

Aim-inhibited *Erôs* in Plato's *Symposium*

...
 sad is Eros, builder of cities,
 and weeping anarchic Aphrodite.
 —W. H. Auden,
 “In Memory of Sigmund Freud”

Regardless of what Plato's own view of *erôs* may have been, the moral psychology derived from the *Symposium* is coherent and the best of those available in the dialogues.¹ An excellent reason to turn first to the *Symposium* for an explanation of human motivation is that *erôs* is the very subject of the dialogue. Plato's most deliberate, sustained, and independent account of desire, I argue, is the *developmental* theory of the psyche found there:² from brute instinct to the cosmic level, and from the primitive erotic state of pure appetitive desire to its complex intellectual culmination at the end of Diotima of Mantinea's instruction. The distinctions we now make or observe, and often invoke, between conative and cognitive desires can obscure their origin in the same one reservoir of psychic energy, *erôs*, so it behooves us to take seriously the challenge that the developmental model poses for the tripartite model. This account is superior to others, including tripartition, compared with which it is more comprehensive. The theory of human motivation in the *Symposium*, though rudimentary, has greater explanatory power, covers more instances, and covers them more satisfactorily, leaving Socratic intellectualism intact. And yet, as I shall point out more carefully later, there is a considerable extent to which the theory in the *Symposium* is compatible with the tripartite account of the *Republic*.

Aim-inhibition is a frame for my discussion. Diotima's moral psychology, i.e., the one she articulates in the *Symposium*, is fine as far as it goes, I will argue, but it is inadequate for the philosopher. Diotima is not a philosopher,³ and following her instructions would give a philosopher a case of aim-inhibited *erôs*. There is a straightforward sense in which *erôs* as described by Diotima is already widely understood as aim-inhibited *erôs*: that is, the priestess counsels that the perfectly natural erotic longing for another person should be diverted from its perfectly natural path to sexual intercourse. Rather, *erôs* must be sublimated, pointed off-course, so that it aims instead at activities, or sciences (μαθήματα, 211c6), then at the science of beauty itself, and at such immortality, i.e. virtuous works, as human beings are capable of having⁴ — though none of these displacements satisfies the primal erotic urge directly. Indirect satisfaction is the best result that aim-inhibition can provide; while displacements may result in other pleasures not localized in the genitalia, these “higher” pleasures leave traces of dissatisfaction in the psyche. According to this garden-variety account, normally attributed to Sigmund Freud, *erôs* as libido is bridled, its aim inhibited, to make civilization itself possible.

¹ See the appendix for several positions on the question of who speaks for Plato in the *Symposium*.

² The least laden term I can identify for ψυχή is the ordinary English ‘psyche’, in use since 1590.

³ At *Phaedrus* 248d3–4, among the nine character types from philosopher to tyrant, the type who is expert at mystery religion is fifth, right *behind* doctors (cf. *Republic* 9.587d3–e4).

⁴ I use the text and translation of Rowe 1998a for the *Symposium*; Rowe 1986 for the *Phaedrus*; Slings 2003 (text) and Allen 2006 (translation) of the *Republic*. Other *ad hoc* translations are from Cooper 1997.

Instead of fighting and rutting like rabbits, so the story goes, human *erôs* must be blunted to make social and political life *possible*, not to mention art, science, and philosophy.

A. W. Price (1990: 255) offers a reconciliation that has found some acceptance, a way of reading Plato and Freud analogously, having conceded that the “intensest pleasure” and “primal bliss” a person is motivated to seek is, for Plato, reunion with the forms and, for Freud, reunion with the mother: “Take any process of desexualization: a Freudian might view it as an escape from one’s true nature, a denial of one’s original goals, and an assumption of inauthentic ones, a Platonist as a return towards one’s true nature, a discarding of inauthentic goals, and a recovery of original (or more nearly original) ones.”⁵ The analogy is useful for the *Meno* and dialogues that make similar assumptions, *Phaedo*, perhaps, but I cannot decouple it from *anamnêsis*, or preexisting and possibly immortal psyches. The epistemology of the *Symposium*, however, does not countenance any of that. However widely accepted this version of aim-inhibition, I pursue a different one below.

After setting out (§1) the account of human psychological motivation proposed in the *Symposium* and clarifying Freud’s explicit use of it, I argue (§2) that mystery religion cannot be more than a hydraulic lift toward philosophical satisfaction: like rhetoric and mathematics, it may be useful as a stepping stone, but the philosopher’s examined life is distinct from Diotima’s in two essential ways: in its attention to embodied particulars, and in its ultimate object of erotic desire. If that object is the fundamental, unhypothetical first principle of all (*Republic* 6.510b6–7), then it is unavailable in the *Symposium*. Since I must turn to the *Republic* for Plato’s unhypothetical first principle, I also (§3) sketch the reasons why the *Republic*’s tripartite psyche should not be brought along with it.

1. *Erôs*: Its Nature and Extent

The most general account of *erôs* in the *Symposium* is that of the physician, Eryximachus, according to whom everything is moved, energized, by *erôs*; the planets owe their motion, and the seasons their changes, to *erôs*; plant and animal growth, disease, and even meteorological events such as hail are all “erotic things” (188a1–b6). Picking up on Pausanias’ theme that *erôs* is two — one heavenly and one vulgar — Eryximachus’ account of “double Love” (δουλοῦν Ἔρωτα, 186b4) belies the notion of separation into two discrete drives. Instead, the physician emphasizes continua (hot-cold, wet-dry, the musical scale) with each extreme seeking the other to effect what medical expertise assists in producing: balance and harmony, achieved through “knowledge of the erotic affairs of the body in relation to filling up and emptying” (186c6–8). Eryximachus, at his broadest, says *erôs* “as a whole has all power” and that, when it is developed in relation to what is good, it results in “all happiness” (188d4–e1).⁶ This cosmic

⁵ On Plato’s behalf, Price goes on to cite the farmer of *Republic* 9.589b1–3 whose weed-pulling (discarding) is a natural part of cultivating crops (recovery). In support of Price, I would add that Plato’s explicitly sexual language used for the communion with forms at the height of the ascent in the *Symposium* is evidence that he did indeed have in mind intense pleasure.

⁶ This description of the physician’s skill is similar to that of the midwife who knows how to bring on labor pains or diminish them, how to birth and how to abort, and knows which matches will produce the best offspring (*Theaetetus* 148e–151d).

psychology, beginning with unconscious processes,⁷ provides a basis for, and complements, what will be Diotima's more limited account. She considers the motivation of animals including humans briefly (206a6–208b6) then limits her discussion to specifically human motivation, not mentioning cosmic *erôs* or even the *erôs* of nonliving things explicitly, but leaving the wider possibility open by affirming the connection among *all* things: “all of this is mutually related” (210c5–6).⁸ Only Eryximachus' view that *erôs* can be developed in relation to what is bad and, indeed, that disease and unhappiness occur under just that circumstance, may appear incompatible with Diotima's view. It is not.

