ONE

Plato

Death and Madness in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*

> Immortal mortals, mortal immortals, living their death and dying their life.
> —Heraclitus

> Why should we not call madness death, seeing that by it mind dies, the noblest part of us?
> —Philo

READERS OF PLATO'S dialogues would recognize a constantly renewed desire to define philosophy and to distinguish it from sophistry, rhetoric, poetry, etc.[1] One suspects that this attempt to delimit philosophy as a discourse is itself what philosophizing is. In Plato, reflexivity is already inscribed into the nature of philosophical activity. The *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* are two of Plato's dialogues where philosophical activity is presented as a questioning of what philosophy is. In the *Phaedo*, Plato claims that philosophy is a practice for dying and death, whereas in the *Phaedrus* philosophy is described as a kind of madness. Through these two characterizations of philosophy, Plato determines the subsequent attempts to think philosophy, as well as to think philosophically about the themes of madness and death. After Plato, madness and death become deeply connected to the way in which philosophy interprets itself. Therefore, to the extent that philosophy is considered to be, among other things, the activity of asking what philosophy is, madness and death emerge as two themes that can help us understand this activity. To say that philosophy is an activity of asking what philosophy itself is does not suggest

that all philosophical activity explicitly asks this question. Historically, the question of what philosophy is has not always been explicitly posed. However, every philosophical questioning does in fact bring together an implicit understanding of what philosophy is. Martin Heidegger expresses this conviction in *What is Philosophy?*[2] and "What is Metaphysics?"[3] These two works not only connect the question of what philosophy is to philosophical activity itself, but also articulate this activity in terms of a certain engagement.[4] Philosophy, according to Heidegger, is a question of a fundamental attunement *(Stimmung)* where philosophy "concerns us, touches us in our very nature."[5] In "What is Metaphysics?" Heidegger expresses the same conviction in terms of metaphysical questions: ". . . every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is also there within the question, that is, is placed in question."[6] Plato shares the conviction that philosophy is a matter of engagement. In the *Phaedo* this engagement is characterized in terms of death.[7] Socrates states that Evenus, who is otherwise indistinguishable from a philosopher, ought to follow him to death if he (Evenus) is a real philosopher. Yet Evenus's alleged unwillingness to do this "surprises" Socrates and leads him to question whether Evenus is actually a philosopher. Evenus is only *believed* to be a philosopher. Is there a criterion to distinguish a philosopher from a sophist? It seems that philosophy and sophistry speak about the same thing to a large extent. What distinguishes philosophical activity is an engagement with not only what is said, but also with that which speaks to us. The response to being *(ousia)* is a response to what a moment presents.

Yet what is philosophical activity as opposed to sophistry? Where does philosophy begin? What, if any, is the mark of the moment where philosophy is not a matter of content, but a desire for engagement?[8] At this point one must not simply ask the historical question as to when philosophy started, or who the first philosopher was. Even when we raise this historical question we realize that our answer depends upon the way in which we understand what philosophy is. Hence, the question of the beginning of philosophy is itself a philosophical question, not only because beginning is a philosophical problem, but also because we need to raise the question of what philosophy is, that is, *the* philosophical question of *ti to estin?* (what is . . . ?). We often take it for granted that the philosophical (rather than the historical) beginning of philosophy is wonder *(thaumazein)*.[9] Yet we must emphasize that wonder is not the origin of philosophy in the sense of a beginning, which is left behind. In *What is Philosophy?,* Heidegger claims that *arche* is both the beginning and the principle of (that which rules) philosophy.[10] Hence, *thaumazein* is not simply the mood one is in before starting to philosophize, but it is an attunement between the questioner and the world. In this sense of the word "beginning," there are in fact multiple beginnings of philosophy, and perhaps wonder is one of them. In Plato we find two

different origins *(archai)* or definitions of philosophy: philosophy as a practice of death, and philosophy as a kind of madness.

In what follows I will discuss the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*. My guiding topic in these discussions will be the following: For Plato philosophy, defined as a kind of madness and as a preparation for death, is, in the first instance, a relationship to *absence*. To the extent that one is called to understand the world around oneself, one is called to respond philosophically to the being of things, and thereby one is transported to a realm of absence. Death characterizes this experience of transport, which is not simply an experience in time, but an archaic experience, perhaps an experience of that which, according to Plato, has never been present. Hence, the willingness to die, or to assume a different relationship to death, is what distinguishes the philosopher from the sophist. However, this understanding of absence is displaced in and through Plato's text once he adopts the language of forms (ideas). The theory of ideas (or even the lack of such a theory) is Plato's response to the philosophical question of absence.[11] Plato articulates this absence as that which accounts for (grounds and causes) things that are present. Things themselves are constituted in terms of *archai* that are not present, in fact those that are always absent. Philosophy, therefore, is an attempt to speak of that which is absent, that which is the ground of what is present. For Plato, death and madness give "access" to this absence. Yet this possibility of access also transforms absence into presence. This transformation enables us to understand Heidegger's claim that the Greeks think being always as presence. This is not to say that the Greeks did not think of absence, but that Greeks had a particular understanding of absence derived from presence. Therefore, Plato institutes a conceptual continuity between presence and absence, that is, absence is understood as a modification of presence within a conceptually homogenous field.[12]

