

it difficult to answer Diotima's questions, and it is interesting to note that Diotima once replaces the beautiful with the good in order to facilitate Socrates' response (204e). However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the pattern of the good taking refuge in the beautiful was reversed by Diotima; she makes the move from the beautiful to the good for a different reason, and she returns to the beautiful soon after (206b). Diotima's move seems to be from the beautiful as the more specific notion to the good as a more encompassing (and more generative) idea. She wants to find out from Socrates what a man "will have" when he attains the things he desires (204d). In the case of good things, it is easier for Socrates to see that such a man will have happiness. It seems that the connection between goodness and happiness is more obvious to Socrates, but at the same time, beauty needs to re-enter the discussion because beauty is more closely related to Eros (especially as far as the initial level of Diotima's questioning is concerned, which builds closely on our everyday intuition).

Concerning the nature of Eros, Socrates recalls how Diotima told him that Eros can be neither good nor beautiful since we desire what we do not have; Eros is the child of poverty (*πενία*) and plenty (*πόρος*). She establishes rather quickly that a lover desires beautiful things, that he wants them to become his own, and that he wants them to be his own forever (204dff.). What these beautiful things are will be discussed in more detail later. First, Diotima discusses the purpose of love: it is "giving birth in beauty" (206b). Why does love strive for reproduction? According to Diotima, there is a straightforward reason: immortality. There are two possibilities for giving birth in beauty: firstly, children; secondly, more robust offspring such as wisdom, virtue, and the ordering of cities.

Diotima assures Socrates that he, too, might well be capable of learning the secrets of love, at least as she has explained them up to this point. But he might not be capable of grasping what she is going to explain next: the stepwise progression from one beautiful body to all beautiful bodies, from there to beautiful customs, beautiful ideas and theories, and, at last, to beauty itself: "The man who has been thus far guided in matters of Eros, who has beheld beautiful things in the right order and correctly, is coming now to the goal (*τέλος*) of loving: all of a sudden (*εξαίφνης*) he will catch sight of something wonderfully beautiful in its nature; that, Socrates, is the reason for all his earlier labors" (210e). The goal of the progression has been reached.

Diotima's speech shows how a process as well as a moment of suddenness is involved in approaching the beautiful. The lover, or at least the philosophically inclined lover, realizes that beautiful bodies are less beautiful than beautiful ideas, and that beautiful ideas are far surpassed by beauty itself. This realization will come suddenly; and when it happens, the philosopher suddenly comprehends that beautiful things are only beautiful by virtue of beauty itself. Therefore, beauty itself turns out to be the more interesting object of study and appropriate object

of desire. Yet what is the relation between beauty itself and beautiful things? The *Phaedrus* responds to this very question.

b) Phaedrus

In the *Phaedrus*, the special connection between Eros and beauty is revealed in Socrates' second speech. Here, Socrates presents the famous myth about the soul, which will only be recounted very briefly here. Our souls, so Socrates says, can be likened to a team of winged horses and a charioteer. While the gods have charioteers and horses all from good stock, humans have to deal with a mixture: one of our horses is beautiful and good, the other is of the opposite nature (246b). It is the "bad horse" which drags the charioteer toward the earth as the chariots move around to catch a glimpse of justice as such, etc. (247b). The bad horse is more earthbound, as it were. It first seems that the bad horse is at fault when the souls strike and damage one another as they circle the place above the heavens, but Socrates says explicitly that it is the fault of bad charioteers if this happens (248b). It is the charioteer's task to pay attention and to keep the chariot on the right track, balancing the more earthbound horse with the horse that is directed more toward the heavens. As the souls circle the place above the heavens, some manage to take in more, others less of the true essence of justice, self-control, etc. But sooner or later, every soul tumbles down to earth, either by its own fault or due to accidents caused by the others. And this is where *Eros*, the *mania* instantiated by the gods, can befall us. We fall in love when we see something beautiful which reminds us of the beauty which our souls saw in the heavens.

We have thus received an explanation, albeit in the form of a myth, about the connection between beauty as such and beautiful things. The myth also clarifies why we desire beautiful things. Beautiful things resemble something which is even more beautiful and which our soul has seen prior to its incarnation. Like we feel drawn to a photograph that reminds us of a wonderful holiday, so we are similarly but much more strongly attracted to everything that reminds us of what our souls have seen in the place above the heavens.

Beauty turns out to be the most "radiant among the other objects" (250d). Justice, self-control, etc. do not shine as brightly. Socrates explains that if we could see an image of true wisdom, our love would acquire an incredible intensity. But "the senses are so murky" that we cannot so clearly discern wisdom, justice, etc. (250b). Beauty thus comes into the picture because our main approach to the world is through the senses in general and vision in particular.⁸ Vision is the "sharpest" of the (generally murky) senses, and if we were able to see wisdom itself, our love would simply become too strong (250d). Does this mean that we are somehow being protected from such an overwhelming experience? If there was such a protection, it would not be imposed by the gods (who are watching the 'objects' rather than creating them) but somehow by nature or the cosmos