

*Proclus on the
teacher-disciple bond of love*



Train of thoughts

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**PROCLUS ON THE TEACHER-DISCIPLE BOND OF LOVE
TRAIN OF THOUGHTS**

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Selections from Proclus' Commentary on Plato's First Alcibiades

Translated by William O'Neill

From: W. O'Neill. (Tr. & Com.) *Proclus: Alcibiades I*. (1st ed. 1965); The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971. [Based on the critical text and indices of *Proclus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, by L.G. Westerink. Amsterdam, 1954.] Republished by The Prometheus Trust, 2011, as Vol. VI of their Platonic Texts and Translations Series, ISBN 978 1 898910 497 | <http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk/> Permission from the copyright holder pending. Page numbers in angle brackets correspond to the Greek MS. Those of O'Neill's translation are given in footnotes. Frontispiece: Socrates chiding Alcibiades in the home of a courtesan (1857) Germán Hernández Amores, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

For the love of the adept burns only for the highest of the highest — that perfect knowledge of Nature and its animating Principle, which includes in itself every quality of both sexes, and so can no more think as either man or woman, than the right or the left lobe of one's brain can think of itself apart from the whole entity of which it is a component. Monosexual consciousness exists only on the lower levels of psychic development; up above, the individual becomes merged as to consciousness, in the Universal Principle; has "become Brahma."

— Helena Petrovna Blavatsky¹

<18-50> ²

"O son of Kleinias, I think you are astonished that although I was the first to become your lover, while the rest have ceased to be so, I alone do not depart."

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<18> . . . The introductions³ to the dialogues of Plato accord with their overall aims and have not been invented by Plato for the sake of dramatic charm (for this manner of **composition** is far beneath the exalted mind of the philosopher) nor do they aim at mere accurate narrative, as some have considered; . . . but all together, as in an initiation, have reference to the overall achievement of the objects of enquiry. This, then, in my opinion, is the view which Plato offers us in this dialogue and I think he

¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MR. ISAACS: A TALE OF MODERN INDIA) IV, p. 341

² [Pages 22, 24, 26, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64.]

³ Proclus seems to state that Plato's introductions should be viewed neither as totally fictitious nor as mere historical narrative, but as something in between, in part adapting what actually took place or was said, and in part supplying any deficiencies in the consideration of the subject under discussion, while viewed as a whole they obviously contribute to the main purpose of the dialogue. *Cp.* In *Parm.* pp. 658, 32-659, 10 Cousin: "The ancients held divergent views about Plato's introductions. Some never even got as far as examining them, on the ground that true lovers of his doctrine must come already informed of them. Some read them in no ordinary manner, but referred their usefulness to the outline of appropriate topics and taught their disposition in relation to the objects of enquiry in the dialogues. Others again claimed that even the introductions lead commentators to the nature of the subject-matter. Following their lead, we shall make a guiding principle of the opening of the introduction that leads to the subject-matter in hand."

neatly shows through the very first verbal encounter the whole object of the composition.

Its purpose, as we have said, is to declare our nature, to compass by the scientific and irrefutable principles of philosophical consideration the whole being in accord with which each man is defined, and through demonstrative methods of enquiry to reveal the meaning of that famous Delphic precept “Know Thyself.” Now the very introduction turns the youth towards himself, makes him scrutinise his pre-existing notions, and along with the reversion upon himself elevates him to the vantage-point of Socratic knowledge. For the examination of the reason why Socrates alone of his lovers has not ceased from his love, but both began before the rest and when they have stopped does not <20> depart, renders him a spectator of the whole life of Socrates. . . .

The memory of one’s father inspires the pursuit of virtue.

<24> . . . Furthermore, the very beginning of the discussion, calling the young man by his father’s name, is fittingly adapted both to the character and to the reality.¹ For the paternal appellation renders the character . . . more accommodating to Socrates, since Kleinias had gained high repute at the battle of Coronea; and those who are born of famous fathers prefer to be named there from rather than from themselves, for the latter form of appellation is common and applies to mankind in general, but the former is a select distinction. Further, the memory of his father affords considerable <25> encouragement to the pursuit of virtue. For it is unworthy to bring shame on the repute of one’s fathers, and while holding on to their name and the manner of address derived from them, to have no regard for resemblance in virtue. Furthermore the reference to the father who generates² the apparent and externally added man is a symbol of the recall of souls to their true father. Socrates makes use of these words according to the custom of the Pythagoreans,³ considering that they contribute to the salvation of the soul, since those famous men also practised what was revealed in secret through the medium of symbols, and closely guarded the appearance of the latter as representing the meaning of the former. Socrates, then, knowing this in the same manner as the Pythagoreans, calls the young man by his father’s name, because he considers this sort of appellation a symbol of the turning around of souls to their invisible causes. If, further, this manner of addressing persons is Homeric, in this way also it would be fitting, since it is put forward by descent, according to the common custom of the Greeks; for Homer⁴ says “naming each man by his father, honouring all.” This kind of conversation is familiarising, courteous and indicative of friendliness.

¹ [“subject-matter” corrected to “reality.”]

² Reading E.R. Dodds’ suggested emendation γεννητην (GNOMON ’55 p. 166).

³ For examples of symbolic phrases employed by the Pythagoreans, cf. Aristotle: *Select Fragments*, p. 135, nos. 6 & 7, Ross; Iamblichus: *Protrepticus*, c. 21, *De Vit. Pyth.* c. 103, 105, 186, 227.

⁴ Cf. Homer, *Iliad* X, 68-9.

Father “has sown the fire-laden bond of love” so that the divine lovers turn, recall, and rally around him.

Furthermore we assert that this is especially suitable to discourses about love, as the divine Iamblichus says; for the paternal appellation indicates the manliness of true love, its awakening from matter and its <26> efficacy. In general, too, since the whole order of love proceeds from the intelligible father (“In all things” as the oracles¹ say, the father “has sown the fire-laden bond of love,” in order that the whole world may be held together by the indissoluble bonds of friendship, as Plato’s *Timaeus*² says), for this reason, loving conversation establishes as the beginning of familiarity the friendliness aroused in the beloved by the mention of his father. For the mention of his father stirs up affection for Socrates in the young man, and this in turn stimulates association with Socrates, which indeed was Socrates’ purpose and the reason for his starting the present conversation. It seems to me, further, that the form of the discussion is most suited to the business of love. For it is the property of divine lovers to turn, recall and rally the beloved to himself; since, positively instituting a middle rank between divine beauty and those who **have** need of their forethought, these persons, inasmuch as they model themselves on the divine love, gather unto and unite with themselves the lives of their loved ones, and lead them up with themselves to intelligible beauty, “pouring,” as Socrates in the *Phaedrus*³ says “into their souls” whatever they “draw” from <27> that source. If, then, the lover is inspired by love, he would be the sort of person who turns back and recalls noble natures to the good, like love itself. Socrates, indicating as much by this first appellation, arouses the mind of the beloved towards attachment to true beauty, stirs up his inward admiration of the life of philosophy, and leads him round to the fulfilment of true love. Socrates illustrates this kind of life especially in this dialogue. He makes his beginning therefrom, and advances the perfection of the young man to the point where he renders him a lover of provision for self, which indeed is a principal benefit of love, and through practically all the main sections he always carefully observes what is appropriate to the life of love.

Perfection comes for those who love contemplating Truth.

Now these sciences which Socrates evidently ascribes to himself are threefold, viz. those of philosophical discussion, elicitation and love. You will find the genre of philosophical discussion in this dialogue illustrated through the reality⁴ itself, and everywhere you may detect the peculiar trait of elicitation contained in Socrates’ arguments, but in a special sense the activities of the science of love prevail <28> throughout the whole composition. Even when eliciting Socrates preserves what is appropriate to love, and when using philosophical argument he does not depart from

¹ Cf. Kroll: *De Orac. Chald.* p. 25: “For the Paternal, Self-begotten Intellect, thinking of works, sowed into all the fire-laden bond of love”; cf. also Hans Lewy: *Chaldaean Oracles & Theurgy* pp. 126-9, 345-53 on the subject of Eros as a binding cosmic power.

² Cf. *Timaeus* 32c; “. . . the body of the universe was brought into being, coming into concord by means of proportion, and from these it acquired Friendship so that coming into unity with itself it became indissoluble by any other save him who bound it together.” (Cornford).

³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 253a.

⁴ [“subject-matter” corrected to “reality.”]

the particular character of discourses on love. As in the *Theaetetus*¹ he is skilled in eliciting, is characterised chiefly by this quality, and therefore proceeds as far as the cleansing away of the false opinions of *Theaetetus*, but thereafter lets him go as now being capable of discerning the truth by himself, which indeed is the function of the science of elicitation, as Socrates himself observes in that work; so in this dialogue he primarily demonstrates the science of love and practises in a loving manner both philosophical argument and elicitation. For everywhere Socrates pronounces the discourses in a manner suited to the characters in question; and as in the godhead all goods pre-exist in the form of the One, but different individuals enjoy different goods according to the natural capacity of each, so also Socrates embraces all the forms of knowledge within himself, but uses now one now another, adjusting his own activity to the requirements of the recipients; one he elevates through the science of love, another he stirs up through the art of elicitation to recollection of the eternal notions of the soul, and a third he brings round by the path of dialectic to the consideration of reality. He unites different individuals to different objects, some to essential beauty, others to the <29> very first wisdom, and others to the Good; through love we are elevated to the beautiful, through elicitation each one of us is revealed to be wise about subjects in which he is unlearned, by realizing the innate notions within himself concerning reality, and through the art of dialectic lies the way up even as far as the Good, says Socrates in the *Republic*,² “for those who love to contemplate the truth.” According, then, to the measure of suitability that each person possesses, so he is perfected by Socrates and elevated to the divine according to his own rank. “The whole godhead is beautiful, wise and good,” as is said in the *Phaedrus*;³ to such heights, then, lies the ascent, and through such means comes salvation to souls. “On such is the winged nature of the soul fed and watered, but through what is base and evil and contrary to the former, it both wastes and perishes utterly,” as Socrates himself observes in that work. Hence it is through love that perfection comes, in the present work, to those that possess this nature (in view of his possession thereof, Alcibiades seemed to be worthy of love to Socrates): the union is made with the divine beauty, and through that results intimacy with the entire divinity. Further, the elicitation by Socrates and the work of philosophical discussion lead the soul of the young man round to this end; for, as we said, it is love that <30> is realized here, but the other kinds of science assist such a purpose. Therefore both the introduction to the conversation and the conclusion are full of the science of love, and all that lies between affords very considerable indication of the setting of Socrates’ activity according to this genre.

