

Chapter Two

ERŌS AND ETHICAL NORMS: PHILOSOPHERS RESPOND TO A CULTURAL DILEMMA



Martha C. Nussbaum

I. HANDS UP AND DOWN: EROS AND NORMATIVE SCRUTINY

An older man stands close to a younger man, who looks up (or, as the case may be, down) at him, often with fond affection. The older man beams beneficently at the young man's beardless face, and with one hand he cups the younger man's chin, in a gesture expressive of tender personal affection. His other hand, however, has other ideas: it fondles the young man's genitals, which are usually exposed. The older man's penis is often erect, the younger man's almost never.¹ The young man sometimes repels the groping hand, but often, too, contentedly allows it.²

In this highly conventional and popular ancient Greek image of sexual courtship—named by Sir John Beazley the “up and down position”³ and found on dozens of vases from the classical period—we see a tension in the Greek concept of *erōs*. To investigate that tension, and the Stoic philosophers' response to it, is my purpose in this chapter. On the one hand, *erōs* is beneficent, showing a tender regard for the young man's personality and his education; on the other hand, it is characterized by strong genital desire, which has the potential for ferocity and blind indifference to the well-being of the beloved. Does the left hand know what the right hand is doing? Or the right the left? The vase images, like some literary texts that I

shall later examine, frequently intimate that the two aspects of *erōs* work harmoniously together: the hand that strokes the genitals is just as precise and reverent, just as cautious, as the hand that delicately cups the face. But the Greeks know well that things are not always so. A statue from 470 B.C., the first plate in Dover's *Greek Homosexuality*, shows a Zeus of massive physique carrying off young Ganymede in one squeezing arm, without even a glance at the face; while Zeus strides victoriously ahead, the young man looks down in what seems to be helpless confusion.⁴ As the chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone* observes, addressing Eros, "You take the minds of the just and turn them aside to injustice." Even the gods are not exempt from this madness.⁵

Greek popular morality contained in this way two ideas about *erōs* that proved notoriously difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, *erōs* is seen as a divine gift, connected with illumination and delight for the lover, and with generous educative intentions toward the beloved. On the other hand, *erōs* is a source of madness and distraction, a force that disrupts reasoning and threatens virtue, but if it threatens virtue, it also seems to threaten, inevitably, the good conduct of the lover toward his partner.⁶ Nor can we even cleanly separate these two tendencies in *erōs*, for it would appear (according, again, to deeply entrenched popular ideas) that the very madness and distraction in the lover that put virtue at risk are among the sources of his generosity to the beloved. The very passion that threatens virtue may also motivate virtuous actions.

The Greek Stoics are notorious in the philosophical tradition for having held what appear to be contradictory theses about the passions. On the one hand, they hold that all passions (*pathē*) should be not just moderated but even extirpated from human life.⁷ On the other hand, they hold that the wise man will be in love, *erasthēsesthai*, will experience *erōs*, with young people of a certain description — both beautiful and apt for virtue.⁸ They hold that the wise man's *erōs* will express itself both in sexual conduct and in the education of the young for virtue. Indeed, they hold that the bonds of *erōs* should be basic to the civic fabric of their ideal city.⁹ Cicero mocks them for the contradiction, saying scornfully, "What is this 'love of friendship' [*amor amicitiae*]?" (*Tusc.* 4.33), and concluding that Epicurus got it right — erotic love is never a good thing. Plutarch, equally baffled by the Stoic thesis, says that it seems all right to defend a kind of sexualized affection for the young that aims at promoting virtue, but if that is what it is, they had better not call it *erōs*, which we all know to have rather different characteristics (*De communibus notitiis* 1072E).¹⁰

The Stoic position cannot be well understood in isolation from its cultural context, for it is one in a series of bold philosophical attempts to resolve a cultural tension. Perhaps it succeeds; perhaps it does not. (I shall conclude that Plutarch's critique has much to recommend it.) But we cannot assess the project until we understand the problem it addresses. I shall begin by sketching briefly a picture of the doubleness of *erōs* that we find in much of the nonphilosophical culture of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., focusing on evidence from the tragic poets, the orators, and the speeches of Phaedrus and Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium*, which are good sources for certain elements, at least, of the popular thought of the period. I shall then turn to Plato's *Phaedrus*, which first, in the speech of "Lysias," boldly forces the two parts of *erōs* apart, portraying them as not merely in tension but as incompatibles—and then, with Socrates' recantation, even more boldly brings them together, describing a beneficent and generous erotic madness. After briefly discussing Epicurus' take on the problem—since Cicero sees this as the greatest rival to the Stoic account—I shall turn to the Greek Stoics, who define *erōs* as "desire for bodily intercourse" (Andronicus, *SVF* 3.397) as "an attempt to form friendship, inspired by the appearing beauty of young men in their prime" (many sources), and, finally, as "service of the gods directed to the ordering of young and beautiful people" (*SVF* 3.397).

This history is interesting in its own right; but it also has a larger scholarly significance. In his important and profoundly insightful analyses of ancient Greek sexual norms and practices in volumes 2 and 3 of the *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault argued that the Greeks do not problematize sexual appetite and activity in the way that Christian and post-Christian cultures commonly do. The sexual appetite is treated as one appetite among the others, and the important consideration, in dealing with all the appetites, is one of self-mastery. The admirable person is one who does not get carried away by any pleasure, but who displays mastery and control of all his pleasures, pleasures of intercourse as well as pleasures of eating and drinking. None of these pleasures is inherently shameful, and all can be managed as elements in a life governed by manly self-control.

Foucault never denied that a complex ethical discourse surrounded all of these appetites, but by focusing on the issue of sexual self-mastery, he did not focus enough, perhaps, on the complex ethical discourse connected with the lover's treatment of the recipient of his sexual attentions. He was in one way importantly correct: the Greeks do regard sex as more like eating and drinking than do many modern cultures, especially those influenced by a

connection between sexuality and an idea of original sin. But in another way his assimilation of sex to eating and drinking can mislead us. For the glutton does no harm to food, nor the drunkard to wine. The Greeks knew well that in this sense there is a clear disanalogy among the appetites. Unlike the others, the sexual appetite can be a source of pleasure or displeasure, of kindness or cruelty, of beneficent formation or the blighting of formation, for the young man who is typically imagined as the recipient of the lover's desire. Thus the ethical questions posed in this area became far more complicated than the ethical questions posed in the area of food and drink. What is at stake in sex is not only one's own self-mastery, but also the well-being, happiness, and ethical goodness of another. But if that is so, then one's own ethical goodness is on the line in a double sense. Not only the good of self-mastery, but also the good of being a responsible, decent, kindly social being is on the line. For what one does inevitably has a very profound effect on the being of the other. In other words, sex is doubly, and inevitably, ethical.

As I say, Foucault did not deny this complexity, but he did not draw attention to it either. And other aspects of the thought of Foucault positively lead away from the recognition of the inherently ethical quality of sex. For throughout much of his work Foucault brilliantly drew attention to the tyrannical role of social norms. Norms are generative, for they create the possibility of discourses and even desires that do not exist without them. But they also display the effects of power, and they constrain the activities of those whose desires are made in their image. Whether or not Foucault intended such a reading, many who take their inspiration from Foucault have concluded that norms in the domain of sex are inherently tyrannical and bad. If one were to mingle a certain Foucauldian atmosphere (for it seems better to call it an atmosphere than a reading) with the related view of sexual norms articulated by Gayle Rubin in her important article "Thinking Sex," one would conclude that any division of sexual acts and actors into the good and the bad is bound to be suspect, expressing the desire of power to tyrannize over the powerless. Thus any drawing of ethical lines that separates actors into two categories—any practice of "normalization" (bringing under the scrutiny of norms) in the sexual sphere—is regarded in some quarters as inherently homophobic, or otherwise aimed at the subordination of the powerless. Resistance to all such line drawing is therefore held to be appropriate.

Since the Greeks are a common point of reference in this modern discussion, and since the Greeks are frequently viewed, with loose and mistaken reference to Foucault, as a people who did not moralize about sex

(especially same-sex sex) the way we do, it seems important to insist that the Greeks—and, above all, the philosophers (not surprisingly)—were extremely attached to moralizing about sex and indeed thought that it was obvious that such a dangerous passion ought to be hedged around with a wide range of ethical norms. The job of these norms was in fact to define what good sex and bad sex are, with reference both to the ethical character of the desiring lover and to the well-being and ethical character of the beloved. The Greeks did not moralize about sex precisely in the way that modern Americans frequently do; but they did moralize, and they found shocking the very idea that one might not moralize.

I think that some moralizing is a good thing. There are many bad ways of moralizing about sex, and modern American life shows examples of quite a few of them. But one should not conclude from the inadequacy of some particular norms that a norm-free discourse is the best thing. (Is that even a coherent position?) The fact that some norms are based on ignorance, prejudice, primitive shame about the very fact of having a body, and hatred of people who are different does not show us that all norms must be like this and are to be resisted. Indeed, we could hardly avoid using ethical norms in the process of saying what is wrong with such bad norms, and why they should be resisted: they insult people's dignity, they treat them as unequal when they are really equal, or whatever. What each of us has to figure out is, What is the appropriate ethical language to use when we evaluate sexual acts and actors? And we must then also pose the different question, Which of these norms do we wish to translate from the sphere of personal ethics into the public realm of law and politics? Even in that area, one cannot easily take the position that a completely norm-free discourse about sex is either possible or good. A determined Milleean, such as I am, who holds that the law has no business interfering with "self-regarding action" (action that affects only the self and other consenting parties), will still seek laws against sexual coercion and various other practices that do harm to non-consenting parties. But most of us will feel the need for a richer menu of ethical norms when assessing conduct in the personal life. Most of us do not want laws penalizing unkindness, or hostility, or egotism; but we criticize these vices in ourselves and in others, and if we have or teach children, we encourage them to do so as well.

Where does this leave us with the Greeks? It means that we should not return to the Greek philosophers, or the culture that surrounded them, in search of a norm-free discourse about the erotic, and certainly not about same-sex acts. Foucault never held out that prospect, nor should we. On the other hand, it does seem reasonable to look to Greek culture for a set of

erotic norms that are not colored by a specifically Christian problematization of sex in connection with original sin, or by a presumption, antecedent to scrutiny of the particular case, that all same-sex relationships must be inherently sinful. And this is of philosophical interest, since it is of interest to see what norms emerge as salient when those two prominent ingredients of modern moralizing about sex are subtracted. Norms of kindness, non-cruelty, beneficence, lack of coercion, self-control—such norms emerge as independent of the notion of intrinsic sinfulness and organize sexual acts and actors into ethical kinds in a way that may seem less arbitrary and tyrannical, more morally pertinent and worthy, than some of the ways in which we have become accustomed to categorize such acts. Thus, the study of Greek norms may illuminate some of our own best possibilities as we wrestle with a passion that, through all its historical and cultural transmigrations, remains among the most baffling, dangerous, and magical elements of human life.