Diotima agrees that all desires whatever are erotic: and it is only *we* who “separate off one kind of love and apply to it the name which belongs to the whole” (205b4–5). That is, we human beings fix on sexual passion, to which we apply the term ‘erotic’ exclusively, although *erôs* actually includes *all* wanting, loving, longing, wishing, or craving, whether irrational or rational, unconscious or conscious.⁹ In a similar move, Freud invokes “the divine Plato”¹⁰ against critics who claim that psychoanalysis is obsessed with sex: “What psycho-analysis called sexuality was by no means identical with the impulsion towards a union of the two sexes or towards producing a pleasurable sensation in the genitals; it had far more resemblance to the all-inclusive and all-preserving Eros of Plato's *Symposium*.”¹¹

Diotima's general description of the psyche,¹² like Freud's, is developmental in the sense of increasing its complexity in a context of general change: human bodies, like those of other animals, passing from childhood to old age, constantly replace their “hair, or flesh, or bones, or blood” (207d4–e2); likewise “pieces of knowledge” (ἐπιστήμαι, 207e6) are forgotten and have to be studied anew (μελετᾶν, 208a3) in the course of a lifetime. Consistently, however, to be alive, to have a psyche, is to have *erôs*, to desire; the psyche's function is *erôs*.

Desire is *initially* unconscious, non-rational, and appetitive, which is only to say that desire at its most primitive is a brute fact of being alive and exactly as true for a single-celled organism as for baby Einstein. Initially, all desire is for the avoidance of pain and the increase of pleasure. A human newborn, feeling the pain of deprivation — hunger or cold, say — desires first of all the absence of pain. Later, specific desires can be differentiated, desires *for* things such as food, warmth, and human contact, each of which delivers a distinct corresponding pleasure. There are unconscious desires as well. So long as there is air to breathe, an infant

⁷ See Rowe 1998a: 147.

⁸ Cf. *Meno* 81c10–d1, “The whole of nature is akin.” Kamtekar (“The Powers of Plato's Psychology,” unpublished, p. 24n2) argues that the account of the powers of the psyche in the *Phaedrus*, mentioning Anaxagoras at 270a, takes the whole cosmos into account (not just the whole psyche, and not just the psyche plus its environment, as the previous literature argues); she suggests that *Cratylus* 400a–b may provide another parallel.

⁹ There has been some dispute over when *exactly* Diotima discusses generic and when specific *erôs*, a controversy detailed by Sheffield (2006a: 85n13). As Sheffield notes, Rowe (1998b: 248) argues that Diotima “treats the universal ἔρωσ according to the paradigm provided by its specific counterpart. In other words, while the subject shifts to the universal, the description of the universal is determined by the specific.” Rowe, however, goes on to argue both (a) that the genus-species comparison is merely metaphor, and (b) that all the participants and readers *know* it is merely metaphor. I am arguing rather that Diotima's generic version of *erôs* grows out of Eryximachus' discussion.

¹⁰ 1920: SE 7, 134.

¹¹ 1925a: SE 14, 218.

¹² 207c8–209e4, especially 207e1–208b2.

feels no pain of asphyxia, but it will be a long time before the recognition of oxygen as a distinct object of desire kicks in. So far for the human infant, as for most living things permanently, the crude approximation of pleasure-good and pain-bad delivers its evolutionary advantages. The priestess leaves no doubt that, for animals including humans, *erôs* is the mover, the motivator, between subject and object;¹³ *everyone* is in love (205a9), and “there is nothing else that people are in love with except the good” (206a1–2).¹⁴ When a pine turns toward the sun, it loves the good. When an amoeba extends its pseudopod in search of the nutrition that will benefit it, it loves the good. When a toddler reaches for a bright, pretty object, she too loves the good. None can be said to have a concept of the good, so the love of the good is a love of its *expression* in light, air, food, warmth and so on.

Eryximachus’ view, that *erôs* can be developed in relation to what is bad, must be explained against Diotima’s view that we love only the good. When the amoeba’s pseudopod finds food, but the food is subtly toxic, the doctor’s description is that the amoeba’s *erôs*, seeking something good, nutrition, encountered something bad, toxins. If the toxins cannot be detected, then the amoeba keeps eating, developing its *erôs* in relation to the bad. If the bright, pretty object grasped by the good-loving toddler is a hot lightbulb, the explanation is similar: she reached for something good (bright and pretty) and encountered something bad, pain. She does not yet have the concepts of light-implicating-heat or potential-pain, but those concepts will be acquired through just such experiences as this one. What were undetectable “toxins” before the experience can afterwards be avoided. If the toddler — let’s call her Trixie — has caregivers who know good from bad nutrition, then they offer her yummy rice, spinach, beets, and other healthy foods, smiling and praising her every bite. Trixie’s *erôs* develops in relation to what is good and she sets out on the path to happiness. Trixie’s cousin Dixie’s development proceeds by the same principle. If her caregivers are ignorant, they feed her fast foods and sugary puddings for which she quickly develops a taste, which pleases them all mightily. The doctor says Dixie’s teeth are decaying and she’s overweight; as her *erôs* develops in relation to what is bad, she’s on the path to misery.

There’s the rub. Do we really want to say that, despite appearances, Dixie loves the good? Yes, insofar as Dixie seeks *happiness* (*Symposium* 204e6–205a3, 205d1–3). Her *wanting* to be happy and *wanting* the good are a far cry from her having them. One must *learn* that there is no direct correlation between pleasure and good, or pain and bad. If Dixie someday learns about good nutrition, then she will struggle against the tastes she has long since cultivated in relation to what is bad.¹⁵ This is at the very root of *no one does wrong voluntarily*. It is why Diotima points out that, for love of the good, people willingly amputate diseased limbs (205e3–5). For Freud, as in Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws*,¹⁶ the education of erotic desire begins very early indeed. What delights one in infancy and early childhood, even before one is old enough to

¹³ In her mythic introduction, Diotima makes *erôs* an intermediary spirit between gods and human beings (202e3–203a7), wisdom and ignorance (203e4–5), but she then attributes *erôs* to animals as well (206c6–7, 207a6–208b6).

¹⁴ ὡς οὐδέν γε ἄλλο ἐστὶν οὐ ἐρῶσιν ἄνθρωποι ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; cf. *Republic* 6.505d5–9.

¹⁵ We might recall the story from Phaedo’s *Zopyrus* that Socrates defeated his natural tendency to stupidity and lust through his efforts at reason.

¹⁶ Perhaps before birth for Plato: the Athenian extols the benefits that accrue to the infant whose mother has exercised physically during her pregnancy (*Laws* 7.789e1–2).

know the reason (*Republic* 3.402a1–4), affects one’s later physical and psychological health.¹⁷ If little Bugsy *feels* pleasure when pleasing his adored older brother and sensing his approval, then Bugsy will enjoy and desire to repeat activities that his brother has set for him — music and books, games, puzzles, Lego — all contributing in their different ways to the psyche’s “growth” in conative and cognitive features. This interaction — our being influenced and changed by contact with those we love — is something Diotima picks out as important (209c2–4). The beloved or the beautiful *causes* in us an increase in desire.

