# *Free to Love?*:

# Unearthing Plato's Conception of Free Will in Relation to Love

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ἠδ᾽ Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι,
λυσιμελής, πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ἀνθρώπων
δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν.

And Eros [Love], who is most beautiful of gods immortal,
the limb-loosener, who in the breasts of all gods and men,
subdues their reason and prudent counsel.[1]

- Hesiod, *Theogony* 120-122

[1] Translation taken from Nehamas and Woodruff 1995, p.88., with slight variation.

***Abstract***

This thesis will attempt to explore the relationship between free will and *erōs* [ἔρως] within a Platonic context. Love has conventionally been characterized as something that happens to you, like an affliction of sorts, rather than as something that one rationally chooses to pursue or subject themselves to. I think the phrase 'falling in love' captures it to some degree: when we fall, it is an involuntary action, it can be scary, fast and somewhat exhilarating. One may ask: could I really have prevented the fall if I were more careful, more attentive to my surroundings, and sheltered myself from whatever unexpected thing prompted the fall? In other words: are we free to love, or as it were, not to love? *This line of thought brings to the surface a question concerning the underlying relationship between love and reason, and further, makes one question the nature of the relation that love has to freedom qua being related to reason*. By surveying the theory of the tripartite soul as offered in the *Republic* and overlapping this account with Gary Watson's account of free will as presented in his seminal paper 'Free Agency', I will endeavour to make use of Watson's view as a kind of rational reconstruction of a Platonic understanding of free will on the basis of tripartition and the supremacy of the rational part [λογιστικόν] of the soul [ψυχή] which results in self-mastery or self-rule. After providing an overview of the nature of love as presented in the *Phaedrus* during the Palinode (243e-257b), I will analyze whether there is any room for freedom as understood in the way of Platonic self-mastery. Does *erōs* fundamentally undermine a kind of Platonic freedom of the will? *Delving into this inquiry of Platonic psychology in relation to free will allows for the unearthing of the interesting implication that erōs is actually an activity of reason and not a threat to it.*

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FREE TO LOVE?

***Introduction***

This thesis will attempt to explore the relationship between two concepts as interpreted within the context of Plato's *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*: free will and love [*erōs*].[2] At first glance, the former may seem to be an unlikely theme within the Platonic tradition, while the latter might be thought of as an unexpected pairing. While Plato never wrote his own explicit account of free will,[3] and is too often taken to entirely forsake liberal freedoms in his construction of an ideal state [*Καλλίπολις*],[4] it has been recognized by scholars[5] that the theory of the tripartite soul holds the potential to produce such an account if one only knows where to look. In the case of *erōs*, I am specifically concerned with an exploration of the position of *personal love*[6] within the Platonic context. When the subject of love [*erōs*] rears its head in conventional discussion, it is often accompanied by aphorisms which generally characterize it to be in tension with rationality. Plato himself defines *erōs* as an 'unreasoning' [ἄνευ λόγου],[7] driving force towards beauty [καλόν][8] and all those things which instantiate its Form [εἶδος][9] (*Phaed*.238b-c).[10] It seems as though, in some strong sense, we do not fall in love of our own free will, but are rather overwhelmed by it, thereby losing some command over our own rational

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[2] *έρως*: love; passionate love; desire for a thing. Not limited to sexual desire; the object of *erōs* does not have to be individuals, but could include for example a love of learning (See Ludwig 2007, p.202, n.1).

[3] For an overview of the notion of free will and its development in classical thought see, Frede 2011; Dihle 1982.

[4] *Kallipolis*: ideal city; beautiful city. For critiques of Plato's apparent denouncement of liberal freedoms, see Crossman 1939; Popper 1966; Klosko 2006, p.156 ff. provides a relatively more temperate critique. For a defence of Plato, see Levinson 1953.

[5] See Neely 1974, p.41-45, esp.44; Watson 1975, p.207-210, esp.209; Stalley 1998; Hecht 2014.

[6] As Renaut 2013, p.95 characterizes it.

[7] *Aneu logou*: without reason.

[8] *Kalon*: beautiful; fine; admirable.

[9] *Eidos*: shape, image, form, kind. Here used specifically in its more loaded sense of Platonic Ideal Forms.

[10] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are from those presented in J. Cooper (ed.), *The Complete Works of Plato* (Indianapolis, 1997).

grounding in the process. Love, after all, is a kind of *madness* [μανία][11] (*Phaed.*251d-252b). It does not seem to be an instance of retaining and exercising self-mastery[12] in a way that is constitutive of the kind of freedom[13] that is arguably found within the just soul [ψυχή][14] as presented mainly in Book IV—and supplementarily drawing on Books VIII and IX, especially within section (i.iii)—of Plato's *Republic*.

This work will seek to unearth the relationship between a Platonic understanding of free will and *erōs* as presented in the *Phaedrus*.[15] Using Gary Watson's compatibilist approach to free will[16]—as set out in his paper 'Free Agency'[17]—as a kind of rational reconstruction of a Platonic view of free will on the basis of tripartition, I will ask whether the account of love as given in the *Phaedrus* during Socrates' second speech[18] (*Phaed.*243e-257b) adequately allows for freedom as understood in this way. Is the phenomenon of falling in love presented only as something that happens *to you* rather than coming from within? Does one's rational aspect [λογιστικόν]—the most important element of a Platonic understanding of free will—risk being undermined by the

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[11] *Mania*: madness; frenzy; mad passion. Discussion of the characterization of love as a kind of divine madness and its supposed tension with reason will follow in section (iii).

[12] Self-mastery in the sense of the presence of justice in the soul [ψυχή] where all the parts (rational [λογιστικόν], spirited [θυμοειδής], and appetitive [ἐπιθυμητικόν]) are rightly and harmoniously ordered, with reason at the helm (*Rep.*IV.442a, IV.443c-d).

[13] A 'freedom from internal constraints' as Hecht (2014, p.197) puts it.