Love is the cause of dis-integration of the One, the medium between spirit and matter (i.e., upper triad and lower quaternary), and the cause of re-integration.

Now let our examination of these matters pertaining to the consideration of style proceed thus far, but thenceforward turning to the actual investigation of the reality,⁴ let

¹ Cf. *Theaetetus* 210c.

² Cf. *Resp.* VII 532a-b.

³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 246d-e.

⁴ [“subject-matter” corrected to “reality.”]

us consider how far love is appropriate to the present discussion. As the individual natures of different gods have revealed themselves as differing, some producing¹ the Universe and constituting the form of beings and their orderly arrangement, others bestowers² of life and generators of its various kinds, others guardians³ ever maintaining undefiled the unchangeable order and indissoluble coherence of things, others again in charge of some other function and preserving the universe through the communication of themselves, so also the whole order of love is for all beings the cause of reversion to the divine beauty, on the one hand elevating to, uniting with and establishing in it all that is secondary, and on the other filling therefrom what lies subsequent to itself and radiating the communications of divine light that proceed from it. Doubtless for this reason the account in the *Banquet*⁴ called love “a mighty spirit,” as primarily displaying in itself this power of intermediacy, since there is a medium⁵ between everything that reverts and the cause of reversion <31> and object of appetency to secondary beings. The whole series⁶ of love, then, produced from the cause of beauty, gathers all things towards it, recalls them to participation therein, and has set up a procession midway between the object of love and the beings elevated through love; for this reason it has pre-established in itself the pattern of the whole order of spirits, possessing that intermediacy among the gods that the spirits have been allotted “between” the affairs of “gods and mortals.”⁷ Since the whole series of love⁸ subsists among the gods according to this individual nature, let us perceive its One-like and hidden summit ineffably established among the very first orders of the gods and united to the most primary intelligible beauty apart from all beings; let us consider thoroughly its intermediate procession that shines forth in the gods that precede the world, manifesting itself first of all intelligently, in the second rank possessing an authoritative character, and at the end of the whole orderly arrangement unconditionally established above all the intra-mundane; again let us observe its third descent, splitting up into manifold divisions in regard to the world, producing from itself many orders and functions and distributing them among the different portions of the universe. After the unitary <32> and primary principle of love and the triple and self-perfecting substance thereof appears the manifold mass of loves, whence the choirs of angels⁹ are filled with their share of love, the bands of

¹ Cf. *El. Theol.* prop. 157 & note on props. 151-9, esp. p. 138, 7-9: “Every productive cause presides over the bestowal of Form upon things composite, the assignment of their stations, and their numerical distinction as individuals.”

² Cf. *El. Theol.* prop. 155 & note; cp. notes on 68, 5 & 52, 8.

³ Cf. *ibid.* prop. 154 & note, prop. 156 & note.

⁴ Cf. *Symposium* 202d.

⁵ Reading *υπάρχοντος μέσου* (NMR). The addition of *γάρ* in MR seems an attempt to indicate that *παντός . . . μέσου* is a distinct causal clause in the genitive absolute.

⁶ Cf. *El. Theol.* p. 25, 5: “A series or order is a unity, in that the entire sequence derives from the monad its declension into plurality.” (Dodds) Cf. also notes on prop. 21, p. 208.

⁷ Cf. *Symposium* 202d-e.

⁸ Here, and in the following lines cp. *El. Theol.* prop. 148 “Every divine order has an internal unity of threefold origin, from its highest, its mean, and its last term.” Cf. also the notes on p. 52 of the text.

⁹ For the division of intermediate beings into angels, spirits and heroes and the origin of the doctrine cf. *El. Theol.* p. 295; and for a more specific description of their particular functions cf. esp. *Procl. in Tim.* III p. 165, 11-166, 3: . . . “For this reason there is also a triad which unites us to the gods, which proceeds on an analogy with the three original causes, although Plato is accustomed to call the whole of it spirit. The division of angels preserves an analogy with the first intelligible that appears from the ineffable and hidden spring of reality, and

spirits through the fullness imparted by this god accompany the gods in their ascent to intelligible beauty, the armies of heroes revel with the spirits and angels because of their share in the beautiful, and practically everything is aroused, re-kindled and warmed around “the effluence of beauty.”¹ Furthermore, men’s souls receive a share of such inspiration, through intimacy with the god are moved² with regard to the beautiful, and descend³ to the region of coming-to-be for the benefit of less perfect souls and out of forethought for those in need of salvation. For the gods and their followers “abiding in their own characters”⁴ benefit and turn back to themselves all that is secondary, and men’s souls descending⁵ and laying hold on process imitate the providence of the gods, which has the form of goodness. As, then, other souls established according to another god visit without defilement the region of mortals and the souls that move about therein, — some help <33> the less perfect through prophecy, others through mystic rites and others through divine medicine — so also the souls that have chosen the life of love are moved by the god who is the “guardian of beautiful youths”⁶ to the care of noble natures, and from apparent beauty they are elevated to the divine, taking up with them their darlings, and turning both themselves and their beloved towards beauty itself. This is just what divine love primarily accomplishes in the intelligible world, both uniting itself to the object of love and elevating to it what shares in the influence that emanates from it and implanting in all a single bond and one indissoluble friendship with each other and with essential beauty. Now the souls that are possessed by love and share in the inspiration therefrom, using apparent beauty with vehicle⁷ undefiled, are turned towards intelligible beauty and set that end to their activity; “kindling a light”⁸ for less perfect souls they elevate these also to the divine and dance with them about the one source of all

therefore it manifests the gods and proclaims their secret identity. The division of spirits preserves an analogy with unbounded life, therefore proceeds everywhere in multiple ranks and assumes many forms and shapes. The division of heroes preserves an analogy with intellect and reversion, and therefore it presides over purification and bestows a life of great achievement and exaltation. Further, the division of angels proceeds by way of the intelligent life of the demiurge, and therefore it is itself essentially intelligent; it interprets and transmits the divine mind to secondary beings. The division of spirits proceeds by way of the providence of the demiurge for the universe: it regulates the nature and rightly complements the disposition of the whole world. The division of heroes proceeds by way of reflexive forethought for all these things: therefore this kind is exalted, elevates souls and imparts vigour. Such being these three kinds, they are attached to the gods, the first kind (to the supercelestial gods, the second) to the celestial, and the latter to the overseers of process; and there is about each god his own appropriate numbers of angels, heroes and spirits” . . . Cf. also *Procl. in Crat.* p. 75, 9-76, 19 Pasquali, and Hans Lewy *op. cit.* cap. V “Chaldaean Demonology.”

¹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 251b.

² Cp. Plot. VI, 7, 22, 8-10: “Then the soul receiving into itself the effluence from (the Good) is stirred, dances wildly and is filled with frenzy and becomes love.”

³ For the noble purpose of the soul’s descent cp. Plot. I, i, 12, 21-8; *ibid.* IV, 3, 17 and Porph. *De Abst.* IV, 18 ad init.

⁴ Cf. *Timaeus* 42e.

⁵ Cf. *El. Theol.* prop. 206; “Every particular soul can descend into temporal process and ascend from process to Being an infinite number of times” and notes, where Prof. Dodds refers to *Procl. in Tim.* III p. 324, 4-7: “We must ask this very question from the beginning, why the soul descends into bodies. Because it wishes to imitate the providential activity of the gods, and on this account it lays aside contemplation and proceeds to birth.”

⁶ Cf. *Phaedrus* 265c.

⁷ Vehicle: *i.e.*, a first body, immediately informed by the soul, cf. *El. Theol.* props. 196, 207-9 & notes pp. 304-9, also Appendix II pp. 313-21 for a description of the origins and development of this dot tune. Cf. further: “Réflexions sur l’OXHMA dans les Eléments de Théologie de Proclus,” par Mr. Jean Trouillard, in *Rev. des Etudes Grecques*, Vol. 70, no. 329-30, 1957; Lewy, *op. cit.* c. III sect. I “The vehicle of the soul” and notes 6, 7, 26-7, 30.

⁸ Cf. *Timaeus* 39b.

beauty. Those, again, that have fallen away from the gift of love on account of bad nourishment, but have been allotted a loving nature and fall upon the images of what is beautiful on account of ignorance of true beauty, <34> embrace material and individual examples of beauty and are distraught at these, “unaware of the experience they have undergone”;¹ they withdraw from all that is divine and are carried down to the godless and obscure element of matter; though seeming to hasten towards union with the beautiful like the souls that are perfect lovers, yet, unawares, instead of union they tend towards the dispersion of their life and “the sea of dissimilarity,”² and instead of the true and really existent beauty are united with ugliness itself and the shapelessness of matter. For where is it possible for material things to pass through³ each other, or where is apparent beauty pure and unadulterated, when it is commingled with matter and filled to the full with underlying shapelessness?

When love meets with a bad receptacle it brings about a life that is tyrannical and intemperate in five different ways.

Now since we have distinguished from one another the divers orders of love, the souls that genuinely participate in it and those that pervert the gift therefrom (for the “emanation of intelligence produces roguery,” says Plotinus,⁴ and mistaken participation in wisdom gives rise to the sophistry of this world, so that the illumination of love when it meets with a bad receptacle brings about a life that is tyrannical and intemperate) <35> — since then we have distinguished these, come let us run through the actual words of Plato and discern the mutual differences of the lovers which Socrates outlines for us in the very first phrases, and let us observe which is the divine lover and the nature of his provision for the beloved, and which is the “vulgar”⁵ lover and the attendant of the multitude within the soul.

1. The coarse lover hangs on his darling; the true lover is self-reliant and poised.

Now the common and coarse lover admires and pursues the beloved and is distraught about him, but the true lover is a cause of admiration to the beloved and arouses him to amazement in all kinds of ways at the life that is in him; and this reasonably. For the inferior sort admits that he depends on his darling and says he has need of him, but the other is self-sufficient and full of power and offers communication of his personal goods to the souls of the beloved.

2. The one loves the body and discards the person when the bloom of youth has withered; the other loves the soul.

Secondly, the inspired lover watches over the beloved from his swaddling clothes and approaches him after the cessation of the bloom of youth, now that he has rest from bodily disturbances; for he is a lover not of the body but of the soul, and when the

¹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 250a.

² Cf. *Statesman* 273d.