PHAEDO

In terms of the dramatic structure of the dialogue, the question of philosophy as a preparation for death emerges in the context of Socrates' impending death. We tend to think that the dialogue introduces the question of death because it concerns Socrates' death. Yet this question is introduced in a seemingly accidental manner. Socrates says that Evenus has to follow him to death if he (Evenus) is a real philosopher. The puzzle this advice causes leads Socrates to explain why "those who are touched[13] by philosophy in the proper manner *(orthos)*[14] practice dying and death." There is, therefore, an improper way of practicing philosophy, as well as an improper way of understanding death.[15] Philosophy is a practice for death only when philosophy and death are understood in the proper manner. Socrates articulates this distinction in response to Simmias's statement that there are people who think that

philosophers desire death and well deserve it too. Socrates answers that these people speak the truth, but "they do not know in what way they [philosophers] deserve death, nor what kind of death it is" (64b).

What, then is the improper manner of practicing philosophy? Is an improper practice of philosophy still philosophy, or does it become some other activity? Socrates formulates his answer on the basis of philosophical engagement rather than on content. What distinguishes proper philosophy from improper and perhaps even non-philosophy is not the presence of a certain content in the philosophical discourse. It is not as if philosophers think about certain issues, as opposed to nonphilosophers who do not know anything about these issues. What makes a certain activity philosophy, according to Plato, is the way in which someone is engaged with this activity. Philosophy is not the knowledge of certain principles, or content, but a particular engagement with *logos*. Yet one does not simply enter into a philosophical engagement at will.[16] Even though the philosophical engagement manifests itself as a willingness to die, one does not engage with philosophy merely by willing to die, for example, by committing suicide. Socrates articulates the distinction between suicide and the philosophical conception of death in terms of his response to Cebes' question concerning the incompatibility of Socrates' claims that Evenus should follow him to death, and that suicide is not permitted. Socrates answers that one should not escape life to the extent that one is the property of the gods, but one can, through the practice of philosophy, join "other wise and good gods." A mere willingness to die, to end one's life, does not guarantee proper philosophical activity. Thus, philosophical engagement requires a displacement of the ordinary understanding of death. Since philosophy articulates itself in terms of a different understanding of death, it has to delimit itself with regard to other activities by raising the question of what it itself is. The accompaniment of this questioning and reflective attitude concerning philosophy itself is what makes a question a philosophical question. This seems to be a characteristic that Heidegger attributes to metaphysics: ". . . every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole."[17]

Plato understands this engagement with/of "the whole" in terms of death.[18] Yet what does it mean to say philosophy is a preparation for death? Socrates establishes what death is quite unproblematically, without any resistance from his interlocutors.[19] "Do we think there is such a thing as death?" The answer is an unequivocal "yes." There *is* such a thing. Socrates continues: "we believe, do we not, that death is the separation of the soul from the body, and that the state of being dead is the state in which the body is separated from the soul and exists alone by itself and the soul is separated from the body and exists alone by itself?" (64c). The word for separation, *apallagen*, can also mean "deliverance," "release," or "departure." According to this def-

inition of death, not only the soul, but also the body has a separate existence, that is, it can also exist by itself. Yet what kind of existence can one attribute to the body by itself? Is the body not dead once separated from the soul? Isn't the body precisely that which cannot exist by itself?[20] This understanding of death as a separation is the most important aspect of the dialogue, since the subsequent discussion in its entirety follows from this understanding of death.[21] Moreover, this definition of death is particularly important for subsequent interpretations of Plato's philosophy. Obviously, there is a metaphysical difficulty in this definition, since it implies the separability, and consequently the potentially independent existence, of the body and the soul.[22] Philosophically, it is difficult to accept this conclusion. However, one has to distinguish the question of the independent existence of the body and the soul from the question of their separation in death. Even if one says that the soul and the body cannot exist separately, one still has to explain why Plato defines death as their separation, and why he introduces this understanding of death in a few lines without any apparent complication.