II. A CULTURAL TENSION

"*Erōs*, you who drip longing down upon the eyes, bringing sweet delight to the souls of those against whom you lead your armed assault"—so the chorus of Euripides' *Hippolytus* begins its account of the contradictory properties of *erōs*.¹¹ *Erōs* is beautiful and divine, sent by the gods; it is also fatal, a force of compulsion, stronger than fire or lightning,¹² that can lay waste the mind of the lover and, through that assault, do great and sometimes fatal damage to the object of the love. The chorus goes on to speak of Semele, the object of the *erōs* of Zeus himself, who was killed in the mythic act of sexual penetration, burnt to death by Zeus's thunderbolt.¹³ On the other hand, it is not always this way: *erōs* can also make the beloved better—even confer immortality. Ganymede, cupbearer to the gods, is evidence of both aspects at once: for his story is one of rape and abduction, and yet its end is glorious. The chorus of Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, speaking of the rape of Io by Zeus, which ended her torments and brought her peace and glory, found a memorable phrase to summarize the situation: Zeus, with his rape, "established well-intentioned violence [*eumenē bian ktisas*]." ¹⁴

The dangers of *erōs* are not confined to same-sex relationships, clearly, although these are thought to be especially powerful sources of erotic temptation.¹⁵ Nor are they confined to the extramarital. It is possible to conceive the passion of *erōs* for one's own spouse—although this is regarded as an

atypical and somewhat ominous phenomenon.¹⁶ The *Antigone* chorus's reflections of the moral dangers of *erōs* have as their occasion Haemon's evident and dangerous passion for his betrothed, which has set him at odds with his father: "You [sc. Eros] have stirred up this strife of kinsmen" (793–94).¹⁷ The normative image of marriage as represented in the wedding formula echoed by Creon immediately before the choral ode eschews the erotic: the wife is given to the husband "for plowing of legitimate children." Or, as Creon says, presumably alluding to that formula, if one woman should prove unavailable, "there are other furrows for his plough" (569). Marriage can avoid the danger of violence and instability by keeping its sexuality free from passion.

One might, of course, stop there: *erōs* simply has those two aspects, the violent and the beneficent, and there is no separating them. But the culture, reasonably enough, regards the copresence of destructiveness and good intentions as a problem to be solved and persistently tries to separate the good intentions from at least the most pernicious of the destructive impulses. Let me briefly examine just four texts that testify to this conceptual (and very practical) struggle: the fragmentary lament of Achilles for the dead Patroclus from Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*, a short passage from Xenophon's *Hiero*, a piece of Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* discussing "just [*dikaios*] *erōs*," and the speeches of Phaedrus and Pausanias from Plato's *Symposium*.

1. Aeschylus famously depicts the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as an erotic relationship that includes sexual conduct. Whether that is how Homer saw the matter or not (probably not),¹⁸ fifth- and fourth-century Athenians generally interpreted the text this way, in accordance with the popularity of such sexual relationships in their own time.¹⁹ Lamenting Patroclus's death, Achilles, who is cast in the role of the *erastēs* (a fact that Plato's Phaedrus finds peculiar in view of Achilles' surpassing beauty; *Symp.* 180a), exclaims as follows: "And you felt no compunction for [sc. my?] pure reverence of [sc. your?] thighs—Oh, what an ill return you have made for so many kisses." Elsewhere he speaks of his "god-fearing converse with your thighs" (Aesch. frs. 228, 229 Nauck). In other words, he represents the relationship as one that combined sexual passion with reverence, and he expressed this reverence in "converse with your thighs."²⁰ The audience would understand this as a reference to the established norm of intercrural intercourse—a way of achieving sexual gratification for the *erastēs* that respected the *erōmenos* by not imposing on him the potential shame of penetration. What this brings out more generally is that the state of *erōs* is here envisaged as compatible with generous and even prudent concern for the

well-being of the *erōmenos*—apparently because it is a state characterized by reverence, both toward the gods and toward the young man himself, the two apparently being closely connected. Plato's *Phaedrus*, as we shall see, follows this lead.

2. Xenophon's *Hiero* represents a conversation between the poet Simonides and the tyrant Hiero on the topic of an older man's *erōs* toward young men:²¹ "How do you mean, Hiero? Are you telling me that *erōs* for *paidika* does not grow [*emphuesthai*] in a tyrant [sc. as it does in other people]? How is it then that you are in love with Dailokhos . . . ?' Hiero said . . . 'My passion [*eran*] for Dailokhos is for what human nature perhaps compels us to want from the beautiful, but I have a very strong desire to attain the object of my passion [sc. only] with his love and consent'" (1.31–33).

What is *prima facie* puzzling to Simonides is, apparently, the restraint of Hiero—who, being a tyrant, could easily have whatever he wants and whomever, without penalty. His restraint makes Simonides wonder whether this tyrant has *erōs* like other people. Hiero answers that he certainly does have *erōs* like other people—indeed, he takes his passion to be a compulsion rooted in human nature. On the other hand, it is combined with a "strong desire" to attain his conquest only with the love and consent of the *erōmenos*. He does not tell us how the two desires, the *erōs* and the "strong desire," are related, but he shows some of the same reverence for the *erōmenos* that Aeschylus's Achilles expressed, and traced to fear of the gods. The compulsion of *erōs* does not necessitate impulsive or violent conduct;²² whether the passion is managed by external motives coming from a virtuous character or from some reverence internal to *erōs* itself, managed it is, for the beloved's benefit.

3. In the *Against Timarchus* Aeschines, although he attacks the self-prostituting behavior of Timarchus as incompatible with the privileges of citizenship, defends a type of *erōs* in which he says that he himself participates: "For my part, I do not criticize *dikaïos erōs*, nor do I assert that those of exceptional good looks have [sc. necessarily] prostituted themselves, nor do I deny that I myself have been *erōtikos* and remain so to this day; I do not deny that I have been involved in contentions and fights which arise from this activity. On the poems which they say I have composed, I admit to the poems, but I deny that they have the character with which my opponents will, by distortion, invest them."²³ Aeschines identifies a type of erotic activity that is "right" or "legitimate"; he associates it with typical marks of passion, such as jealous quarrels and the writing of poetry. "Legitimate *erōs*" does not pay the young for satisfaction, turning them into

prostitutes, nor does it employ violence—Democritus defined “legitimate *erōs*” as “aiming, without *hubris*, at beautiful objects” (B73). Aeschines appears to reserve the name *erōs* for the legitimate variety: being in love with the younger man is associated with fights and romantic transports, but not with coercion or bribery.²⁴ Once again we have no clear indication of the mechanism by which *erōs*, with all of its violence (which Aeschines acknowledges), generates good deeds. Aeschines speaks of “hard words and blows arising out of this activity” (136), but he appears to be proud of this, thinking of the blows as a manly way of competing for his love against rivals and as imposing no burden on the loved one himself. There may even be, as in Aeschylus, an implicit idea of reverence or respect toward the recipients of the love poems; at any rate, we are to feel a strong contrast between the person in love, who sends his young man fine poetry, and a cruder sort of suitor, who goes out and buys a Timarchus.

4. Two speeches early in Plato’s *Symposium* take up the same theme. For Phaedrus there simply is no problem: *erōs* is good through and through, “the cause of extremely great goods for us” (178c). There is no greater good for a young man than a fine *erastēs*, and no greater for an *erastēs* than his *paidika* (178c). For *erōs* consistently inspires good and noble deeds by promoting, more effectively than any other cause, a sense of shame toward base deeds and emulation toward fine deeds (178d). Because of their intense passion for one another, lover and beloved will fight more boldly when each can see the other, and in general display admirable virtue, ashamed at the thought of being seen by the other in any base action. In fact, an army of pairs of lovers would fight more bravely than any other (178e–179a).²⁵ Love makes even a mediocre person “inspired toward excellence, so that he is similar to the best in nature” (179a). Moreover, lovers are capable of a generosity and altruism that nobody else can touch, going so far as to offer their lives for those they love (179b), something that other relatives and friends are unlikely to do. Phaedrus here mentions Alcestis’s offer of her life for her husband, Orpheus’s risk of his life to restore his wife, and, finally, Achilles’ courageous sacrifice of a peaceful old age through his choice to fight Hector and avenge his *erastēs* Patroclus. (It is noteworthy that according to Phaedrus the *erastēs* and the *erōmenos* have similarly strong motivations for fine conduct;²⁶ he remarks that the *erastēs* is a “more godlike” figure than the *erōmenos*, since he is divinely inspired, so there is something especially fine in the younger man’s devotion to him.)

Two mechanisms, then, are suggested through which strong passion leads to good treatment of its object: the desire to look good before one’s love

(not to incur shame) and the high estimation of the object, which can lead one to put that object's good before one's own. This high estimation is especially appropriate and efficacious when its object is godlike. Although Phaedrus fails to confront the dangers of violence associated with *erōs*, his psychological observations are promising and will reappear in later solutions.

Pausanias begins and ends with a fundamental point: no action is good or bad *per se*, but everything depends on the way it is done (181a, 183d). He does acknowledge a doubleness in *erōs*, but he says that there are simply two sorts of erotic conduct, linked with two sorts of people. There are those who love the body only—and these are indeed likely to be bad for those they love, since this love is indiscriminate: “they look only to gratification, neglecting whether it is well done or not” (181b5). Such people are likely to choose both males and females indiscriminately (181b).

The higher type of *erōs* chooses male objects, since it looks to the soul rather than the body. This (and apparently only this) *erōs* is “without share in violence” (181c). Because the soul is the focus, and friendship and education among the goals (as well as pleasure), such lovers choose mature young men whose beard has already begun to grow—on the theory that these people have good judgment, and they are starting a relationship “as if they were going to be together through the whole of their lives and to live together” (181d). They avoid deception and inconstancy (181d), prefer public to secret love (182d), and are willing even to choose relatively ugly youths (*aischious*; 182d), so long as they are noble and excellent. Given the satisfaction of all these conditions, Athenian custom gives the lover great encouragement—to the point of permitting and even praising actions that would appear absurd or bad in anyone else—imploring and supplicating, and oaths, and sleeping on the doorstep, and “being willing to serve in a servitude that no slave ever endured” (183a). Even when they break their promises, there is indulgence (183b).

So all the young man needs to do, in order to receive good treatment, is to test the prospective *erastēs* carefully (184a) and take a good deal of time to look into the man's character. That is what Pausanias says. And yet we wonder whether the problems have really been solved. Pausanias's *erōs* is really *erōs*—it is characterized by distraction, a neglect of everything and everyone else, a willingness to do things usually thought shameful. But if it is this, how do we know that it will not be capable of inconstant and bad behavior to the *erōmenos*? The mention of indulgence for broken promises is particularly ominous. The fact that *erōs* is directed at the soul rather than (primarily) the body offers some reassurance. But we might well feel that Pausanias has not fully come to grips with the danger of the passion, or

offered a full psychological argument explaining how his Ouranian love can retain the madness while expecting to avoid its bad consequences.

In short, Athenian culture of the fifth and fourth centuries tries very hard to work out a conception of "legitimate *erōs*" that will recognize the potentially lethal power of the passion but show how that power can be harnessed toward friendship and education. To a great extent this is done by focusing on notions of respect for the soul, reverence for the gods (even for the loved one, or the lover, as inhabited by god), and generous altruism. But there is no stable equilibrium reached here, no point at which the lover does not have to protest a little too much that his intentions are wholly benign. This is because the tradition continues to recognize the passion as a form of madness and continues to hold that "well-intentioned violence" is something of a contradiction in terms.

III. "LYSIAS": CHOOSING THE NONLOVER

Socrates follows Phaedrus outside the city walls, hoping to hear what Phaedrus has been discussing with the famous orator Lysias. The topic, says Phaedrus, will suit Socrates very well indeed (227c), since it was *erōs*. Lysias had written a speech depicting one of the beautiful young men as being propositioned (*peirōmenon*; 227c6)—"but not by a lover [*erastou*]"—that was, in fact, the really clever part—for he says that one should give oneself to the person who is not in love, rather than to a person who is" (227c). The speech is introduced, then, as something clever and paradoxical: by playing on the fact that the conventional name for the older party to a male-male sexual relationship is *erastēs*, an agent noun from the verb *eran*, Lysias makes it look as almost like a contradiction in terms that one should be asked to give oneself to someone whose mental condition is not characterized as *erōs*. But, as we shall see, the speech is clever precisely because it combines cultural paradox with sound cultural good sense. It presents an argument that is very hard to refute, leading to a conclusion that is strikingly discordant with conventional practice. This may be why it has had such an effect on Phaedrus, whom the *Symposium* has depicted as a rather uncritical enthusiast for *erōs* and a defender of the moral goods that this sort of passion can promote. Socrates, teasing him, implies that he is as if sexually aroused by the speech: "Show me first, my dear fellow, what you are holding in your left hand under your cloak: I bet it's the speech itself (228d).