³ There is no communication between one material thing and another, but the immaterial can communicate itself to the material (e.g. the creator of the universe *Procl. in Tim.* I pp. 365, 26-366, 7: the work of divine providence in this dialogue p. 54, 10, and of spiritual illumination p. 80, 10). Interpenetration of bodies was a stoic tenet (cf. SVF II 467 etc.).

⁴ Cf. *Enneads* II, 3, II.

⁵ Cf. *Symposium* 183d.

body has ceased from its full bloom the beauty of the soul shines out. The vulgar lover, however, reaches after the bloom of the beloved like fruit, and neither before nor after is he busied about him, but as soon as the bloom of youth has ceased he is rid of his darling and behaves in a manner to be expected in view of his personal principles; for being a lover of the body he proportions his love to the fair flower of apparent beauty.

3. The one is fickle and readily forsakes his darling; the other is truehearted and loyal.

Thirdly, the one is stable and always the same “as being welded to a stable <36> condition,”¹ but the other is swift to change, and when present coarse, but fickle and easily inclined to forsake his darling; for, likened to the beloved through love involved in matter, he naturally becomes unstable and easily inclined to change his intimate relationship with his darling.

4. The vulgar lover contrives all sorts of pretexts for conversation with his darling; the true lover avoids talking to his beloved, unless there is some spiritual benefit to him.

A fourth element in the difference between the two men may be observed, that the one, even when present to the beloved, is in some way separated from him, neither touching nor associating nor speaking with him at all, when there is no opportunity for benefiting the soul, but the other loves to be united with him by the senses and troubles him with varying moods and by contriving all sorts of pretexts for conversation with him.

5. The one lives apart from the One; the other, is akin the One and an exemplar of divine virtue and beauty.

Fifth, from the text itself you can gather that the divine lover is spoken of as one and “first” and “only,” as being akin to the One and the Good and as reaching up to the simple and One-like exemplar of beautiful things, but the vulgar sort as “common” and “a random heap”;² for to call the lovers of images “others,” but the inspired lover “first” and “only,” exposes the indeterminate, divided and completely disintegrated life of the former, and extols the divine virtue of the latter, far as it is from the multiplicity of matter and transcending all the emotions incident to generation.

The eyes of the common man cannot contemplate the splendour of Truth.

On the basis of these words one could name numerous other points that separate <37> these lovers from each other. Socrates still does not scorn to call even the many “lovers,” since it has not yet been decided what man truly is and where Alcibiades is to place him. For then necessarily Socrates would be seen as the only lover of Alcibiades, but the others as loving what belongs to Alcibiades; and, since they carry around an imaginary love, as being busied with images, neglectful of souls and completely unaware of the real Alcibiades; then therefore he will expose their hypocrisy as regards love and that, quite missing the true inspiration of love, they have substituted the image thereof and in this respect are entangled in the mere appearance of beauty. For every order of love is ranked together with a corresponding beauty, and

¹ Cf. *ibid.* 183c.

² Cf. *Phaedrus* 253c.

as divine love is referred to divine beauty, so also imaginary love hastens to lay hold of similar beauty: this is all that it can see, and in regard to the divine it is like one who is completely blind. “For in the case of the many, the eyes of the soul are unable to endure gazing at the truth,”¹ says the Eleatic stranger.

So much then for this topic. If, further, Socrates begins before the <38> others, extends his provision for the youth as long as they do, and when they have ceased, himself does not depart, through this sort of life I think it is clear both that everywhere the more exemplary and more perfect comprehensively includes the activities of semblances, and that no one possesses the inferior to whom the more perfect does not impart a share in itself long beforehand; it is clear also that in every order of being the One includes the Others, operating before them, with them and after them. Straightway, then, the discourse has assigned the superiority that befits the One to the inspired lover, summoning him “alone” and “first” to provide for the less perfect, but the position of the multitude that is in every way divided it has given over to the many lovers. As the One operates both before the others and with them and after them, if it is lawful to speak of it,² so also the divine lover is both concerned for the beloved before the vulgar sort: along with them does not cease from forethought for him (then indeed especially he expends care, lest the beloved unawares entrust himself to the materialised and vulgar semblance of love), and when they have grown quite weary, because the wearisome disposition of matter has entered into <39> them, he is present to the beloved, now become calm after dispersing the coarse multitude and eradicating the associations that tended towards the debasing and material kind of life. Then indeed he is apt for communion with the inspired lover and for shared and harmonious activity with him, but while the former are still present his measure of unsuitability is extreme. If I am to speak my own opinion, it seems to me that this bears an amazing resemblance to the rites of the mysteries.³

In the ascent to the summit of divine love, the multitude of common lovers becomes an obstacle by assuming the character of the true lover and dragging down the soul of the youth from vistas on high to the dark side of this illusive plane; by charming souls they lead them away from the mysteries, say the oracles.

Everywhere something of the less perfect assumes the character of the more perfect, diverts to itself the souls that have not yet been set right and keeps them away from the better things. As in the intelligent considerations of philosophy obstacles are raised by the sophist’s way of life and the association with it that drags away the less perfect from the consideration of reality to the appearance that corresponds to coming-to-be and passing-away, so also in the elevation to divine love the multitude of common lovers becomes an obstacle by assuming the character of the true lover and dragging down the soul of the youth from the Olympian good things on high to the dark things of earth. In the same way, in the holiest of the mysteries the visitation of

¹ Cf. *Sophist* 254a-b.

² On the impropriety of speaking of the ineffable first principle as if it came down to the level of the inferior cf. p. 181, 11, where the reference is to the Good.

³ Cf. pp. 9, 2; 61, 10 & 142, 4-7. The reference appears to be to the Chaldaean mysteries in which Proclus himself was initiated, although Lewy *op. cit.* p. 238 and note 41 seems to disagree with Lobeck (*Aglaophamus*, Vol. I, sect. 15, pp. 111-23) and incline to favour Eleusis.

the god is preceded by assaults and apparitions of certain spirits of the nether <40> world, confounding the initiates, tearing them away from pure goods and inviting them to matter. Therefore the gods exhort us not to look upon them before we have been strengthened by the powers derived from the mystic rites: “For thou must not look upon them before thy body has been initiated.” On this account the oracles¹ add that “by charming souls they are ever leading them away from the mysteries.” Like the nether spirits the vulgar lovers surrounding the youth lead him away from the ascent to the divine and render him unsuited for communion with the inspired lover. As in the ritual the divine is manifested after the purging away of all such spirit-like influence as leads souls down to matter, so also the divine lover is revealed after the flight of the many lovers concerned with temporal process and he imparts to the beloved a share in his own communing. So quite simply Socrates seems to me to occupy the place of a good spirit towards Alcibiades, to keep an eye on him from his youth, like that spirit, to guard him, oversee all his activities, and watch over his words and deeds.

As the good spirit attends us for the most part invisibly, bestowing un-awares his forethought upon us and silently correcting our lives, so also Socrates attends the spiritual needs of his beloved Alcibiades in silence and in secret.

As the good spirit, even before our fathers do, begins to take forethought for us and along with our fathers is set over us as a guide <41> of our whole life and after our deliverance from this world takes care of our journey before the judges (“Each one” says Socrates “is led by the spirit who has watched over him during life”),² in the same manner Socrates both anticipates all the other relatives and friends of the young man in his forethought for him and along with many lovers also bestows his care upon him and when the others have left off in person frequents and associates with him and recalls the beloved to justice as a whole and the real goods of the soul. Furthermore, as the good spirit attends us for the most part invisibly, bestowing un-awares his forethought upon us, silently present and secretly correcting our lives, so also Socrates attends his darling in silence, and though making provision for him, not yet does he bestow upon him a share in his intercourse. Just as the good spirit reveals himself to those who possess the utmost suitability, utters something to them and communes in words, the way I imagine Socrates himself enjoyed the presence of the spirit and seemed to hear a certain voice,³ so also the divine lover gives a share in his conversation to the beloved and summons him to <42> intercourse through discussion only at the very moment when he has beheld the life within him loosened from the “throttling spirits”⁴ of matter, rid of the thronging mob of lovers, and master over the pursuits of earth and underworld. For these events are evidence of the affinity within him to the beautiful.

¹ Cf. Kroll: *De Orac. Chald.* p. 55; Lewy *op. cit.* p. 227 note I, p. 264, note 15.

² Cf. *Phaedo*, 107d.

³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 242c; Plutarch, *De Genio Socratis* § 20.

⁴ Cf. Kroll *De Orac. Chald.* p. 62, n. 1; Lewy, *op. cit.* p. 298 n. 151, where the following references are indicated: Procl. *in Remp.* II, p. 150, 24 . . . “are dragged down by material natures and by the punishing *throttling spirits* that lead into darkness”; *in Eucl.* pp. 20, 25 . . . “the bonds of process and the *throttling spirits* of matter”; and *cp.* in *Crat.* p. 76, 13.

Socrates is about to begin delivering Alcibiades, purified from vulgar lovers, by the philosophy of love.

Socrates, then, approaches at this moment when he has seen the beloved aroused in a special way to the reception of intercourse with him. In fact Socrates makes this quite clear: “You wonder” he observes, “what I am about and how it is I remain when the other lovers have fled.” But wonder is the “beginning of philosophy.” as he remarks in the *Theaetetus*,¹ and for this reason “Iris” is called the daughter of “Wonder” according to the old saying. Now if he approaches the youth just at the time when he wonders at the life of the philosopher and seeks after the causes of his sort of affairs, he would have a starting-point <43> for the impulse towards philosophy: the deliverance from vulgar lovers and the excitement with regard to philosophy somehow coincide. For the souls that have been purified from the evils crowded around them from birth render themselves ready for participation in divine goods. Consider also according to the following analogy the nature of the position that Alcibiades occupies with regard to his lovers, and how this contributes to the consideration of the matter in hand. Socrates, as being an inspired lover and elevated to intelligible beauty itself, has established himself as corresponding to the intellect of the soul, for what else is it that is united to the intelligible than intellect and all that possesses intelligent life? But the diverse and vulgar class of lovers, carried along with sense and imagination and given over to the “manyheaded beast”² of the soul, bears the impress of the corresponding way of life, in accord with which it characterises its own manner of living; for every soul is that portion by which it lives and it defines itself there by. Somehow between these is Alcibiades, rent asunder from beneath by the passionate lovers and drawn down to the worse part, but from above aided by the one individual Socrates and preserved and provided for by him, lest he suffer anything at the hands of the lovers surrounding him. According to the analogy of the extremes we must relate Alcibiades to the rational soul, to which are still attached the emotions and the irrational powers, as it were plotting against the life of reason and like the Titans attempting to rend it, but the intellect, like Athene, is set above, keeping it from sinking in the scale and tending to implication <44> in matter.³

¹ Cf. *Theaetetus* 153d “This sense of wonder is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin, and he was a good genealogist who made Iris the daughter of Thaumias.” (Cornford) Cf. also Hesiod: *Theogonis* 237, 265-6, 780-1; and *Ol. in Alc.* p. 24, 21-25, 7. Iris was the messenger of the gods, and the rainbow. Her father was son of Sea and Land, and her mother (Electra) daughter of Ocean.

