovers, and the initiation into the mysteries of love, which they teach, if they accomplish what they desire in the way I describe is beautiful and brings happiness from the inspired lover to the loved one [...]

(252e–253c, trans. Fowler)³⁷

So, in the case of the inspired lover, her love motivates the cultivation of the god in her beloved, a devotion that eventually inspires that very same uncanny and bewildering sight in the beloved but now redirected towards the lover (255d). In short, the initiate becomes the mystagogue, learning not just to follow but also to lead, to move towards the god herself.³⁸ Ultimately, together the inspired lovers share in what is similarly witnessed in the *Symposium* when Diotima explicitly refers to the highest mysteries (*epopteia*) in her own account of the value of eros which ends in the transformation of the lovers into *theophiles* [god-loved/god-loving]. It is these inspired individuals who realise their immortality through a seeing that gives birth to true Beauty:

For one who looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen—only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue—because he’s in touch with no images—but to true virtue—because he is in touch with true Beauty. And being *theophiles* (god-loved/god-loving) belongs to anyone who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it, and if any human being could become immortal, it would be this one.

(212a, trans. Evans 2006)³⁹

In this revealing passage, Plato, beyond the telestic divinatory practice, also appeals to the divinatory life of the poets insofar as Diotima’s speech explicitly identified all forms of production with poetry and, so, we are brought round to the value of the *Phaedrus*’ third form of divine madness, the god-sent poet. In the *Symposium* Diotima explicitly expands on what poetry can mean, arguing: “...well, you know that ‘poetry’ has a very wide range. After all, everything that is responsible for creating out of nothing is a kind of poetry” (205b–c, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff: οἷόςθ’ ὅτι ποιησις

ἐστὶ τι πολὺ· ἡ γάρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν ἰόντι ὁτῶδ' αἰτία πᾶσα ἐστὶ ποιήσις). In other words, the begetting of the beautiful in the beautiful that constitutes the philosophical/erotic life is the highest form of poetic activity (possibly confirming Socrates' initial interpretation of his dream wherein philosophy is the highest music [*Phd.* 61a]). Indeed, it should come as no surprise, then, that Plato looks to inspired poetry as a form of creative production that cannot be confined, that, if inspired, overflows, arousing more than oneself, enticing the maker of the production to experience divine (god-sent) beauty (cf. Carter 1967).

To understand this overflowing capacity of divine poetry, the last of the three divinatory activities that parallel the life of true philosophy recall the arguments in the *Phaedrus* where true poetry, like prophecy, must be married to or possessed by the gods if it is to say anything of worth. Interestingly, this same theme is found in the *Ion* where inspired god-sent poetry, over and above the uninspired poet, is able to garner an audience:⁴⁰

And for this reason God takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his servants, just as he does prophets and godly seers, in order that we who hear them may know that it is not *they* who utter these words of high value, for their intellect is not in them, but that it is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them. A convincing proof of what I say is the case of Tynnichus the Chalcidian, who had never composed a single poem in his life that could deserve any mention, and then produced the paean which is in everyone's mouth, almost the finest song we have, simply—as he says himself—‘an invention of the Muses.’ For the god intended him to be a sign to us that we should not waver or doubt that these fine poems are not human or the work of men, but divine and the work of gods; and that the poets are merely interpreters of the gods, according as each is possessed by one of the heavenly powers.

(534c–e, trans. Lamb with slight modifications)⁴¹

The example of Tynnichus has a dual function. He both resembles the poet in the *Phaedrus* who attempts unsuccessfully to craft poetry without divine dispensation (245a) while, later on, when he received the gift of the Muses, he was able to create something impressionable. Only when Tynnichus becomes receptive to the divine does he ultimately become a poet, an interpreter of the divine, transmitting and communicating what is not the work of humanity, a product of one who stands isolated in the all-too-human mode of production but as one who comes as an intercessor for something more. Before, without godly possession, Tynnichus was unable to reach or touch any audience, and unable to communicate anything of value. Yet, when the divine muse strikes, his words finally rouse an audience. Tynnichus is only able to inspire others, to touch them with his words, when the poetry is not his own. Patently, for Socrates, even the rhapsode himself becomes

part of this divine chain of inspiration, becoming an “an interpreter of an interpreter”:

I do observe it Ion, and I am going to point out to you what I take it to mean. For, as I was saying just now, this is not an art in you, whereby you speak well on Homer, but a divine power, which moves you like that in the stone which Euripides named a magnet, but most people call “Heraclea stone.” For this stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a power whereby they in turn are able to do the very same thing as the stone and attract other rings; so that sometimes there is formed quite a long chain of bits of iron and rings, suspended from another; and they all depend for this power on that one stone. In the same manner also the Muse inspires men herself, and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others, and holds them in a connected chain.