The speech of "Lysias" has generally received a bad press from its modern commentators. Hackforth condemns the speaker's "coldly prudential

calculation," his obliviousness to "romantic sentiment."²⁷ Charles Griswold says that the speaker is "rather base,"²⁸ and manipulative in the use he intends to make of the young men. About the related first speech of Socrates, he writes that the speaker's position "condemns passion for the sake of defending reason, but does so in a way that debases man, in whom passion and reason are combined, to the bestial. This is admirably conveyed by the verse that Socrates breaks into"²⁹—but of course, that verse ("as wolves love lambs, so *erastai* love a boy"; 241d) depicts the rapacious wolflike conduct of the person in love, not of the Lysianic person-not-in-love. Christopher Rowe calls the speech of "Lysias" "empty, clever, rhetorical and essentially playful," and concludes, "whether the non-lover's position is actually consistent with 'merit' of any sort is another matter."³⁰ Such arguments may rest on the anachronistic premise that male-male sex acts can be made all right by overwhelming love but are base when we take love away. They may also rest on some rather modern assumptions about the goodness of love, which portray love as glorious and sweet, rather than dangerous and destructive. In any case, I shall argue that this simple condemnation of the speaker is not sustainable if we set the speech in its cultural context, where it is indeed a brilliantly clever response to a young man's dilemma.

One more commentary on the speech must now be introduced before we analyze the speech itself. This is my own earlier analysis. I defended (at least initially) the position of "Lysias" as a very sensible one, using a modern parallel.³¹ Imagine, I said, a young woman who has a career in a male-dominated profession where she finds herself surrounded by suitors who are both older and more powerful than she. This young woman, let us imagine, wants both sex and the type of friendship that will be good for her career. Let us suppose (to make the parallel to ancient Athens closer) that the class of available sex partners is limited to the people with whom she must work. The question that faces this woman now is: should she prefer the person who is in love with her, or a person whose attitude is one of balanced friendship? I shall argue that my parallel does in fact help us to get at some of what is attractive about the speech, but that it is less effective, ultimately, than a more direct historical analysis that would show the complexities of what a Greek *erōmenos* would be likely to think and feel. Such an analysis can show us both why the speech seems initially attractive and why, from the very first, it is felt as paradoxical and incomplete.³²

Throughout, I shall use the conventional terms "lover" and "nonlover" to translate *erōn* and *mē erōn*, for the sake of ease. But it is important to bear in mind that these are rather misleading translations: the Greek distinguishes between the "person who is in love" and the "person who is not in

love." Both of these people desire to be the young man's "lover," in the sense of "sexual partner."

The young man is characterized as a typical, good-looking *erōmenos* of good family and good prospects. The speaker assumes that he is interested in the development of his mind and character, in bodily health and strength, in the integrity of his property, in reputation and political advancement, in good relations with his family. It is assumed that he is going to give his sexual favors to somebody: the only question is, to whom? He is now told that his personal aims will be thwarted by a sexual relationship with the passionate lover, and not only not thwarted but considerably advanced by a relationship with the nonlover, if he picks a nonlover who has the right characteristics. The speaker's argument relies on a conception of *erōs* that is deeply embedded in the culture.³³ It leaves some things out, as we shall see, but what it leaves in is familiar. *Erōs* is not defined, but is taken to be a condition of the personality in which an unreasoning "mad" passion, strongly sexual in nature, takes the person over, acquires the force of necessity (231a, 233c), and deprives the person of self-control and deliberation. The object of this passion is the boy's bodily beauty (232e3, 234a); its goal is the lover's sexual satisfaction and pleasure (233e2, 233a), and the satisfaction desired is exclusive (232c). The state is associated with the absence of good reasoning and self-government (231a, d, 233c).

The speaker now argues that a relationship with such a person will have a number of bad consequences for the boy.³⁴ First of all, he will be associated with a person who is going to neglect his own property and affairs and who will incur the blame and reproach of his friends (231b, 234b), and this cannot be very good for the young man's own advancement. Moreover, such a lover will, by indiscretion, harm the young man's reputation (232a–b) and, by jealousy, cut him off from the other advantageous associations (231c, 232c–d) and make life unpleasant (232c, 233c). Because the lover cares only for the young man's beauty, he will not care for his character or education (232e, 233a–d); by flattery he may even harm his moral development. Moreover, because he never was a friend in the first place he will prove unstable: when his desire ceases he will be off to someone else and his exclusivity now will entail bad treatment then (231 c).

On the other side, we have the nonlover. He too desires the boy's sexual favors, responds to his physical beauty, and hopes to gain sexual pleasure. But his claim to the boy's favor rests on character, rather than passion: he expects to get what he wants "through excellence [*di' aretēn*]" (232d, 234b). His desire has a larger focus than the lover's, for it takes in the boy's character as well as his body (232d). His goal is above all friendly love or

philia—whose intensity, he points out, can be in its own way as great as that of *erōs* (233c–d). We intensely love members of our family, and will make many sacrifices for them.³⁵

This sexual partner, unlike the lover, offers the young man a long-term relationship (“throughout the whole of life” [232a]; “for a long time” [233c5]). Based on something deeper than the evanescence of bodily beauty, the relationship can and will endure. Because it lacks the jealousy and possessiveness of *erōs*, it will not be full of quarrels or cut the young man off from other desirable associations (233c, 232d–e). And it will, throughout, be focused on the improvement of the young man’s mind and character (233b etc.).

This speech really is enormously clever, in terms of the cultural tension I have described. Pace Hackforth, Griswold, and Rowe, it says much that is inspired good sense, much that its young target has reason to accept with a Phaedrus-like enthusiasm. For it persuasively drives a wedge between love’s madness and its alleged educational benefits. It points out what any Greek young man would have to grant, given the conception of marriage that he grows up with: that *erōs* is not necessary for sexual desire and sexual conduct.³⁶ It must be emphasized that this would be a completely unremarkable claim, and one with which any Greek youth bent on eventual marriage could be expected to agree.³⁷ But then, if what the young man wants is an intimate relationship in which he trades his sexual favors for educational benefits,³⁸ how much better to get it from a nonlover of good character, whose mind is free and clear, whose eye looks beyond beauty to character, and whose gifts will therefore prove enduring. Pausanias suggested that *erōs* itself could take character as its object and become aroused even by relatively ugly youths, so long as they are good and noble (1820). This the Lysianic speaker plausibly doubts, and he has much of the culture behind him when he does so. We do not see pinup art of ugly but noble and intelligent youths. The standard erotic graffito and vase caption is not “So-and-So *gennaios*” (So-and-So is noble), but “So-and-So *kalos*” (So-and-So is beautiful).³⁹ We all know that *erōs* is hooked on bodily beauty and is a kind of madness born of that beauty. But if *erōs* is narrow in this way, then it is unreliable as a source of generosity and educational assistance. If, furthermore, it is possessive and acquisitive in its aims, it will not wish to deliver such assistance, except as a way of securing sexual favors.

The young man might wonder at this point why he should give himself sexually to anyone at all. Note that Socrates’ first, Lysianic, speech omits this positive advice. Here we see clearly the limits of my earlier analysis:⁴⁰ for

(plausibly enough in modern terms) I imagined the woman in question as having strong sexual desires of her own, and as wishing to gratify those desires as well as desires for friendship and education. The Greek *erōmenos*, as conventionally, normatively imagined, has no such motive. Perhaps he really does, and simply dares not acknowledge it; very likely this was the case for some, if not many, *erōmenoi*, and the speech to some extent may be exploiting a gap between social norm and reality. On the other hand, perhaps he simply believes that it is only by giving the nonlover something precious of his own—and what else has such an inexperienced youth to offer?—that he can reasonably demand such services in return. Whatever his motives, the young man has been given a powerful reason to accept the proposition of the nonlover.

But the audience for this speech would also be aware that something important has been omitted. With the omission of passion and madness, he might sense that “Lysias” has omitted a powerful motive to care for the young man’s good. He might begin to ask questions, such as: If the nonlover does not feel exclusive passion for the young man, how do we know that he will focus on giving favors to that young man, rather than to many people? After all, bodily beauty is one part of what he wants, and why, if he is not in love, wouldn’t he pursue it in many youths whose character he approves? How do we know that he will not make this same proposition to many people, and dilute his attention and favors accordingly? Moreover, what makes us think that such a person, prudent and in control of himself, will take risks and make sacrifices for the beloved, as people in love are known to do?⁴¹ Doesn’t the exclusivity of the passion, and even its mad focus on beauty, have something to do with the readiness of the lover to go to extraordinary lengths to please and help the one he loves? Isn’t love, in fact, more generous, and less single-mindedly connected with grasping and possession, than the speech has let on? These reservations are shortly brought to the surface in Socrates’ speech, which makes a brilliant proposal for the resolution of the cultural dilemma.

IV. SOCRATES: GENEROUS MADNESS

Socrates is ashamed of his own Lysianic speech. He says that this shame has deep cultural roots: “My good Phaedrus, you recognize that the two speeches were quite shameless—both mine just now and the one you read from the book. If anyone should chance to hear them who was noble and gentle in

character, someone who either was currently or had been previously in love with another person of similar character, and he heard us saying that lovers conceive great hatreds on the basis of small causes and conduct themselves in a spiteful and harmful way toward their boyfriends, how could he fail to think that he was hearing the speech of people who had been brought up somewhere among sailors, and who had never seen a case of free-and-generous [*eleutheron*] love? Wouldn't he be far from agreeing with our blame of *erōs*?" In other words—and our examination of Aeschines and Pausanias has shown us how plausible Socrates' claim is—there is a conception of *erōs* that is linked to good birth and good character (we would not expect to find it among sailors), according to which *erōs* is itself generous, free from spite and from the wish to harm. The question Socrates must now address is the big cultural question: how can *erōs* be this way, if it is also madness?

Socrates begins by making distinctions. Madness is not a single thing (244a5–6). Some forms of madness may indeed produce harm; some, however, are responsible for very great goods. From this point on, Socrates ignores the harm-producing varieties (which, in fact, he does not explicitly mention—I have supplied that as a way of making sense of his implicit distinction).⁴² He certainly does not deny that there may be harm-producing varieties even within madness; he never holds that madness in a lover is sufficient for the good conduct he will describe, and he strongly suggests that it is not. On the other hand, he sets out to describe a variety that is linked with good conduct and generosity, and he will show us that this type is really erotic madness—indeed, that its benefits cannot be had without madness.