² Cf. *Resp.* IX 588c.

³ Dionysus was born of Zeus by Persephone and torn into seven pieces by the Titans, partly because they envied his birth from Zeus, and partly at the instigation of Hera; but Athene preserved his heart intact. The heart represents the undivided Nous, and the seven-fold rending the divisions of the soul in *Timaeus* 35b-c (cf. Taylor ad loc). Cf. Kern: *Orph. Fgm.* 210; Clem. Alex. *Protrep.* II, 18, 1; *Procli Hymni* ed. Vogt VII, 11-15 & notes; *Procl. in Tim.* I p. 168, 15-17; *Ol. in Phaed.* p. III 20-25 Norvin; I.M. Linforth: *The Arts of Orpheus* p. 307 “Myth of the Dismemberment of Dionysus”; W.K.C. Guthrie: *Greeks and their Gods* (1949) p. 320, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* pp. 82-3, 107-26 & Appendix I.

Alcibiades shall be saved by Pallas Athene, whose function is uphold the unity of life and preserve the heart intact.¹

For it is the function of Athena to preserve life undivided, “for which reason Pallas Athene is called Saviour”;² but of the Titans to divide it and to entice it to the process of coming-to-be. As the intellect does not always reveal itself to souls, but only when they have got rid of “the thronging mob that has grown upon them latterly” as a result of birth, as Timaeus³ says, so also Socrates gives a share of his own intercourse to the youth precisely when, freed from the many lovers that have latterly surrounded him with their toils, he has leisure for philosophy and those who can lead him to it. As, too, the intellect is always active in our regard and ever bestows the light of intelligence, both before we incline to irrationality and when we live with the emotions and after these have been stilled by us, but we are not always conscious of it except when, freed from the many waves of temporal process,⁴ we anchor our lives amid some calm (for then intellect is revealed to us and as it were speaks to us, then what was formerly silent and quietly present gives us a share of its utterance), so also the divine lover is both present to the beloved before the many lovers <45> and with them and after them, but in silence and quiet and forethought alone; but when they have left off he gives a share of conversation to the beloved, offers him mutual intercourse and reveals his identity and that his love is provident, of the form of the good and elevating, not like that of those many lovers, divided, deficient, implicated in matter and concerned with mere images. It is possible, then, for one who likes to contemplate such considerations to proceed on this analogy, and again it is possible through the analogy we mentioned before, by likening Socrates to a good spirit, the vulgar lovers to the nether spirits concerned with matter, and to the initiand the young man who flees from the debasing tribe of spirits, attaches himself to the good spirit and hands over to him the complete guidance of his life.

His soul is dual, animal and divine.

If one should combine both points of view, then think of Alcibiades as twofold, both as a soul simply and as a soul using a body. For these two are not the same: likewise neither the steersman and the man in himself nor the driver and the subject;⁵ and in

¹ [Note to Students: cf. the following passage from Damascius:

The soul descends into generation, after the manner of Kore;
She is scattered by generation, after the manner of Dionysus;
Like Prometheus and the Titans, she is bound to body.
She frees herself by exercising the strength of Heracles;
Gathers herself together through the help of Apollo
And the saviour Athene, by truly purifying philosophy;
And she elevates herself to the causes of her being with Demeter.]

² There seems to be no early mention of a cult of Athene as “Saviour,” but the epithet is used of her in a dedicatory epigram by Antipater of Thessalonica (*Anth. Pal.* VI, 10), as A.J. Festugière notes in *Le Dieu Cosmique* p. 316.

³ Cf. *Timaeus* 42c.

⁴ For this expression cf. Procl. *Hymni* I, 20 & notes, Vogt; Porph. *Vit. Plot.* 22, 25 & 31-5; Plot. V, 1, 2, 15; Numenius *test.* 45, Leemans.

⁵ The distinction here seems to lie between the man in himself and some particular function he fulfils, typified by the steersman and the charioteer. The latter were stock examples (cf. Aristot. *Top.* 105a 13-16), and in particular the steersman was used by Plato and the Platonists to describe the function of Nous in the soul (*Phaedrus* 247c) or of the soul in the body (cf. Alex. *Aphrod. De Anim.* Bruns p. 15, 9-10, p. 20, 26-9).* The term “subject” is used to refer to the individual man as that which underlies some quality, cf. Alex. *Aphrod. in Metaph.* p. 523, 25-8 Hayduck: “It has been observed that the term subject has two senses, either as this individual

general the unparticipated¹ is other than the participated, what is by itself is other than what is observed along with another and the transcendent differs from what has received its rank in conjunction with some other. Now since Alcibiades is understood in two ways, both as a soul and as a soul using a body, in so far as he is a soul, Socrates preserves the analogy of the intellect towards him, but in so far as he is a soul using a body, that of <46> the good spirit; and the same person is a spirit as regards man, and intellect as regards soul. For when we think of the intermediacy of spirits, we are considering it as between gods and men, but when we assign intellect the highest position we are making soul depend upon it and the body on the soul. You have the one distinction in the *Banquet*,² for I think he says there that the sphere of the spirit is midway between gods and men; and the other in the *Timaeus*,³ for the soul subsists midway between intellect and body. The same person then is spirit and intellect, intellect as attached to soul, but spirit as attached to soul-in-man. Hence when the enquiry centres around the nature of man, no mention will be made of intellect, but Socrates will remind the youth of the providence of the spirit, sometimes calling it a “spirit” and other times “a god.” However, the reason for this will be stated more clearly hereafter.

Once again from the beginning let us raise the question what is the reason for Alcibiades’ “wonder” at Socrates’ earnestness and attention in his regard and the endurance of his love when the rest have ceased, and how Socrates guesses the mind of the young man. We assert that the less perfect among men are accustomed to measure the efforts of souls and their activities by the duration and not the perfection of their activity. Do we not perceive the many calling one who has spent rather a long time in the company of teachers a skilled craftsman or an expert in those matters on which he happens to have spent this time? Yet there is nothing surprising in a man of better disposition requiring less <47> time and trouble to achieve self-perfection. Nevertheless those who are unable to judge of form in itself and habit of mind think that time has been given them by nature as an adequate criterion. Now since the many are accustomed to judge each circumstance after this fashion, it was to be expected that Alcibiades too should wonder at Socrates’ love because he had remained earnest in Alcibiades’ regard for a longer time than the other lovers, and at what was his object; and that Socrates, knowing the youthful characteristics of his nature, should have aimed at the wonder within him, although it was for other reasons that he had devoted himself in the first place to provision concerning him, and main-

being, as for instance the living organism — Socrates, Plato or this horse — underlies the qualities of white and hot and suchlike, or as the matter which underlies act and form.” Soul is not the same as soul using a body: neither is man in himself and man in his function as steersman, nor the underlying subject and the quality of being a charioteer. Soul using a body is merely soul as fulfilling a temporary function: it is not soul in its essential nature, cf. *Simpl. De An.* p. 17, 35ff: “Again, the steersman, although possessing activities inseparable from the ship, seems to be separable in essence, because as a man he was separable, possessing other activities too, that were separable”; Avicenna [Abū Alī ibn Sīnā], *Kitāb al-shifa [Book of Healing]* Bk. VI of the Physics, Sect. I: “This is why the body is included in the definition of the soul, as, for example, building is included in the definition of the builder, although it is not included in his definition in so far as he is man.” (I owe these two quotations to F. Rahman: *Avicenna’s Psychology* pp. 8-9).

[* Cf. The charioteer in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a manual of initiation at least 27 millennia old, *Katha Upanishad*, and other Indian myths. — ED. PHIL.]

¹ Cf. *El. Theol.* props. 23-4 & notes for the relation between the participated and the unparticipated.

² Cf. *Symposium* 202d-e.

³ Cf. *Timaeus* 35a.

tained the constancy of the character of love, and had never in the past nor now departed from his love. Now, on the contrary, he begins to reveal himself to the beloved.

Forgetfulness and ignorance of what is primarily beautiful make inferior lovers concern themselves with the kind of beauty that is implicated in matter.

Let us next investigate the reason why, while the intemperate man would never think himself worthy of the epithet “moderate,” nor indeed the unjust man nor the coward of the appellation “brave” and “just” respectively, yet those who are vulgar in their love-affairs and have failed to attain the right method of carrying out this pursuit want to be <48> called lovers and to share the same name as those inspired in their love, although they have not shared the same purpose but are even of an opposite disposition to them. The one sort elevate their beloved to the divine, clear, and One-like, but the others drag their souls down to the godless, dark and fragmentary. Now perhaps we could reasonably meet this enquiry by saying that the end of the intemperate and the moderate man is not the same, but as their habits, so also their ends completely differ; whereas all lovers have the same end, viz. familiarisation with the beautiful, but forgetfulness and ignorance of what is primarily beautiful make the inferior lovers rush down and concern themselves with the kind of beauty that is implicated in matter. As therefore even the lowest beauty has the same name as the primarily beautiful although it has degenerated from its own nature (for beauty lies in form, but this is commingled with the formless and the ugly), so also the lowest of lovers claims the same name as the first since he is on the same level as the lowest beauty. Moreover, in another way also you may see a not unnatural association of names between these two. The moderate and the intemperate man have completely opposed habits and act accordingly, but all lovers, in so far as they are enthusiastic have suffered somewhat the same experience, although some are distinguished according to the superior kind of enthusiasm, others according to the inferior.