(533d–e trans. Lamb)⁴²

In this stirring account of inspiration – it is worth noting that Ion describes Socrates’ words as those which touch his soul (*Ion* 535a) – Socrates reveals an important aspect of divination and divinatory activities like poetry that may be lost when the focus is on the epistemological lack that diviners, prophets and poets share (as Struck is wont to argue). Yes, it is true that if Socrates subjected Tynnichus to the *elenchos*, he would likely be revealed to lack knowledge of his own creation. Again, Struck and others are right. Tynnichus and those of his stripe possess an imagistic, non-discursive form of knowing that is unable to give an account of itself. Yet, in this passage, Plato is less concerned with highlighting the epistemological lack of the poet than in endeavouring to work through the excess, the overflow, the chain of divinity linking the god to the poet, the poet to the rhapsode, the rhapsode to the audience and so on (cf. 535e–536d). Interestingly, the inspired poet, Tynnichus, is explicitly described by Socrates as “a sign from god” (*Ion* 534e), a sign meant to clarify to the human audience what is and is not the work of the divine. Of course, the parallel to Socrates’ response to the divine oracle seems remarkably similar insofar as Socrates interprets the oracle to mean “human wisdom is of little to no value” (*Ap.* 23a). He, like Tynnichus, signifies to his peers and countrymen what is the work of the divine and what is not, showing that the only wisdom worth anything, much like the poetry of Tynnichus or the inspired *mantikê* in the *Phaedrus*, is one that is not human.⁴³ Additionally, like Socrates’ arguments in the *Ion* where “the Muse inspires men herself, and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others, and holds them in a connected chain” (*Ion* 533e), Plato crafts the character of Socrates so as to resemble the inspired rhapsode who is part of a divine “Heraclea stone” connecting all those with whom he converses to the divine source of his mission.

To return to the theme of rational, calculative (sober) reasoning in contrast to the inspired reasoning of the philosopher, we should recall that, for Socrates, in the *Phaedrus* augury is not divination just as technical poetry is not poetry.⁴⁴ These human arts say nothing of real value; they speak to no one because they do not go beyond themselves. They are not divinely (other-) touched, graced or enthused. In other words, beyond merely uplifting a kind of non-discursive knowing over discursive knowing, Plato is clearly emphasising that these divinatory practices cannot do their work, are not really divination or poetry, without divine (other than human) possession or, in the case of the mystagogue, guidance. Ergo, sober, calculative, anthropocentric reasoning is not philosophy. For Socrates, philosophy is not a merely rational enterprise, a making of arguments without divine source, purpose and guidance. This would be like Tynnichus' original poetry – empty, uninspiring and devoid of beauty. Consider again the role of the mystagogue: they are not leading the initiate anywhere; they are not circling back to the value of the human. Rather, they guide and lead so as to take the initiate beyond the human. So, too, the inspired lover does not practise philosophy for the sake of the human. This anthropocentric goal is that at which Socrates feared his first speech on the non-lover aimed: “That’s why, almost from the beginning of my speech, I was disturbed by a very uneasy feeling, as Ibycus puts it, that ‘for offending the gods I am honored by men’” (*Phdr.* 242c–d: ἐμὲ γὰρ ἔθραξε μὲν τι καὶ πάλαι λέγοντα τὸν λόγον, καὶ πως ἐδυσωπούμην κατ’ Ἴβυκον, μή τι παρὰ θεοῖς ἀμβλακῶν τιμὰν πρὸς ἀνθρώπων ἀμείνω· νῦν δ’ ἥσθημαι τὸ ἀμάρτημα). His second speech is not guided by the human desire to make a better speech for no good, purely because he can (he certainly shows us he can, insofar as his first speech defending the non-lover shows he has the technical ability to wield arguments simply to best others, like Lysias, at their own game). Rather, the second speech will be a recantation, a markedly purgative speech (243a–b) that must have a divine source, audience and goal. In this, Socrates appeals to his own enthusiasm, showing through his palinode what reason/dialectical activity looks like when it is divinely moved, not simply discussing the erotic mysteries, parsing them out, but performing and enacting them, showing Phaedrus the power of inspired love as they sit under the plane tree. As seen, Socrates explicitly appeals to being (1) a sort of seer, and, indeed, Socrates seems to see the soul of the beloved, recognising Phaedrus’ divine desire, despite its current misdirection, and enigmatically commands the young man to do something other than blindly parrot the words of a human lover, the so-called sober reasoner that is Lysias.⁴⁵ Further, Socrates resembles (2) the mystagogue, cleansing and purifying himself and his initiate to live an otherwise than human, earthbound life, guiding/caring for the soul in its unusual journey, praying that they have honoured the gods appropriately. And, finally, Socratic love compels the philosopher to become (3) a divine poet-artist (see Ferrari 1987, 16–21), creating an unforgettable image of the soul that touches not only Phaedrus but generations of readers to see within themselves

the beauty of divine love. Indeed, Socrates attempts to wield a *logos* that gives birth to true beauty, crafting a speech that inspires and rouses Phaedrus to live not the life of a philo-logist, the life of mere words and babble, but the life of the philosopher, a life, much like Socrates' own, that creates so as to beget the philosophical life in another.

So, again, in taking up the activities of all three forms of madness invoked by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, the inspired/erotic philosopher divines, leads, purifies and creates, and in this she tends to the pathway that returns the soul to its divine source.⁴⁶ Indeed, the inspired philosopher's tools are not the tools of the seer or mystagogue, or even a poet. No tripods or sacred staffs or tusks of corn. Rather, her tools look a bit different, her tool for communion is reason indeed but reason inspired. Reason merely at the service of humanity is self-serving and, therein, unable to move. Socrates warns Phaedrus of what becomes of those who gratify the non-lover, the uninspired human seducers, the ones who wield reason in such a way as to circle around itself rather than going outside itself:

[...] the affection of the non-lover, which is alloyed with mortal prudence and follows mortal and parsimonious rules of conduct, will beget in the soul the narrowness which the common folk praise as virtue; it will cause the soul to be a wanderer upon the earth for nine thousand years and a fool below the earth at last.

(256e–257a, trans. Fowler)⁴⁷

Reason wandering and trapped, eventually buried and forgotten, versus ascending and forever moving and caring about the other, is the difference between the paths of the non-lover and the lover, respectively. A lover who is a dialectician, who tends to the individuals before him, who sees into their soul, cleanses their soul, guides their soul and produces/creates/gives birth to the beauty that animates their soul to ascend higher and higher, that is the true friend of wisdom, the true philosopher Socrates admittedly is ready to worship (*Phdr.* 266b).