The human psyche of the *Symposium* develops much as the *Republic*’s primitive communal society adds specializations, one might say: under the influence of need and desire, the psyche adds more complicated and convoluted expressions of its single primitive *erôs*. That is what it is to mature psychologically, emotionally and intellectually, and this specialization of psychic labor occurs naturally; it would fail to occur if the right stimulations were not present.¹⁸ Cognitive desires, to take an example dearer to philosophy than diet, have a trajectory of development.¹⁹ Just as a body needs nourishment and exercise for healthy growth and strong limbs, the embryonic capacity to learn and to reason requires stimulation through the senses and practice to grow into a healthy, mature intellect. All humans, females and males alike (but some more than others), are pregnant with innate ideas that are nourished and grow under certain conditions—by Diotima’s lights, in the presence of the beautiful. The psychic-pregnancy account of the *Symposium* (206c1–212a8) is not unique to the dialogue,²⁰ but it is richly detailed, and it does the work managed elsewhere, in the *Meno* most prominently, by *anamnêsis*. It explains why we learn under questioning, i.e., upon the stimulation of capacities formerly dormant; the value of figuring things out, which is rather like exercising the body; and how our holding false beliefs prevents our seeking true ones. Agathon, under the influence of Socrates’ questioning, for example, is purged of his false beliefs and becomes eager to learn, whereas he was not previously — much as Meno’s slave needed first to recognize that he didn’t know what he thought he knew. Sometimes, as in the case of philosophical learning, the midwifery of a dialectician is needed as well.

For both Diotima and Freud, as for Plato, the psyche responds to its environment by developing increasingly complex, finer varieties of *erôs*: mature intellectual curiosity manifested as scientific research into the recoil of atomic nuclei, for example, or a connoisseur’s

¹⁷ I do not mean to overestimate the malleability of infants and small children — I mean rather to keep my discussion short. One’s physiological inheritance is more than just a limiting factor, and not easily controlled. Moreover, children do not automatically like the activities that give their parents pleasure. In both those senses, I am aware of my oversimplification of the interaction that results in the development of tastes.

¹⁸ By featuring Plato’s view of the early training of the desires, Brown 2004 has uncovered the deep and far-reaching similarity between Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws*, something even more important than explaining why there is no gap in the *Republic* between psychological and practical justice.

¹⁹ Reason (deliberative desire), for example, is explicitly identified as a type of desire at *Republic* 9.580d6–7, its object proving most true and permanent, and thus providing the greatest possibility for happiness. As Eryximachus promotes his expertise at filling and emptying, the argument at 9.585a–586e promotes filling the psyche with truth: a greater fulfillment (happiness) than such food and drink as fill the body.

²⁰ The accounts in the *Theaetetus* (148d4–151d3) and the *Republic* (6.490a8–b7) are broadly similar. While everyone can learn (*Republic* 7.518c4–6), not everyone can learn philosophy; Socrates suggests other teachers to some would-be pupils (Damon and Prodicus in *Laches*, Prodicus in *Theaetetus* and *Apology*).

appreciation of 1989 Amarones.²¹ *Erôs* is the source, the reservoir, from which all the streams of psychic energy emanate toward their many objects of desire and into which they recede. Freud's economic model of the psyche is just what Plato provides in *Republic* 6: "when the desires set strongly in one direction, we know they flow more weakly by the same amount in others, like a stream diverted into another bed" (485d6–8).²² Freud likewise supposes a developmental overlay: from primitive, undifferentiated instinctual desire (the psyche as id, ruled by the pleasure principle), through recognition that one's environment impinges on one's ability to achieve pleasure directly (the reality principle restricts the rule of the pleasure principle as ego emerges); finally, as one starts to internalize the cruel and often impossible demands of the outside world, the superego begins to confine the satisfaction of pleasure still further.²³ Of course the story is more complicated, but my point is that the two *developmental* models are comparable and preferable to a by-the-numbers tripartite psyche of appetite-intellect-will and id-ego-superego.

In her account of the higher mysteries, after she has expressed her uncertainty about whether Socrates will be able to make the climb, Diotima focuses in tightly on one segment of a lifetime, the psyche's development from adolescence (*véov*, 210a5) to maturity, putting aside childhood and the aging process she countenanced earlier. Gabriel Lear (2006: 107) sets out exactly what is implied in Diotima's account of the higher mysteries: "love aims to possess (a) the good (b) permanently. This is one desire, the desire for happiness," and it is most likely to take place in the presence of beauty. Beauty is what attracts us, moves us, changes us. For the few who come under the appropriate kinds of intellectual influence, who obtain the proper nourishment during their intellectual pregnancies, and the services of a good dialectical midwife when ready to give birth, contemplation of forms yields knowledge that does not supplant their earlier experiences and learning — not if those experiences were developed in relation to the good. Rather, the increasingly competent and skilled psyche becomes more adept at achieving goals that are more likely to bring happiness in more ways.

2. Diotima's *Erôs*: Its Limitations

Although Diotima focuses narrowly on the proper ascent that goes along with *paiderastia*, overwhelming us with the goal of the permanent possession of the good, we would do well to recall that the mature ideal that is her topic is anything but permanent, as she has already established with her example of our losing bits of knowledge we once possessed. As the *Phaedrus* is

²¹ Either might be called aim-inhibited in the sense I mentioned at the beginning of the paper.

²² See Freud's metapsychological works, e.g., 1911, SE 12, 222; 1915, SE 14, 180–182.

²³ The stream analogy at 6.485d6–8 is central to Plato's overall argument in Books II–IX. I am grateful to Henry Dyson for making explicit that Plato needs this argument to show that *psychological justice in general and wisdom in particular entails social justice*, which in turn is necessary for the legitimation of the philosophers-rulers. Plato's argument depends on the claim that channeling one's erotic energy into the pursuit of wisdom necessarily siphons off energy that might otherwise go towards the kind of desires that motivate antisocial behavior. The claim seems to be that the pursuit of wisdom is so rigorous that, if it successfully undertaken, there would not be sufficient remaining psychic energy to enable the appetites and spirit to overreach their proper boundaries; and that this would cut antisocial behavior off at the roots. If that is how the argument works, then it crucially depends on something like the economic model and the claim that the desires of all three parts of the soul are nourished by a single source of erotic energy.

to rhetoric, and the *Theaetetus* is to mathematics, the *Symposium* is to mystery religion. For all Diotima's wisdom, so admirable in the eyes of the young Socrates, what she outlines is "a radical new vision of piety — one that utterly trumps all prior accounts," as Mark McPherran (2006: 91) put it: piety. Perhaps it was a similar inference that led David Sedley (1999: 310) to mark the *Symposium* as "Plato's probable debut" on the topic of becoming like god, insofar as a human being can. For centuries after Plato's death, and increasingly under the influence of Christianity, platonists of antiquity almost universally considered *becoming like god* to be the end toward which all the striving of a philosopher properly aimed.²⁴ Although the issue usually emerges from the *Theaetetus*, where the philosopher of the digression actually uses the expression (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ, 176b1), Diotima's religious ascent has evident similarities: she describes the pinnacle as divine (τὸ θεῖον καλὸν, *Symposium* 211e4) and the climber, "when he has given birth to and nurtured true virtue," as "loved by the gods" and as having such immortality as a human being can have (212a5–7). Both the philosopher of the digression and Diotima's climber represent idealizations — neither Socrates, nor Plato, nor any embodied philosopher. The climber eschews what is human, "seeing beauty itself, pure, clean, unmixed, and not contaminated with things like flesh, and colour, and much other mortal nonsense" (*Symposium* 211e1–4, φλυαρίας at e3), and the philosopher of the digression eschews what humans value — gossip, political power, wealth, and breeding (*Theaetetus* 174d3–175b4). This raises the question whether any flesh-and-blood philosopher — Socrates, or Plato, or any one of us — experience erotic longing for *permanent* intellectual intercourse with the forms — which sounds more like a mystical experience or religious rapture than anything related to philosophy. Diotima gives us what we expect from an expert in mystery religion: the good as piety, the good life as the ascetic life, communion, contemplating rather than doing.