Socrates' explanation of why philosophy is a preparation for death and dying starts out with a description of the philosopher. The philosopher, according to Socrates, is not concerned with the pleasures of the body. People would think that someone who is not concerned with the pleasures of the body "does not deserve to live, and that one who cares nothing for the pleasures of the body is about as good as dead" (65a). Initially it appears that Socrates associates life with the bodily functions. Yet this is what most people think, and not necessarily a proper understanding of life. This poses a special difficulty in understanding the role of the soul for life. The soul is said to be the cause *(aitia)* of life. It is also that which is related to death in that its separation from the body leads to death. Socrates leaves the description of the philosopher with respect to the bodily pleasures and moves on to the acquisition of knowledge. The body is also said to be a hindrance in gaining knowledge, as the body's sources (the senses) do not yield accurate knowledge. In other words, both in everyday life, as well as in the pursuit of knowledge, the philosopher tries to dissociate him/herself from the body. Yet Socrates' discussion up to this point does not provide a proper explanation of how philosophy is a practice for the separation of the soul and the body. One cannot understand this separation by simply observing or describing the philosopher. As we see in the next argument, true understanding is not to be accomplished in terms of things we observe, but in terms of principles that are not immediately present. At this point the content of Socrates' argument converges with the way in which he designs his argument, that is, Plato articulates the necessity of looking away from the sensuous by himself looking away from what is given to the senses.

Socrates changes his line of questioning by asking whether we think that there is such a thing as the just itself. By admitting that there are such things

as beauty itself, goodness itself, justice itself, Socrates' interlocutor is forced to look away from the realm of the sensuous to that which is not sensuously present.[23] Socrates claims that these forms are the underlying being of everything. To know what lies before us, one must look *away* from that thing. It requires a certain kind of access to something that is absent, yet which constitutes the underlying being of that which is in front of us. This look away is not a voluntary action that results from a decision, but a condition for the possibility of perceptual knowledge. As Plato demonstrates in his argument that knowledge is recollection, a prior knowledge of forms, such as the knowledge of equality, is necessary in order to be able to perceive any two things resembling each other (i.e., falling short of equality) (73c–75c). The knowledge of these forms cannot be reached through the senses. The senses only give access to things that are physically present. Yet their ground, cause, or underlying being *(ousia)* is not present (65e). These grounds can only be accessed through thinking detached from the senses, that is, through the soul "separated" from the body. Hence the body is said to be the cause of the evil that distracts the soul from its pursuit of truth. The foolishness of the body keeps one away from this pursuit. Since pure knowledge is impossible to the extent that the body intervenes in this pursuit, it can only be gained at the moment of a complete separation of the soul from the body. Yet this does not mean that there is nothing to do while the body is still with the soul, namely, while one is alive. The philosopher engages in a kind of purification in order to collect and bring the soul together from all parts of the body as much as possible, that is, he or she tries to separate the soul from the body. Hence, it would be absurd for the philosopher to be afraid of death once this separation is finalized. Once death is understood properly, then the fear of death is circumvented, and once this fear is circumvented, there is nothing more to be afraid of in life.

Socrates' response to Cebes' concern that people still fear that the soul does not exist after death makes explicit what has been implicitly the underlying theme of the dialogue, namely, the relationship between the opposites. Plato had already intimated the structure of oppositions at the beginning of the dialogue. Opposites are related to each other in such a way that one cannot experience or even comprehend one of the opposites without the other; for example, there is no pleasure without pain, as Socrates suggests when he is freed from his shackles. In response to Cebes, Socrates argues that opposites come from each other; death comes from life just as life comes from death. The move from death to life is necessary for existence in general to continue, and is possible only through the soul being immortal. Our souls exist in another world when we are dead. Hence "the living are generated from the dead, just as much as the dead is from the living . . . it seems . . . to be a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead exist somewhere, whence they come back to life" (72a).

According to the dialogue, this structure of opposites not only establishes that the souls of the dead in fact survive death, but also shows that knowledge is recollection.[24] Socrates establishes that knowledge is recollection through demonstrating that the concept of equality cannot be derived from the things that we observe, since no two things exhibit perfect equality. This proof seems to be similar to the one in the *Meno,* in that both demonstrate the impossibility of arriving at the "itself" through things that we can observe. However, the argument in the *Phaedo* demonstrates the additional point that this knowledge of equality as such is necessary in order to perceive two things as similar.[25] The requirement of the form of equality connects the conviction that things in the world are what they are through the forms with the claim that we cannot even perceive and understand things in the world without an access to forms.[26] Since the knowledge of forms must have been with us prior to any perception, it can only be explained as being in our soul prior to having any experience, that is, prior to birth.