Conclusions: the problems of teaching and writing for the philosopher

To be clear, the process of inspired philosophy is a tenuous and difficult affair. Again, Socrates is a seer but not necessarily a good one (*Phdr.* 242c), as he admits, because philosophy enacts a different form of sight than the sight given to the inspired *mantikê*, a cleansing/initiation different from the mystagogic healer-purifier and a begetting wholly other to poetry of the normal variety. Alcibiades is a good example of how Socrates' prophetic, telestic and poetic practices are not always on the mark. Like contemporary professors who see blinding confusion married to a remarkable beauty in one particularly talented student and therein strive to guide and inspire,

attempting to remove conceits obstructing their own divine life through not only conversations but also lectures, we, too, can fail, can be wrong about such potential. We, as philosopher teachers, are not always perfect seers. The sight might not be as clear, the purification never finished and the begging may, despite its inspired source, fall on deaf ears, be rejected as the ramblings of a frustrating busybody who disturbs rather than assists the city in its affairs – a professor bent on speaking and passionately caring even when no one is listening.

In the end, philosophy is *like* all these divinatory practices and in this likeness it carefully attempts to do its own work as any misstep threatens to harm what matters most. Indeed, this threat of harm, of unintentionally leading initiates (read: students or lovers) astray, is why Plato was so nervous about philosophical writing in the first place. Writing, much like the speech of the non-lover in its lack of concern for the lover, or more accurately in its inability to see the soul of the auditor, cannot intuit (*prophesise*) what the reader knows and does not know. It does not *witness* the reader's (student's) arrogance nor their hidden (pregnant) beauty, and it may be unable to *purify* them from the former and therein unable to lead them to *produce* (give birth to) the beauty lying dormant in their souls. In fact, all these inabilities of writing, to simply be unresponsive and unconnected to the lived individual person who reads or recites a text, risks inspiring a reader (student or lover) to go down another path, much like the path Phaedrus almost traversed in being seduced by Lysias' "sober" as well as written speech, a path that would lead the reader to the graveyard of the merely human (*Phdr.* 257a) rather than somewhere other, somewhere celestial. For Socrates the true dialectician will only write for the sake of reminding oneself or for amusement and will, consequently, seek out another for one's serious work. Thereby one becomes like the mystagogue who needs to initiate and find others to guide, teach and care for rather than irresponsibly to hope that mere words on a wax tablet, paper or screen may do such tender work. Through an analogy of two different forms of gardening Socrates contrasts the mystagogic (face-to-face) work of true philosophers with those who rather invest in writing:

- Socrates:* When [the dialectician] writes, it's likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, for storing up reminders for himself "when he reaches forgetful old age" and everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps, and will enjoy seeing them sweetly blooming. And when others turn to different amusements, watering themselves with drinking parties and everything else that goes along with them, he will rather spend his time amusing himself with the things I have just described.
- Phaedrus:* Socrates, you are contrasting a vulgar amusement with the very noblest – with the amusement of a man who can while away his

time telling stories of justice and the other matters you mentioned.

Socrates: That's just how it is, Phaedrus. But it is much nobler to be serious about these matters, and use the art of dialectic. The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human can be (276d–277a, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff).⁴⁸

Interestingly, in this illuminating passage about the nature of philosophical pedagogy, Plato tempers the extremes of how the philosopher recovers or recollects their immortality in the *Phaedo* or the *Symposium*. In those two texts immortality (the divine life of the soul) is revealed in uncanny forms of giving birth or dying. Yet, here in the *Phaedrus*, Plato highlights a sowing and tending to the immortal that serves the good life of the human being right now, the life which is between birth and death. We must sow, cultivate and let things grow, a growth that creates new discourses, new ideas, but all for the sake of nurturing more seeds of the divine.

While, in the end, Plato may not have thought his writing to be of serious worth – what matters more is the planting of divine seed that feeds both those who reap and also those who sow in a harvest that begins and ends in a divine thanksgiving – the dialogues, even as written texts, still seem to embody the divine spark that Plato was eager to cultivate in his students (*Ep.* VII 341c–d).⁴⁹ Much like an oracle, the dialogues seem to be crafted to be both enigmatic and commanding, speaking to a variety of souls at a variety of levels, framing things in a divinatory manner (do we not know the past, present and future of Alcibiades, Socrates, etc. – are we not asked to have a peculiar sight?) so as to beckon readers to converse with the text, become frustrated, feel accused, see the light of understanding and misunderstanding that demands that we constantly go back, reread and converse, purifying ourselves again and again of different conceits, initiated again and again into new mysteries. This, ultimately, seems to be the real thrust of the divinatory theme in Plato's texts – a rather uncomplicated appeal that the philosopher must be like the prophet, the telestic priestess or the poet, not in what or how they know but in how they lived and inspired others to live.

To conclude with a return to torch-bearing Cassandra, that prophet whose grief, pain and erratic behaviour did not make her frenzied statements to the Achaeans any less rational, Socrates was, like her, also a doomed seer – less frenzied but not any less possessed. In point of fact, neither Cassandra nor Socrates wielded a sober rationality or, even, a mad irrationality. Rather,

both of them were possessed by a divine power and a divinely inspired wisdom that allowed them to see through their adversaries, dismantling the idea that their pretensions, their clever reasoning, constituted their power. Fearless and committed, Socrates and Cassandra both knew that death would not be the end of their divine missions. Unlike the Achaeans and the Athenians, who did not have ears to hear, Socrates' and Cassandra's own fates were not to die, to be forgotten, but to live even after death, inspiring generations of others to resist and dismantle the human, all too human reason that attempted and still attempts to snuff out the torch-bearer, the prophet, the mystagogue and the poet, in us all.