There are two kinds of enthusiasm, one superior to moderation, and another short of it. The former is an insufflation from without; the latter, a pernicious inflammation of the heart.¹

For one kind of enthusiasm is superior to moderation,² but the other falls short of it. In so far therefore as each <49> set is disposed to enthusiasm about the beautiful, they share the same name, but the varied manner of their enthusiasm and the difference in the sort of beauty renders some divinely inspired, others vulgar lovers. In the third place, we assert that what is more divine, through abundance of power, regulates its inferior derivations and gives to them too some reflected semblance of

¹ [Plutarch, citing Plato on the origin of enthusiasm, says “. . . that there is a certain madness transmitted from the body to the soul, proceeding from a malignant mixture of ill-humours, or a noxious vapour or rather pernicious spirit that possesses the heart; which madness is a rugged and terrible disease. The other kind of fury, partaking something of divine inspiration; neither it is engendered within, but is an insufflation from without, and a disturbance of the rational and considerative faculty, deriving its beginning and motion from some stronger power; the common affection of which is called the enthusiastic passion. For as *ἐμπνοος* signifies *filled with breath*, and *ἐμψρον* denotes *replete with prudence*; so this commotion of the soul is called enthusiasm (from *ἐνθεος*) by reason it participates of a more divine power. Now the prophetic part of enthusiasm derives itself from the inspiration of Apollo possessing the intellect of the soothsayer. . . . There is also a third sort of enthusiasm, proper to the Muses, which, possessing an even tempered and placid soul, excites and rouses up the gifts of poetry and music.” Goodwin W.W. *et al.* (Tr. & Ed.). *Plutarch’s Morals*, Vol. IV; Boston. Little, Brown & Co, 1878; [OF LOVE] 16, pp. 278-79; (tr. Philips) — ED. PHIL.]

² Cf. *Phaedrus* 244d.

its own specific nature. Now moderation cannot do this for intemperance, but the inspired friendship of love, since it is more divine than moderation, gives something even to its image and transmits to it a faint trace, which is why it is called an image. In this respect, then, it receives a share in the same name; for everywhere images desire to share the same appellation as their exemplars. Let such be our reply to this enquiry.

It has already been said that the real lover is the divinely inspired, as Socrates himself will observe when he has proceeded in his argument, proving himself the only lover of Alcibiades on account of his zeal for the true Alcibiades. For he is a lover of the soul, but the others did not even pretend this, “and it was after all over a phantom” (as the poet¹ says) “that they were rending one another”; and so, once they have seen the phantom of beauty beginning to fade, they are off. To put it <50> more accurately than this, right from the first syllables Socrates shows himself to be the only lover of Alcibiades. If he began before the rest, obviously at that time he was the only lover; and if when they have stopped he still honours the beloved, now also he would be the only lover; but if, even when they were present the manner of his love was different, and while they were a nuisance to the young man he like some guardian spirit of his or a god made provision for him from without, then also he was clearly the only lover. The reason for this is that every transcendent in each grade of beings is alone, even if there be a multitude subsequent to it; for this multitude, if it possesses any good, has obtained it on account of the unification of the transcendent, but if anything be put in the same rank as another, this can neither be nor be said to be alone. Therefore Socrates is the only lover as transcending the multitude of common lovers, for they have neither the same rank with him nor any relation, on account of their dissimilarity to him. So that even at the present moment Socrates is hereby proved to be the only lover of Alcibiades, and he will be seen as such shortly afterwards, by the young man, when the latter has observed both himself and what belongs to him.² For then he will be able to discern what is the exemplar, and what the image; what is fabrication and what is genuine in love; who is the pseudonymous lover adorned by another’s name and who befits the god after whom he is called. Let so much be said on this topic.

<53-68> ³

The intelligibles, on account of their unutterable, undifferentiated oneness, have no need of the mediation of love; but in the separation and the reunification of beings, love is the agent and medium.

<53> . . . the gods advise the theurgists⁴ to unite themselves to god to through this triad. Now the intelligibles on account of unutterable union have no need of the me-

¹ Cf. Homer, *Iliad* V 451-2.

² *i.e.*, His soul, as distinct from his body, at *Alc.* 129e-31a.

³ [Pages 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88.]

⁴ For a brief note on Theurgy and its connexion with Iamblichus and the Chaldaean Oracles cf. *El. Theol.* intro. pp. xx, xxii-iii, and index s.v., and for a fuller explanation cf. “Theurgy” in “The Greeks and the Irrational” by E.R. Dodds pp. 283ff. Cf. also the detailed treatment in Hans Lewy *op. cit.* # 3 “Theurgical Elevation,” # 4 “The Magical Ritual of the Chaldaeans,” and Excursus IV “The meaning and history of the terms ‘theurgist and theurgy.’” [See “Magic or Theurgy, purpose and pitfalls” in our *Buddhas and Initiates Series*. — ED. PHIL.]

diation of love; but where there exists both unification and separation of beings, there too love appears as medium; it binds together what is divided, unites what precedes and is subsequent to it, makes the secondary revert to the primary and elevates and perfects the less perfect. In the same way the divine lover, imitating the particular god by whom he is inspired, detaches and leads upwards those of noble nature, perfects the imperfect and causes those in need of salvation to find the mark. But the other sort does quite the opposite: he drags souls down to the depths¹ of matter, turns them away from the divine, carries them towards the regions of error and ignorance and fills the soul of the beloved full of all sorts of images, committing himself not to the “divine fire”² but to the heat involved in matter and producing generation and to the darkness of matter.

“And that the others became a nuisance to you through their converse, whereas I did not even address you for all those years.” 103a

The more accurate accounts say that there are two principal elements in divine and spiritual providence towards the secondary beings:

- 1 That it passes through all things from the top to the bottom, leaving <54> nothing, not even the least, without a share in itself, and
- 2 That it neither admits into itself anything it controls nor is infected with its character nor is confused therewith.

It is not mixed up with the objects of its provision just because it preserves and arranges everything (for it is both the nature of the divine or spiritual to experience the emotions of individual souls), nor does it leave any of the inferior beings without order or arrangement because of its distinct superiority over all that is secondary, but³ it both disposes everything duly and transcends what it disposes; at the same time it has the character of the good and remains undefiled, it arranges the universe yet has no relation to what is arranged by it, it passes through everything and mingles with nothing. This spiritual and divine providence, then, Plato clearly attributes to the beneficent forethought of Socrates for the less perfect, both maintaining its vigilance and stability (as regards the beloved) and its full use of any opportunity for zeal, and at the same time its detached, unadulterated and undefiled character and its refusal to touch what belongs to him.⁴ So the fact that he began to love “first” and “when the others⁵ had ceased did not depart” is sufficient indication to us of Socrates’ care and guard over the young man’s life, but the fact that although present and an adherent of his he “did not even address” him — let this be evidence to you of his detached and <55> unentangled solicitude for his inferior. For the first relationship of man to man is to speak to him; so the failure to have even this communication with the object of his provision reveals him as completely transcendent and unrelated to his in-

¹ This is a Chaldaean term. Cf. Lewy *op. cit.* p. 304, note 173; pp. 296-7, notes 143 & 147.

² On divine fire, cf. Lewy *op. cit.* pp. 168-76; p. 60, note 7. Cf. also Kroll *De Orac. Chald.* p. 53. Cp. *Procl. in Tim.* III, p. 300, 16-19 . . . “But to my mind the science of purification makes the greatest contribution, since through the divine fire it removes all the stains that result from coming-to-be, as the oracle teach us.”

³ Omitting *δια ταύτα* as a dittography.

⁴ *i.e.*, to touch Alcibiades physically, cf. *Alc.* 131c.

⁵ Using *άλλων*, the corrected reading of M.

ferior. So at the same time he is both present to him and not present, he both loves and remains detached, observes him from all angles yet in no respect puts himself in the same class.

As the centre of the circle is everywhere, and its circumference (that represents the hidden deity) is nowhere, so the divine heart throbs everywhere but is nowhere to be seen.

Now if their behaviour assumes this form even in the case of divine men, what must we say about the gods themselves or the good spirits? Surely, that while present to all they yet transcend everything, and having filled everything with themselves they nevertheless do not blend with anything, and while pervading every place nowhere have they situated their own life. What should we say about the gods who are said to be in love with their own offspring, as the coiners of legends represent Zeus in regard to Persephone¹ or Aphrodite² herself? Surely that such a love is provident and preservative of the beloved, able to perfect and maintain them? Surely, that is detached and unmixed, of the form of the good and undefiled? What origin do we ascribe to this characteristic of love in the souls of men, unless it previously pre-exists in the gods themselves? For all that is good and makes for salvation in souls has its cause determined by the gods: and for this reason Plato³ says that the exemplars of all the virtues and bodily goods pre-exist in the divine world *e.g.* health, strength, justice, moderation. How much more shall we suppose that the primary cause <56> of love lies among the gods, “given by a gift divine,” as Socrates himself says in the *Phaedrus*?⁴ So gods too love gods, the superior their inferiors providentially, and the inferior their superiors, reflexively.

Such then is the immediate teaching to be derived from the aforesaid words. But further let us arrive at a greater perception of the reason for Socrates’ silence, and observe that among the gods the unspeakable precedes what may be spoken, the unutterable what may be uttered, what is kept silent that which comes about through the medium of words and voices.⁵ So because Socrates has perfectly assimilated himself to the divine he begins his provision for the beloved in silence, since this very quality of unutterableness is proper to love itself there first of all, as we said, where it estab-

¹ Cf. Kern *Orph. frg.* 153: “For Orpheus your poet says that Zeus slew his own father Kronos and took his own mother Rhea, and from them was born Persephone. Zeus defiled her too . . .” cf. *ibid.* 195 . . . “And so they say that the Maiden was violated by Zeus, but carried off by Pluto . . .”

² Cf. Plot. *Enn.* III, V, 8, II. 14-23: “Zeus then is the Intellectual Principle. Aphrodite, his daughter, issue of him, dwelling with him, will be Soul, her very name Aphrodite indicating the beauty and gleam and innocence and delicate grace of the Soul. And if we take the male gods to represent the Intellectual Powers and the female gods to be their souls — to every Intellectual Principle its companion Soul — we are forced, thus also, to make Aphrodite the Soul of Zeus; and the identification is confirmed by Priests and Theologians who consider Aphrodite and Hera one and the same and call Aphrodite’s star (“Venus”) the star of Hera.” (McKenna) [See “Plotinus on the Dual Aphrodite” in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Cf. *Laws* I 631d-c, which appears to be apposite.

⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 244a: “But in reality the greatest of benefits comes to us through madness, when it is given by a gift divine.”