[14] *Psuché*: the soul.

[15] Although both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* often accompany one another in examination of the topic of *erōs*, I chose to focus on the account of love as provided in the *Phaedrus* without deep examination of the *Symposium*. This is because the *Phaedrus* offers an account which is evidently informed by the theory of tripartition—a key aspect of this investigation—whereas the theory of tripartition does not seem to be obviously at work in the *Symposium*. See Sheffield 2012, p.211, 215 ff. For accounts arguing for the presence of the divided soul in the *Symposium*, see Hobbs 200, p.250 ff.; Nehamas 2007, p.6; Price 1990, p.89.

[16] Whether or not Watson succeeds in convincingly establishing his compatibilist view of free will on its own terms is a matter with which I am not too presently concerned. The incorporation of Watson's approach to the nature of free will in this paper is simply taken to be a suitable and convincing account of what Plato's own views would be in virtue of the tripartite soul.

[17] Watson, G. (1975), 'Free Agency', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 72(8) 205-20.

[18] Otherwise known as 'the Great Speech' or 'the Palinode' [παλινῳδία]. I have chosen to focus on the second speech because I take it to be putting forth Plato's own foundational view in relation to love. See Vlastos 1981; White 1990, p.396 n.2.

non-rational parts of the soul in the process? There are many moving parts within the account of love as presented in the *Phaedrus,* it draws on numerous complex concepts such as the tripartite soul, the Forms, the Good [Ἀγαθόν],[19] madness and so forth. I hope to distil these elements into an understanding of *erōs* that is compatible with the vision of Platonic free will that will hopefully become sufficiently comprehensible through its explication and development throughout this project. *Essentially, I am investigating where love fits into the theory of the tripartite soul and what relation it has to freedom qua being related to reason.* This exploration of Platonic psychology oriented towards a more modern understanding of free will, paired with an investigation into the nature of *erōs* as presented in the *Phaedrus,* will allow for the unearthing of the precise relationship between these two significant elements in human life. *I believe that this inquiry brings to light the interesting implication that erōs is actually not in tension with reason as is often believed, but is actually an activity of the rational part [λογιστικόν] of one's soul.*

This thesis will attempt to delve into the relationship between a derivatively Platonic understanding of free will and *erōs* and provide some potential explanations for the aforementioned questions and more. I will first (i) provide a brief overview of the theory of tripartition as presented in the *Republic*, with Book IV serving as the main area of focus. (ii) Gary Watson's account of free will as offered in his seminal article 'Free Agency' will then be explained and offered as an agreeably Platonic understanding of free will in light of tripartition. I will then (iii) explore and analyze the account of love given in the *Phaedrus* within Socrates'

[19] *agathon*: good; good in its kind. τό άγαθόν [*to agathon*]: the good (cf. Lat. *summum bonum*: the highest good; the ultimate good—usually in reference to the ultimate end or goal of all human action; usually conceived as that from which the values and priorities of 'the good life' are derived. See Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.IV.1095a; I.VII.1097a-1098a.

Palinode [παλινῳδία],[20] and examine whether the account of love as presented in the *Phaedrus* allows for the kind of Platonic freedom with which we are presently concerned.

### *(i) Tripartition of The Soul in The* Republic[21]

#### *(i.i) Construction of Καλλίπολις: Justice in the City*

The *Republic* mainly serves as an investigation into the nature of justice and injustice and how they each respectively shape one's soul (*Rep*. II.358b, 368c, etc.). After various fruitless attempts at discovering the nature of justice in the individual head on, Socrates suggests that the group change their method and instead examine the nature of justice in the *polis* [πόλις],[22] supposedly enlarging their target so as to more easily pin it down[23] (*Rep.*II.368d-369a, 434e-435b). Cities, it is said by Socrates, come into being due to our lack of self-sufficiency in meeting our basic needs (*Rep*.II.369b-c). Thus, the city is born out of necessity. Socrates then begins to set up the division of labours in the city by appealing to the assumed principles that (*a*) each individual has skills to which they are most naturally suited, and (*b*) the products of these skills are of higher quality when each individual who is naturally suited to performing them only focuses on the exercise of that one specific skill (*Rep*.II.369e-370c). Socrates and his interlocutors then proceed into a long discussion concerning the proper division of the citizens

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[20] *Palinodia*: a recantation. The second speech of Socrates in the *Phaedrus* is a recantation of his first speech which, in a more rhetorically meritorious fashion, agreed with Lysias' own speech in its condemnation of love and apparent distaste for lovers over non-lovers (*Phead*. 242c-244a). Socrates recants this view and offers a more positive image of love in his second speech so as not to cause any offence to Love, the son of Aphrodite (*Phaed*.242c-243b).

[21] I am not concerned in this section with arguing for the legitimacy or merits of positing a tripartite soul. In this paper I take it for granted that the soul is divided into rational, spirited, and appetitive parts. This section is simply concerned with briefly presenting the theory of tripartition in an attempt to lay the groundwork for section (ii) where I will overlap Watson's approach to free will with the Platonic tripartite soul.

[22] *Polis*: city-state. Used interchangeably with 'city'.

[23] Moline 1978, p.2-3, believes that it is an 'understatement' to say that the relation between *polis* and soul is merely analogous. On his view, the stakes for the soul, like the *polis*, to actually be made up of 'distinct and usually seditious agents' are high because the construction of the *polis* would have been a waste. For views considering the relation between city and soul as mere analogy see, Cornford 1912, p.264; Williams 1973, p.196-7.

into distinct classes based on their natural dispositions and come to the conclusion that the state is composed of three main classes: guardians, auxiliaries, and producers[24] (*Rep*.II.360b-427c).