One might argue, however, that Diotima specifies a productive outcome beyond the vision itself and, in one sense, she does: "he will succeed in bringing to birth, not phantoms (εἶδωλα) of virtue ... but true virtue, because he is grasping the truth" (*Symposium* 212a4–5).²⁵ There is a literature urging that we take virtue to be knowledge, which seems particularly appropriate when, as in this case, one is grasping truth. The most sympathetic version of the claim I can manage would be that the ultimate vision of beauty enables the initiate to infer the implications of the form, much as having an unhypothetical first principle would be useful in revisiting knowledge one previously grasped only hypothetically. As I argue below, there is better reason to suppose that, as Diotima suspected (209e5–210a2), Socrates did not follow her to be initiated into the higher mysteries, into her version of the permanent possession of the beautiful and the good. He was a philosopher — not a mystic, a magician, a prophet, or a priest. Diotima's domain, "sacrifices, rites, spells, and the whole realm of the seer and of magic" (202e7–203a1), is not the domain of philosophy. As the philosopher of the digression is not Socrates, the Socrates of the *Symposium* is everywhere and nowhere on Diotima's ladder of love — as Ruby Blondell has argued in telling detail.²⁶

²⁴ See Sedley 1999 and Annas 1999: ch. 3 for ancient attributions of the view to Plato; and Gerson 2005: ch. 8 who shows why Neoplatonists (so-called) attributed the view to both Plato and Aristotle.

²⁵ I thank Henry Dyson for this argument and for sending me back to Patterson 1993.

²⁶ For the digression in *Theaetetus*, see Blondell 2002: 251–313, especially 289–300; and her 2006 for the *Symposium*.

2.1 *The Examined Life*. Both Socrates and Plato chose to conduct their lives as engaged philosophers, guiding actual human beings where they had the opportunity to do so, and creating further opportunities when they could. Take the account of the psyche provided in §1 as a starting point. A human being — nurtured and loved in infancy and childhood by caregivers who had the inclinations and information required to rear a child in good health and happiness — is a human being with fellow-feeling, empathy and concern with the *lives* of others, especially others in the local environment. Training and education in rhetoric, mathematics, mystery religion, and philosophy do not remove these profound effects of early childhood on the psyche.²⁷ One can describe a *god* so ethereally — or the philosopher of the digression, or Diotima’s initiate into the higher mysteries — but if a psyche has developed in relation to the good, then amputation of diseased limbs is specifically the *wrong* metaphor for abandoning the *healthy* objects of one’s desires (*logoi*, youths, et al.). Yes, the economic model of the psyche implies that the exertion of the intellect toward one objective results in diminished exertion toward other objectives, but — let’s get real — the most productive exertion of the intellect, dialectic, requires a great variety of *other* objects of desire, beginning with air and gravity, and including other human beings, along with thinking. Life itself is impossible on intellect alone. In the *Symposium*, where personal immortality is denied (206e7–8, 207d1–2), the philosopher’s death is the personal *end of the story*. Thus it is no wonder that Socrates and Plato chose to live examined lives.

How should a human being live?²⁸ Socrates says “the unexamined life at not worth living for a human being” (*Apology* 38a6: ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ),²⁹ but Diotima says, “life is worth living for a human being, in contemplation of beauty itself” (*Symposium* 211d1–3: τοῦ βίου...βιωτὸν ἀνθρώπῳ, θεωμένῳ αὐτὸ καλόν).³⁰ These are not compatible because no one’s *life*, no matter how beautiful and good, is the eternal form of beauty. Well, on the one hand, but perhaps one should contemplate those things that are is beautiful and good *in one’s life* because they are expressions of beauty and the good. After all, Socrates doesn’t say, Tell me, Charmides, what is intemperance? Perhaps. On the other hand, what is examined in the dialogues is all manner of good and bad instances as the characters make their way toward deeper understanding of some particular virtue. If one contemplates only the good, appar-

²⁷ Brown 2004: 286 develops this point in relation to the higher education of the guardians in *Republic* 7, an overlay, but not a replacement of, what they learned in the description of *Republic* 2–3.

²⁸ Reeve 2007: §3 has identified a cache of verbal and situational parallels between Socrates’ early speech in the *Apology* (17a–c) and his preamble to his encomium in the *Symposium* (198b–199b). I am about to add another (noted in passing at Nails 2006: 193n40), though it occurs later. Reeve adds a titillating final parallel between “whatever occupies Socrates on the road to Agathon’s” and “the aporetic awareness of the absence of knowledge that distinguishes Socrates’ ‘human wisdom’ from the ‘more than human wisdom’ claimed by the sophists (*Apology* 20c4–e8).” The *Apology* passage suggests a different parallel to me: “Well now, most wise Diotima: is what you say really true? Like an accomplished sophist, she said ‘you can be sure of that’” (*Symposium* 208b8–c1). In any case, I trust that, because the parallel I emphasize is not an isolated one, there is added reason to suppose that parallels between the two works are deliberate.

²⁹ Kraut 2006: 231 argues for scrapping the standard translation and adopting instead “no human being should live an unexamined life.” The parallel for Diotima would be something like “a human being should live contemplating beauty.” The incompatibility that troubles me would still stand, however.

³⁰ Alcibiades echoes the remark at 215e6–7, saying of his experiences with Socrates, “I was frequently reduced to thinking that it wasn’t worth my living, in the condition I’m in.”

ently, the dialectical process cannot take place.

The evidence of how Socrates lived his own life would seem to support the claims of the examined life: openly and constantly questioning others — even the poor, women, and old men (215d2–5) — and encouraging them to care for their psyches, while denying he was wise. Yet his periods of oblivion (175a7–b3, 220c3–d5), his *daimonion*, and parts of Alcibiades’ description of Socrates — imperviousness to winter cold, alcohol, fear, and the wiles of the young Alcibiades — might make one think him unworldly wise, a sage. The latter view would play havoc with the texts, however, because we would need to imagine a Socrates seeking *permanent* possession of something (the beautiful and the good) he already possessed intermittently due to his initiation, despite his protests that he didn’t have the knowledge he helped others to acquire. It is difficult to imagine what would motivate Plato’s Socrates to spend so much energy maintaining so seamless a deception. The conceit of the dialogue is that, as a young man, Socrates was persuaded by Diotima’s speech (212b1–3); perhaps the goal, however impossible, served its purpose so well that he later sought to motivate others with it, and Plato later did likewise. An advantage of taking the text in this straightforward way is that it implies neither failure nor pretense to lead the examined life.