Yet, according to Simmias, the childish fear of death in us is not satisfied by this argument. The proof only shows that the soul existed before we were born, but not after we die. As a response to this difficulty, Socrates connects the being of the soul with the being of things.[27] The soul knows the being of things because it is akin to such being, unchanging, divine, deathless, intelligible, and invisible. Therefore, we should understand the soul in terms of the characteristics of the forms. Yet how is the knowledge of the soul possible? If the soul is itself invisible and absent in any given presence, what is it that knows the soul? The answer seems to suggest that the soul has a circular relationship to itself.[28] It has to know itself. Within the Platonic framework, the knowledge of the soul is only possible with regard to its form.[29] That is to say, we can only know one, unchanging, immortal soul. Therefore, the relationship between the being of the soul and individual souls seem to have a similar character to the relationship between equality itself, and equal things. Socrates explains this relationship in terms of his response to Cebes' objection that the soul may live longer than the body, but that this does not prove that it is immortal. Socrates' response first establishes that forms, that are invisible, are the causes of things that are visible. The individual things are what they are in virtue of their participation in the universals. Accordingly the soul, considered as a universal, is that which gives life, as well as that which does not accept its opposite, namely death. This response is intended to explain the relationship of the soul to the body, but not the relationship between the being (form) of the soul and the individual souls. The question remains as to how one can distinguish individual souls from each other. To the extent that the soul is united with the body it can be said to be individuated, but what is it that individuates the soul after its separation from the body?[30] The soul is that which gives life to the body, but without the body it is impossible to understand the identity of the individual soul. The soul is not

only inaccessible to the senses, but it is not a "thing" that can exist independently of the body and still be individuated.

The soul in a body is that which gives access to what is absent. It has access to things that are not immediately present. Yet the presence of the things that are present is constituted (caused) by things that are themselves not present, namely, forms. On the other hand, since the soul is no*thing,* but rather is that which provides access to (perceives and understands) the presence of things that are present, it can be read as the unity of presence, just as forms constitute the unity of particulars. In the dialogue Socrates refers to this unity in terms of the individual soul "collecting and bringing itself together" (67c). Yet this unity is already presupposed since it cannot be first constituted from the things that are present. Since this unity is also the presupposition for any perception, Plato attributes this unity to a time before birth. The soul is said to exist before we were born. The soul, therefore, has to be understood as that which is absent, yet constitutes the presence of the things that are present. To the extent that it can be known it is one, and the multiplicity of individual souls can only be understood in terms of the multiplicity of bodies.

To say that the soul is immortal is to say that there *is* a unity of presence, and individuals participate in this unity. The soul is the cause of life. Yet what does it mean to say that the individual is dead? If the soul is that which causes life and if the body is alive to the extent that it is united with the soul, human life is a unity of life and death. Therefore, death is not the simple opposite of life as people generally think, taking it to be the end of ordinary life, but it already *is* in and through life. But which part of human existence represents life and which part represents death? Plato's response to this question is complicated.[31] First of all, we have to reiterate that death is that which provides access to beings in themselves, as well as that which makes human perception in life possible. The soul is the part, which represents both of these aspects. Furthermore, the soul is that which knows death the least, because it is said to be immortal. Hence, by displacing the ordinary understanding of death, Plato associates the soul with life and the body with death.[32] People, who think that philosophers are as good as dead because philosophers deny bodily pleasures are wrong in thinking that life is to be associated with the body. Plato's strategy does not simply reverse the terms of the body and the soul with respect to life and death, but complicates the opposition between life and death while carrying over the opposition to one between body and soul. As a result, that which represents absence (the soul) emerges as that which is the prime presence. This is to say that even though Plato initially articulates the nature of the soul in terms of absence (i.e., in terms of "things" that are not present), he displaces this explanation by attributing a full presence of these things to the soul after death. The soul (that which practices philosophy properly) is going to be fully present to forms, just as they are going to be fully present to the soul.

Death for Plato provides an access to forms that are not present. However, death (i.e., a certain type of absence within presence) is already presupposed in order to be able to perceive anything. Plato demonstrates this presupposition in his argument that learning is recollection. It is this confrontation with death that Plato sees as an engagement of philosophy. "I do not believe anyone who heard us *now* . . . would say that I am chattering and talking about things which do not concern me" (70c, my emphasis). The "now" Socrates is referring to is the moment of confrontation with death, where philosophy is not an activity that is to be justified in terms of its content, but in terms of being touched. It is precisely the same touch that Plato articulates in the *Phaedrus* as madness.

PHAEDRUS

In the *Phaedrus*, madness plays a similar role to that played by death in the *Phaedo*. A special kind of madness, just like the particular understanding of death we have just considered, is said to provide access to the forms that are not present in front of us. This transition from death to madness is especially important between the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, because Plato refers to the contamination of the soul by the body as a kind of foolishness. Yet this conception of madness (referred to as "of human origin" in the *Phaedrus*) has to be distinguished from divine madness, just as the ordinary death of the body has to be distinguished from death as the separation of the soul from the body. Madness is a peculiar configuration of death in life, and plays the same role as death in delimiting philosophy as a peculiar engagement.

Socrates' speech developing philosophy as a kind of madness follows two speeches, Lysias's speech read by Phaedrus, and Socrates' own speech attempting to surpass the former. The dialogue starts out with Socrates meeting Phaedrus who is on his way to take a walk outside the city walls. Socrates has already been lured outside the city, to unfamiliar domains. Yet Socrates immediately displaces the unfamiliarity of the country outside the city walls by locating exactly where Boreas is said to have carried off Orethyia, just as he is going to circumvent the unfamiliarity of madness through philosophy. Phaedrus has spent the entire night with Lysias who was in the city, and promises to tell Socrates Lysias's speech about love. Phaedrus says that this is particularly fitting for Socrates, as he claims to be a lover. Lysias's speech argues that favors should be granted to the one who is not in love rather than to the lover.