The natural dispositions and relations between each class of citizen correspond to and fulfil what is required of a supposedly well founded and well-functioning city, that is, the four cardinal virtues of the *polis*: wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice (*Rep*.IV.427e). Wisdom is found in the small ruling class; those guardians who possess knowledge and can judge matters concerning the whole city and manage good relations both within itself and with other cities (*Rep*.IV.428b-429a). Courage is found in the auxiliary class which is able to preserve correct beliefs about what is to be feared, in accordance with the law (*Rep*.IV.429a-430c). Moderation is a holistic virtue which consists in the harmonious relationship between ruler and ruled. 'The desires of the inferior many[25] are controlled by the wisdom and desires of the superior few' (*Rep*.IV.430d-432a). Justice—also a holistic virtue—turns out to be when each individual of a certain natural disposition[26] harmoniously, willingly, and virtuously[27] performs their class function [ἔργον][28] (*Rep.* IV.433a-e 435b).

***(i.ii) From City to Soul: Justice in the Individual[29]***

Socrates believes it is an 'easy question' to answer whether we have the same kinds [εἴδη][30] of things in us as the city, that is: 'spiritedness', 'love of learning', and 'love of

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[24] Also referred to as 'money-makers' or 'craftsmen'.

[25] i.e. the money-making/producers and auxiliary classes.

[26] i.e. those best suited to being rulers (guardians), to being soldiers (auxiliaries), and to being producers/money-makers.

[27] Here I mean virtue [αρετη: *aretē*] in the sense of a thing performing its function well. Often also translated as 'excellence'. See *Rep*.I.353a-b ff.

[28] *Ergon*: a thing's proper function; proper work.

[29] I am not here suggesting that the concept of justice truly originates in the city and then allows for its discovery in the individual. It is generally accepted that the inverse is actually the case, namely that the characteristics of the soul in the individual inform the characterization of the city.

[30] *Eidē*, see n.9 above. Here used specifically as 'kind' as in 'kind of thing'.

money' (*Rep*. IV.435b-e). What is difficult to establish is whether we do these things—learn, get angry, and 'desire the pleasures of food, drink, sex' and those like them—'with the same part of ourselves' or 'with three different parts' (*Rep*. IV.436a). Since justice in the individual was presumed to be effectively the same thing as justice in the *polis,* it seems an intuitive next step to then investigate whether, like the city, the soul of the individual is indeed made up of three distinct parts[31] with distinct roles to play so as to produce the conditions necessary for justice (*Rep*. IV.435a-c). How is one to determine the tripartite form of the soul? By appealing to the *principle of non-contradiction* (*PNC*), which holds that propositions which contradict one another cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time.[32] Socrates presents the argument as such:

> ***P1)***[33] *A single thing cannot 'be, do, or undergo opposites, at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing'*[34] *(Rep. IV.436b-437a).*[35]

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[31] While I will continue to use the term 'part(s)' of the soul, scholars have taken note that the term *meros* [μέρος] which is most traditionally translated as 'part' is not exclusively used in order to refer to what readers of the *Republic* conventionally recognize as the parts of the soul, and if it is indeed used, the instances are curiously few. Other terms used include *eidos* [kind] and *genos* [γένος: class; sort]. See Ferrari 2007, p.165 n.1; Hobbs 2000, p.34; Sheffield 2012, p.222.

[32] It cannot be the case that both 'q' and 'not q' are true at the same time with the same meaning/intent. For example, if A is a rabbit, then A cannot *not* be a rabbit.

[33] It is interesting to note that there is a discrepancy between the two separate expressions of (P1) which may yield important implications. In its first presentation, the principle is stated as such: 'It is obvious that the same thing will **not be willing** to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. [δῆλον ὅτι ταὐτὸν τἀναντία ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν κατὰ ταὐτόν γε καὶ πρὸς ταὐτὸν **οὐκ ἐθελήσει** ἅμα, ὥστε ἄν που εὑρίσκωμεν ἐν αὐτοῖς ταῦτα γιγνόμενα, εἰσόμεθα ὅτι οὐ ταὐτὸν ἦν ἀλλὰ πλείω]' (*Rep*.IV.436b). Its second appearance is written as: 'No such statement will disturb us, then, or make us believe that the same thing **can** be, do, or undergo opposites, at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing. [οὐδὲν ἄρα ἡμᾶς τῶν τοιούτων λεγόμενον ἐκπλήξει, **οὐδὲ** μᾶλλόν τι πείσει ὡς **ποτέ** τι ἂν τὸ αὐτὸ ὂν ἅμα κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ τἀναντία πάθοι ἢ καὶ εἴη ἢ καὶ ποιήσειεν]' (*Rep*.IV.436e-437a). The first form seems to be weaker than the second in its use of *οὐκ ἐθελήσει* [not willing; not wanting to]—implying mere disallowance or unwillingness—instead of *οὐδὲ-ποτέ* [not at any time; never]—implying impossibility.

[34] Examples of certain opposites that are given are: 'assent and dissent, wanting to have something and rejecting it, taking something and pushing it away' (*Rep*. IV.437b).

[35] Kenny 1973, p.4 suggests that this is not an expression of the principle of non-contradiction but rather 'the principle of noncontrareity'. Moline 1978, p.3 n.8 supports Kenny's characterization and also denies that this is a presentation of the principle of non-contradiction. See also Santas 2006, p.140. Lorenz instead opts for calling it the 'principle of opposites' (2006, p.22).