F. M. Cornford (1949: 125), commenting on Diotima’s statement (209e5–210a2) that Socrates might not be able to ascend to the higher mysteries, says, “I incline to agree with those scholars who have seen in this sentence Plato’s intention to mark the limit reached by the philosophy of his master.” The implication, and it is not uncommon now, is that Plato saw *himself* as the contemplator of beauty and the other forms, saw himself as imitating the divine. Interestingly, this gives Plato a role in the long-running dispute over what motivates the philosopher-rulers of Kallipolis. Did Plato value his vision of the beautiful and the good well above the work he was impelled to do in the Academy? What could we then say about the nature of the necessity that accounts for *Plato’s* long academic life and his attempt to reform the tyranny in Sicily, especially since there is no one in Athens to play the role of city-founders, *forcing* Plato back down into the cave? I suggest that he was motivated, impelled, by knowledge and the same desire to lead an examined life that motivated Socrates. Plato, like Socrates it seems, was deeply determined to turn psyches toward the good, and no initiation into higher mysteries was required to generate that commitment.

An argument against my view that Socrates does not follow Diotima to pure contemplation of the beautiful and the good, i.e., is not initiated into the higher mysteries, is that Diotima — mystic, priestess, prophetess, and mystagogue — instructs young Socrates after *her* initiation into the higher mysteries, implying that Socrates could go on guiding young men after his.³¹ Socrates could go on “giving birth to the sorts of words ... that will make young men into better men” (210c2–3). That appears possible at first, but Diotima seems to block the option almost immediately afterwards when it becomes clear that making young men better was a *preliminary* stage, after which there is the initiate’s sudden (ἐξαιφνης, 210e4) vision of beauty it-

³¹ Rowe’s commentary on 210a6–7 takes Socrates’ initiation to be a philosophical one. On the other hand, he points to the conditional at 211e1, “if someone succeeded,” as evidence against simply assuming that anyone succeeds. *Phaedo* 69c–d on the philosopher mystics may perhaps be taken as a defense of the notion that Diotima was a philosopher. I pursue this issue from the question of where the tragedy of the *Symposium* lies in Nails 2006: 187–200.

self, when the life worth living for a human being (211d1–3), contemplation of beauty uncontaminated by the human distractions of previous stages, is reached.

There is another reason to doubt that we should view Diotima's exhibition as the sort of engaged philosophical commitment that Socrates and Plato showed throughout their lives: she plays the role of sage and instructor in the dialogue, *not* that of an elenctic guide. I concede that Socrates prepares us for his parallel to Diotima, soothing the confused Agathon: "I myself was saying to her other things of pretty much the very sort that Agathon was saying to me just now, that Love was a great god, and was of beautiful things; and she then set about examining me by means of the very arguments I was using with Agathon" (201e3–6). The content of Socrates' two conversations overlaps, but their form does not. Whereas Agathon asks not a single question of Socrates, Socrates turns Diotima's statements and questions into questions of his own fifteen times. Often, she simply gives him the answers he seeks; to some questions, however, she replies with long didactic speeches (203b1–204a6; 207c8–208b6; 208c1–212a7); sometimes she pummels Socrates with questions without waiting for any answer (four in a row at 207a5–c1, three in a row at the end, 211d8–212a7); and sometimes she answers her own rhetorical questions without a pause (208d2–e2). Diotima needs little encouragement to dissert: Socrates says, "If I could [answer you], Diotima ... I wouldn't be admiring you for your wisdom, and visiting you to learn just these very things" (206b5–6), so she obliges him. When Socrates cannot answer why unreasoning animals are strongly affected by love (207c2), she chides him, but when he protests, "But that's the very reason ... I've come to you — because I recognize that I need teachers," she immediately sets off on twenty-eight more lines — "like an accomplished sophist" (208c1). This is not at all like Socrates' conversation with Agathon. In fact, from Diotima's behavior at argument, one might be reminded that Agathon wanted Socrates to recline beside him, prompting Socrates to say, "It would be a good thing, Agathon, if wisdom were the kind of thing that flowed from what is fuller into what is emptier" (175d4–6). Unlike Plato's Socrates, Diotima has a kind of wisdom, and employs a didactic method, that make it very difficult to see her as illustrating someone's living in contemplation of beauty while also leading the examined life of the philosopher.

A young Socrates, however, might nevertheless have been dazzled and motivated by the prospect of such a permanent state of the psyche. If I suspend disbelief momentarily, and imagine his youthful desire to be initiated into the higher mysteries, I am also driven to imagine his asking just how essential it is to proceed exactly "in order and in the correct way" (210e3; cf. 211b6) stipulated by Diotima. One consideration is that she herself could not have been initiated by the procedure she recommends since *paiderastia* is not available to women. On the other hand, one cannot be a mystagogue without having been initiated. Perhaps it is best not to be too literal. For one thing, the prospect of pure communion with forms might seem possible from a great distance, the distance of youth perhaps; but Socrates may have found later that the more one pursues such a goal, the more it recedes, and the more one recognizes one's own inescapable humanity and specificity. One's knowledge is shed like one's hair and skin; but that is no reason not to use the beautiful and the good to attract others into improving their psyches.

2.2 *The Ultimate Object of Desire: the Erotic Longing of the Knower for the Known.* The second sense

in which I see the mystagogue's description of the psyche to be inadequate is in her neglect of what is unique to philosophy. Although it is unusual now to write of philosophers as if they differ in any way from other human beings, Plato regularly distinguished philosophers from others, most especially in his passages of ascent.³² Philosophy is distinct from other disciplines in at least three ways: (a) in the nature of the reflecting subject, (b) in the nature of the object reflected on, and (c) in the nature of philosophical reflection itself.

(a) What characterizes the reflecting subject as a philosopher is the insatiable desire for truths lying beyond the subject's grasp, hence *love* of wisdom; in Plato's dialogues, philosophers are not sages (*Symposium* 203e5–204b5).³³ Certainties or facts, once attained, are quickly assigned to some other discipline (physics, psychology, theory of x); they cease to motivate and lose their attractiveness compared to what is still out of reach; at best, facts are rungs to what remains attractive. The reflecting subject's desire is so unique to the philosophical endeavor that Alcibiades calls it madness (218b3–4),³⁴ and it has been called worse. If the developmental model of the psyche is correct, then Plato's psyche-as-stream metaphor would have it that philosophical practice increases philosophical success which, in turn, has the double effect of draining energy from the pursuit of other goals while honing the intellect of the reflecting subject, making it gradually more suitable for its pursuit of its object (at least until one reaches the age when the slipping away of "pieces of knowledge" begins to require returning to one's earlier studies).

(b) The ultimate object of philosophical reflection is nothing less than timeless being itself in its causal relation to everything good, bad, and neither good nor bad, including formal knowledge and truth — the nature of nature most fundamentally.³⁵ The ultimate object of the philosopher's erotic longing is not merely the beautiful and the good, as Diotima instructs, but the fundamental, unhypothetical first principle of all (*not* identical to the good for a host of reasons inappropriate to the present context).³⁶ The philosopher's interest in proximate objects — whether physical, mathematical, human, fictional, or other — is in their actual, not their merely apparent, natures, i.e., in their structure, their formal principles;³⁷ the philosopher has no interest in making predictions à la cave dwellers. This is no less true of the contemporary philosopher of x (e.g., art, medicine, mathematics, physics) than of the metaphysician; each seeks as universal and fundamental an understanding of its object as possible, not just what is *good* about the object.³⁸

(c) The relationship between the reflecting subject and the ultimate objects of reflection, clearest in Plato's account of the divided line in the *Republic* (6.509d6–511e5), is knowledge gained through dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι, 511b3). It is with the power (δυνάμις) of dialectic

³² *Symposium* 204b4–5, *Republic* 5–7, and *Phaedrus* 248d2–4, 248e5–249d3.