Central in Socrates' solution to the cultural problem is an account of how *erōs* can take as its object both bodily beauty and excellence of soul—how, in fact, excellence of soul can manifest itself in the features and shape of the body. "Lysias" had pushed hard here: either the person is focused on character, in which case he is not in love, or he is focused on bodily beauty, in which case he cannot be generous and reliable. Socrates never denies that bodily beauty is extremely important to falling in love; he does not retreat to Pausanias's position that a rather ugly person can still be the object of passion. Sight is absolutely central in his account of falling in love—in fact, desire is imagined as stirred up by particles that stream in from the young man's beauty through the eyes (251c5). What he says, however, is that the "godlike face that represents beauty well and the form of the body" (251a) can itself contain traces or signs of the character, or the god within (252dff.). Some lovers, whose vision of the ideal is faint, will not notice

those signs, and will attach themselves to the body alone, seeking reproduction or casual bodily pleasure.⁴³ But those who have a more vivid memory of the ideal notice its traces in the beloved and seek a beloved in accordance with the characteristics of the soul that they truly admire (251aff.). Whether consciously or not, they search for features that have more than a certain pleasing surface configuration, that express and gesture toward something deeper. Their strongest responses are to the body as illuminated by a soul of a certain type, containing the divine. Love's initial shiver is a shiver of awe (251a), "and then, gazing at him, he reveres him as god, and if he were not afraid of getting a reputation for being mad, he would make sacrifices to his *paidika* as to the image of a god" (251a).

Here we have a crucial step in the resolution of the cultural dilemma. For Socrates has very plausibly described an aspect of the real-life experience of falling in love. He may be wrong to think that people are aroused primarily by admirable moral attributes—rather than, for example, by the other person's similarity to a parent, or by his athletic ability, or something else less high-minded—but he certainly is right to say that the bare, unanimated form of beauty is rarely what arouses desire, if we exclude the crudest sort of promiscuous desire. The "person brought up among sailors" is (if we may disregard the class prejudice that Plato so easily expresses) the person who gets turned on by pinup art, with its generalizable, fungible images and its absence of animation. People of good character, he argues, not implausibly, look for something more than the pinup. (Zeus, says Euripides' chorus,⁴⁴ fell in love with Ganymede when he saw him bathing after running a race—so even here excellence, not just a pretty face, was the focus of desire.) Plato's suggestion—not unprecedented, as we have seen, but developed with a new sharpness—is that the real object of love's intensity is the divine.

Socrates' account of the lover's madness makes it perfectly clear that this is really madness, not a tame friendship of the Lysianic kind. Like the Lysianic sort, it involves sexual arousal—this is made unmistakable by the account of what the dark horse wants to do, as well as by the account of the whole response to the boy as being like a tickling and boiling, words by convention strongly associated with sexual arousal (251c).⁴⁵ But, unlike the friendship of the nonlover, it is also really a kind of madness and distraction—full of the gadfly's sting of painful longing (*oistrai kai odunatai*; 251d), which cannot permit the lover rest or satisfaction in the absence of the young man's beauty. The joy the lover feels at the sight of the young man is metaphorically described in language suggestive of sexual pleasure and even orgasm: "Seeing him, and channeling desire into herself as through an

irrigation trench, the soul releases what had then been pent up, and she takes a respite from her strings and agonies, and reaps right then a pleasure that is the sweetest of all" (251e).

How is this madness made a source of generosity and kindliness? Here we arrive at the heart of Socrates' bold solution. Two motives for good conduct are suggested: reverence and gratitude. Reverence first. Seeing the young man's beauty as not just pinup art, but as something splendid and wonderful, something that contains traces of the divine, the lover is inclined not toward manipulation and use, but toward worship. He does all the things lovers conventionally do—neglecting his relatives and property, sleeping wherever he can be near his love, disdaining reputation—because the loved one is for him a kind of divinity (*sebesthai ton to kallos echonta*; 252a). But this kind of awe actually inhibits greedy sexual aims—the good horse helps to rein in the dark one—and prompts a generous and indeed a self-abnegating treatment of the partner. The second motive is gratitude: "because, in addition to revering the one who has beauty, he finds him the only healer of the greatest pains" (252a). And it is not just that the young man heals the pain that he also causes: he also waters the roots of the lover's wings, helping to restore him to a healthier condition. In less metaphorical language, being in love makes the personality take on a depth and richness that the lover recognizes as good. He understands that the young man is the source of this richness, and he benefits him out of gratitude for this great gift. Finally, as the relationship develops, he recognizes that the loved one is the vehicle of divinity through whom and in whom he follows up the traces of the god he himself reveres; and this epistemological gratitude⁴⁶ increases his motives for virtuous conduct. "Thus it comes about that the soul of the lover follows the young man in a condition of awe and reverence" (254e).

So the young man gets a surprise. (What Socrates suggests is that this is a common surprise in real-life love—at least among good people. His own contribution is a new analysis, not the production of a new phenomenon.) He has probably heard bad things about lovers. But as time goes on and their intimacy increases, "the evident good will of the lover strikes and dazzles the *erōmenos*, who sees that all his other *philo*i and associates put together do not contribute even a fraction of the *philia* that the inspired *philos* does" (255b). He spends time with him, as they touch one another in the gymnasium and other places of association (255b). And then something remarkable happens: he falls love in return, conceiving a desire that is similar to, though weaker than, the desire of the *erastēs* for him (255d). It really is *erōs*, says Socrates, and includes bodily desire—although the young man himself calls it not *erōs* but *philia*. Some such couples make love; the highest

contemplative types abstain, holding that sexual activity will distract them from the goods they pursue (256a–e). Although the latter are the best, both types are rewarded by the gods in the afterlife; the indulgent ones recover their wings together “on account of their *erōs*,” and live a happy life in the bright heavens wandering around together.⁴⁷

Socrates claims that this is the story of many lovers in his culture—that if we understand correctly the metaphysics behind sexual attraction in good and high-minded people, we shall see that there are good reasons for the cultural connection between love and generosity, love and educational benefits. It is reasonable enough that someone who sees the beloved as containing a god, and who is inspired with mad passion for that god, will behave in a fashion both reverent and generous. Someone who just wants to make love with an attractive body will not behave this way, nor, he holds, will the Lysianic nonlover, operating out of a combination of ordinary friendship with bodily desire. He concludes: “Such and so many, my boy, are the divine gifts that the *philia* of an *erastēs* will give you. But an intimacy with the nonloved, all mixed up with mortal self-possession, retentively dispensing its mortal and niggardly benefits, will give birth in your dear soul to a lack of generosity that is praised by the many as virtue, and will cause it to roll around and beneath the earth for nine thousand years devoid of understanding” (256e–257a).

V. EPICURUS SIDES WITH “LYSIAS”

There are several chapters that should be added to this story before we get to the Stoics. I could talk about the Cynics and the Cyrenaics, and about Aristotle’s position, which appears to be indeterminate between that of Pausanias and that of “Lysias.”⁴⁸ But the most important transitional step, in terms of explaining the later debate, takes place with Epicurus. As I have noted, Cicero sees us as having to choose between Epicurus and the Stoa on the value of *erōs*. Much later, Alexander of Aphrodisias represents the choice in a similar way (*In Arist. Top.* 2.139.21 Wallies). So we should have the Epicurean solution before us as a background to the Stoics, whether they were consciously adverting to it or not. Our task is complex, since we need to confront a possible discrepancy between Epicurus and Lucretius, who is also our primary source for the Epicurean position. I shall be very brief here, since I have treated the material at length elsewhere.⁴⁹

Epicurus himself is unremittingly hostile to *erōs*. He defines it as “an intense desire for intercourse, accompanied by the gadfly’s sting and distrac-

tion" (*oistrou kai adēmonias*; 483 Usener)—an accurate, if one-sided, account of the cultural understanding—and sternly warns that it is not god sent and that the wise man will never have it (D.L. 10.118). Here, as so frequently elsewhere, he rejects Platonism—perhaps in accordance with his well-known saying "I have spat on the *kalon* and all those who gape at it in an empty fashion" (51 Usener). It seems significant that he refers to the gadfly's sting of longing, which was so prominent a feature of the *Phaedrus*'s description of the god-sent madness—in the context of denying that the *erōs* is god sent and that it can be a source of great goods. "For a young person," he advises, "the portion of safety is to guard your youth and ward off those things that pollute everything in accordance with agonizing desires" (*Sent. Vat.* 80). This may have a double meaning: avoid falling in love, and also ward off the mad *erastēs*.

On the other hand, the record is more complex concerning sexual desire and sexual conduct. "Intercourse never helped anyone, and it is lucky if it does not harm" (D.L. 10.118), he wrote in his *Symposium*. A young man who asks for sexual advice is given a related answer: "You tell me that the movement of the flesh has made you excessively preoccupied with achieving sexual intercourse. So long as you do not break any laws, or upset customs that are well designed, or offend any person around you, or harm your health, or waste your property, you may indulge your inclination as you wish. But in fact it is impossible not to run up against one of these obstacles. For sexual intercourse never did any good, and it is lucky if it does no harm" (*Sent. Vat.* 51). On the other hand, "Lysias" recognized all those reasons for avoiding the lover, while telling his young man that sexual intimacy with a nonlover could be the answer. Could Epicurus accept this solution? There are a number of fragments that give indications of positive delight in sex, above all, a famous fragment of the *Peri telous*, or *On the Goal*: "I have no idea what I should consider good, if I take away the pleasures of smell, take away the pleasures of sexual intercourse, take away the pleasures of sound, take away the pleasures of beautiful shapes" (67 Usener).

We must be careful here to distinguish different roles and people. The male recipient of Epicurus's letter is not the *erōmenos* in the speech of "Lysias," for he is imagined as having intense desires for intercourse. He is likely, then, to be a somewhat older male who is thinking about playing the active *erastēs* role with either men or women or both. (Lucr. 4.1053 envisages arousal of the male by both female and young male forms.) So far as I can see, nothing in Epicurus gives us information about the *erōmenos* and the choices about intercourse he ought to make, provided he safely guards himself against (his or another's) "mad" desires. The *erastēs* is permitted

sexual expression so long as he contrives to avoid the difficulties that usually attend it—which, thinks Epicurus, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to do. Certainly, he should not take the route of marriage and children, since that will lead to many distractions and impediments.⁵⁰ It is striking that Epicurus, in spite of his recognition of the dangers attending intercourse, never takes the Cynic way out by praising masturbation; the fragment from *On the Goal* suggests that *aphrodisia* were still his preference.

Now we must turn to Lucretius, knowing as we do so that we may be diverging from Epicurus.⁵¹ (We have a further difficulty: Latin lacks the clear Greek distinction between *erōs* and *philia*, rendering both by *amor*.)⁵² Lucretius seems to concur in Epicurus's thoroughly negative judgment on *erōs* and "madness." In what appears to be a concerted assault on the views of the *Phaedrus* (or, if not these, then their popular equivalent)⁵³ he traces many of the harms of *erōs* to the idea that the beloved is divine—and to the related notion that in sexual intercourse the lover will become fused with the divine loved one. Rather than leading to Platonic reverence and generosity, he holds, the divinization of the beloved leads to obsessive jealousy, to an overwhelming desire to incorporate and immobilize, and, through these, to sadistic behavior in lovemaking itself. It leads, as well, to an inability to confront without disgust and disillusionment the evidence of the beloved's everyday bodily reality.⁵⁴

On the other hand, a sexual relationship may avoid the long list of problems attendant on *erōs* if it avoids the overestimation inherent in *erōs* and learns to "yield to human life" (4.1191). In this spirit, Lucretius can recommend marriages (and, possibly, other long-term relationships) based on friendship and character. Like Pausanias, he insists that such relationships do not require outstanding beauty in the partner (4.1278–87); unlike Pausanias, he holds that such relationships at their best are totally lacking in passionate madness. Showing a remarkable interest in women's sexuality, he argues that women do experience sexual pleasure (4.1192–1207); he suggests that this will be recognized by a male only if he does not make his own projects of possession or incorporation the focus of all attention.⁵⁵

In short, Lucretius has defended a position very close to that of "Lysias," though his focus is on the marital relationship rather than on male-male intimacy.⁵⁶ (On the other hand, we saw that the position of "Lysias" presupposed and to some extent perhaps modeled itself on an antecedent conception of marriage.) Like "Lysias," he prefers a relationship in which the equivalent of the *erastēs* is not mad, is not in love; he makes many of the same arguments about the connection between love and bad behavior to the equivalent of the *erōmenos*, that is, the woman. The major difference is

connected with the shift from the male-male to the male-female relationship: he takes an interest in the woman's sexual satisfaction and (implicitly) urges a woman to prefer the nonlover partly on grounds of her own sexual satisfaction (insofar as she has any choice in the matter—for her own choice is not really discussed in the passage, addressed as it is to a male interlocutor).