***P2)*** *If we find there to be opposite things in the soul, then the soul must be made up of more than one part (Rep. IV.436b-c).*

***P3)*** *There are opposite things in the soul.*

***C**[P1-3]**)*** *Therefore, the soul is made up of more than one part.*

Evidently, (P3) needs to be supported by the presentation and examination of cases in which opposite things really do seem to be present in one's soul and how precisely they differ in ways that would reflect the kinds of things found in the city. In the case of distinguishing the difference between the rational and appetitive parts of the soul, Socrates presents a case where a thirsty individual has the appetitive desire to quench their thirst but is overruled by the rational calculating part of the soul (*Rep.* IV.439c-e). In establishing the difference between the spirited part and the appetitive part, the story of Leontius is offered. While passing a pile of corpses Leontius had an appetite to look at them, and although he felt shame and anger—activities of the spirited part of the soul—he gave in to his appetites and had a look (*Rep.* IV.439e-440b). Finally, in separating spirit from reason Socrates presents as proof of their distinct natures that, when it has not been corrupted by poor education, the spirited part is naturally the ally of the rational when the appetitive part is at war with the latter (*Rep.* IV.440a-441a).[36] In proving the separation between spirit and reason, Socrates also brings attention to the slower development of reason in children relative to the spirited part (*Rep.* IV.441a-b). On the basis of these cases and (P1), Socrates concludes that the soul is in fact not 'one thing but many' and is therefore made up of parts (*Rep.* IV.436b-c).

[36] I agree here with Moline 1978, p.4 n.10 that this case shows the distinction between spirit and reason in virtue of them having the *potential* to conflict.

Socrates and his interlocutors have decided that the classes present in the city do indeed directly reflect the number and kinds of things in the individual soul (*Rep.* IV.441c). It would be prudent to briefly discuss what the proper ordering of the soul is said to be and how each part plays its respective role. Like the guardians, the rational part [λογιστικόν] of the soul is wise because it possesses the knowledge of what is to the advantage of each part and whole of the soul (*Rep.* IV.442c). It *rules* the entirety of the soul with this wisdom and 'foresight' (*Rep.* IV.441c-e). The spirited part [θυμοειδής], like the auxiliaries of the city, is courageous and preserves the edicts of the rational part concerning what is to be feared and not to be feared (*Rep.* IV.441e-442c). The spirited part is the ally of and obeys the rational part; together with reason, the spirited part rules the appetitive part and ensures its insatiability for the 'pleasures of the body' is checked (*Rep.* IV.441e-442a). The appetitive part [ἐπιθυμητικόν], desires 'the pleasures of food, drink, sex' and those other things 'that are closely akin to them' (*Rep.* IV.436a, IX.580e). Following the clear relation that Plato wishes to draw between the *polis* and the soul, he reminds his interlocutor that individuals should be said to possess the virtue of justice in the same way as the city: *each part virtuously performing its own function in harmony with the other parts (Rep. IV.441c-443e)*. The individual must maintain the proper hierarchy of their soul parts. The just person 'believes that the action is just and fine [δικαίαν[37] μὲν καὶ καλὴν[38]] that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it, and calls it so, and regards as wisdom[39] the knowledge that oversees such actions' (*Rep.* IV.443c-e).

[37] *dikaian*: just; righteous. [*δικαιοσύνη: dikaiosyne*]: justice; righteousness.

[38] *kalen,* see n.8 above.

[39] i.e. the object of the rational part of the soul.

### *(ii) A Platonic Conception of Freedom: Gary Watson's Compatibilist Approach*

#### (ii.i) The Watsonian Account of Free Will

In his article 'Free Agency' Gary Watson delves into, and in a sense defends,[40] the compatibalist[41] view that *freedom consists in being able to get what one wants*[42] against the objection that if determinism is true, then one cannot get what one wants because the agent would not be in control of what they want. Whether he succeeds in doing so is irrelevant to my purposes in this paper, I simply present his understanding of free action as a convincing account of what could be said of free action in light of Plato's theory of the tripartite soul. Watson's first order of business is to establish an important distinction between two sources of motivation: *wants/desires* and *values*.[43] Based on this, he then attempts to make clear the difference between two kinds of actions: *free action* and *unfree action*.[44] Free action requires harmony between the sources of motivation (i.e. wants and values); unfree action obtains when there is a conflict between these motivations of action.

> 'In the case of actions that are unfree, the agent is unable to get what he most wants, *or values,* and this inability is due to his own 'motivational system.' In this case the obstruction

[40] Although he does not himself take his work here to be an explicit defence of compatibalism, but rather an attempt at establishing important distinctions allowing for a 'correct account of free action' and a better understanding of human motivation and responsibility (p.205-206).

[41] To provide extremely brief and general definitions sufficient for grasping the basic tenets of these background concepts in this section: *compatibalism* is a prominent view within the free will debate which claims that free will is compatible with determinism; *determinism* is a view within the free will debate which holds that all instances of will-based action and natural phenomena are causally determined and in all instances of action, the acting agent could not have done otherwise.

[42] As we will see, 'want' here is meant by Watson to refer to objects of desire which are also objects of value.

[43] Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self,* seems to provide a prima facie similar view which operates on the term 'strong evaluations' which make distinctions between what is 'right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower' and act as 'standards' against which one can judge their desires (1989, p.4). A seemingly similar characterization to Watson's 'valuational system'.

[44] Watson 1975, p.206 ff.

to the action that he most wants to do is his own will. It is in this respect that the action is unfree: the agent is obstructed in and by the very performance of the action.'[45]

What exactly does this mean? Essentially, *free action occurs when an acting agent is self-determining in the sense of acting in accordance with what she most* ***values****, which is determined by her rational capacity*. It would help if we had a better understanding of the distinction made between desires and values. In answering this, Watson appeals to the Platonic division of the soul into rational and non-rational parts (i.e. reason contrasted with the spirited and appetitive parts) and draws a distinction between it and a more Humean understanding of reason. On the Humean account, according to Watson, reason is not a source of motivation but rather that which works out how to best fulfil one's desires and serve one's ends. However, as we will see in section (ii.ii), within the theory of tripartition, reason has its own object of desire: the Good.[46] The notion of value 'cannot be understood independently of' the notion of the good; desiring a state of affairs to obtain and thinking those state of affairs to be good and therefore valuable are two different things.[47] The precise distinction between desiring something and valuing something consists in *why* the agent wants what she does; in other words, it depends on the *source* of the want and how it fits into the agents *system* of desires and ends.[48]

Watson here identifies two such systems: the *valuational system* and the *motivational system*. One's valuational system consists in a set of considerations which, 'when combined with one's factual beliefs (and probability estimates' determines what state of affairs one values most (i.e.the state of affairs that one judges would be *good* if it were to obtain). One's motivational

[45] Watson 1975, p.206. Emphasis in original text.