⁵ Cf. Kroll *de Orac. Chald.* p. 16, where he quotes *Procl. in Crat.* p. 63, 21-6: “For the *Timaeus* (37d) characterised eternity particularly by its abiding in the one that precedes it and by its establishment at the summit of the intelligibles, and Socrates characterised the heavens by their looking at what lies above (*Crat.* 396b-c), namely the place above the heavens and all that is embraced by the ‘god-nourishing silence’ of the fathers.” Cf. also *Procl. in Tim.* II, p. 92, 6-9; Lewy *op. cit.* p. 160 and note 353 — the abode of the supreme god is “silence” described as “god-nourishing” because “every divine intelligence intuits the father” and “the intelligible is nourishment for the intelligent.”

lishes its subsistence in the silent rank of the gods. There was a need, then, for the divinely inspired lover to entrust his care concerning the beloved to “the god-nourishing silence”¹ before communion in words; for so he would appear much like his own god and would be turning the young man to wonder at his silence.

People is a multitude united to itself, mob is an incoherent multitude: their relation is that of democracy versus ochlocracy.

Only love can melt away alienation and warm the heart of all those who are born under the same law.

Such, then, is Socrates; but of what sort are the vulgar lovers? “They mobbed you,” he says. Now what is the mob? That it is a multitude, is clear to anyone, but an indeterminate, confused and <57> disorderly multitude, since it is not like the chorus nor like the people. The people is a multitude united to itself, but the mob is an incoherent multitude, and for this reason, when speaking of constitutions, they say that ochlocracy is different from democracy;² for the one is disorderly, lawless and discordant, the other drawn up under the laws. It is clear, then, that mobbing is evidence of a slovenly, confused way of life that drags down the beloved to the materialised, fragmentary and “manifold”³ kind of variety of the emotions. Timaeus⁴ too called all forms of irrational behaviour a mob, as being indeterminate in themselves, discordant and disorderly — “the thronging mob that had later grown upon it, composed of fire and earth and air and water.” As therefore the term “others”⁵ revealed their discordance and incoherent way of life, so also the term “mobbing” indicates to the young man the insulting treatment he has received at their hands, and that they were debasing him to some fragmented and material kind of <58> living. Not only then were they so disposed towards one another, dividedly and discordantly, but they also filled the young man with this sort of vice, acting clean contrary to the function of love. Love “empties out estrangement and fills up with intimacy,” as Plato’s Agathon⁶ observes, but they were both full of division and discord among themselves, because they were “others,” and they extended this estrangement of theirs to the beloved; for to everyone turbulence is by nature strange and painful.

We train ourselves in regard to pleasure and pain, neither fleeing from our emotions, nor remaining completely without experience of them, but assuming a middle position in their regard and overcoming our tendency to excess and disorderliness.⁷

Such then is the common lover; and it is a very great eulogy upon the character of Alcibiades that only as far as conversation did he admit the company of the other lovers and he gratified their excitement about him only so much: he considered it troublesome and distasteful, nevertheless permitted it and shared in conversation

¹ Cp. notes 105, 107 & *Procl. in Crat.* p. 29, 22ff., p. 31, 24ff., p. 32, 18ff.

² Cf. Plutarch: *Moralia* 826f.

³ Cp. *Phaedrus* 238a.

⁴ Cf. *Timaeus* 42c.

⁵ On this use of the term ‘Others’ cf. Jean Trouillard: “Sur un pluriel de Plotin et de Proems” in *Bulletin de l’Assoc. Guill. Budé* 1958 No. 2 pp. 88-91, where he compares *Procl. in Tim.* I, p. 375, 28.

⁶ Cf. *Symposium* 197d.

⁷ [On how to overcome the stranglehold of emotions. — ED. PHIL.]

with the vulgar lovers, but not in touching or drinking parties or the other evils that invited him to bad living. Herein especially we see what was the difference between the character of Alcibiades and that of others of the same age. As we train ourselves in regard to pleasure and pain, not fleeing from these emotions nor remaining completely without experience of them, but assuming a middle position in their regard and overcoming their excess and disorderliness, so also in matters of love the <59> greatest training ground for integral virtue, in the case of those with noble natures, is the company of vulgar lovers; for to rise superior to annoyance at their hands and overcome the folly of their nature shows a strength that despises flattery and life according to pleasure. Alcibiades, having proved himself such, naturally seemed to be worthy of love to Socrates, since he had shaken off the passionate flood of lovers at such an age, and wondered at Socrates' love. As then the Athenian stranger¹ introduces youth to strong drink, contriving this as practice for the young against their emotions, and sets over them a magistrate as judge of the movements within them, so also Socrates has as it were set himself as a magistrate over the young man, arbiter of the intoxication that accords with his age and judge both of him, of his emotions and of the lovers that live in accordance with these. Since he has beheld him master over all these and "surpassing in pride of spirit" their ignoble, deceitful and hollow lives, he summons him to communion with himself, and shows him what is the genuine art of love, what is the benefit that derives from it and what is the goal of activity in accordance with virtue.²

"The reason for this has not been something human, but a certain spiritual opposition, about whose power you will hear later." 103a

<60> Socrates proved a source of wonder to the youth through the aforementioned words and because of the stability of his love, his purity of life and his detached forethought in his regard. What could be more divine in the life of men than these aspects that show forth the wonder of actual divine providence towards secondary beings? For its capacity to range through everything and at the same time not depart from itself, and while present to all, be established solely in itself is the most paradoxical of the doctrines concerning providence. So how can the revelation that human life is capable of such activity, at the same time detached from and in relationship with the objects of its providence and "abiding in its customary state,"³ fail to be altogether worthy of wonder? Socrates astounds Alcibiades still further by making the cause of human pursuits depend on the spiritual, in order that he may appear wonderful to him not only as a man, but also as acting in accordance with a spirit and possessing something superior to human virtue viz. spiritual inspiration. Socrates' love, therefore, is far from being like that <61> of the other lovers; for they were dragging Alcibiades down to irrationality and matter, but Socrates lifts him up, even through these first words alone, to reason and spirit.

¹ Cf. *Laws* I 648c-50b, II 617a-e.

² Cf. *Ar. Eth. Nic.* 1098a 16: "The good man turns out to be an activity of soul in accordance with virtue."

³ Cf. *Timaeus* 42e.

Better help than the love of philosophy it is not easy to find, says Diotima.

Such is divine love, elevating beneficent, bestowing perfection, cause of intelligence and of life according thereto. “A better help than love towards philosophy,” Diotima¹ says “it is not easy to find,” as he himself instructs us elsewhere. Already then Socrates is revealed as someone inspired by a spirit, arousing greater astonishment in Alcibiades and multiplying his wonder as regards philosophy. It is natural for Socrates to do this; for everywhere similar occasions of amazement attract us to affinity with the good. As in the holiest of the mysteries certain awe-inspiring events precede the performance of the rites, submitting the soul to the divinity, either through what is said or what is shown, so also on the threshold of philosophy his guide arouses towards himself wonder and <62> astonishment in the youth, in order that the discussion as it proceeds may act upon him and entice him to the life of philosophy. This should especially be done in the case of those who are full of high-spirit and arrogance; for such pride is correct in dealing with the mob, but in dealing with men of serious worth it is an obstacle to help from them. In order then that Alcibiades, after mastering his many lovers, should not presume likewise to despise Socrates, right from the start Socrates reveals himself to Alcibiades as someone worthy of wonder by reason of his earnestness, silence and life according to the spirit. Two of these qualities have been mentioned by him before, one that he is a lover of much longer standing than those divers and many lovers, and second that heretofore he maintained silence in his regard. The reason for this second quality he refers to the good spirit; “the reason for this,” he says, “viz. my not even speaking to you” is “a certain spiritual opposition.” Yet the good spirit is also entirely responsible for his love; for he would not thus have pursued the life of love in the best possible way had he not made both the choice and the earnest following thereof in accordance with the spirit, but since to have loved the youth and taken pains in his regard is the function of forethought for the less perfect, but to watch over him² in a detached, pure and transcendent manner is a quality too spiritual for human ways of living, for this reason he has referred the cause of this alone to the good <63> spirit. For to perfect the inferior and provide for the lesser belongs even to souls as souls, since their descent was occasioned by forethought for things involved in process and by care for mortals; but to admit into one nothing from those one controls nor be mixed up with one’s inferiors but order them detachedly is proper to gods and good spirits, and when it belongs to human souls also, it does so by the gift of some god or spirit. For this, then, he held the good spirit responsible, viz. the transcendence of his care for Alcibiades; for silence is a sign of equilibrium, of the cessation of outward-tending activities, and indicates a life unrelated to the inferior.

For chaste love is the binder of all things and their sublime guide.

Furthermore the mention of the spirit accords with the essential nature and power of love; since the same man is concerned with love and spirit. For the lover, if he be inspired, enjoys close union with the spirit, through whom he is united with the gods, and receives his very inspiration through means of the spirit (for the goods of the

¹ Cf. *Symposium* 212b.

² Reading Cousin’s conjecture *αὐτό*.

gods have come to men through the medium of the spirits, according to the <64> account of Diotima);¹ and again the spiritual man is a lover: for how does he enjoy the benefit of the spirit, if he has not united himself to it and shared his life with its functions? What effects this bond of union between the inferior and the superior if not love? For this god the Oracles² call “the binding guide of all things,” and not, “binding together some and not others”; he it is, then, who unites us with the care of the spirits. Furthermore love itself is “a mighty spirit,” as Diotima³ says, in so far as everywhere it fulfils the mean role between the objects of love and those hastening towards them through love. The object of love holds the first position, what loves it the last, and love fills the middle between the two, uniting and binding with each other the desired object and what desires it and filling the weaker from the stronger; among the intelligible and hidden gods it makes the intelligible Intellect one with the primary and hidden beauty according to a certain mode of life⁴ superior to intellectual perception (and therefore the Greek theologian⁵ terms such love blind: <65> “Cherishing in his heart blind swift Love”), while among the beings outside the intelligibles it irradiates an indissoluble common bond to those undergoing perfection from it. The bond is union, but with greater distinction, and so the Oracles⁶ have termed the fire of this love binding:

“ . . . who first leapt forth from Intellect, clothing his binding fire in the fire (of Intellect).”

For, proceeding from the intelligible Intellect, it combines all the secondary beings both with each other and with the former. It unites, then, both all the gods with the intelligible beauty and the spirits with the gods and us with the spirits and the gods, subsisting primarily among the gods, secondarily among the spirits, and among individual souls according to a sort of third procession from the principles: among the gods in a manner beyond essence (for the whole class of gods is such), among the spirits essentially and among souls by irradiation. This triple rank is like the three-fold⁷ function of Intellect.

The living creature is the fairest of the objects of intellect.