VI. FALLING IN LOVE WITH VIRTUE; OR, TWENTY-EIGHT CANDLES

Do the Stoics side with "Lysias" or with Plato's Socrates? That is, do they banish madness or defend it as productive of very great goods? This is a very difficult question to answer, and we had better begin by simply enumerating some facts that are less controversial.

First of all, it seems fairly clear that for the Stoics the sexual act itself (and whether it is with a man or a woman) is an "indifferent"—that is, something of no positive or negative value in and of itself, but something that can be good if chosen in the right way at the right time, and so on, as virtue would dictate (see Stob. 2.9–11; Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 1.160, 3.200, 3.245; Origen *c. Cels.* 4.45). This means that they begin from a position on intercourse that is, in effect, that of Pausanias. What we now need to know is, are the motives, aims, and desires conventionally associated with *erōs* among those that can possibly be involved in a virtuous action?

The Stoic wise man is *apathēs*: that is, he experiences none of the *pathē*. The *pathē* are defined by Chrysippus as judgments that involve the ascription of high worth to unstable "external goods," items not fully controlled by the agent's reason and will. All such states are held by Stoics to be bad, both because the value ascriptions are false and because they are attended by bad consequences—weakness, loss of integrity, the propensity to excess.⁵⁷ The standard ancient critique of "madness" lies close to these Stoic anti-passion arguments, for they do repeatedly insist, like "Lysias," that the person in the grip of any of the *pathē* is in a state in which he is pushed around as if by necessity by his attachments to externals, and in which he cannot reason prudently or soundly. The Stoic doctrine of *erōs* should be understood in the light of this more general doctrine and should, if at all possible, be interpreted in such a way as to render it consistent with that doctrine. (Cicero thinks that this is not possible, but we need not follow him.)

On the other hand, as we have seen, the Greek Stoics strongly approve of *erōs*: "And the wise man will be in love with [*erasthēsesthai*] young men

[young people?] who by their physical form [*eidous*] display a natural aptitude for excellence, as Zeno says in his *Republic* and Chrysippus in the first book of his *On Lives*, and Apollodorus in his *Ethics*. They define *erōs* as an attempt to make a friend⁵⁸ due to beauty appearing; and they say that it is directed not at intercourse but at friendship [lit., it is not of intercourse but of friendship]. At any rate, they say that Thrasonides, even though he had the woman he loved [*erōmenēn*] in his power, kept away from her because she hated him. So *erōs* is directed at friendship, as Chrysippus also says in his *On Erōs*; and they say that it is not sent by the gods. And they say that the prime [*hōra*] of a young person is the bloom of virtue" (D.L. 7.129–30). This account of *erōs* is repeated in many sources, the definition being given repeatedly and with only slight variation, usually in the form "attempt to form a friendship on account of the appearing beauty of young men [people?] in their prime" [*epibolē philopoiias dia kallos emphainomenon neōn kai horaion*]. Let us now comment on each of the major parts of the Diogenes passage, bringing in other sources as we do so.

1. *Be in love; attempt to form a friendship.* To indicate that the wise man's being-in-love is not a *pathos*, is not a way of being at the mercy of some piece of the external world which one has overvalued, the Stoics stress that it is a deliberately undertaken project: an attempt (*epibolē*)⁵⁹ to form a certain sort of relationship. "They are of the opinion that the wise man will conduct himself with practical wisdom and dialectically, and sympotically and erotically" (Stob. 2.65.15 [SVF 3.717]). Just as the wise man will set himself to drink the right amount but never be overcome by drunkenness, so too with *erōs*: he will set out to form a good sort of relationship. In the technical sense of the theory of the passions, where *epithumia* is one of the four genera of the *pathē*, "Erōs is not *epithumia*" (Stob., passage quoted).⁶⁰

2. *Sexual conduct.* This does not mean that *erōs* will not be attended by sexual desire (in the Stoic view, a bodily desire like hunger, and not in its nature a *pathos* or corruption of judgment). When the wise man judges it appropriate, sexual conduct will follow. As we recall, sexual conduct is an indifferent—which means that it is virtuous if done by the wise man, with all of his knowledge of the good. The sexual nature of the wise man's intentions is in fact stressed by the Stoics, who also define *erōs* as a "hunt" or "chase" (*thēra*) "after a young man [*meirakiou*] who is undeveloped but naturally endowed for virtue" (Plut. *De communibus notitiis* 1073B). They thus connect their *erōs* with popular Greek conceptions of the aim of the *erastēs*—see, for example, Plato *Lysias* 205e–206a and *Symposium* 203d (where *erōs* is called a *thereutēs deinos* and a plotter about the beautiful).⁶¹ Zeno is credited not only with intense sexual enthusiasm for his young men (Ath. 563e:

see below), but also with theoretical advocacy of intercrural intercourse as a norm of sexual conduct.⁶² A speaker in Plutarch reports that Zeno discussed this topic in his *Republic*. Although the speaker himself is a little annoyed at this—he wishes that Zeno had discussed it in a playful after-dinner speech instead—the young men who are his audience are themselves irritated by his irritation, and clearly seem to prefer Zeno's topic. ("This put the young men out of countenance, and they sat in silence": Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 653E.)⁶³

We may add that the Stoics apparently do not demand sexual exclusivity in such relationships: "Do not have intercourse with the young man you love in preference to the one you do not (or vice versa), or with a female in preference to a male (or vice versa)" (Sext. Emp. *Math.* 2.190 = *Pyr.* 3.245). While this may simply mean that the wise person will sometimes see good reasons of a particular sort for having intercourse with someone else, it may also mean that sexual exclusivity is more actively discouraged—as indeed some of the texts about the Stoic ideal city appear to suggest. It would appear that avoidance of sexual exclusivity is connected with the prevention of excessively intense attachments that would lead to *pathē*.⁶⁴

3. *Young men in their prime.* Most versions of the Stoic definition are gender ambiguous: though the "young" is grammatically masculine, the group may include females as well as males. Schofield has argued well that, given the Cynic origins of the Stoic view of sex, and given the Stoic views about female equality, we should understand females to be included alongside males—at least as the younger parties to the relationships but also, if the genders are to be truly equal in the ideal city, as "wise men" who seek youthful beauty.⁶⁵ On the other hand, we must grant that Zeno appears to have been much more interested in young men. As Athenaeus writes, "You [sc. Stoics] are oglers of boys, and in this alone emulate the founder of your philosophy Zeno the Phoenician, who never consorted with a woman, but always with boy-friends, as Antigonos of Carystus records in his *Life* of him" (563E; trans. Schofield 1991, 33). The ideal city is built around couples in very much the same manner of the Sacred Band and the imaginary army of Phaedrus's speech in the *Symposium*: the image is that of male-male couples, one member older, one younger, whose mutual loyalty and devotion will give the city strong sources of motivation for virtue (Ath. 561C). Women are certainly not excluded, but they are not the theoretical focus.⁶⁶ And the reference to the prime or *hōra* of the beautiful person is especially familiar within the conventions of male-male love.

4. *Appearing beauty; the aptitude for excellence.* The Stoic definition, like the *Phaedrus*, gives the sight of beauty a central causal role in *erōs*. On

the other hand, Stoic texts frequently insist that their kind of *erōs* is “of the soul” rather than “of the body” (see *SVF* 3.721; Ath. 563E: “not bodies but soul”). Further problems come from the fact that they paradoxically insist that young people are actually ugly, since they have not yet become good (Plut. *De communibus notitiis* 1072Eff.). We should solve this problem, I think, by pressing the link with the *Phaedrus*: as in Socrates’ conception, so here the outward appearance of a beautiful young person may “display”—as Diogenes in fact says, citing Zeno and Chrysippus—“a natural aptitude for excellence.” We cannot tell whether all physical beauty is taken to be the sign of this aptitude, but the Stoics appear to think that it is necessary that some beauty be present—at least if the response to the signs of excellence is to deserve the name of *erōs*. Then the wise man will reason that what he finds so moving is not really the bodily beauty, but the signs of the soul within that make their way into his presence through the body. He can fairly claim that his object is really the soul, not the body, and that the young really are not truly beautiful until they have been educated.⁶⁷

5. Its goal is not intercourse but friendship. As we have seen already, intercourse will be available in these erotic relationships, when the virtuous judgment of the wise man chooses it. On the other hand, this is not the goal of the relationship, or what gives it its *raison d’être*. Diogenes’ further explication of the point is revealing. Zeno and Chrysippus, he says, cite the example of Thrasonides, in Menander’s *Misoumenos*, who kept away sexually from the young woman he desired because she hated him. The moral of that story is that sex should never be chosen when it cannot be combined with friendship—not that it should never be chosen at all. We can compare the Stoic position with that of a speaker at a philosophy conference who, when asked, “Did you come here in order to eat?” will say, “Of course not. I came here to attend the conference.” But this person is highly likely to eat while attending the conference, since she will get hungry—provided she sees no good reason to abstain. The overall goal of the Stoic lover, like that of Pausanias and “Lysias” and the lover in the *Phaedrus*, will, then, be a friendship that improves the character of the young.

6. Not sent by the gods. This is puzzling, for in the Stoic universe everything is sent by god. Nor does the plural give us an easy way out (taking the reference to be to popular gods rather than to Zeus)—for Stoics often use the plural in perfectly serious contexts.⁶⁸ I am inclined to connect this claim with the denial that *erōs* is madness or passion, for the ordinary conception of “god-sent” *erōs* is closely linked with ideas of madness, transport, and necessity (the ideas “Lysias” pilloried). In other words, we should think of it as a project that is “up to us,” not as something that comes upon us sent

from on high. It is always in our power to regulate and even to refuse it. Does this also involve the Stoic in denying the godlike splendor of the loved one's beauty, and the mysterious power of reverence that splendor exerts? It might seem so, but we must reserve our conclusion on this central matter. We could, however, avoid the entire question by adopting the manuscript variant *epimempton*, "blameworthy" (for *theopempton*, "sent by the gods,"), as does Long in the O.C.T.