[46] Watson 1975, p.207.

[47] Watson 1975, p.208.

[48] Watson, 1975, p.211.

system consists in a set of considerations which move someone to action. Unfree action, then, is the result of conflict between one's valuational and motivational systems.[49] Free action is the result of harmony between those systems; that is, when that which determines one's judgements about what state of affairs is most valued also determines one's actions.[50] Reason is that faculty which evaluates whether something is *good*, and therefore whether it has value. '*Values provide reasons for action';*[51] *'the free agent has the capacity to translate' her 'values into action', her 'actions flow from' her 'evaluational system'.*[52] Essentially, free agency is related to the valuational system because it necessitates that a free agent be able to make judgements about her own values (i.e. evaluate what is good) and rank them. What makes a desire our own is that it stems from our valuational system.[53] We first consider what course of action is worth pursuing (i.e. which state of affairs all-things-considered is most valuable to us) and we want some desire to become effective in virtue of this consideration.[54]

***(ii.ii) Role & Rule [Ἄρχειν] of Reason [Λόγος]: Platonic Free Will***

For our present purposes, it is important that the role of reason as it is presented within the *Republic*—here drawing on Books VIII and IX as supplementation to Book IV—is further explored and that the sense in which it is said to '*rule*' [ἄρχειν][55] is more closely examined with

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[49] For example, when wants motivate one to act in spite of what an individual values. Consider Watson's case in which a mother has the sudden urge to drown her crying infant in the bathtub; she does not value this action, in that she does not believe that the state of affairs in which it obtains are/would be good, but she momentarily desired it (Watson 1975, p.210).

[50] Watson 1975, p.215.

[51] Watson 1975, p.208, 211.

[52] Watson 1975, p.216.

[53] Indeed, Watson states 'one cannot dissociate oneself from all normative judgments without forfeiting all standpoints and therewith one's identity as an agent' (1975, p.216), implying that one's identity is tightly bound to one's values.

[54] Watson 1975, p.219. This he contrasts with Harry Frankfurt's view in 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person' (1971) which seems to entail, according to Watson, that one should first makes judgements about the efficacy of one's desires. Watson contends that we should makes decisions about how our desires are related to our values.

[55] *ārchein*: to lead; rule; govern.

the Watsonian account freshly given. In the *polis*, the way in which the rulers (i.e. complete guardians) governed the rest of the classes was quite intuitive, however, things are complicated as the argument shifts in focus from the city to the soul of the individual. Watson's understanding of free will as presented above is Platonic 'in the sense that it involves a distinction between valuing and desiring which depends on there being independent sources of motivation'.[56] In light of the Watsonian account, it is important to establish that all three parts of the soul have desires because of the emphasis placed on the good being the proper desire of reason. This is most plainly stated in Book IX where Socrates states: 'it seems to me that there are three pleasures corresponding to the three parts of the soul, one peculiar to each part, and similarly with desires and kinds of rule' (*Rep*.IX.580d). It seems explicit here that Socrates is making the claim that all three soul parts—not just the appetite which is perhaps most conventionally associated with producing desires—are subjects of desire. What is the desire of reason? It is presented throughout the *Republic* that if an individual's soul is just (i.e. ruled by reason with all the other parts operating in harmony while fulfilling their respective functions), then they are said to possess wisdom (*Rep*.IV.441c). In being so justly ruled, an individual is oriented towards the good.[57]

We have seen that value is fundamentally intertwined with notions of the good,[58] and so, in being oriented towards the good, the rational part of the soul is that part within one's soul which determines what has *value*. In Books VIII and IX, the characterizations of souls that are ruled by the different parts suggests that the sense in which a part of the soul is said to rule

[56] Watson 1975, p.209.

[57] Barney 2010, p.366 n.4 notes the different ways in which something can be classed as a good, namely in virtue of being an excellent instance of its kind of by being beneficial to the individual.

[58] Watson 1975, p.208.

consists in having a particular set of values in accordance with whichever part is the ruler. For example, the democratic man who is characterized as having a soul ruled by appetites by 'surrendering rule over himself to whichever desire comes along' (*Rep*.VIII.561b). A helpful interpretation of this sense of ruling is offered by Richard Kraut[59] and George Klosko.[60] Both Kraut and Klosko differentiate between 'non-normative'[61] and 'normative' senses of ruling.[62] The non-normative rule of one part of the soul over the others consists in winning out in some case of motivational conflict. For example, when one's appetitive desire for drink is overruled by the rational part of the soul (*Rep.* IV.439c-e). The normative rule of one soul part over the whole consists in its determination of the overall values of the agent.[63] This instance of ruling can perhaps be clearly recognized in Book IX when Socrates and his interlocutor are discussing the 'three primary kinds of people: philosophic, victory-loving, and profit-loving' (*Rep*.IX.581b-c). These kinds of people, it is said explicitly, are the result of their souls being ruled by different parts. The philosophical individual has a soul that is ruled by reason and which is therefore harmonious and just; the victory-loving individual's soul is ruled by the spirited part of the soul; the profit-loving individual has a soul ruled by the appetites (*Rep*.IX.581b-c). Further, it is said the upon asking each kind of individual whose life is 'most pleasant' [ἡδύς],[64] each of them will

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[59] Kraut, R., (1973), 'Reason and Justice in Plato's *Republic,*' in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos*, edited by Lee, E.N., Mourelatos, A.P.D., 207-224, Assen.

[60] Klosko, G., (1988), 'The 'Rule' of Reason in Plato's Psychology,' *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 5(4), 341-356.