Lysias's speech is predicated upon the assumption that the lover is insane *(nosein)* rather than being in his or her right mind *(sophronein)*. This assumption accompanies all the advantages Lysias claims the nonlover has over the lover. He argues that the "beloved," who is assumed to be acting according to his or her self-interest, should choose the nonlover over the lover, as the

nonlover will serve this self-interest better. Socrates finds Lysias's speech repetitious and not well organized. Yet there seems to be a more fundamental problem with the speech, namely that even though it represents the virtues of granting favors to the nonlover, Lysias actually becomes a lover, and demonstrates all the qualities of the "lover." In other words, in order to gain the favors of the "beloved," the nonlover appeals to all the advantages that can equally originate from a lover. That is to say that since Lysias does not proceed from a definition of love, he is not in a position to distinguish the lover from a nonlover. Thus Lysias does not have knowledge of himself, and is not in a position to preserve his identity as non-lover throughout the speech.[33] Socrates' response and his subsequent speech underscore this problem. Socrates delivers the speech as a lover disguised as a nonlover. Moreover, Socrates indicates the difficulty of distinguishing the lover from a nonlover because they both have desires *(epithumiai)*.

Socrates claims that it is possible to deliver a better speech than Lysias's. In fact his breast is full, and the speech is forcing itself outside. Thereby, Socrates gives the first indication that he is not going to be responsible for the speech. In addition, he covers his head, and qualifies his speech as a lover disguised as a non-lover in order to win over the beloved. These qualifications move Socrates further away from being the origin of the discourse he is about to deliver. Yet Socrates admits that he cannot surpass Lysias's speech in every aspect; this is something that would not even happen to the worst speaker. Phaedrus agrees and allows Socrates to retain the premise that the lover is more insane *(nosein)* than the non-lover. Therefore, both speeches share the same assumption: love is a kind of insanity. This assumption will not be entirely denied in Socrates' second speech, although it will be modified.

Socrates starts his speech with a definition of love. Yet this definition is already qualified by the phrase "everybody knows."[34] Evidently love is going to be different than what everybody thinks it is. Everybody thinks that love is a kind of desire. But nonlovers also have desires for what is beautiful. So the definition is not proper to distinguish lovers from nonlovers. Socrates proceeds to distinguish two ruling and leading principles in human beings, the innate desire for pleasures, and the acquired opinion that strives for the best. When the opinion leads through reason its power is called self-restraint, but when desire irrationally leads human beings toward pleasure it is called excess *(hubris)* (237d–e). Love, accordingly, is a particular kind of excess where desires overcome rational opinion and lead one away toward the enjoyment of beauty (238c). The important point to underline in this definition is Socrates' dissociation of love and *logos*. Love, as *hubris* of a specific kind, is without *logos*, an opposition that Socrates will later dissolve, and join love with *logos*.[35] Philosophical madness combined with *logos* will be excess of *logos*, rather than of irrational desire. The rest of Socrates' speech follows

from this definition of love. Someone who is overcome by this particular excess (the lover) prefers the beloved to resist as little as possible in order to satisfy his desires. The lover would thus try to make the beloved intellectually inferior, physically weaker, and prefer that the beloved would not have any possessions. Yet this excess of being overcome by the desire for the enjoyment of beauty is necessarily transient. The lover, having made various promises while in love, will be governed by different principles, once his love has ceased. Sense and reason are going to replace love and madness (*mania*). The beloved may think that he is speaking to the same person, but this is not the case. Socrates' indication of this change refers to the difficulty in Lysias's speech. The lover cannot preserve an identity without knowing what love is. Once love is articulated in terms of transient bodily desires for pleasure, we cannot distinguish the lover from the nonlover; even the "lover" himself cannot do this. The problem of opposites is also at issue here, just as it was in the *Phaedo*, albeit in a different context. The lover cannot be identified by simply observing the behavior of a person. To understand love one has to look away from what is present ("the lover"). One can understand what is present only after one determines what love is. This structure is similar to the one in the *Phaedo* where Socrates looks away from the philosopher in order to understand how the philosopher practices death. In fact, the structure is not just similar, but is identical to the extent that the philosopher is a lover. Love cannot be comprehended in terms of transient human desires; one has to introduce *logos* into love in order to account for its permanent nature, which in turn will provide the identity of the individual. This transformation requires a different interpretation, as well as a "rationalization" of madness.