For the unparticipated intellect, transcending all the particular classes, differs from the participated, in which the souls of the gods share as being superior and different again is the intellect which derives from the latter and comes to be in souls, indeed is the perfection of souls themselves. You have these three divisions of Intellect indicated in the *Timaeus*. We must then take love among the gods as analogous to the un-

¹ Cf. *Symposium* 202e-3a.

² Cf. Kroll *De Orac. Chald.* p. 26, Lewy *op. cit.* pp. 179-80, note 8; p. 128, note 239; p. 132, note 250. Lyd. *De Mens.* 4, 20: “The oracle refers to the soul as a god-like triad. For the same Chaldaean says: Having mingled the spark of the soul with two like-minded faculties | With god-like intellect and will, (the Father) added to them as a third chaste Love | The Binder of all things and their sublime guide.” (Lewy).

³ Cf. *Symposium* 202d.

⁴ i.e., the intelligible intellect is united to the primary and hidden beauty through Life, the middle principle of the second hypostasis, which was distinguished by the later Neo-platonists into the triad Being-Life-Intellect. Cf. note 152.

⁵ Cf. *Orph. Fgm.* 82 Kern, and esp. *Procl. in Tim.* II p. 85, 16-31.

⁶ Cf. Kroll *De Orac. Chald.* p. 25; Lewy *op. cit.* pp. 127-8 and notes 233-36.

⁷ Cf. *El. Theol.* prop. 166 & notes.

participated¹ intellect, since it transcends all that are inspired and <66> illuminated by it: love among spirits as analogous to the participated,² for this is essential and self-complete like the participated intellect and immediately ruling over souls: and clearly the third kind of love, which subsists in souls by irradiation, as analogous to the intellect as a state of mind.³ I think it reasonable that love is considered as corresponding to this distinction of intellect, because it has its primary and hidden subsistence in the intelligible intellect; for if it “leapt forth” therefrom it is causally established therein.

Also I think that Plato too, finding this same god termed “love” and a “mighty spirit” in the works of Orpheus,⁴ loved such praise of love. For speaking about the intelligible intellect the theologian mentions “dainty Love and bold Counsel,” and again “whom a mighty spirit bestrode and blew upon <67> their footsteps”; and concerning the intelligent and unparticipated intellect “and Counsel, first begetter, and much delighting Love”⁵ and again

¹ Cf. *Timaeus* 39c: “So as intellect discerns the quality and quantity of the forms that exist in the Living Creature that truly is, such quality and quantity of forms he thought this world should also possess”; and Taylor’s note ad loc. cf. also *Procl. in Tim.* III p. 101, 24-9: “The Intellect that is creator is not in the participated class, in order that it may be creator of the whole universe and be able to look towards the Absolute Living Creature; but although it is unparticipated, it is a really intelligent intellect, and through its simple intuition is united to the intelligible, while through its variegated intuition it hastens toward the generation of secondary beings.”

² Cf. *Timaeus* 30b: “He found . . . moreover that intellect apart from soul cannot be present in anything. In virtue of this reasoning, when he framed the universe, he fashioned intellect within soul, and soul within body.” (Cornford). Cf. also *Procl. in Tim.* I p. 406: “We must first see which is this intellect, and whether it is substantial, situated above the soul, or whether it is some intelligent condition of it, and we must reckon that it is substantial, both by analogy — for as intellect is to soul, so soul is to body. But the soul does not belong to the body as a state of it, so neither intellect to soul — and by the final cause; for Plato says that the soul is constituted on account of intellect, and not vice-versa; but if the soul is on account of intellect, and intellect is that on account of which, then intellect is not a state; for nowhere is being constituted on account of a state. And thirdly because the creator establishes this intellect, but the intellect by way of a state is established by the soul according to the movement of the circle of the same around the intelligible object, as Plato himself will observe.”

³ Cf. *Timaeus* 37c: “But whenever discourse is concerned with the rational, and the circle of the Same, running smoothly, declares it, the result must be intellect and knowledge.” (Cornford). Cf. also *Procl. in Tim.* II p. 313, 1-3: “Intellect is threefold: first divine, such as the creative intellect, secondly participated by soul, but substantial and independent, thirdly intellect as a state, on account of which the soul is intelligent.” *ibid.* I. 24: “It would be more in harmony with the text to consider this intellect as a state in the soul itself.” *ibid.* p. 314, 2-5: “It would not be prior to the soul, but a state of it, like knowledge; and therefore Plato says it comes to be in the soul like knowledge, opinion and belief.” Cf. also Taylor’s notes on *Timaeus* 37c.

⁴ Cf. *Orph. Fgm.* 83, 74 & 170 Kern, and esp. *Procl. in Tim.* I p. 433, 26-434, 17: “But why has he described the Living Creature as the fairest of the objects of intellect (*Timaeus* 30d), although it is at the limit of the intelligibles? Surely because, although there are intelligible grades prior to it, what is fairest is subordinate to these; for they do not participate in beauty, but there is within them the cause that produces beauty, the very first beauty and fairness. So on this level fairness is intelligently disclosed by Orpheus, viz. as beauty already proceeds among the primary intelligibles in a unified and immediate manner, Phanes is called “a very beautiful god” (or “son of very beautiful Ether”) and “dainty Love,” because this god is the first to be filled with the hidden and ineffable fairness. Therefore he is called fairest, being the very first of the participants, even if all the intelligibles are unified one with another; for we must not divide them from one another in the manner of the intelligent orders, but contemplate their one and undivided unification.

Now this is a fair opinion. But the most essential point is that Plato described the Living Creature as fairest, not of all the objects of intellect absolutely, but only of living beings; for, comparing the absolute with the more partial living beings, he described it as the fairest of all the intelligible living beings; so that if there is anything superior to the nature of a living being this has no relation to the present discussion. Now there must of necessity be some such thing, because being is simpler than the nature of living being, and so is absolute beauty, and this is why it is found even in non-living beings.”

⁵ Cf. Kern: *Orph. fgm.* 168, 6 & 9, where the lines quoted form part of an Orphic hymn to Zeus; fgm. 169, 1 & 4, where in slightly altered form they occur in a quotation from Syrianus of the same hymn. For the respective functions of “Counsel” and “Love,” cf. Guthrie: *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (1952) pp. 79-83 & 95-107, where he deals with their place in Orphic Religion under their Greek names of Metis and Eros. It was part of Proclus’ task to conflate Orphic teachings and Chaldaean Oracles with Neoplatonism, and an interesting comparison of the three systems is provided by Hans Lewy *op. cit.* Excursus VII.

“One power, one spirit came to be, mighty, ruler of all.”

As spirit hides between god and man, so love binds the lover to the beloved.

Naturally therefore Diotima also calls it “a mighty spirit”¹ and Socrates combines with the discourse about love and the objects of love the exposition concerning the spirit and the spiritual cause. As the whole spiritual sphere depends on the mediacy of love, so also the account of the spiritual accompanies that of love and is akin to it. Love lies in the middle between loved object and lover, and spirit between god and man: on account of this intermediacy they have acquired a very full communion with each other, according to which Socrates in pursuing the account thereof, began with love and ended with the account of the spiritual. He is at the same time a lover and a spirit-like man: he governs the activity of love according to the will of the spirit, and he invites the inspiration of the spirit by his earnestness in regard to the art of love.

So much then for what we had to say on this subject; next we must talk about the spirits in themselves, further about those that have <68> become our common guardians, and thirdly about the spirit of Socrates.

<116-19> ²

“In all these respects your boasting have overpowered your lovers, and they being inferior, were overcome; and this has not escaped you. For this reason I am well aware that you wonder for what purpose I do not give up my love and possessed by what hope I remain when the rest have fled.” 104c

How the inspired lover differs from the vulgar lover:

Again through these words it should become clear to us how the inspired lover is completely different from the common and vulgar lovers. The latter, priding themselves on small matters, have been overpowered by the young man, vanquished by more refined emotions; for they were, as he himself says, “inferior,” starting from below and as it were from matter, and striving to drag the young man down to it; but the former showed plainly the emptiness of his vaunting, reducing all this apparent high-mindedness to the lowest form of ignorance and the <116> lack of knowledge of oneself. The difference between them is adequately shown by the fact that the one set are termed “runaways” as being emotional, ignoble and cowardly lovers, but the other does not relinquish his love, but is “courageous and earnest”³ and really akin to his god. That this has happened is reasonable. For the soul is midway between intellect and bodily nature; and when it regards intellect and what is beautiful there, its love is stable as being united through similarity to the immovable and unchangeable, for intellect has both its being and its activity fixed in eternity; but when it regards bodies and the beauty therein, its love becomes externally moved and changes along with its object, for such is the body, I mean externally moved and easily changed. Holding a midway position, then, and of its own motion tending towards both, at one

¹ Cf. *Symposium* 202d.

² [Pages 152, 154, 156.]

³ Cf. *Symposium* 203d.

time it becomes like the unmoved and ever the same, at another like the externally moved wandering amid all kinds of change.

Being aligned with intellect and divine beauty, the inspired lover is stable, active, immaterial; the wanton lover, fickle, passive, material (since the object of his love is ephemeral, sensual beauty).

Reasonably, then, the inspired lover, who reaches up towards the stable and fixed kind of beauty hardly relinquishes his love; for he lays no claim to bodily flux; but the earthborn and materially-minded lover is full of the wandering changes of the world of process. For which reason he too is fickle and changeable, since the reason for his love is changeable beauty; and it is never lawful for effects to escape from their causes and rise superior to the nature <117> of the latter. Since, then, even when causes are ordered, their effects spring forth in disorder, and their products are in movement when they are stable, indeterminate though they are determined, what should one say about these very effects whose causes even are disordered, changeable and indeterminate? Surely that they are much more carried away into indeterminacy and change of all kinds? If therefore beauty that is sensibly perceived and involved in matter is liable to change and mobility, what should one say of the love that is implanted in souls as a result of it? Now this could not be otherwise. For the same reason we must observe that divine love is an activity, wanton love a passivity; the one is co-ordinate with intellect and divine beauty, the other with bodies; and the aspect of activity is appropriate to immaterial forms, but of passivity to those involved in matter, since to act is characteristic of incorporeal beings, but to be acted upon of bodies. These loves, then, are opposed to each other, since one is stable, the other changeable, one active, the other passive, one immaterial, the other material, one inspired, the other “wanton.”

Love is threefold: one absolute and primary, one perpetually participated, and one intermittently participated.