³³ *Republic* 6.485a10–b3, 494a3, 496a11–497b7, et al.

³⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 249d4–250b2.

³⁵ *Republic* 6.490a8–b7, et al.

³⁶ These include textual arguments based on passages in *Republic* that distinguish the unhypothetical first principle of all from the good, passages that distinguish the good from the bad, problems with the coherence of the privation model of the good, et al.

³⁷ See *Symposium* 205e3 where x must be good (ἀγαθὸν ὄν), and more explicitly at *Republic* 6.505d5–506a2.

³⁸ More accurately, the philosopher's interest in any object is in its instantiation or expression of forms; but making that case would require more elaboration than is possible in this context.

that one grasps forms and the unhypothetical first principle of all, after which one is warranted to proceed deductively.³⁹ The process or method that yields this apprehension is itself called ‘dialectic’ (διαλεκτική).⁴⁰ Cognates of the term διαλέγω, conveying its general sense of ‘converse’ or ‘discuss’, imply two participants. This would appear to advise the introduction of a midwife or partner as a fourth essential component in philosophy. Elsewhere in the dialogues, a second person, though important to philosophical progress, is not strictly necessary:⁴¹ insofar as the *psychê* is capable of conversing with itself, suggested at both *Theaetetus* 189e6–7 and *Sophist* 263e3–5, there are to that extent two voices already. I have doubts about the possibility of real progress without other human beings. For any Ramanujan — unschooled, a genius who conceived two thousand years of western mathematics, developed a notation to express it, and pushed mathematics beyond itself with new proofs — there had also to be a G. H. Hardy to play midwife.

If I have failed to distinguish philosophy from other disciplines convincingly, then I would default to the claim that, in our role as educators of youths who have already determined that they will pursue philosophy, we may naturally speak and write of what is distinct to philosophers.

3. The Unified Psyche or Tripartition?

To explain human motivation satisfactorily for the entire lifetime of a human being, from infancy to old age, I have tried to show that Plato’s rich developmental account of the psyche in the *Symposium* is required, and I have suggested that the unified psyche, which desires happiness, pursues a wide variety of proximate objects of desire while leaving intact the dictum that no one does wrong voluntarily. Psychic conflict develops as soon as Dixie, say, wants both to binge on pudding and to refrain for her better health. Between the unified psyche, for which the stream of *Republic* 6 is so apt a metaphor, and the tripartite psyche of *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and other parts of the *Republic*, tension arises because aspects of the unified psyche cannot *be*, though they may *seem*, independent of one another: in the developmental model, all desires originate from exactly the same reservoir of psychic energy,⁴² and they naturally adapt to a vast array of available objects. However, because adult human beings can accurately describe the psyche’s appetite and its rationality without overlap, or because they can *distinguish* the psyche’s solving (as in solving for x) from its striving (as in striving to win), they then make the mistake of inferring that these are in fact three separate and independent psychic functions. I will sketch my reasons to think the tripartite psyche has *already* been applied beyond its own limitations, as Plato presented them, and then suggest a compromise.

³⁹ *Republic* 6.511b1–c5; cf. *Parmenides* where the old philosopher warns the young pup that failure to accept forms, despite a host of objections, would completely destroy the power of dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν, 135b5–c3).

⁴⁰ Cf. *Republic* 7.531c9–537c7, *Meno* 75d2–7, *Theaetetus* 167e1–168a2, and *Philebus* 16c5–17a5.

⁴¹ Weiss (2001: 151) takes *Meno* 89e1–2 and 96c1 and 8 to be calling “attention to the possibility that there might indeed be learners without teachers.”

⁴² As late as 1938, Freud wrote of “the great reservoir, from which libidinal cathexes are sent out to objects and into which they are also once more withdrawn” (1940: SE 23, 150); echoing, “All through the subject’s life the ego remains the great reservoir of the libido, from which object-cathexes are sent out and into which the libido can stream back again from the objects” (1925b: SE 20, 56).

3.1 *Tribulations of Tripartition.* The tripartite psyche of the *Republic* is like a snapshot of a mature but simple psyche, less inclusive and explanatory than Diotima's adolescence-to-middle-age account, and still less inclusive than Eryximachus' *omni-erôs*. Its role in the *Republic* is appropriately elaborated in the wings of the dialogue where the issues are education, social-political theory, and how to *live*: in the center of the *Republic*, when the conversation turns metaphysical, a different image is needed, and the psyche-as-stream metaphor is introduced (6.485d6–8). I suspect that the partition of the psyche into precisely three aspects was governed by the desirability of the corresponding three occupational groups of the *polis*, as many have thought before me. Because *Timaeus* is notionally set immediately after the conversation of the *Republic*,⁴³ I would argue further that it constitutes literary justice for Plato to partition the cosmos into three parts in parallel to the *Republic's* three occupational groups and three parts of the psyche. Thus, arguments based on the supposed order of composition of the dialogues, citing tripartition in *Timaeus*, are not dispositive.

While it is uncontroversial that a “late” group of dialogues edited by a single hand includes *Timaeus*, and *Timaeus* includes a tripartite psyche, consider the *Laws*, the last of the dialogues. Its concern is primarily with human interactions, recurring to the homogeneous conception of the psyche, and maintaining that “no one errs voluntarily” (*Laws* 9.860c–861d). Moreover, the *Laws* has elaborate instructions on the care of infants, early childhood education, and the special needs of the elderly — emphasizing developmental aspects of the psyche.

In the argument of *Republic* 4, the psyche refuses “to do or suffer opposites at the same time in respect to the same thing and relative to the same thing” (4.436b9–10); if it did, the psyche would be more than one. Leontius (4.439b–440a) wants and does not want to look at the corpses he encounters, so his psyche is in conflict, suffering opposites at the same time ..., so psyches have parts. The famous example is riveting, but it does not settle the matter. A developmental account would trace the origin of Leontius' erotic attraction to young men pale as death and the origin of his shame and revulsion at his own desire to stare at corpses. Different influences on a psyche result in different manifestations of desire without the need to claim actual separation of aspects. Besides, Socrates had already told Glaucon (4.435c–d) that they would be *unable* to determine whether the psyche has three parts with the methods they were using, though they soldiered on. According to the developmental account, we have many conscious and unconscious desires,⁴⁴ but it is when we attend to two at the same time that we sometimes discover in ourselves inconsistencies and contradictions that have long been unconscious — not so different from using the elenchus to uncover inconsistencies among our beliefs of which we were previously unaware. The primitive, unconscious psyche is not rational, and while our brute impulses can be trained, that is a matter only belatedly up to us; in

⁴³ I elide the fraught issues of the two-scroll proto-*Republic* here (see Nails 1995: 116–122) as I elided the fraught issues of the *Republic's* pedimental architecture above. Ausland (2000: 195–198), characteristically, provides an excellent analysis of the textual issues in the context of the history of scholarship. For textual correlations, *Republic* 2.369b5–5.466d5, he recommends August Boeckh, *Specimen editionis Timaei Platonis dialogi* (Heidelberg: Mohr, 1807) [= *Kleine Schriften* III, 181–203], 14–25; G. F. Rettig, *Prolegomena ad Platonis Republicam* (Bern: Huber, 1845), 3–7; et al.