Notes

- 1 Aeschylus, Vol. II, translated by Alan H. Sommerstein, Loeb Classical Library Volume 146, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 2008 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Loeb Classical Library ® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- 2 According to most classical sources, Apollo offered the famed daughter of Troy the gift of prophecy in exchange for sex. However, after receiving the divine gift, Cassandra rejected Apollo's advances. In retaliation, Apollo condemned Cassandra to utter prophecies that no one believed. See Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Trojan Women* for the classical depictions of Cassandra within Athenian tragedy. With regard to Socrates, it should be noted at the outset that the following arguments focus exclusively on the role of divination and Socrates in Plato's dialogues. For further discussion of Xenophon's Socrates and divination, see Chapter 3 in this volume.
- 3 Euripides, *Trojan Women* 458.
- 4 Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 410–2 (trans. Kovacs).
- 5 Τὸ δὲ δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπιθυμῶ ὑμῖν χρησιμωδῆσαι, ὃ καταψηφισάμενοί μου καὶ γάρ εἰμι ἤδη ἐνταῦθα ἐν ᾧ μάλιστα ἄνθρωποι χρησιμωδοῦσιν, ὅταν μέλλωσιν ἀποθανεῖσθαι. φημί γάρ, ὃ ἄνδρες οἱ ἐμὲ ἀπεκτόνατε, τιμωρίαν ὑμῖν ἤξειν εὐθὺς μετὰ τὸν ἐμὸν θάνατον πολὺ χαλεπωτέραν νῆ Δία ἢ οἶαν ἐμὲ ἀπεκτόνατε
- 6 See Talthybius' remarks in the *Trojan Women* (408–24) or the charges brought against Socrates in the *Apology* (19b–c).
- 7 Vlastos 1991, 170. See also Versenyi 1982 and Nehamas 1986 for others of this ilk, while for counterviews see McPherran 1985 and 1991, as well as Beckman 1979; Brickhouse and Smith 1989 and 1993. For more recent evaluations, see most particularly Schefer 1996 and 2003, as well as Evans, 2006; Morgan 2010; Landry 2014; Struck 2016.
- 8 Of course, it should be noted that Plato would have been very familiar with Euripides' tragedies insofar as during his lifetime, the popularity of the tragedian's work was unrivalled. See Sansone 1996 for a discussion of Euripides' impact on Plato's dialogues. For references to Odysseus in Plato's dialogues, see *Resp.* 390d, 441b, 620c; *Phd.* 94d; *Symp.* 220c and, of course, the running arguments of *Hippias Minor*.
- 9 The term *daimonion* refers to Socrates' appeal to an inner voice that often prevented the philosopher from committing what he believed were moral errors or blasphemous actions. For more information on Socrates' divine sign, see Destrée and Smith 2005; particularly Brisson 2005, 1–12; Brickhouse and Smith 2005, 43–62; Van Riel 2005, 31–42. See also Chapter 5 in this volume. For Plutarch's interpretation of Socratic divination, see Chapter 6. On Apuleius' view of

Socrates' *daimonion*, see Chapter 9. See also Chapter 5 for a brief discussion of the divinatory language in Socrates' appeal to his *daimonion*.

- 10 Cf. Morgan 2010, 72:



In line with his analytic imperative Socratic divination and music transform themselves into philosophy. Narratives of belief can be investigated in argument and placed on a firm footing. The beginning of the *Phaedo* sets up a tension between two different kinds of accounts: reasoned philosophical argument that must generate its own authority vs. inspired (or received) accounts that claim, but do not justify, their authority. The dialogue as it progresses mediates these extremes. We see the received and imaginative *logoi* that Socrates presents in the first half of the dialogue pressed until Socrates is forced to justify, as well as he can, the beliefs he communicates to his companions.



- 11 Brickhouse and Smith 1993, 37, who begin with the assumption that Plato may in fact regard divination as a form of knowledge but one that is rather “paltry.”
- 12 ταῦτ’ οὖν ἐγὼ μὲν ἔτι καὶ νῦν περιῶν ζητῶ καὶ ἐρευνῶ κατὰ τὸν θεὸν καὶ τῶν ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων ἂν τινα οἶμαι σοφὸν εἶναι· καὶ ἐπειδὴν μοι μὴ δοκῇ, τῷ θεῷ βοηθῶν ἐνδείκνυμαι ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι σοφός. καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ἀσχολίας οὔτε τι τῶν τῆς πόλεως πράξαι μοι σχολή γέγονεν ἄξιον λόγου οὔτε τῶν οἰκείων, ἀλλ’ ἐν πενία μυρία εἰμι διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείαν.
- 13 For a detailed account of the role of Apollo in Socrates' understanding of his philosophical mission, see Schefer 1996. On Socrates' testing of the Delphic oracular response, see also Chapter 1 in this volume.
- 14 *Ap.* 33c, trans. Fowler 1914: ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτο... προστέτακται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πράττειν καὶ ἐκ μαντείων καὶ ἐξ ἐνυπνίων καὶ παντὶ τρόπῳ, ὥπῃ τις ποτε καὶ ἄλλη θεία μοῖρα ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ὁποῦν προσέταξε πράττειν.
- 15 Cf. *Euthyd.* 290a, where such speakers who wield *logos* so as to best their interlocutors are compared to enchanters.
- 16 See Calvo 1992 for an in-depth discussion of Lysias' speech and Socrates' initial response.
- 17 See Moore 2008 for the close relationship between persuasion and compulsion in Plato's *Republic*.
- 18 Cf. *Tht.* 155e where such reasoners are described as uninitiated, or *Soph.* 246a–d which decries the irascible nature of materialistic debaters. Wild 1939, 333:



And so with reasoning: the reasons which lead to solipsism, to determinism, to materialism, are cogent indeed, almost impossible to gainsay, and sometimes are convincing enough to alter men's outlook on life, and so even their actions. But nobody is surprised when they fail to bring conviction; many people who hold them would rather not, and seek a way by which, without forfeiting their intellectual honesty, they may avoid their conclusions. Something essential separates the reasoning which leads to our knowing that the square of the diagonal is twice the square of the side, and the reasoning that leads to solipsism. Socrates would say that the first is knowledge because it is not only reasoned but recollected, i.e. understood to correspond with absolute truth, and the second merely reasoned and not (in addition) recollected and therefore “not of much value.”



- 19 See *Ion*, where divine inspiration is compared to a magnet binding those inspired in a kind of chain to the source of the inspiration (533d–e). More will be said on this below.

- 20 For more discussion of the language of hope in Plato's *Phaedo*, see Layne 2010.
- 21 *Symp.* 203a: θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους καὶ πρὸς θεοὺς ἀνθρώποις. Trans. Lamb 1925 with slight modifications.
- 22 δὲ δὴ διαταξάμενος τὰ λόγων τε καὶ ψυχῆς γένη καὶ τὰ τούτων παθήματα δίδεισι πάσας αἰτίας, προσαρμόττων ἕκαστον ἑκάστῳ καὶ διδάσκων οἷα οὕσα ὑφ' οἷων λόγων δι' ἡν αἰτίαν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἡ μὲν πείθεται, ἡ δὲ ἀπειθεῖ. It may be interesting to note that this divinely inspired dialectician will in some sense be determining whether it is the right time for his interlocutor to receive one speech or another. In other words, there is a real sense that the dialectician must determine the right *kairos*. See Chapter 5 for more on the importance of *kairos* for proper divination.
- 23 ὁ γὰρ ἀκούσας, ἐὰν μὲν ὄντως ᾗ φιλόσοφος οἰκεῖός τε καὶ ἄξιός τοῦ πράγματος θεῖος ὢν, ὁδὸν τε ἡγεῖται θαυμαστὴν ἀκηκοέναι συντατέον τε εἶναι νῦν καὶ οὐ βιωτὸν ἄλλως ποιοῦντι. μετὰ τοῦτο δὲ συντείνας αὐτός τε καὶ τὸν ἡγούμενον τὴν ὁδόν, οὐκ ἀνίστην πρὶν ἂν ἡ τέλος ἐπιθῇ πᾶσιν, ἢ λάβῃ δύναμιν ὥστε αὐτὸς αὐτὸν χωρὶς τοῦ δείξοντος δυνατὸς εἶναι ποδηγεῖν.



ans. Bury 1929


All translations of this work are drawn from this edition.



- 24 ἐν εὐμενέσιν ἐλέγχῳς ἐλεγχόμενα καὶ ἄνευ φθόνων ἐρωτήσεσιν καὶ ἀποκρίσεσιν χρωμένων, ἐξέλαμψε φρόνησις περὶ ἕκαστον καὶ νοῦς, συντείνων ὅτι μάλιστ' εἰς δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην.
- 25 For the classical analysis of the *Phaedrus* in general, but divination in particular, see Brisson 1974; Griswold 1986; Ferrari 1987; Chiesa 1992.
- 26 Cf. Chapter 1 in this volume. For more on the nature of oracles and their particulars see Fontenrose 1978; Roth 1982; Flower 2008; Johnston 2008. For an in-depth account of oracles in late antiquity see Addey 2014, 1–82.
- 27 καὶ τίνα φωνὴν ἔδοξα αὐτόθεν ἀκοῦσαι, ἡ μὲ οὐκ ἐὰν ἀπιέναι πρὶν ἂν ἀφοσιώσωμαι, ὥς δὴ τι ἡμαρτηκότα εἰς τὸ θεῖον. εἰμὶ δὲ οὖν μάντις μὲν, οὐ πάντῳ δὲ σπουδαῖος, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οἱ τὰ γράμματα φαῦλοι, ὅσον μὲν ἐμαυτῷ μόνον ἱκανός. σαφῶς οὖν ἤδη μανθάνω τὸ ἀμάρτημα. ὥς δὴ τοι, ὦ ἑταῖρε, μαντικόν γέ τι καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ.
- 28 For more extensive treatments of Socrates' divine sign, see Brisson 2005; Van Riel 2005. See also Chapter 5 on this volume for the reception of Socrates' divine sign in Late Antiquity.
- 29 See Brisson 1974, 226, for the relation between prophetic and telestic madness in the *Phaedrus*, as well as their affinity to philosophic erotic madness. Cf. *Ion* 533c–536d.
- 30 For more on pollution and purification in antiquity in general, but often discussed in the context of its relationship to philosophy and philosophical inquiry, see Dodds 1963; Dorter 1972; Parker 1983; McPherran 2002; Bendlin 2007.
- 31 Cf. Burkert's (1987, 93) commentary on Plutarch's remarks on initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries and its similarity to the Socratic *elenchos*:



According to Plutarch, “in mystery initiations one should bear up to the first purifications and unsettling events and hope for something sweet and bright to come out of the present anxiety and confusion”; there even is a special kind of “joy, such initiands experience, mixed with confusion and depression but full of pleasant hope.” [...] As the initiate is accepted and hailed by a chorus of those who have gone through the same peripeties of experience, his feelings of relief will rise to the heights of exultation. Yet the texts insist that the true state of blessedness is not in this emotional resonance but in the act of “seeing” what is

divine. Cf. Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures* 47a and Plato, *Phdr.* 250b, for the importance of the act of seeing the highest things. Again, please see below for a more detailed examination of this issue. Cf. *Soph.* 227b–230d wherein there is an extensive discussion of being purified from the disease of double ignorance through an activity that looks much like the *elenchos*. 