[61] I have opted for Kraut's simpler terms of either 'normative' or 'non-normative'. Klosko utilizes the term 'normative' in reference to the same kind of rule as Kraut, but opts for the term 'direct rule' (1988, p.343) in the case of Kraut's 'non-normative' rule.

[62] Apart from Kraut and Klosko, other scholars who recognize that in order for one part of the soul to 'rule' the rest, it must espouse certain ends and values for the individual as a whole include: Bobonich 2003, p.47 ff.; Lorenz 2006, p.17, 33; Ferrari provides a relatively looser characterization as parts of the soul being able to shape an individual's life (2007, p.194 ff.); Crombie's distinction between the 'formal' and 'material' supremacy of reason also seems to loosely fit the bill, with the 'formal' sense obtaining when 'emotions and appetites are indulged only in so far as reason decides that their indulgence is in his [the just man] best interests as a whole person' (1962, p.98 ff.).

[63] Kraut 1973, p.210. Klosko characterizes this as when reason directs the soul towards its own preferred objects (i.e. those superior goods which provide greater overall benefit to the individual) (1988, p.342-343).

[64] *hedus*: pleasant.

say that it is their way of living and praise themselves the highest. I take this to signify a strong correlation between value and action and how one's values shift according to whichever soul part is in the seat of power. This is because each individual seems to truly value their own way of life above the others.

As is essentially claimed by Watson: not everything that is desired is good, but everything that is good is desired.[65] He further notes that 'It is an essential feature of the appetites and the passions that they engender (or consist in) desires whose existence and persistence are independent of the person's judgment of the good'.[66] That is, they are not necessarily *valued* in the relevant sense and so less in tune with the identity of the individual.[67] Hence, the free agent being able to render her values into action which find their origin, then, in the agent's evaluational system.[68] Freedom, it seems, has some kind of deep connection to the activity of the self. This is not least demonstrated by the image of the. soul which Socrates draws up to further demonstrate justice and injustice in Book IX. Here, appetite is portrayed as a multi-headed hydra, spirit is portrayed by a fierce lion, and reason is portrayed my a human (*Rep*.IX.588b-589c ff.). On the Platonic picture, one's rational part of the soul determines what has value and indeed how much value it has relative to other variables.[69]

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[65] Watson 1975, p.208.

[66] Watson 1975, p.211-212.

[67] Watson 1975, p.216. See n.52; See Stalley 1998: 'While Plato does not have a concept of 'the self' as such it might be thought that he, in effect, treats the rational element of the soul as the real self and stipulates that only its desires are genuinely ours.' (p.152 ff.). Stalley goes on to stipulate in what ways the Platonic concept of the self becomes a bit more nuanced and complicated than this simplified account just offered.

[68] Watson 1975, p.216. See Stalley 1998: 'only an individual whose behaviour is governed by a consistent set of values is able to act effectively. Thus only such an individual is free […] since all of us have some inclination to the good, those with mistaken values must be in a state of inner conflict. Given this claim, he is entitled to argue that the unjust man or woman cannot do what he or she really wants. Such people cannot therefore be truly free' (p.152-153).

[69] Watson 1975, p.208.

### *(iii) The Account of Love [Ερως] Presented in The* Phaedrus: Self Mastery & *Erōs*

The Palinode is Socrates' ode to love both literally and figuratively: it is both a kind of apology to the god of Love, the son of Aphrodite, and a more positive characterization of *erōs* than his first speech. Is the kind of Platonic free will (i.e. self-mastery/self-rule), which flows out of the 'normative'[70] rule of reason, over the whole of the soul, present in the depiction of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*? In his preceding speech, which favoured the non-lover over the lover because he was apparently not overcome by madness [μανία] (*Phaed*. 244a), Socrates urged his young interlocutor to realize that individuals are 'ruled by two principles': (1) our natural desire for pleasures; (2) our reason that judges and pursues what is best (*Phaed*.237d). These two principles can either be in harmony or in conflict with one another, leading one to motivate us to action over the other (*Phaed*.237e). When reason is in control and it leads the individual to what is best [ἄριστον][71] it is a kind of 'self-control' [σωφροσύνη][72] consisting in 'being in your right mind'—taken to mean the opposite of μανία. When desire is in control and leads us towards pleasure without reason, its commands are 'outrageous' [ὕβρις][73] (*Phaed*.237e). The two principles here nicely map onto Watson's characterization of our valuational and motivational systems: whereas (1) fits our motivational system and (2) fits our valuational system. It was said that free action comes out of the harmonization of these two systems.[74] Socrates continues by providing his first initial definition of *erōs* as 'the unreasoning [ἄνευ λόγου][75] desire that overpowers a person's

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[70] Kraut 1973; Klosko 1988.

[71] *ariston* [*ἄριστος: aristos*]: the best; best in its kind. Used as supplement to *agathos* [ἀγαθός], can be taken to mean something like 'the best at something' (Liddell and Scott 2007, p.102), see n.19. I take the use of *ἄριστος* here to refer to the good [ἀγαθός].

[72] *sophrosunē*: moderate; temperate; having self-control.

[73] *hubris*: arrogance; wantonness; wanton violence; sexual violence.

[74] Watson 1975, p.215.

[75] See n.7.

considered impulse to do right (i.e. reason) and is driven to take pleasure in beauty' (*Phaed*.238b-c).