In order to emphasize their allegiance to the goal of friendship, the Stoics say something surprising about the age of the *erōmenos*. In Athenian convention, the best age is usually understood to be the time between the attainment of full height and the growth of the beard: if we go by modern growth patterns, perhaps fifteen to nineteen, though there is some reason to think that ancient Mediterranean growth patterns were slower.⁶⁹ Pausanias had insisted on a relatively high threshold of entry into the *erōmenos* relation: when the beard first starts to grow. His life gave evidence of an unusually high age of exit as well: he and Agathon began their relationship when the latter was eighteen, and it was still going on twelve years later.⁷⁰ The Stoics follow this lead. We do not know what they say about the precise age of entry, but their exit age, apparently recommended by Zeno, was found very remarkable by Athenaeus: it was put at twenty-eight.⁷¹ Chrysippus is said to have spoken about the need for the *erōmenos* to shave his chin (564A), and Antigonos of Carystus, in his *Life of Zeno*, stated—probably with mocking intent—that they actually had to shave the rump of the *erōmenos* as well (cited in Ath. 564E). The point of this departure from cultural convention is probably to emphasize that long-term friendship, not momentary bodily delight, is the goal: they will put up even with someone who has become culturally subpar as a sex partner, since they obey in this way the educational requirements of *philia*.⁷²

Note that it is very important to the Stoic doctrine that *erōs* so defined should not be reciprocal. For only the wise man can use *erōs* correctly and well; in the hands of the nonwise, such a relation is dangerous. As Seneca says to Lucilius, "You and I, who are still a long way short of being wise men, should not blunder our way into something which is turbulent, uncontrollable, forsworn to another, and cheapened in its own eyes" (*Ep.* 116.4–5).⁷³ This means, it seems, that the *Phaedrus* doctrine of reciprocal *erōs*, or *anterōs*, must be rejected by the Stoic sage, who must not comport himself in such a manner as to arouse such an intense feeling in the younger partner. This may be a further reason for the Greek Stoics' intense focus on male-male relations, even though their arguments support, in general, male-female equality, for it was the conventional norm that the *eromenōs* would

not fall in love in return, though he would certainly have *philia*. However much the *Phaedrus* may depict a known reality, the public norm was otherwise. Females, by contrast, were well known to be very ready to fall in love—in fact, Phaedrus in the *Symposium* compares the wife Alcestis to the *erastēs* in the male-male relationship, despite her younger age, because of the passion she evidently displayed (*Symp.* 179B–D). The education of young women, then, would not so obviously be fostered by an erotic tie, and this may be another reason for Zeno’s apparent avoidance of the topic of young women as *erōmenai*.⁷⁴

Perhaps, too, the prohibition of *erōs* for the nonwise explains why things stop at twenty-eight,⁷⁵ for the *erōmenos* is now pretty advanced in education and may be able to attempt the transition to the role of wise lover in his own right, a role that is evidently seen as a good one for a Stoic to play, provided that he has become wise.

Now we arrive at the large question: is this really the old *erōs* or isn’t it? Is the Stoic wise man “Lysias” or is he Socrates? Cicero clearly thinks that this is the old erotic passion, with all of its dangers, and thinks, therefore, that the Stoics are flatly inconsistent with their doctrine of the *pathē*, inspired, it would seem, by their strong preference for youthful male bodies:

Let us now turn to the teachers of virtue, the philosophers—who deny that love is directed at intercourse, and in that they take issue with Epicurus, who was not far wrong in my opinion. For what is this “love of friendship”? Why is it that nobody loves an ugly man, or a beautiful old man? For my part I think that this custom was born in the Greek gymnasia, in which this sort of lovemaking is free and permitted. Well, then, did Ennius say: “The beginning of vice is the stripping of bodies among citizens.” And even when such loves are modest, as I see they can be, still they bring anxiety, all the more since they supply their own limit and law. Again, not to speak of the love of women, to which nature has permitted a greater freedom, who has any doubt about what the poets mean by the abduction of Ganymede, and who fails to understand the point of Laius’s language and what he wants in Euripides’ play? What, finally, do the most cultivated men and the greatest poets publish about their own lives in poems and songs? What things Alcaeus, a brave man renowned in his city, writes about the love of young men! Anacreon’s whole corpus is love poetry. Above all, Ibycus of Rhegium was ablaze with love, as is clear from his writings. In fact we see that all those loves are based on sexual desire. We philosophers have come forward, with our Plato as authority, whom Dicaearchus reproves,

not unjustly, to attribute authority to love. The Stoics actually both say that the wise man will fall in love, and define love itself as an attempt to form a friendship from the appearance of beauty. But if in the real world there is any such thing without anxiety, longing, care, sighing, let it be—for then it is empty of all sexual desire; and our discourse is about desire. (*Tusc.* 4.70)

Cicero gives the Stoic a stark choice: either sexual desire, in which case we have a full-blown passion, connected with anxiety, longing, and care, or no sexual desire, in which case we have nothing to worry about. He reproves Plato as the origin of the Stoic doctrine, but he seems unwilling to consider seriously either of the alternatives that Plato's *Phaedrus* offers us: either the nonlover "Lysias," who has sexual desire without anxiety or jealousy because he lacks the madness of *erōs*, or the lover described by Socrates, who has sexual desire without anxiety or jealousy ("using neither spite nor ungenerous hostility toward his *paidika*"; *Phdr.* 253a) precisely because he has a particular species of erotic madness, one that sets him on the road to reverence and generosity. His criticism is useless without further argument to show why neither of these precisely described alternatives is available as a psychological reality. Moreover, it would appear to be in bad faith, given that Cicero, as much as any fifth-century Athenian, accepts a conception of marriage according to which it should contain sexual conduct, therefore of necessity sexual desire, without containing *erōs*. So he knew very well the possibility that he denies, when male-male love enters the picture.

We turn now to Plutarch, who has a different criticism to make. It is that if the Stoics lack all pathos as they understand it, then we should not really let them call their state *erōs*: "Nobody would stop the enthusiasm of the wise for young men [people?], given that there is no pathos in it, if it is called a 'chase' or 'making friends'—but they wouldn't let them call it *erōs*."⁷⁶ In other words, according to the common conception of *erōs*, it contains elements—presumably of "mad" transport, of longing, of intense need for an ungoverned external object—that make it in its very nature a pathos as the Stoics understand that term. Either the wise man is just chasing after young men whom he views as potential friends with an eye to virtue and education (with sex included where appropriate)—in other words, he is "Lysias"—or else he is really needy vis-à-vis, and intensely focused on, that one person, in which case his state is *erōs* according to the common conception, but then he is not a Stoic.

Is Plutarch right? What, we now ask, is the wise man's love like? We should try, at least initially, to imagine it in a way that is consistent with

Stoic doctrine of the *pathē*. The wise man, then, falls in love with a beautiful young man (let us say), whose physical forms show signs of the promising soul within. The beauty is crucial in inspiring the love—in this way *erōs* is distinct, it would seem, from Roman Stoic ideas of marital affection.⁷⁷ Since he is wise, this love is consistent with perfect virtue. This means that it is not characterized by a mistaken overestimation of the importance of its object, vis-à-vis the wise man's own *eudaimonia*. The wise man can certainly have boundless respect and friendship for the humanity of his partner; but he should never think of his partner as an absolutely essential element in his own flourishing. He must at all times keep up the Stoic practice of *praemeditatio malorum*: that is, he must rehearse to himself all the disasters that can befall the young man, or the relationship, or himself, reminding himself that such things are sometimes the will of Zeus. When a disaster does arrive, he must not feel distress or pain—he must tell himself that this was, all along, Zeus's will. So long as things are going well, he can move toward the gratification of his pleasures under the guidance of *boulēsis*, or rational wish, and he can attempt to avoid bad consequences under the guidance of *eulabeia*, or prudent caution.⁷⁸ Finally, he can find joy in the relationship—not, however, the “cheerful joy” that the Stoics denounce, but the “solid,” reliable joy that is defined as *eulogos eparsis*, rational uplift.⁷⁹

In effect, the central object of the wise man's good affective attitudes is always his own virtue and will, seen as sufficient for good life. He will act for the sake of others as the Stoic doctrine of the social *oikeiōsis* recommends, remembering that his own virtue and reason are just part of the rationality of the universe as a whole, and that the interests of others are, in the universal scheme of things, on a par with his own. In benefiting others he does not treat them as merely instrumental to his own projects; he may respect and benefit them for their own sake. On the other hand, his view must be that no concrete human relationship, no form of action toward another concrete human being, is necessary for his *eudaimonia*. All his actions, including his other-regarding actions, will be selected with a view to his own rational perfection, and this will dictate the way in which the interests of others are permitted to count for him. The young man, then, will be seen as a valuable occasion offered by the world for the exercise of social virtue—as one of the rational beings in the universe toward whom that virtue is appropriately exercised. His role is thus somewhat like the role of property, or money, or political office, which also provide occasions for the exercise of virtue—although, given that he is a rational human being, he will merit a respect and concern that these things do not. At the end of each day (if he follows the practice recommended by Seneca *De ira* 3.36),⁸⁰ the wise man

will go over his actions, asking himself whether he has been too concerned with an external object, too reliant on the things of chance. Since he is fully wise, the answer will be no.⁸¹

How, then, can he really be in love? We can certainly see how such a man could “chase” after attractive sexual partners within the constraints imposed by virtue, in much the same way that he would chase after a good meal. (If we return to my example, the philosopher who goes somewhere to attend a conference will not skip the conference to eat, but in the breaks he may well “chase” after a good meal, and genuinely enjoy it.)⁸² We can also understand how such a man could be a really good friend to his young partner, fostering his development toward virtue in a measured and balanced manner. (He would not feel obliged to foster the development of all young men equally, since he would remember that the Stoics perform their duties where life has stationed them, and it is rational to give our near and dear a greater measure of our time and concern.) What we have a hard time imagining is that this man would ever do the things standardly associated with *erōs*—sighs and longing, sleepless nights outside the loved one’s door, extravagant gifts, the disregard of other duties, the disregard of property, the disregard of life itself. We know well that he will not do what Aeschylus’s Achilles did, mourning the death of Patroclus with haunting erotic memories of thighs and kisses.

What has become of reverence and gratitude, the two key Platonic mechanisms for turning madness into virtue? The Stoic wise man will have no more reverence for his boyfriend than for any other human being who is making progress. He will have, in fact, less reverence for him than he has for himself, for the wise—not the unwise—are “godlike” (D.L. 7.119). He would not feel Plato’s “shudder” of religious awe at the sight of that well-adjusted young brow and that ear open for the logos. As for gratitude, certainly the young man contributes nothing to one who is already complete, beyond a theater for the operations of his virtue. But the whole world is that.

All this, the Stoics will say, is an advantage of their sort of *erōs*. All this, Plutarch plausibly says, is a reason for not calling it *erōs* at all.

Plutarch has not tried to enter very deeply into the spirit of Stoic *erōs*. He does not try to see how similar, in many respects, the wise man’s benevolent actions will be to the actions of the conventional *erastēs* without, it is claimed, including the usual risks of jealousy, possessiveness, and insensitivity to the young man’s true needs. Nor does he try to imagine the Stoic lover’s attitude in a sympathetic light. One can indeed see something fine and awe inspiring in the spiritual intensity of a person whose first

devotion is to the universe as a whole, and to rationality as a whole; and one can see great attractions in being the boyfriend or girlfriend of such a person, whose vision of humanity and of the universe would indeed lift one beyond oneself, and beyond the narrow obsessions of a passion in which one is oneself turned into a divinity. In this sense, the Stoic lover is not "Lysias," for the nonlover of "Lysias," though he did make a claim based on *aretē*, offered no clear picture of a vision or understanding of the world toward which he would intend to lead his beloved. He has Stoic *apatheia* without Stoic physics, and that can indeed seem a cramped and stingy sort of union. The Stoic, by contrast, offers an understanding of life so awe inspiring in itself that it claims to transcend the merely personal; inhabiting it, both lovers will feel reverence and awe for the logos, and that, they claim, is more exhilarating than feeling it for one another. Indeed, they can claim in one way, and with good reason, to be fulfilling the spirit of Socrates' teaching in the *Phaedrus*: for their partnership, like that of Socrates' lovers, is above all partnership toward knowledge and truth, and its joy is the joy of that illumination.