⁴⁴ Kamtekar 2006: 176 brings an important passage to my attention: “our soul teems with countless results of opposition of this sort, occurring at the same time” (10.603d5–7).

the meanwhile, life lays down layers of experience that have profound effects later.

A further difficulty emerges in *Republic* 4: the whole argument of 4.436b–440a implies further divisions among the parts. Socrates suggests as much himself when he later mentions the three parts of the psyche and any “other terms in between” (4.443d7–8). The many appetites are themselves often in conflict: Albin wakes up in the night and feels thirsty, but his desire for sleep overcomes his thirstiness. Bea craves the chocolate but she craves the vanilla too. Belle loves Albus but she also loves Archie. Appetitive desires in conflict with one another do not prompt us to say that each is a different aspect of the psyche. When Socrates pursues What is x? to both F and not-F, the respondent’s experience is *aporia*, conflict in the reasoning part of the psyche. That the psyche can converse with itself is yet more Platonic evidence that the reasoning aspect too can be further divided. Even the most elusive aspect of the psyche, spiritedness (which seems to disappear by the end of the *Republic*) shows divisions: Abe wants to win the race and is tempted in anger to trip his opponent, but he also wants honor for winning — which is incompatible with cheating. The tripartite conception has proved extraordinarily useful pedagogically, but Plato appears to have seen its fault lines all along.

3.2 *Compromise*. Because the tripartite psyche is so powerful and useful an analogy for familiar aspects of adult life, and because it has played so much greater a role in the literature on Plato’s moral psychology than the developmental model of the *Symposium*, I want also to suggest how it could appropriately be brought within the compass of the unified developmental psyche. An apparent incompatibility between the tripartite psyche and the unified one can be reconciled. We noted earlier that the Platonic-Freudian economic model of the psyche admits three channels into which the stream of psychic energy flows. It doesn’t *matter* how many such channels there are, so long as all originate from *erôs*, the same vast sea of psychic energy, and so long as they vary proportionately. According to the metaphor, if the stream of psychic energy flows into the erotic reservoir and flows from there into two or twenty different channels, the capacities of which vary in proportion to one another, then the psyche is “partitioned.” When Plato considers mature persons, in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*,⁴⁵ he addresses the vicissitudes of a partitioned psyche.⁴⁶

* * *

⁴⁵ No one is obliged to read the following footnote that I abridge from Chis Kelly’s 5 February 2008 blog, compliments of the ever-vigilant Ruby Blondell (but it does address tripartition). It seems that Mitt Romney said in 1994, “It was not my desire to go off and serve in Vietnam,” but in 2007, “I longed ... to actually be in Vietnam.” Kelly explains how tripartition saves Romney from contradiction: “Now, when the charioteer (Mitt Romney) beholds the vision of love (Vietnam), and has his whole soul warmed through sense, and is full of the prickings and ticklings of desire, the obedient steed (*thumos*, the desire to go somewhere other than Vietnam) then as always under the government of shame, refrains from leaping on the beloved; but the other (*epithumetikon*, the longing to be “in the shit”), heedless of the pricks and of the blows of the whip, plunges and runs away, giving all manner of trouble to his companion and the charioteer, whom he forces to approach the beloved and remember the joys of love.” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/_85005.html>, accessed 6 February 2008.

⁴⁶ Adjustments here and there in the details might still be made. For example, Price (1990: 254) holds that, assuming channels of a stream, “not all human desires flow in some way towards the divine, but most can be diverted to flow along the right course.”

I take the unhypothetical first principle of all to be the ultimate object of erotic desire for the philosopher, far surpassing human concerns such as political theory, ethics, education, and psychology; the unhypothetical principle is, at the same time, the very condition for those subjects and for everything else as well — not just the good things. The *erôs* of the philosopher is aim-inhibited *unless* it apprehends the ultimate object of knowledge, the most comprehensive metaphysical theory of all, the *cause* of the form of the good and the form of the beautiful, *and* the cause of the form of the bad and the form of the ugly, the theory without which there would be no basis for the Platonic moral psychology. Insofar as the philosopher settles for mere communion with the good and the beautiful, her *erôs* is aim-inhibited and she cannot be fully happy.

Debra Nails
Michigan State University

Appendix: Who Speaks for Plato?

In the background, the question has often enough been posed, Who speaks for Plato in the *Symposium*?⁴⁷ The world has not been short of answers: all the characters do, or Socrates does, or Diotima does — all with complications.

If all the characters speak for Plato, then either they all contribute important points (a1) to Plato's own view⁴⁸ or, as I prefer, (a2) to the views Plato deems it important to reflect on seriously and to subject to critical discussion.⁴⁹

If Socrates speaks for Plato, it is in one of four ways: perhaps (b1) in his whole speech beginning with his dialectical exchange with Agathon, when Socrates says he is willing to speak the truth (199a8–b2), to the end of Diotima's speech, when Socrates says he is persuaded (212b1–5). The *Symposium* is a “middle” dialogue, according to this unrefined developmentalist view, so the character Socrates *just does* give the mature Plato's views; besides, Socrates' comment that he earlier held Agathon's views himself gives dramatic continuity to the two parts of Socrates' speech. Another possibility is that Socrates speaks for Plato (b2) only when he converses with Agathon, on the view that Plato continues to see uses for the elenchus even into dialogues uncontroversially considered late, e.g., *Philebus*.

Despite Socrates' remark about truth and persuasion, however, one may take Socrates' remark that Agathon can easily argue against Socrates, but not against the truth (201c8–9) as a matched bookend to Socrates' earlier profession that he is willing to tell the truth, marking the *division* between Plato's Socrates and Plato's Socrates' Diotima at that point. In that case, (b3) Socrates may speak for Plato in his report of Diotima's speech *only*, a position often difficult to distinguish in the literature from (c1) Diotima speaks for Plato. According to Vlastos's Thesis III (1991: 48), Socrates_e (corresponding to early Plato) seeks knowledge only elenctically; elenchus is not supposed to appear in “middle” dialogues such as *Symposium* because Plato had lost faith in the method (117). Thus “Plato creates new voices,” Diotima and Parmenides, “to supersede that of Socrates *pro tem*” (73–74, 117n50). Reeve (2006: 300) argues similarly that when Diotima is teaching Socrates the art of love, she is teaching him Platonism; “what the *elenchus* needs if it is to satisfy rather than frustrate love, in other words, is the theory of Platonic Forms.”⁵⁰ There is also the view that (b4/c2) Socrates speaks for Plato in his report of the *end* of Diotima's speech, from when she tells Socrates she doesn't know whether he is capable of initiation into the higher mysteries. This was the view of Cornford we noted in §2.1, and it would also appear to be the position of those who take Plato's own aim to be $\delta\mu\omega\iota\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$.

The difficulty of distinguishing (b3) from (c1) and (b4) from (c2) is brought about in part by the problem of which part of Diotima's speech, if not all of it, better fits Socrates him-

⁴⁷ Scott and Welton 2000, arguing that “taking a character as Plato's mouthpiece often does very little to help understand a Platonic dialogue,” provide a number of references to the earlier literature that I do not.

⁴⁸ A recent contribution to the long debate on this topic, arguing for continuity among the dialogue's speeches, is Sheffield 2006b, citing previous approaches to the question. Some additional points are made in Sheffield 2006a, chapter 2, §5.