In the Palinode, however, Socrates clearly states that he is abandoning his disavowal of μανία and instead posits that it is not in fact entirely a bad thing but is rather the source of some of the best things we have [νῦν δὲ τὰ μέγιστα τῶν **ἀγαθῶν** ἡμῖν γίγνεται διὰ μανίας][76] when it is given by the gods (*Phaed*.244a). Thus far we have come across the classification of *erōs* as a kind of μανία and also the claim that μανία is in fact the source of good [ἀγαθῶν] things when divinely gifted [θεῖος].[77] If we can establish *erōs* as a divinely gifted kind of μανία,[78] then perhaps it can be established as something ἀγαθῶν.[79] This is precisely what Socrates sets out to do: 'we […] must prove […] that this sort of madness is given us by the gods to ensure our greatest good fortune [ἡμῖν δὲ ἀποδεικτέον αὖ τοὐναντίον, ὡς ἐπ᾽ εὐτυχίᾳ[80] τῇ μεγίστῃ παρὰ θεῶν ἡ τοιαύτη μανία δίδοται]' (*Phaed*.245b-c). After providing an account of the immortality of the soul, Socrates then proceeds to provide an account of the structure of the human soul and likens it to a chariot team consisting in: (a) the charioteer, (b) a bad horse,[81] and (c) a good horse. He also provides the qualification that the charioteer rules both of the horses (*Phaed*.246a-b). The soul-chariot[82] attempts to make an ascent into this heavenly realm of the Forms; this is an

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[76] Note the use of ἀγαθῶν here, which seems to imply 'the best' in reference to 'the good'. This suggests that μανία can actually be good in the sense relevant to *to agathon* [the good]. See n.19, n.67.

[77] *theios*: of or from the gods.

[78] And to my end also established as an activity of reason. Vlastos 1981, p.27 n.80 also takes not of the 'convergence of μανία and νούς'. See also Santas 1982; Nussbaum 2001; Burnyeat 2011. It is interesting in the *Phaedrus* that philosophy itself—that search for truth and love of learning/wisdom—is a form of madness (See Nussbaum 2001, p.201)., specifically through its relation to recollection as explained in the *Phaedrus* as a process of divine possession (*Phaed*.249a-e).

[79] While she seems to focus exclusively on the *Symposium*, see Kronqvist 2018 for the treatment of love as a good.

[80] *eutychia*: good fortune; success; prosperity.

[81] Divine souls have two good horses.

[82] A term I borrow from Nehamas, A. and Woodruff, P. 1995, p.15.

easy task for those divine souls which possess two obedient and good natures horses, this is a difficult task however for human souls who have to corral the bad natured horse.

Souls, it is said, sustain themselves through contemplation of Being and the Forms (*Phaed*. 246e-7c, 248b-c). Plato refers to the realm of the forms as that plane of *Reality* beyond the dwelling place of the gods, signalling that it is only the Forms which are true in the relevant philosophical sense (*Phaed*.248a). If the wings of one's soul are in 'perfect condition' then it will be able to maintain its position on the domain of the gods and beyond, dedicated to glimpsing and contemplating the Forms. These Forms—'being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge'—are said to be visible only to 'intelligence', that is the charioteer (*Phaed*.247c).[83] Souls secure their wings when they re able to consistently witness and contemplate the Forms, as they provide nourishment. If a soul sheds its wings, then it falls to the ground, out of the heavens, and takes an earthly and mortal form (*Phaed*.246c). The way in which a soul sheds is wings is through 'foulness and ugliness'—a vague set of conditions which need to obtain. In making the ascent into the realm of Reality so as to catch sight of the Forms, charioteers who have one bad horse (i.e. human souls) are weighed down by it if it has not been 'trained well' (*Phaed*.247a-b). This ascent for the purpose of seeing and contemplating the Forms is indeed the main thing with which souls are concerned. Due to the fact that all human souls by nature have 'seen reality', that is witnessed the Forms, mortal humans are able to recollect the Forms and when they see an image or instantiation of them on earth (*Phaed.*249b-250a). This recollection is what enables and catalyzes an earthly soul to sprout its wings once more and attempt to regain its position in the heavens so as to directly contemplate the Forms.

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[83] Cf. Book IX's characterization of reason as a human inside a human (*Rep*.IX.588b-589c ff.). The charioteer seems to be following this characterization of an internal human symboling reason which would lend itself to the view that one's rational part is one's true self.

It is said that all the Forms apart from Beauty [καλόν] are very difficult to see and recollect. Beauty has a radiance which no other Form possesses, it can shine through mere images which instantiate its Form and be easily recognized through our clear sense of sight (*Phaed.*250a-e). That is how one is able to recognize a boy as beautiful, because his instantiation of the Form of beauty would be visibly perceptive. Upon perceiving an image or likeness of beauty—say in a young boy, as is often the case in Platonic dialogues—an individual whose soul left the heavens long ago and has been severed from the Forms and their contemplation long enough for their soul to become defiled and imbalanced (i.e. not in the proper order where reason is the ruling part) will submit to the appetitive pleasures and seek to lay with the individual who is a likeness of beauty (*Phaed*.250e-251a). An individual who has only recently manifested a corporeal being and is therefore able to more easily recall the Forms when they see them instantiated; upon viewing a beautiful individual this more tempered soul will the strange reaction of shuddering and being fearful and becomes overwhelmed with a sense of devotion to the individual (*Phaed*.251a-b).

Here, the crucial moment where one 'falls' so to speak, for the beautiful individual, one can question where the true devotion of the perceiver of the beautiful individual lies. Does he love the boy only insofar as he is an image of Beauty and  so cause the occasion for the regrowth of his wings? Does he value the boy himself, that is, take him to be an inherent good? What is the relationship between the beautiful [καλόν] and the good [άγαθόν]? Gabriel Richardson Lear contends that: 'our response to things *qua* good is not the same as our response to them *qua* beautiful. Even if, in truth, the class of good things is coextensive with the class of beautiful things; even if a thing's beauty depends on its goodness, the experience of a thing as a good

plays a different role in our lives than does the experience of a thing as beautiful'.[84] I do not take Lear's to be making a point of extreme importance. Essentially, all that is being said here is that we *can* experience the beautiful and the good differently in virtue of them being different forms which evoke in us different reactions. This does not, however, preclude their simultaneous experience and *valuing*. He admits to the coextensive nature of the beautiful and the good as well.