After Socrates finishes his speech prematurely, he attempts to leave in order to escape any further compulsion Phaedrus may put upon him. He is unwilling to complete his speech. Phaedrus is surprised that Socrates delivered only half of the speech, as he did not talk about the advantages of the nonlover, but only the disadvantages of the lover for the beloved. Socrates proposes to simply read all the disadvantages of the lover as the advantages of the nonlover. Yet could one do this? Does this not presuppose that one can already distinguish the lover from the nonlover? Socrates does not continue because he cannot say that the nonlover will make the beloved intellectually superior, physically stronger. The nonlover cannot be said to be the opposite of the lover, because the former also has a desire (otherwise he would not even deliver a speech in order to win over the "beloved"). Socrates' speech is problematic in two aspects. First, the lover, by trying to make the beloved less resistant, destroys the object of his love (the beloved), and consequently his love itself. He thereby undermines his identity as a lover. Secondly, the nonlover is in exactly the same position as the lover, and it can be said that he will do exactly what the lover would do because he also has bodily desires. The difficulties Plato underlines indicate the

necessity of rethinking love, and require an appeal to the being of love, rather than an observation of what is present. What is present ("the lover") cannot be comprehended by the senses. The lover cannot even *be* who he or she is without knowing what love is.

As Socrates is about to leave, he claims to be stopped by his *daimon*. Socrates attributes this to his being a seer *(mantis)*.[36] He is aware that he has offended the god of love, the son of Aphrodite, and he has to engage in a kind of purification in order to avoid punishment, for example, the blindness which Homer could not avoid but Stesichorus could. The purification is the same as in the *Phaedo*, a cleansing from the bodily aspects of existence, that is, articulating love not in terms of what we physically see as bodily pleasures, but as the way in which one is possessed by the gods. Socrates does not want to lose his prophetic power (as a *mantis*, a seer), a power which protects itself as a power (of seeing) by making Socrates aware of the danger of blindness.

In his second speech Socrates puts into question the fundamental assumption that love is a kind of madness, and that it is harmful for the beloved. More precisely, he does not displace the fact that love is a kind of madness, but he transforms the ordinary understanding of madness as the absence of *logos*. Proper madness has to be understood differently, specifically as of divine origin; as such, madness is not evil, but on the contrary the greatest goods come through madness if sent as gift of the gods (244a). The immediate example Socrates gives is the prophetess of Delphi, the oracle associated with Apollo that delivered the prophecy that Socrates is the wisest of men. It is clear that Plato now has a positive conception of madness. However, it would be premature to claim that Plato endorses madness uncritically. Love as madness has to be thought together with *logos*, or, to be more precise, as a peculiar manifestation of *logos* rather than as its absence.

According to the *Phaedrus*, there are four kinds of madness of divine origin that provide goods for human beings. Therefore, it is clear at the outset that Socrates distinguishes madness of human origin (a disease) from madness as a gift from gods. As Socrates later indicates while reflecting on the structure of his speech, madness of human origin is a disease (*nosematon*, the same word both he and Phaedrus used to describe madness as an excess of desire).[37] Therefore, Socrates does indeed leave a certain kind of madness intact, but he distinguishes this type of madness from the proper kind of madness, just as he distinguishes the death of the body from the proper conception of death in the *Phaedo*.

The first kind of madness is that which is related to prophecy, the noble art of foretelling the future. The *mantic* art, according to Socrates is in fact the same as *mania*, a word that was later modified with an addition of the letter "t" (244c). This kind of madness is a gift from Apollo (265c). To the extent that Socrates sees his philosophical activity as an investigation of the statement that he is the wisest man, he associates philosophy with the type

of madness given by Apollo.[38] However, prophetic madness will be only one of the mad origins of philosophy, as all the other three types of madness seem to be within philosophical activity. Socrates already incorporated this type of madness by saying that he was a seer *(mantis)*, a claim that led to this speech in the first place.

The second type of madness deals with purifications *(katharmos)* and sacred rites. Purification is the same notion Socrates uses to describe the practice of death in the *Phaedo*. Socrates describes the benefits of this type of madness in the following manner: ". . . when diseases and the greatest troubles have been visited upon certain families through some ancient guilt, madness has entered in and by oracular power has found a way of release *[apallagen]* for those in need . . ." (244d–e). These greatest troubles seem to be related to bodily existence, as the diseases *(noson)* referred to here are bodily diseases. The release from these troubles seems to be possible only through a kind of madness.[39] The word for "release" *(apallagen)* is the same word that Socrates uses to describe the separation of the soul from the body in his definition of death in the *Phaedo*. The second type of madness is related to the god Dionysus, and is also exemplified by Socrates, as he is engaged in an act of purification in order to dissolve the possible punishment for offending the god of love.