⁴⁹ Nails 1995: 213–235.

⁵⁰ Reeve 1992: 101 is succinct: “Diotima is Plato in disguise.”

self — propaedeutic to who speaks for Plato. Sheffield (2001: 9–11), for example, argues that “the Socrates of the *Apology* is better identified, in many respects with the LHM [lover of the higher mysteries], whereas the LLM [lover of the lower mysteries] is reminiscent of those people with a reputation for wisdom whom Socrates examines.” In Sheffield’s view, while Diotima’s doubts about Socrates’ ability to be initiated into the higher mysteries (209e5) were applicable when Socrates was young, as Agathon is at the time of the interior dialogue, the mature Socrates became expert in erotic matters, as he says (177d7–e1).⁵¹ He later disowns his earlier remark (198c6–d3), but perhaps ironically.

What with all the pronoun issues facing anyone writing philosophy in this era, it is blissfully easier to write that *Diotima* says something and then to use feminine pronouns without confusion than to labor over references to Socrates or Plato’s Socrates or Socrates’ Diotima or Plato’s Socrates’ Diotima — easily explaining modern authors’ diction. What is amusing is the insistence with which Diotima is so often claimed to be a *pure* fiction, Plato’s creation, by authors who have taken the rhetorical easy road.⁵² Various characters from the Platonic dialogues were dead before Plato was born, though his accounts of the Athenians and famous others are corroborated historically. If the historical Socrates ever *really* mentioned learning from men and women, priests and priestesses (*Meno* 81a5–b1) or put names to any of them, would it be so very surprising that his young associates took note of it? The familiar argument that Diotima could not in the late 440s have alluded (205d10–e5) to a speech that Aristophanes didn’t make until 416 misses Kenneth Dover’s (1966) point: Aristophanes was dressing up a folk tale, not inventing original material. Aristophanes had, after all, been persistently critical of Socrates (423, ±418, 414, and 405), earning a mention in Socrates’ speech before his jury; so perhaps Plato’s *Symposium* gives Aristophanes a mild comeuppance.⁵³

⁵¹ Sedley cautions, “Diotima’s position should not too readily be assumed to be identical to Plato’s view at the time of writing” (1999: 310n2).

⁵² Ausland (2000: 186n11) points out that “Diotima’s fictionality is a modern development,” citing ancient writers (testimonia in *Platonis Symposium*, ed. Otto Jahn, 2nd edn., Bonn: Marcum, 1875, 16–18); F. A. Wolf, *Platons Gastmahl*, Leipzig: Schwickert, 1782, xlvi (2nd edn. [1828], lxiv); and Plato’s nineteenth century prosopographer, G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Prosopographia Platonica*, Leiden: Hazenberg, 1823, 125.

⁵³ A longer version of this paper was presented to the Ancient Circle at Michigan State University in January 2008. I am grateful for comments on that occasion from Darci Doll, Henry Dyson, Terry Echterling, William Levitan, Jason Mask, and Chet McLeskey; and later from Mary Tjiattas. At the wonderfully organized and conducted conference for which the paper was originally intended, I benefited especially from Connie Meinwald’s formal comments, Jonathan Lear’s informal ones, and the informed discussion of Richard Kraut’s students and the participants and audience at large. Sara Ahbel-Rappe later gave the paper a thorough going-over that led to further improvements.

Works Cited

- Allen, R. E., trans. 2006. *Plato: The Republic*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Annas, Julia. 1999. *Platonic Ethics: Old and New*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ausland, Hayden W. 2000. "Who Speaks for Whom in the *Timaeus-Critias*?" In Gerald A. Press, ed., *Who Speaks for Plato?*, 183–198. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.
- Blondell, Ruby. 2002. *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2006. "Where is Socrates on the 'Ladder of Love'?" In Leshner et al., 147–178.
- Brown, Eric. 2004. "Minding the Gap in Plato's *Republic*," *Philosophical Studies* 117: 275–302.
- Cooper, John M., ed. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing.
- Cornford, F. M. 1949. "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*." In W. K. C. Guthrie, ed., *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted in Gregory Vlastos, ed., *Plato II: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 119–131. Citations in the text are from the reprint.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1911. *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*. Standard Edition (SE) 12, 213–226.
- . 1915. *The Unconscious*. SE 14, 159–215.
- . 1920. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Preface to the Fourth Edition. SE 7, 123–245.
- . 1925a [1924]. *The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis*. SE 19, 211–224.
- . 1925b [1924]. *An Autobiographical Study*. SE 20, 1–74.
- . 1940 [1938]. *An Outline of Psycho-analysis*. SE 23, 139–207.
- Gerson, Lloyd P. 2005. *Aristotle and Other Platonists*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kamtekar, Rachana. 2006. "Plato on the Attribution of Conative Attitudes," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 88, 127–162.
- Kraut, Richard. 2006. "The Examined Life." In Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar, eds. *A Companion to Socrates*, 228–242. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Lear, Gabriel Richardson. 2006. "Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's *Symposium*." In Leshner et al., 96–123.
- Leshner, J. H., Debra Nails, and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, eds., 2006. *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- McPherran, Mark L. 2006. "Medicine, Magic, and Religion in Plato's *Symposium*." In Leshner et al., 71–95.
- Nails, Debra. 1995. *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- . 2006. "Tragedy Off-Stage." In Leshner et al., 179–207.
- Patterson, Richard. 1993. "The Ascent in Plato's *Symposium*." In John J. Cleary, ed., *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* (1991) 7, 193–214. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Price, A. W. 1990. "Plato and Freud." In Christopher Gill, ed., *The Person and the Human Mind*, 247–279. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Reeve, C. D. C. 1992. "Telling the Truth about Love: Plato's *Symposium*," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 8, 89–114.
- . 2006. "Plato on Eros and Friendship." In Hugh H. Benson ed., *A Companion to Plato*, 294–

307. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- . 2007 [2004]. “Plato on Friendship and Love,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ed. Edward N. Zalta, url <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-friendship/>>.
- Rowe, Christopher J., trans. 1988. *Plato: Phaedrus*. Second edition. Warminster: Oxbow.
- . 1998a. *Plato: Symposium*. Warminster: Oxbow.
- Rowe, Christopher J. 1998b. “Socrates and Diotima: Eros, Immortality, and Creativity.” In John J. Cleary and Gary M. Gurtler, eds., *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1998), 239–259. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Scott, Gary Alan, and William A. Welton. 2000. “Eros as Messenger in Diotima’s Teaching.” In Gerald A. Press, ed., *Who Speaks for Plato?*, 147–159. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.
- Sedley, David. 1999. “The Ideal of Godlikeness.” In Gail Fine, ed., *Plato 2. Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, 309–328. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Sheffield, Frisbee C. C. 2001. “Psychic Pregnancy and Platonic Epistemology,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 20, 1–33.
- . 2006a. *Plato’s Symposium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2006b. “The Role of the Earlier Speeches in the *Symposium*: Plato’s Endoxic Method?” In Leshner et al., 23–46.
- Slings, S. R. 2003. *Platonis: Rempublicam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Weiss, Roslyn. 2001. *Virtue in the Cave: Moral Inquiry in Plato’s Meno*. New York: Oxford University Press.