- 32 See Burkert 1987: 70; Riedwig 1987; Nightingale 2005; McPherran 2006; Ionescu 2007; Payne 2008, as well as Evans 2006 for more information on the mysteries in general as well as on how Diotima's speech mirrors the structure/stages of the Eleusinian mysteries specifically. In particular Ionescu (2007) argues persuasively on the parallel between the lower and higher mysteries of Diotima's speech and the theory of recollection in the *Meno*, which is explicitly described by Socrates as a teaching given to him by certain priests and priestesses (81a).
- 33 Cf. *Soph.* 230c–e and *Men.* 84b–d for the parallel arguments that the *elenchos* is a purgative device. See also Proclus, *In Alc.* and *In Parm.* for similar arguments regarding the nature of the *elenchos*.
- 34 It is no coincidence that in the two dialogues that explicitly transform love into a spiritual/inspired affair resembling an initiation, Plato frames the openings as moments wherein individuals are being led. In the case of the *Symposium*, Socrates, freshly bathed, invites Aristodemus to the banquet, and like the mystagogue with an initiate, they walk together before Socrates halts, while still supporting Aristodemus in making the rest of the journey himself. So, too, the *Phaedrus* begins with Socrates being led outside the city walls, following the young man in his desire to converse. See Gordon 2012, 167, who notes that in the *Phaedrus*' opening alone the language of leading and being led is mentioned nine times (227c1, 228c1, 229a7, 229b3, 230a7, 230c5, 230c7, 230d8, 230e1 as well as 253d3, 261a2 and 271d4). Again, Evans' observations about Diotima's own initiatory function as leading are helpful: "The initiate into Diotima's rites is led by someone else who knows the way and is able to lead rightly (*ho hegoumenos*, 210a6–7). In Diotima's *telea*, the initiate is at first led passively, is taught to love the body and beauty of another person, and, through the process, ultimately perceives and considers abstract beauty in all bodies (210b3). Diotima here plays on the meaning of the word *hegeomai*, a verb that means "lead," as well as "think, consider." The word play here is subtle, but indicates an important shift. In the first instance, the one leading the initiate (*ho hegoumenos*) is the grammatical subject: the leader conducts the initiate lover through the rites of love (210a6–7). But once the initiate lover recognises that the beauty of one is akin to the beauty of others, it is the initiate who becomes the subject (210b3, 210b6, 7). With this switch of subject, the meaning of *hegeomai* slips, and instead of meaning "lead" as it did at 210a6 and 7, in 210b it means "think, consider." The leader drops out after a certain point, and the initiate continues alone the journey to the vision of true Being." See also Schefer 2003, 192.
- 35 See Schefer 2003 for the most detailed account of the context of the mysteries in Plato's *Phaedrus*.
- 36 κάλλος δὲ τότε ἦν ἰδεῖν λαμπρόν, ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῷ μακαρίαν ὄψιν τε καὶ θέαν, ἐπόμενοι μετὰ τὸν Διὸς ἡμεῖς, ἄλλοι δὲ μετ' ἄλλου θεῶν, εἰδόν τε καὶ ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἦν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν ὁλόκληροι μὲν αὐτοὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀπαθείς κακῶν ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρω χρόνῳ ὑπέμενεν, ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἀπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μουούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τοῦτου ὃ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὁστρέου τρόπον δεδασμευμένοι.
- 37 οἱ μὲν δὴ οὖν Διὸς δῖόν τινα εἶναι ζητοῦσι τὴν ψυχὴν τὸν ὑφ' αὐτῶν ἐρώμενον. σκοποῦσιν οὖν εἰ φιλόσοφος τε καὶ ἡγεμονικὸς τὴν φύσιν, καὶ ὅταν αὐτὸν εὐρόντες

ἐρασθῶσι, πᾶν ποιούσιν ὅπως τοιοῦτος ἔσται. ἐὰν οὖν μὴ πρότερον ἐμβεβῶσι τῷ ἐπιτηδεύματι, τότε ἐπιχειρήσαντες μανθάνουσι τε ὅθεν ἂν τι δύνωνται καὶ αὐτοὶ μετέρχονται, ἰχνεύοντες δὲ παρ' ἐαυτῶν ἀνευρίσκειν τὴν τοῦ σφετέρου θεοῦ φύσιν εὐποροῦσι διὰ τὸ συντόνως ἠναγκάσθαι πρὸς τὸν θεὸν βλέπειν, καὶ ἐφαπτόμενοι αὐτοῦ τῇ μνήμῃ ἐνθουσιδόντες ἐξ ἐκείνου λαμβάνουσι τὰ ἔθη καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, καθ' ὅσον δυνατόν θεοῦ ἀνθρώπῳ μετασχεῖν· καὶ τούτων δὴ τὸν ἐρώμενον αἰτιώμενοι ἔτι τε μᾶλλον ἀγαπῶσι, κἂν ἐκ Διὸς ἀρύτωσιν ὥσπερ αἱ βάκχαι, ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ἐρωμένου ψυχὴν ἐπαντλοῦντες ποιοῦσιν ὡς δυνατόν ὁμοιότατον τῷ σφετέρῳ θεῷ. [...] προθυμία μὲν οὖν τῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρώντων καὶ τελετή, ἐάν γε διαπράζωνται ὁ προθυμοῦνται ἢ λέγω, οὕτω καλὴ τε καὶ εὐδαιμονικὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δι' ἔρωτα μανέντος φίλου τῷ φιληθέντι γίγνεται.