The third kind of madness comes from the Muses.[40] It inspires the souls it possesses to songs and poetry. The poetic madness is what Socrates has appealed to while delivering his first speech. However, there is a definite irony associated with Socrates' description of himself as inspired. It is important to note that all four types of madness are related to philosophy.[41]

The first three types of madness already establish that god-sent madness is far superior to any self-restraint of human origin. Therefore, the nonlover is not to be preferred to the lover. Socrates moves to the discussion of the fourth type of madness by implicitly raising the question of how the gods send madness to humans.[42] In order to understand how madness is sent to the soul of the human being, Socrates claims, one has to understand the truth about the human and divine soul. At this stage, it is established that madness concerns the soul rather than the body. It is, therefore, necessary to know the nature of the soul. Socrates seems to suggest that we can do this by observing how the soul acts and is acted upon. Evidently this is not to be an "observation" at all. We are faced with the same problem as in the *Phaedo:* how is it possible for the soul to know itself? This question does not concern, according to Socrates, the immortality of the soul, but rather its form *(idea)*. He claims that to describe the soul "would require a very long account, and is a task for a god" (246a). It is not clear whether this task is at all possible for the human being. In any case, Socrates claims that it is possible to describe it briefly in a figure (in what it is like, *eoiken*). This appeal to *eoiken*, we must emphasize, does not solve the problem of the soul describing itself. As we said

in the context of the *Phaedo*, this knowledge can only be of the being of the soul, rather than of an individual soul.

The soul, Socrates continues, can be likened to a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. This appeal to a mythic story suggests that the soul has to know itself through something other than through what Socrates claims to be its proper activity of contemplation.[43] The division within the soul (the different actors involved) implies that there is a multiplicity in the soul, the very unity of which is in question. Socrates continues to describe different forces within the soul in terms of the characters of the horses. One horse is of good breeding and the other one is the opposite. What distinguishes the soul of a mortal being from that of an immortal one is the fact that an immortal soul has a constant unity among the different parts, whereas unity is something elusive that mortal souls must constantly achieve. The wings of the horses suggest that the story describes the movement of the soul, which is said to be self-moving, hence immortal. The wings allow the soul to accompany the divine, which is beauty, wisdom, and the good. The ability to continue to accompany the gods in their procession around the heavens depends on the possibility of sustaining the dominance of the good horse, which is nurtured by the good and the beautiful. Socrates continues to describe what is to be seen beyond the heavens and thereby seems to be going beyond the self-imposed modesty of appealing to an image. What is there above the heavens is *ousia ontos ousa*.[44] The phrase is very difficult to translate.[45] I will leave it simply as being(s). It seems that Socrates is referring to beings like absolute justice, temperance, knowledge, and so on.[46] These beings are constantly accessible to the gods, as they preserve the unity of their souls. As the souls of mortal beings attempt to behold these beings by preserving the unity of their souls, they inevitably fail, because they have a negative dimension to their souls, which represents their bodily aspects. The degree to which the soul sees these beings along with the gods creates a hierarchy among them once they are born. The soul of the philosopher is the one that had seen being(s) the longest time before it was born. However, the difference between the soul of a philosopher and others is only a matter of degree. Socrates states:

> For the soul which has never seen the truth can never pass into human form. For a human being must understand according to a form *[eidos]* of what is said *[legomenon]* formed by collecting many perceptions of the senses into a unity [one, *hen*]; and this is a recollection of those things which our soul once beheld, when it journeyed with god, and looking down upon the things which now we suppose to be, gazed up to being as such *[to on ontos]*.[47]

This passage complements the argument concerning equality in the *Phaedo*. A prior access to beings is the precondition for having a meaningful experience.[48] In other words, the beings Plato refers to are not simply to be contemplated after one is dead, but they also underlie the structure of human existence, and human perception. As Heidegger notes:

> If we did not know what difference and equality were, we could never encounter different things, that is, we could never encounter things at all. If we did not know what sameness and setting-against were, we could never comport ourselves toward ourselves as selfsame in each case; we would never be alongside ourselves, we would never *be* ourselves. Nor could we experience something, something that stands over against us, something that is other than ourselves.[49]

Plato predicates the possibility of gathering perceptions of things that are present, indeed the possibility of perception in general, upon the "existence" of these beings. I believe this predication is more important than whether Plato regards them as unchanging forms or not, because he opens the possibility of reading absence within the structure of things that are present in terms of *presence*, that is, the presence of beings to thought.[50] The claim that such beings are necessary in order to have a meaningful experience changes the concern about the theory of forms.[51] It also underscores the necessary structure of absence in sensible presence.[52] Therefore, Plato can be said to understand sensible absence in terms of intelligible presence, but he also circumvents a more radical understanding of absence.[53]

Plato explains the fourth kind of madness in terms of a memory of forms:

> Now a man who employs such memories rightly *(orthos)*[54] is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes truly perfect; but since he separates himself from human interests and turns his attention toward the divine, he is rebuked by the vulgar, who consider him mad, and do not know that he is inspired *(enthousiazon)*. (249c–d)