On the other hand, Socrates contends that these benefits require madness and the surrender of self-sufficiency, before an object whom one deeply needs and whose absence one desperately minds. It requires both longing and gratitude. All this the Stoics are committed to denying. And in this sense what they recommend is crucially unlike *erōs*. It is beautiful and it is splendid—but Plutarch is basically right, it is not *erōs* according to the common conception, even when we make allowances for their desire to improve on the common. In leaving madness out, they have made too radical a break. The Stoics may offer much beyond "Lysias," but they are certainly not the inspired Socrates. Unable to accept that Socrates' solution because it is too "mad," too full of longing and passivity, they return to a position that is in some important respects, though not in all, that of "Lysias" and Epicurus. They use the name of *erōs* because they are physically aroused by their partners' beauty and want to have sex with them. So far so plausible. But by leaving out need, reverence, and gratitude they have left out some of the value of the old *erōs*, no matter what wonderful educational experiences they offer instead. The relationship goes well beyond that proposed by "Lysias," but it has, in the end, a similar gap at its heart. Could such a love really do for the city what Plato thinks *erōs* will do, linking citizens through bonds of selfless devotion? Or will it, as Plato asked, "breed in the dear soul a stinginess that is praised by the many as virtue?" (*Phdr.* 256e–257a).

To put it another way, isn't the Stoic wise man all too like Plato's man

brought up among sailors, who had “never seen an example of free and generous love”?

The mysterious beauty of *erōs*, in the common conception, was the beauty of a deep opening in oneself, a surrendering of boundaries toward surprising incursions of influence from the world. This Plato’s Socrates preserves, with its sting of madness and his liquids flowing in as through an irrigation trench — connecting this surrender, plausibly and powerfully, with the goods of generosity and altruism. The Stoic self is determined at the outset to close all such openings, to stop up all the holes through which such liquids might enter, to be a house carefully sealed against the elements. Stoics cannot have this solid joy, I argue, and have all the goods of *erōs* too.

VII. ANCIENT AND MODERN NORMS

One of the claims of this essay has been that we must study the ancient Greek philosophical debates about *erōs* in their historical context. Thus, I have criticized my earlier treatment of the *Phaedrus* for its all too easy transportation of Plato’s example into a modern context, which neglected, I now argue, some norms and problems peculiar to that context, neglecting in the process some of the more interesting contributions of the dialogue. On the other hand, my prefatory remarks in section 1 suggest that precise historical attention to the Greek ethical debate might possibly still make a contribution to our modern reflections about the erotic and the ethical. It is now time to connect these two claims.

One way of connecting the two claims should by now be obvious: when the Greek thinkers are studied in their own context, and not simply as projections of modern norms, our thought is freed from certain specifically modern prejudices and assumptions about what issues and categories are most salient. This is itself a contribution to our thinking. Thus, as Foucault so well put it, they free our thought so that it can think itself differently. We see that it is possible, even in the context of same-sex relationships, to focus on ethical issues other than “the morality of homosexual conduct” as a long Christian tradition has tended to define that issue, namely, as an issue about same-sex inclination and conduct, as to whether these are immoral just on account of their same-sex nature. The Greek debate shows us, further, that when one ceases to take that particular ethical focus one does not ipso facto become a raving beast deaf to all ethical questions (a stereotype on the American Right). Nor need one react to these stereotypes by becoming

a subversive parodic countercultural resister of all norms. One may become, in fact, a sensitive ethical human being who does not happen to have a particular set of characteristic American obsessions. Indeed, what should strike us with great force about the Greek debate is its highly refined ethical character, its persistent focus on dividing ethical actions and actors from unethical actions and actors—in a way that does not single out same-sex desire and conduct for particular blame. Insofar as there is blame, it attaches to bodily excess, to overweening, to exploitation, to lack of generosity, to deception—all issues that arise in both the same-sex and the opposite-sex context.

But the texts, I believe, do not simply free us; they also give us some worthy paradigms to follow. For even though our culture is in many respects different from the culture of the Greeks, we still have on our hands the central problem of this debate: whether or not the powerful erotic passions of human beings can be made harmonious with the virtue of the lover and the well-being of the beloved. When we fall in love, we do terrible things to one another. And the debate I have traced, if it leaves the right answer in doubt, seems to pose the right questions: about generosity and restraint, about kindness and education, about the proper balance between passion and the other concerns of a life.

Even the answers put forward by the philosophers deserve our most serious scrutiny. It is very tempting to think that the Stoics may be correct. We should love only within the strict constraints of a vigilant moral idealism. The Stoics make a valuable contribution to our thinking when they attempt the conjuring trick of keeping *erōs* alive, and whole, inside morality.

Is it just a trick? Or does it work? Each of us must judge. For those who reject it, Plato's *Phaedrus* offers us yet another possibility: an *erōs* that is more genuinely a passion, more closely connected to other passions and vulnerabilities and to a genuinely reciprocal exchange of passion and benefit. Perhaps even that ideal is too refined, too high-mindedly moral and intellectual, to satisfy us (or Plutarch) as an image of what real human love can offer at its best. Maybe, then, even that ideal moralizes love so relentlessly that it loses the surprise and the radiance that we associate with that passion. Again, each of us must judge. What seems irrefutable, however, is the proposition put forward by all the philosophers I have considered: that it is only coarse and callous people who see sex as extraethical (whether they do so by focusing on reproduction or on pleasure). In people of good character, sex is a matter for ethical judgment, indeed, for a lifelong process of ethical self-scrutiny. For justice is in our lives, and sex is in our lives. If we care about both, we cannot but anxiously seek to bring them closer together.

Notes

This chapter appeared in an earlier form under the title “*Erōs and the Wise: the Stoic Response to a Cultural Dilemma*,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1995): 231–67, and also in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1998), 271–304. The present version contains both revisions and additions (sections I and VII are essentially new). My analysis is closely connected to my account of the Stoic passions in Nussbaum 1994b, chaps. 10–12, and to Nussbaum 1994a, appendix 4 of which is coauthored by Kenneth Dover and me. But the chapter also returns to the topic of chaps. 6 and 7 of Nussbaum 1986, in the belief that the analysis given there was insufficiently grounded in the historical and cultural context of Plato’s thought. On Stoicism, I have learnt much from Brad Inwood’s unpublished manuscript “Why Do Fools Fall in Love?” and, of course, from Schofield 1991. For comments on earlier versions, I am grateful to Victor Caston, Kenneth Dover, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Christopher Gill, Brad Inwood, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji.

1. Dover 1989. Dover initially claimed that there are no examples of erections for the younger partner, but in his second edition he grants that one vase may well depict such an erection: see p. 204, where he insists that this vase “remains, however, exceptional.”

2. There are many variants—for some, see the illustrations in Dover 1989. The younger partner is most frequently of mature height, though sometimes shorter; often he is taller and more solidly muscled than the older. The upper hand sometimes touches shoulder or neck rather than face, and sometimes it simply reaches toward the face rather than touching it. On the age of the younger partner see text below, and Nussbaum 1994a.

3. Dover 1989, 94–95, referring to Beazley 1947, 199; Dover calls the position “the most characteristic configuration of homosexual courtship in vase-painting” (94) and describes many variants.

4. It is difficult, however, to interpret facial expressions on semiarchaic statues, given the narrow range of stereotypes that seem to have been in use.

5. Soph. *Ant.* 781ff., esp. 787ff.: “and not one of the immortal gods can escape you, not one among human beings, who live for a day; and the one who has you is mad. You even take the minds of the just and turn them aside into injustice.” On Zeus’s abduction of Ganymede see Soph. fr. 320 Nauck: Ganymede’s thighs “set Zeus aflame”; for other literary accounts see Dover 1989, 197. For other examples of gods gripped by *erōs* see Dover 1989, 197ff., focusing especially on Pindar’s account of Pelops and Poseidon in *Ol.* 1: “Pindar’s gods are too refined to digest anything but ambrosia, but never so insensitive that their genitals cannot be aroused” (198).

6. On love and madness, an excellent discussion focusing on later evidence is Winkler 1990.

7. For some evidence on this point see SVF 2.443–55. See my discussion in Nussbaum 1994b.

8. See, e.g., SVF 3.650–53, to be discussed below.

9. For a comprehensive discussion of the evidence see Schofield 1991, 57ff.

10. Plutarch's position is not that sexual desire and conduct are inherently at odds with education for virtue. He seems to admit that there could be an educative relationship that included sexual desire and sexual conduct—he just holds that if it lacks *pathos* it should not be called *erōs*: see below.

11. Eur. *Hipp.* 525ff.

12. *Ibid.*, 530–31.

13. *Ibid.*, 555ff.: “O holy wall of Thebes, o mouth of Dirce, you could speak along with me of the way in which Cypris advances. For, arranging a marriage for the bearer of Bacchus, son of Zeus, by means of the flaming thunderbolt, she put her to bed with a bloody fate.”

14. Aesch. *Supp.* 1067. (Possibly the *eumenē* is predicative: “established violence as well intentioned.”) Zeus's touch “with a healing hand” is *eumenēs*, kindly or well intentioned, because it releases her from the torments and wanderings she has endured. Invoking Io's story, the suppliant women here pray to Zeus for deliverance from bad marriages and for the distribution of power to women (*kai kratos nemoi gunaixin*; 1068–69). The author of the *Prometheus Bound* records the legend that the impregnation of Io was caused by the calm touch of a hand, apparently without any further physical act: *epaphōn atarbei cheiri kai thigōn monon*, “caressing her with an unimpassioned hand and merely touching her” (849). The question of rape is thus pushed to the background.

15. Dover 1989, 60ff.

16. On Herodotus's story of Candaules, who fell in love with his wife, see the good discussion in Halperin 1989.

17. See the good discussion of the ode in Winnington-Ingram 1980, 92–99.

18. See the discussion in Dover 1989, 53, 197; and also Halperin 1990, 86–87.

19. On this see Dover 1989, 53, 197, referring to Aeschin. 1.142 (who holds that the relationship was not explicitly described by Homer because a cultivated audience would find it self-explanatory) and Pl. *Symp.* 180a4–7, where Phaedrus criticizes Aeschylus's judgment that Achilles was the *erastēs*.

20. See Dover 1989, 197.

21. See Dover 1989, 61. I follow his translation (and therefore system of transliteration). Note that the younger man's “love” is, as we might expect, *philia* and not *erōs*.

22. See the discussion of *anankē* in Dover 1989, 61–62.

23. Aeschin. *In Tim.* 136; see Dover 1989, 43ff. (his translation).

24. See Dover 1989, 43ff., arguing that *dikaïos erōs* should be understood not as a subspecies of *erōs* but as the only genuine type of *erōs*.

25. On the reference to the Theban Sacred Band, see my discussion in Nussbaum 1994a. And see now Leitaō's chapter in this volume.

26. In these examples Alcestis is treated as an *erastēs* (*dia ton erōta*; 179c), as is Orpheus.

27. Hackforth 1952, 31.

28. Griswold 1986, 48. Other peculiarities in Griswold's account of the speech of “Lysias” are his description of the nonlover as having “mastered his eros” (45) (no, he never had it), and its erroneous claim that “the speaker says nothing about his own personal qualities” (46), whereas he twice mentions his *aretē*.

29. Griswold 1986, 69.

30. Rowe 1986, 144, 146. Rowe oddly states that “the speaker implicitly claims not only that he is not in love with the boy, but that he does not desire him physically either; it is to be a purely businesslike transaction” (145). But of course the speaker does allude, however discreetly, to his desire: “You know how matters are with me” (230e6), and “with an eye not to the present pleasure, but also to the benefit which is to come” (233b6–c1), where the “also” implies that pleasure is at least a part of what is envisaged. It is perfectly clear that the *charizesthai* that is under discussion implies sexual conduct, and Rowe himself grants this (“but he wants to sleep with him”; 145). So why does Rowe deny sexual desire to the nonlover, and how does he envisage this wanting-to-sleep-with-him, in the absence of desire? In short, if the older man does not desire the younger, what is the speech all about, and why does he make it?