- 38 The language of initiation is also utilised in the *Meno* where Socrates asks the young man not “to go away before the mysteries, and could stay awhile and be initiated” (77a, trans. Lamb). Further, Socrates also appeals to Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries through the poetry of Pindar just before expanding on his theory of recollection:

As to their words, they are these: mark now, if you judge them to be true. They say the soul of man is immortal, and at one time comes to an end, which is called dying, and at another is born again, but never perishes. Consequently one ought to live all one's life in the utmost holiness. 'For from whomsoever Persephone shall accept requital for ancient wrong, the souls of these she restores in the ninth year to the upper sun again; from them arise glorious kings and men of splendid might and surpassing wisdom, and for all remaining time are they called holy heroes amongst mankind.'

77b–c, trans. Lamb)

- 39 *Symp.* 212a: ... ὁρῶντι ὃ ὁρατὸν τὸ καλόν, τίκτειν οὐκ εἰδῶλα ἀρετῆς, ἅτε οὐκ εἰδῶλου ἐφαπτομένῳ, ἀλλ' ἀληθῇ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ· τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῇ καὶ θρηγαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι, καὶ εἴπερ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ;
- 40 For in-depth accounts of the *Ion* and inspired poetry, see Harris 2004; Stern-Gillet 2004; Dixon 2008. Dixon (2008, 11) offers a more traditional reading of inspiration as a mere ironic stand-in for the more worthy, solely *rational* activities of philosophy. Ultimately, Plato's use of the inspired analogy is simply to show the value of philosophy. While commenting on how philosophy is the true muse at *Resp.* 548b, Dixon writes: “With this the words ‘inspiration’ and ‘Muse’ lose all traditional meaning and become subsumed by a new, Platonic senses [*sic.*]. In this way, Plato's use of inspiration can be seen in its proper light. This is simply as a method of introducing interlocutors and the audience they represent into a discussion which ultimately draws them towards the detailed intricacies of Plato's own philosophy.” For analysis of Plato and poetry relevant for the discussion of divination and inspiration, see Tigerstedt 1969 and 1970, as well as Murray 1981 and 1996.
- 41 διὰ ταῦτα δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἐξαίρουμένος τούτων τὸν νοῦν τούτοις χρῆται ὑπὲρ τῶν καὶ τοῖς χρησμοδοῦσι καὶ τοῖς μάντεσι τοῖς θείοις, ἵνα ἡμεῖς οἱ ἀκούοντες εἰδῶμεν ὅτι οὐχ οὐτοί εἰσιν οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες οὕτω πολλοὺ ἄξια, οἷς νοῦς μὴ πάρεστιν, ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἔστιν ὁ λέγων, διὰ τούτων δὲ φθέγγεται πρὸς ἡμᾶς, μέγιστον δὲ τεκμήριον τῷ λόγῳ Τύννιχος ὁ Χαλκιδεύς, ὃς ἄλλο μὲν οὐδὲν πώποτε ἐποίησε ποίημα ὅτου τις ἂν ἀξιώσειεν μνησθῆναι, τὸν δὲ παίωνα ὃν πάντες ἄδουσι, σχεδὸν τι πάντων μελῶν κάλλιστον, ἀτεχνῶς, ὅπερ αὐτὸς λέγει, “εὗρημά τι Μοισᾶν.” ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ δὴ μάλιστα μοι δοκεῖ ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι ἡμῖν, ἵνα μὴ διστάζωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρώπινά ἐστιν τὰ

καλὰ ταῦτα ποιήματα οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ θεῖα καὶ θεῶν, οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ ἐρμηνῆς εἰσιν τῶν θεῶν, κατεχόμενοι ἐξ ὅτου ἂν ἕκαστος κατέχηται.