This explanation of madness is also the coincidence of madness with what is most rational. The person who remembers being(s) is *considered* to be mad. As a philosopher he is engaged in the maddest, and at the same time the most rational activity. For the outside observer, the philosopher is mad. However, the observer does not know the true cause or nature of this madness, just as for the observer the philosopher is just as good as dead, although for completely different reasons. *The madness of the philosopher is the presence of death in life*. Socrates' explanation does not imply the existence of a different realm of ideas completely separate from the sensuous world. In fact his subsequent discussion exhibits the intimate relation between the two realms. The one who sees beauty in the world remembers the being of beauty, and the soul develops wings to reach that beauty. Therefore, the one who is in love with a beautiful person is reminded of the being of beauty. He or she is really in love with the person as such only to the extent that the person reminds him or her of the being of beauty. What distinguishes this type of madness from other kinds is that the mad one loves the beautiful, and is called a lover, and this is the best and the highest origin (249d–e). Beauty has a privilege among

other beings such as justice and temperance because "in the appearances of justice and temperance and other ideas which are precious to the soul there is no light, but only a few approaching the images through the darkling organs of sense" (250b). But beauty is the most radiant, and also the most enchanting *(host ekphanestaton einai kai erasmiotaton)* (250d).[55] What distinguishes beauty from other forms is its shining forth in the realm of appearances. It is clear that Plato attributes great significance to the relation of being(s) to the sensuous world. Beauty is the most visible of the being(s), the one in which the relation between presence and absence takes the most complicated form. On the one hand, love is a desire for something that is forgotten and absent. On the other hand, love is also triggered by what is most present of the being(s) that are absent. Beauty as the true object of love snatches one away from the world of human affairs, yet also demands the most intensified preoccupation with what is present, namely the beloved. Beauty is the proof (exhibition, brilliance) of being(s) in the world.[56] Socrates concludes his speech by further explaining love as a kind of madness. The soul of the lover is reminded of the god that it followed and tries to treat the beloved as if he were a god. Since the lover also tries to liken the beloved to the image of a god, he or she always makes the beloved better, contrary to what is suggested in Lysias's and Socrates' first speeches. Thereby, Socrates demonstrates that Lysias's speech that claimed that the nonlover would make the beloved better was misguided in that he did not know himself as a lover or a nonlover. However, Socrates is careful to preserve the purity of love and the soul of the philosopher by attributing the highest rank to the souls that followed Zeus, and by claiming that they are of a philosophical nature (252d). These (philosophical) lovers practice a philosophical life of wisdom and prudence, in which their souls preserve the power to reach the heavens. The beloved, by contrast, is seized by the image of himself reflected from the lover, and in a sense falls in love with himself through the lover, enclosing the narcissistic circuit of love. Love as a type of madness is also beneficial for the beloved in that he or she is improved as a person provided that madness is restricted to the soul, rather than the body.

Socrates' speech is an explanation of the way in which the gods send madness to human souls. God-sent madness is united with *logos*. Plato also thereby inscribes an opposition between *logos* and a different type of madness, namely, a madness of human origin. This madness seems to be associated with everything that is related to embodied existence: the senses, desires, and so on. If madness is to be praised in terms of any positive aspect, then it can only be done within this oppositional structure that Plato articulates. The very attempt to simply restore the dignity of madness, of the bodily and the sensuous, that is, to read one Plato against another Plato, will already take place within a certain kind of Platonism. Therefore, madness is already a philosophical term in Plato, both as a "definition" of philosophy where the mad-

dest is also the most rational, and as that which is "excluded" from philosophical activity, namely all things associated with the sensuous world.

Plato's relationship to madness is ambivalent. Even though he appears to be restoring madness, or indicating the inevitable crossings between madness and reason *(logos)*, he also solidifies the opposition between madness and reason by incorporating a particular definition of madness while excluding another one. I do not claim that the opposition between life and death, or madness and reason, is a privileged opposition in terms of which every other opposition can be understood. However, taking Heidegger's claim that every metaphysical question contains the entirety of metaphysics as a point of departure, I claim the opposition of madness and reason as the inscription of oppositionality in general. Admittedly my reading of the *Phaedrus* is influenced by Derrida's interpretation in "Plato's *Pharmacy*." I do not claim, however, that madness can be substituted for *pharmakon*, even though such substitution is in principle possible.[57] Indeed, such a possibility would be troublesome for Derrida's deconstruction. Reason is that which inscribes oppositions. Yet reason has to situate itself on one side of an opposition. Thus, there is a difficulty, one has to acknowledge, in situating reason both as one side of the opposition, and at the inception of oppositionality in general. This difficulty forces us to think madness not as a positive experience, nor as a negative accessory, but as pointing to the "between" of madness and reason, the neighborhood in which the oppositionality comes to be inscribed. This inscription takes place both at a textual and an experiential level. To read this inscription as a relation to absence, and, fundamentally, to death is not to attempt to describe, nor to explain madness, but rather to underline the need to rethink philosophy not as a series of formal delimitations, but as a risky engagement with what is not present in and through what *is* present.