It was thus I think, that Socrates termed it in the *Phaedrus*,¹ and the oracles call it “a stifling of true love.”² Now what is the reason for the opposition between these loves? The descent in the scale of things. Procession, beginning from on high, ceases when it has got as far as those things which can both change and make to subsist along with <118> themselves some sort of aberration. Take what is just, for instance:³ in the one case it is primarily just, the absolute just, not just by participation: in the next case there is that which primarily and always participates in the preceding; then there is that which sometimes participates in it, but at other times falls away from participation. It was neither fitting that the absolute just should rule in sterility, giving nothing a share in its own specific nature (none of the primary existents is like that, but sterility is appropriate to matter alone as the lowest of beings) nor that,

¹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 254e.

² Cf. Kroll: *Orac. Chald.* p. 26, Lewy *op. cit.* pp. 264-5 & note 17, where they quote Procl. *in Remp.* I p. 176, 22-6: “(Socrates), after reviling wanton love, and what the gods have termed “a stifling of true love,” confesses his error, in so far as, instead of the consideration of the divine and elevating love of souls, he has been concerned with its lowest and materialised image”; cf. also *ibid.* II p. 347, 6-11: “And therefore the oracles bid us expand ourselves through the freedom of our way of life, but not to cramp our style by drawing upon ourselves “a stifling of true love” instead of extending to the whole universe; for those who are stifled narrow the entrances through which we partake of the cosmic breath.”

³ For this scheme of participation cf. *El. Theol.* prop. 63 & notes.

when participated by others, it should be primarily participated by intermittent participants (for what is composite and changeable is completely alien to what is simple and unchanging and requires some middle link to be united to it), nor that, when participated by beings capable of constant irradiation, it should bring the gift of itself to a halt at this point; in order that the end term might not be that which is always attached to the first principles. We must, then, look upon the absolute just in three ways, and not only that, but also all the other forms, the absolute beautiful, the equal, the similar, each one of the others, and call some absolute, some participants and discern the by-products among those third from the truth. Nothing can subsist parallel either to the simple beings or to the constant participants; in the one case simplicity, in the other case perpetuity of participation prevents parallel existence. The inferior,¹ then, must come into parallel existence with the third class, the intermittent participants, the unjust with the just at this level, the ugly <119> with the beautiful, the unequal with the equal. In this way then, love is threefold, one absolute and primary, one perpetually participated and one intermittently participated. So alongside this third kind of love wanton love has come to subsist, and therefore it is opposed to it, sets opposite ends, employs different aims and sets its roots in opposing ways of life.

<130-34> ²

The phrase “my good friend, speak on” makes Socrates an object of desire to the young man, and turns the lover into the beloved; for the good is the object of desire and love leads lovers towards the good, according to the account of Diotima.³ Now why did he address <130> Socrates as “good”? Surely he uttered this word because he marvelled at Socrates’ spirit-like and divine powers; for providence, steadfastness and the work of perfection belong to goodness.

The true lover must combine criticism and sympathy. Judgment without fellow-feeling banishes love and leads it away to some other kind of life, while sympathy bereft of judgement attaches the soul to the worse.

Well finally what is the meaning of the preceding remark “for it would not be surprising if, as I was reluctant to begin, so I should be reluctant to stop?” Surely it contains in brief the cause of the young man’s questioning; for by this means Socrates stimulated discussion as he proceeded viz: because he was slow to begin. The true lover must exercise both faculties, criticism of and sympathy with the objects of his love. Judgment without fellow-feeling banishes love and leads it away to some other kind of life, while sympathy bereft of judgement attaches the soul to the worse. The lover requires neither a life that is completely detached nor a relationship involved in matter, but a sort of detached relationship, that he may both provide for the less perfect, yet not sink downwards in their regard. Since therefore these are both elements of true and divine love, I mean judgment and sympathy, judgment in regard to the beloved is the cause of Socrates’ reluctance to begin (for the examination of a per-

¹ For a parallel derivation of falsehood from truth cf. *Ol. in Alc. p. 32, 7-11. Cp. also Simplic. de Caelo p. 429, 35: . . . “the contrary to nature is an offshoot and by-product of what is natural.”*

² [Pages 172, 174, 176.]

³ Cf. *Symposium 204e-6a.*

son's ability and character requires time), and sympathy of his reluctance to stop; on account of such reasons he does not relinquish love nor love's arguments. Furthermore, in another sense, we state that this is also everywhere observed in regard to the providence of the gods and the good spirits viz. slowness to begin and slowness to stop. In fact, while many persons <131> commit many errors, their punishment is slow to begin, and once begun endures for a very long time indeed, and while many perform many good actions, their recompense from providence is slow to begin and extends as far as possible. So also Socrates, emulating the divine, is both slow to begin the discussion and continues benefiting the young man as long as possible;

. . . This prelude to the discussion is concise and compressed, embracing in the briefest possible words the reasons for the whole conversation. <132> Alcibiades, although he has vanquished many other lovers, is still imperfect, not discerning the nature of love nor comprehending its different orders nor the way in which what is contrary to nature differs from what is in accord with it. Therefore he requires perfecting by Socrates: for neither, if wholly perfect, would he require one to guide him, nor, if unsuited to divine love would he be receptive of help. Now if he had been overcome by the multitude of lovers, he would stand revealed as fallen away from all suitability, whereas if he had clearly distinguished notions of the respective loves, viz. divinely inspired and wanton, he would already be completely perfect; but as it is, not knowing the latter, but having escaped the former, he is suitable for the reception of true knowledge. Socrates at any rate is full of the good and the beautiful and offers the young man communication in the virtues; he descends, as it were, to activity in relation to another, and proceeds from his inner life to a movement lower in the scale of being; for this reason he terms this procession "daring,"¹ after the manner of the Pythagoreans, and manifests his forethought for the young man; he unfolds the whole purpose of his personal way of life and the loving <133> aim on account of which he does not relinquish his love. Now since Alcibiades is "not overcome by lovers" and since "it is difficult" even for his true lover "to approach" him, because he has not yet distinguished the kind kinds of love, he stands revealed as fulfilling an intermediate function and possessing natural virtues, but employing inarticulate notions; for such is natural virtue, since it "has only an imperfect view (of the good) and an incomplete morality," according to the divine Plotinus.² But because Socrates "ventures to declare his own mind," he descends to an activity inferior to that which abides within him; since for divine lovers, to turn towards the inferior is at any rate venturesome; but nevertheless Socrates does descend, in order that like Hercules he may lead up his beloved from Hades,³ and persuade him to withdraw from the life of appearance and revert to the life that is intelligent and divine, from which he will come to know both himself and the divine, which transcends all beings and is their pre-existent cause.

¹ This appears to be a neo-pythagorean term. cf. Pherecydes of Syros fr. B14 (which Diels notes is probably not genuine): "The followers of Pherecydes too, called the dyad "daring" (apud Laur. Lyd. *Mens.* II, 7). Cf. also *Theol. Arith.* p. 9, 5-7 De Falco: "For the dyad was the first to separate itself from the monad, whence it is called "daring"; for the monad signifies unification, but the dyad by slipping in indicates separation." Cf. further Ol. in *Alc.* p. 48 16-18: "He appropriately calls the procession to secondary beings "daring"; for so the Pythagoreans termed the dyad, as having first dared to separate itself from the monad." Cp. Plut. *Is. & Os.* 381f.

² Cf. Plot. I, 3, 6 for a brief account of natural virtue and its relation to true virtue.

³ Cf. Diod. IV, 26; Apollod. II, 5, 12 for the rescue of Theseus from Hades by Herakles.

“For if, Alcibiades, I saw you satisfied with the things I have just now detailed and thinking you should live out your life in their midst, I would long ago have given up my love, or so I persuade myself.” 104e

In these words Socrates clearly shows whose character is worthy of love. As in the Republic¹ he has given us an account of the elements of the philosopher’s character, so also herein he seems to me to be relating certain elements in the character of one worthy of love. These elements are twofold, some visible and others invisible, some made <134> apparent in relation to the body, but others movements observed within the inmost soul: some the gift of fate and nature, such as beauty and stature, others the seeds of divine providence instilled in souls with a view to their salvation, as for instance the quality of leadership, the quality of command and the kind of life that is elevated to the heights. Now as regards the endowments of nature and of fate Alcibiades has risen superior to the multitude of lovers, for on account of his arrogance in their regard he scorned their discordant and disorderly importunity; but as regards the making of provision and the movements within the soul he is overcome by Socrates, since by their means he is persuaded by him that he (Socrates) is “more than anything else worthy” of his earnest attention. Herein is demonstrated how great is the superiority of the inspired over the common lover. The latter is deficient even in the advantages of nature; but these are secondary to movements of the soul; and the latter are perfected only by the inspired lover. “Much more, then,” the geometers would say, would vulgar love be said to be inferior to divine.

<140-41> ²

Intellect is superior to reason, and reason to opinion and imagination.

<140> . . . The divinely-inspired friend begins his judgment from within; since he brings perfection primarily to the soul, and as it were from this control-point³ guides the whole life of the beloved. One must point out that previously when he called the activity of soul on the young man’s part conceit, he termed his own movement a consideration saying in regard to Alcibiades: “for you think you are,” but in regard to himself “what I have under consideration” but now, since he has called the movements in Alcibiades “considerations,” he establishes his own way of life entirely on the level of intellect: “by which you will realise,” he says, “that I have continuously turned my mind towards you”; for intellect is immediately superior to discursive reason, and reason to opinion and imagination. The lover, then, must pay heed to any one fine point in the beloved in order that he may be both more perfect and immediately superior. In this way one would lead upwards, the other be led upwards, and the former would exercise forethought with some fellow-feeling. For what is completely uncoordinated has no communion with its inferior, but love finds its subsistence among those who are able to <141> commune with each other, since it itself is perfected through the likeness of the inferior to the superior, through the uniting of the less perfect with the more perfect and through the reversion of what is made complete to the causes of completion. Furthermore, through these same words Socrates

¹ Cf. *Resp.* VI 484a-87a.

² [Page 186.]

³ Cf. *Critias* 109c.

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both rallies Alcibiades to himself and to forethought for his own person, and at the same time makes him a spectator of his own soul and the movements within it, purifying him from sense-perception, imagination and excessive conceit in external matters, turning him to the life within, and inducing him to become acquainted with the movements within him and examine the end they have in view and the manner of bringing them to perfection.



Socrates dragging Alcibiades from the embrace of sensual pleasure (1791) Jean-Baptiste Regnault