This leaves us in a good spot to bring in Kosman's position which sates: 'If I love A because of ϕ or love the ϕ in A, I should not be said to love something other than A if ϕ is what A is. Thus to love A for its beauty is to love A for itself'.[85] When we consider something to be beautiful, we say that it itself is beautiful. As Barney notes, 'while it is common to speak of what is *agathon* for someone, using the dative of interest, the same construction is awkward and rare, if not impossible, with *kalon*. This is because what is good is standardly so by being good *for* somebody or other; but what is fine, generally speaking, is just plain fine'.[86] Drawing on our foundational Watsonian account, something is valued by an individual insofar as their rational element has determined that thing to be good. That which is good has *value*. When we speak of our beloved as being beautiful or recognize them as an instantiation of beauty, we do not love them or value them only in virtue of them being beautiful *simpliciter.* This seems like it would result in some strange occurrences where anything and everything which shares a likeness with beauty with be subject to our love. It is in virtue of them being a person, and indeed an important person—that person who aids in the nourishment of one's soul—that the beloved is loved at all.[87]

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[84] Lear 2006, p.97.

[85] Kosman 1989, p.159.

[86] 2010, p.367.

[87] See Mooney 2002, p.311: 'it is *qua* person that the beloved is loved and not just as bearer of loveable qualities or attributes.'

I would like to make a distinction here between the terms 'valued' and 'valuable'; the former implying inherent value, the latter implying instrumental value. I believe that beauty is the kind of thing that can be, and is, valued inherently. If we were to ask someone in an art museum why they valued beauty and they responded 'because it is beautiful' we would shrug off their response in a disappointed fashion recognizing the circularity and uninspired quality it rung. When we love a beloved, we love them in virtue of them being who they are, that is a bearer of that beautiful quality. Besides, it would be quite implausible to posit that every individual believed the exact same individual(s) to be beautiful as everyone else; does this not speak to the maintenance of the uniqueness of one's beloved? That is, we see the beauty in *them*, not everyone.

As was aforementioned, our rational capacity is that which determines value on the basis of its desire for the good. To be more precise, the good is the proper object of reason. I claimed in this paper that *erōs* is an activity of reason. What does it mean for something to be an activity of reason? It means that its origin lies within reason. That is on the basis of recognizing *erōs* as something that is valued, as well as the beloved. In making the claim that *erōs* is an activity of reason, I mean just this. So *erōs*, then must have its origin in reason. Insofar as *erōs* can be a rational response to something, a response originating within us, it can be said to be an activity of reason. If *erōs* is that which kick-starts the *recollective process* in coming to once more know the form of Beauty, it is a rational response to that which is an image of the beautiful.

> 'Therefore, if someone's **soul** has a **fine and beautiful** character and his body matches it in beauty and is thus in harmony with it, so that both share in the same pattern, wouldn't that be the most beautiful sight for anyone who has eyes to see? […] And isn't what is most **beautiful** also most **loveable**? [οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτου ἂν συμπίπτῃ ἔν τε τῇ **ψυχῇ καλὰ** ἤθη ἐνόντα

καὶ ἐν τῷ εἴδει ὁμολογοῦντα ἐκείνοις καὶ συμφωνοῦντα, τοῦ αὐτοῦ μετέχοντα τύπου, τοῦτ᾽ ἂν εἴη **κάλλιστον** θέαμα τῷ δυναμένῳ θεᾶσθαι; […] καὶ μὴν τό γε **κάλλιστον ἐρασμιώτατον]**᾽ (*Rep*.III.402c-d).

In order to even recognize what is 'most beautiful' one's soul must be sufficiently well-aligned—that is, with reason ruling the soul (*Phaed*.251a). *Erōs* itself is said to be valuable because, of course, it is a good insofar as it catalyzes the growth of one's wings and aids in their ascent back into the realm of the Forms, where truth and wisdom lie. Perhaps in a paradoxical manner, the divine madness that is *erōs* is a significant element in allowing an individual to contemplate truth and attain wisdom. The beloved is said to be valuable because it seems as though, in some sense that the reason we see the Form of beauty in *them*, is precisely because we value *them* above anyone else. This then turns out to be a bit of a reflexive relationship. Consider the following: 1) the object of reason is the good; 2) if X is good, then X has value; 3) *erōs* is a good; C) ∴ *erōs* has value. Characterizing *Erōs* as being in tension with reason, then seems to be missing the point. *We are free to love* because in the act of falling in love, that is, the moment of the recognition of the form of beauty in our beloved, we both desire and value that individual. Our motivational and valuational systems, as Watson calls them, are effectively harmonized.

***Conclusion***

The characterization of love that has thus far been presented in this paper has been subjected to a great number of evolutions throughout the drafting of this work. In its infancy, the crux of this project was to be concerned with what I thought to be a rather naive and innocuous investigation of 'personal love', that is, deep and intense feelings for a unique individual for their own sake. As I carried out my inquiry, however, it became clear to me that the scholarly debate concerning whether the characterization of *erōs* in the erotic Platonic dialogues even considered

personal love to be anything of significance besides its instrumental value—in potentially catalyzing the ascent of one's soul to higher pursuits (i.e. wisdom and the Forms)—was anything but tame. As I carried on still further, my investigation simultaneously became narrower and broader and evolved into an examination of the relationship between *erōs* and free will in virtue of being related to reason.

This investigation into the relationship between love and free will came about through personal musings concerning the highly romanticized ideal of a love written in the cosmos; a love where both the lover and beloved were destined to be, where the maddening desire to be together overwhelmed their capacity for reason. I think, perhaps, it is more romantic to be in love through a kind of collaboration of reason and madness; where one truly values their beloved and does so on the basis of some part within them that constitutes the foundations of who they are—reason. It seems as though the tension between love and the rational aspect of one's soul—and consequently free will in the sense of self-mastery—can be dissolved when one recognizes that *erōs* is in fact an activity of reason.

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