31. Nussbaum 1986, 207–8. I go on to argue that ultimately this initially plausible position is found unsatisfactory—for good reasons; I shall not take issue with that part of my analysis, though I shall add some new points.

32. Nussbaum 1986, by contrast, suggests that the first two speeches are heard as plausible until Socrates actually criticizes them.

33. A critical discussion that brings this out well is that by Ferrari (1987, 50ff., 88ff.). See also 90ff., where he gives an attractive account of the prudent self-interest of the typical *erōmenos*.

34. As Ferrari points out (1987, 89ff.), the speech does not altogether deny that there may also be good consequences; it focuses on the fact of the ambivalence of *erōs*, which is itself seen to be a bad thing from the boy’s point of view. The claim is that he can have the good consequences without the ambivalence.

35. Ferrari (1987) seems to me to neglect this claim (and its plausibility) when he calls the relationship promised by the nonlover “business-like” (51).

36. As Kenneth Dover points out to me, this statement would still be true if the words “Greek” and “given . . . with” were deleted!

37. We may remark, too, that the writers who insist that the position of “Lysias” is base because it leaves out romantic passion do not apply this judgment consistently, condemning the ancient Greek norm of marriage. “Lysias” in effect is reconstituting the male-male relation along marriage-like lines.

38. I do not mean to suggest that the young man is selling himself for a reward—something that would be socially unacceptable—but he is expected, still, to make a prudent calculation of costs (disadvantages) and benefits, as we can see from Pausanias’s speech.

39. See Dover 1989, 111–14. Note that *kalos* here means “physically beautiful,” not “noble.” Dover does note exceptions to this general tendency, however. Archaic graffiti on rocks on the island of Thera include praises of youths for being *agathos* and even *aristos*; a fragment of Callimachus around four centuries later refers to a graffito that praises a youth for being *sophos* (see Dover 1989, 113).

40. And in general, the analysis fails to explain why the speech both allures and shocks.

41. See Phaedrus’s speech, above.

42. It is implicit because the harm-producing varieties have been prominently recognized before, because the recognition of “divine” *mania* does implicitly distinguish this variety from a merely mortal variety, and because the later discussion of rhetoric explicitly recognizes the duality in madness; see 265a: one sort of madness results from human diseases, one from divine causes.

43. Pl. *Phdr.* 250e. I analyze this difficult passage in detail in Nussbaum 1994a, arguing that its criticism includes both those who focus on reproduction and those who seek casual bodily pleasure alone in male-male relations. (As Pausanias pointed out, these will often be the same people: for those who go for the body rather than the soul are indifferent between women and males — *Symp.* 181b). It appears to be a working assumption of the speech that the only reason for turning to women is reproductive.

44. Eur. *Tro.* 821 ff.

45. See Dover 1989, 162–65. I have also profited from an unpublished paper by Malcolm Pettingill on this topic. On the theme of reciprocity in Socrates’ speech as a whole, see the excellent analysis in Halperin 1986.

46. Gratitude, I note, will be termed a *pathos* in Hellenistic arguments and linked to anger, both requiring the ascription of high importance to an unstable “external good,” and both being ways in which a person with such an attachment responds to the attempts of others to foster or harm it. Plato’s lover’s gratitude, similarly, seems to involve an acknowledgment of deep need: in the absence of the beloved he suffers great pain.

47. For a close analysis of the dialogue’s attitude to sexual conduct, including the views expressed in this passage, see Nussbaum 1994a.

48. On Aristotle see Nussbaum 1994a.

49. Nussbaum 1994b, chap. 5.

50. For the difficulties of reconstructing Epicurus’s position here, given the textual corruption in a crucial passage in Diogenes Laertius, see Nussbaum 1994b, 152–53.

51. On the other hand, the later tradition is likely to view them as one. It is impossible to tell to what extent Cicero and other thinkers who contrast Epicureans and Stoics have formed their picture of the Epicurean tradition on the basis of Lucretius’s poem.

52. Of course *amicitia* (or the odd Lucretian variant *amicities*) will also be used for *philia* in some cases.

53. For discussion of the theme of the divine mistress in poetry of Lucretius’s time and later, see Nussbaum 1994b, chap. 5.

54. On all this see Nussbaum 1994b, chap. 5.

55. In the sick relationships he criticizes, the aim of incorporation leads to a frenzied biting and grasping, which not only ignores the object’s pleasure but also deliberately inflicts pain; for analysis of this material, and the related material on female pleasure, see Nussbaum 1994b, chap. 5.

56. Lucr. 4.1053 makes it clear that the relationship could be a male-male relationship; that is just not what the poet-speaker finds most interesting—perhaps because it would be unlikely to illustrate his theme of mutual pleasure.

57. Here I am giving the barest summary of Nussbaum 1994b, chap. 10. For all relevant texts and an attempt to interpret them, see that chapter.

58. *Philopoiia*, and “friendship” below renders *philia*. Although these translations are very imperfect, they are chosen to mark the distinction between *erōs* and *philia*. From the presence of the word *philia* one may conclude that what is envisaged is a relationship involving some sort of reciprocity or mutuality; one may not infer that it is weak in affect nor, indeed, on the other hand, that it contains affect of any kind (since *philia* may exist between family members who do not know one another).

59. See the excellent discussion of the term by Schofield (1991, 29 n. 14), who points out that Cic. *Tusc.* 4.72 renders it by *conatus*. The definition of *epibolē* in Stob. 2.87.18 as “an impulse [*hormē*] before an impulse” is well explained by Schofield as growing from the idea that before one can be motivated to do something one must make it one’s project, set oneself to do it.

60. See Schofield 1991, 29–30.

61. Cited in this connection by Schofield (1991, 29 n. 13). Of course Diotima will go on to offer a novel account of the best goal for this chase, so the presence of “chase” language would not by itself establish that the Stoics saw sexual conduct as one part of the permissible goal.

62. See Dover 1989 and Nussbaum 1994a (with further references) on the connection between this norm and interest in the well-being of the *erōmenos*.

63. Schofield, after producing the evidence on sexual conduct’s “indifferent” status and on Zeno’s interest in intercrural intercourse, which I have also produced, suggests without argument that “Zenonian love proper” was “of course a sublimated Platonic form of love.” Schofield offers us no reason to prefer this conclusion, and by linking Zeno closely with the Cynics he gives us yet further reason not to prefer it—for Cynics were not in the least given to sublimation. Brad Inwood, “Why Do Fools Fall in Love?” (unpublished manuscript), argues, convincingly I think, that the Stoic position is similar to that of Pausanias: where sexual conduct is concerned, all the difference is made by the mode of execution and the disposition of the agent.

64. See, e.g., D.L. 7.131: “among the wise, women should be in common, in such a way that any man at all may have sexual relations with any woman at all . . . and that we should love all children equally in a paternal manner and that the jealousies arising from adultery will be removed.” We might compare Lucr. 4.1065–66, where the advice to be promiscuous is a therapeutic strategy to break the hold of obsessive love.

65. Schofield 1991, 43–46. He argues that Zeno accepts Plato’s proposals on female equality but rejects his conclusion that bonds of family devotion should replace erotic bonds as the “cement of society.”

66. See also the Zeno passage cited in the next note, where praise of the manly bloom of the young male is juxtaposed with some very derogatory remarks about women.

67. My solution is thus similar to that of Schofield 1991, appendix B, 112–14, although he does not make the connection with the *Phaedrus*. In appendix C Schofield cites a striking extract from Zeno preserved in Clement of Alexandria, in which the appearance of such a young man is described: “Let his face be unclouded, his brow not relaxed, his eyes neither gaping nor drooping, his neck not slouching down, his limbs not slack, but tensed up like tuned strings, his ear alert for the logos. Let his attitudes and his movement give no hope to the wanton. Let proper shame and manliness

flower upon him, but away with the stimulation of perfume-shops and goldsmiths and wool shops, and the rest of the shops, where women spend the whole day dressed up like courtesans, as if they were sitting in a brothel" (my translation).

68. E.g., D.L. 7, which defines the religious duties of good people to "the gods" (repeatedly); the wise are experts in matters relating to "the gods."

69. See my discussion in Nussbaum 1994a, with references.

70. See Dover 1989, 84.

71. Ath. 563E, addressing the Stoics, qua followers of Zeno: "you who say that we should continue with those we are in love with until they are twenty-eight years old."

72. On the other hand, if the shaving referred to in a joke really took place (which we should doubt), this would suggest a desire to prolong the delight of youthful appearance.

73. This is the topic of an excellent discussion in Inwood, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love."

74. Athenaeus remarks, not apropos of the Stoic view but in the same context, that the Spartans treated girls like *paidika* before marriages.

75. Strictly speaking, of course, the evidence does not state that they stop then; on the other hand, given Antigonos's mocking purpose, if the Stoics had urged continuation to an even later age, we might have expected him to mention it.

76. See Schofield 1991, 30, whose translation I generally follow.

77. On Stoic marriage see especially the fragments of Seneca's *De matrimonio*, ed. Hense. One fragment tells the story of a man who fell passionately in love with his own wife. Seneca remarks: "It does not matter from what decent cause one goes mad. That's why Sextus used to say, 'That man is an adulterer who loves his wife too passionately.'" (The entire fragment is translated in Nussbaum 1994b, 473 n. 48.) Seneca draws the conclusion that a good Stoic husband will love "by judgment" (*iudicio*), not by passion, and will be self-controlled about intercourse—avoiding, for example, the time during his wife's pregnancy, when damage to the fetus was thought to be possible.

78. On the *eupatheiai* see SVF 3.431–42.

79. See SVF 3.432, and the discussion of the two sorts of joy in Sen. *Ep.* 23.

80. I do not mean to suggest that we can trace this practice back to the original Greek Stoics; Seneca says he got it from his teacher Sextius, who was eclectic and influenced by Pythagoreanism.

81. Notice that something very similar will be true of the wise man's attitude to his own children: he may focus intensely on his own because that is where his station has placed him, but he may not care about them in such a way that he will feel grief at a child's death. Cicero tells the exemplary story of a father who, informed of his child's death, said, "I was already aware that I had begotten a mortal" (*Tusc.* 3.30).

82. The parallel is of course faulty, since the "chase" of the Stoic wise man is not purely recreational, but is tied in with his virtuous activity as an educator of the young.

References

Beazley, J. D. 1947. "Some Attic Vases in the Cyprus Museum." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 33:195–244.

- Dover, K. J. 1989. *Greek Homosexuality*. 2d ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Ferrari, G. R. F. 1987. *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Griswold, C. 1986. *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Hackforth, R. 1952. *Plato: Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Halperin, D. 1986. "Plato and Erotic Reciprocity." *Classical Antiquity* 5: 60–80.
- Halperin, D. 1989. "Plato and the Metaphysics of Desire." *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy* 5: 27–52.
- Halperin, D. 1990. "Heroes and Their Pals." In *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. London: Routledge.
- Nussbaum, M. C. 1986. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. 1994a. "Platonic Love and Colorado Law: The Relevance of Ancient Greek Norms to Modern Sexual Controversies." *Virginia Law Review* 80: 1515–1651. A shorter version appears in *The Greeks and Us*, ed. R. B. Louden and P. Schollmeier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and also in M. C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). All page references here are to the longer version.
- Nussbaum, M. C. 1994b. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Rowe, C. 1986. *Plato: Phaedrus*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
- Schofield, M. 1991. *The Stoic Idea of the City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reissued, with a new foreword by Martha Nussbaum, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Winkler, J. J. 1990. "The Constraints of Desire: Erotic Magical Spells." In *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. London: Routledge.
- Winnington-Ingram, R. P. 1980. *Sophocles: An Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.