- 42 Καὶ ὁρῶ, ὦ Ἴων, καὶ ἔρχομαί γέ σοι ἀποφανόμενος ὃ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτο εἶναι. ἔστι γὰρ τοῦτο τέχνη μὲν οὐκ ὄν παρὰ σοὶ περὶ Ὀμήρου εὖ λέγειν, ὁ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, θεία δὲ δύναμις ἢ σε κινεῖ, ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ λίθῳ ἦν Εὐριπίδης μὲν Μαγνητὴν ὠνόμασεν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ Ἡρακλείαν. καὶ γὰρ αὕτη ἡ λίθος οὐ μόνον αὐτοὺς τοὺς δακτυλίους ἄγει τοὺς σιδηροὺς, ἀλλὰ καὶ δύναμιν ἐντίθησι τοῖς δακτυλίοις ὥστ' αὐτὸ δύνασθαι ταῦτ' οὗτο ποιεῖν ὅπερ ἡ λίθος, ἄλλους ἄγειν δακτυλίους, ὥστ' ἐνίοτε ὄρμαθός μακρὸς πάνυ σιδηρίων καὶ δακτυλίων ἐξ ἀλλήλων ἥρτηται· πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις ἐξ ἐκείνης τῆς λίθου ἡ δύναμις ἀνήρτηται. οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἡ Μοῦσα ἐνθέους μὲν ποιεῖ αὐτή, διὰ δὲ τῶν ἐνθέων τούτων ἄλλων ἐνθουσιαζόντων ὄρμαθός ἐξαρτᾶται.
- 43 Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* I I 9: "What the gods have granted us to do by help of learning, we must learn; what is hidden from mortals we should try to find out from the gods by divination" (ἔφη δὲ δεῖν ἃ μὲν μαθόντας ποιεῖν ἔδωκαν οἱ θεοὶ μαθάνειν, ἃ δὲ μὴ δῆλα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶ πειρᾶσθαι διὰ μαντικῆς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν). Cf. also Chapter 3 in this volume on Xenophon's approach to divination and the co-operation of humans with the gods and divine knowledge; on the latter topic, see also Chapter 5.
- 44 For more information on the distinction between technical or skilled (human) divination or poetry versus inspired divination or poetry, see Brickhouse and Smith 1993; Harris 2004; Johnston 2008, 9. See particularly Brisson 1974; Landry 2014, whose entire dissertation is devoted to this topic while emphasising that this division clarifies many of Plato's seeming incongruities and ambiguities about divination between dialogues like the *Phaedrus* or the *Phaedo*. See also Chapter 6 in this volume, which discusses Plutarch's belief that both inspired and technical divination require divine receptivity.
- 45 Consider also Socrates' prophecy concerning Isocrates (279a) wherein Socrates pronounces his vision of the rhetorician's character while also commanding him to follow the "more divine impulse" for greater things than mere human rhetoric. For more on how Lysias' speech and Socrates' first speech are merely manipulations of a lover in the guise of the non-lover, see Ferrari 1987, 103–12.
- 46 Cf. *Ap.* 41a, where Socrates invokes the value of the divinely inspired when questioning those whom he might meet in death – beyond the demigods Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus, there is Triptolemus and Orpheus, founder of the mysteries as well as Musaeus, a prophet and purifier and, finally, Homer and Hesiod (41a), the classical poets whose words have inspired generations. Cf. Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1032–35. In death then, Socrates explicitly hopes to commune with those who invoked a more than human wisdom, a wisdom that may not be able to give an account of itself, but a wisdom that possesses us, purifies us, guides us even when we shake off this mortal coil.
- 47 ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ἐρῶντος οἰκειότης, σωφροσύνη θνητῇ κεκραμένη, θνητὰ τε καὶ φειδωλὰ οἰκονομοῦσα, ἀνελευθερίαν ὑπὸ πλῆθους ἐπαινουμένην ὡς ἀρετὴν τῇ φίλῃ ψυχῇ ἐντεκοῦσα, ἐννέα χιλιάδας ἐτῶν περὶ γῆν κυλινδουμένην αὐτὴν καὶ ὑπὸ γῆς ἄνουν παρέξει.
- 48 ΣΩ. Οὐ γάρ· ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν ἐν γράμμασι κήπους, ὡς ἔοικε, παιδιᾶς χάριν σπερεῖ τε καὶ γράφει, ὅταν [δὲ] γράφῃ, ἑαυτῷ τε ὑπομνήματα θησαυριζόμενος, εἰς τὸ λήθης γῆρας ἐὰν ἵκηται, καὶ παντὶ τῷ ταῦτ' ἔχοντι μετιόντι, ἡσθήσεται τε αὐτοὺς θεωρῶν φουμένους ἀπαλούς· ὅταν <δὲ> ἄλλοι παιδιᾶς ἄλλαις χρῶνται, συμποσίοις τε ἄρδοντες αὐτοὺς ἐτέροις τε ὅσα τούτων ἀδελφά, τότε ἐκεῖνος, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀντὶ τούτων οἷς λέγω παίζων διάζει. ΦΑΙ. Παγκάλην λέγεις παρὰ φαύλην παιδιάν, ὃ Σώκρατες, τοῦ ἐν λόγοις δυναμένου παίζειν, δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ ἄλλων ὧν λέγεις πέρι μυθολογοῦντα. ΣΩ. Ἔστι γάρ, ὦ φίλε Φαῖδρε, οὕτω· πολὺ δ' οἶμαι καλλίων σπουδῇ περὶ αὐτὰ γίγνεται, ὅταν τις τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος, λαβὼν ψυχὴν

προσήκουσαν, φυτεύη τε καὶ σπείρη μετ' ἐπιστήμης λόγους, οἱ ἑαυτοῖς τῷ τε φυτεύσαντι βοηθεῖν ἱκανοὶ καὶ οὐχὶ ἄκαρποι ἀλλὰ ἔχοντες σπέρμα, ὅθεν ἄλλοι ἐν ἄλλοις ἤθεσι φυόμενοι τοῦτ' αἰεὶ ἀθάνατον παρέχουν ἱκανοί, καὶ τὸν ἔχοντα εὐδαιμονεῖν ποιοῦντες εἰς ὅσον ἀνθρώπῳ δυνατόν μάλιστα.

- 49 Cf. Schefer 2003, 185, who synthesises the two disparate ideas of the *Phaedrus*, i.e. eros and writing, by aligning them to Plato's consistent appeal to the mysteries:



Beginning, center, and end of the critique of writing harmonize in a striking way. They all refer to the mysteries. We are shown, not only by the images and philosophical terms of the passage but also dramatically, that Platonic rhetoric is only a preparatory stage of mystery initiation and that a kind of religious 'vision' is the aim and climax of written and oral speech. This corresponds to the dialogue as a whole: the mysteries constitute the hidden unity of the *Phaedrus*. So, the two basic subjects of the dialogue, the question of love and of speech, are connected in the mysteries. They meet at the highest stage of initiation, in the *epopteia* as unspeakable experience, which is the goal of love and of speech."

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