

The soul compared to a charioteer riding a chariot drawn by two horses from Plato's
Phaedrus

At the beginning of this story of ours we divided every soul into three parts, two of which had the form of horses, the third that of a charioteer. Let us retain this. As we said, one of the horses is good, the other not. But we did not define the goodness of the one or the badness of the other, which we must now do. The horse that holds the nobler position is upright and clean-limbed; it carries its head high, its nose is aquiline, its color white, its eyes dark; it is a lover of honor only when that may be joined with temperance and decency: in other words a follower of true renown; it needs no whip, but is driven by word of command alone. The other horse, however, is huge, but crooked, a great jumble of a creature, with a short thick neck, a flat nose, dark color, grey bloodshot eyes, the mate of insolence and knavery, shaggy-eared and deaf, hardly heeding whip or spur.

Now when the charioteer beholds the love-inspiring sight and his whole soul is warmed by the vision and becomes filled with the tickling and pricking of desire, the obedient horse, then as always constrained by decorum, controls itself and does not leap upon the beloved. The other, however, no longer pays any attention to the driver's spur or whip, but leaps wildly forward, causing all possible trouble to its mate and to the driver, trying to force them to approach the beloved and propose the pleasures of love. At first they pull back, indignant at being forced to a dreadful, lawless thing; but at last, since there is no end to the evil insistence, they are dragged forward, yielding and agreeing to do its bidding. And they come to the beloved and behold his radiant face.

At this sight the charioteer's memory is borne back to the form of real beauty: again he beholds it seated beside Temperance on a throne of holiness. He sees this and is afraid and falls backwards in awe and reverence, necessarily pulling the reins so violently that both horses are brought down to their haunches, the one willingly, without opposition, but the wanton one very much against its will.

When they have withdrawn, the good horse in shame and horror drenches all the soul with sweat; but the other, as soon as it has recovered from the pain of the bit and the fall and has barely regained its wind, bitterly reviles its mate and the charioteer for their cowardice and weakness in deserting and forsaking the agreement. And against their will

it tries to force another approach and hardly will yield to their pleas for postponement. And when the time appointed comes, the others pretend to have forgotten, but the bad horse reminds them; struggling and neighing and dragging them on, again it forces them to approach the beloved to make the same proposal. And when they are near at hand, it lowers its head, elevates its tail, takes the bit in its teeth, and pulls shamelessly. But the charioteer has the same feeling as before, only it is more pronounced: like a racer recoiling from the starting-rope, he jerks back the bit even more violently than before from the teeth of the wanton horse, bespatters its malicious tongue and jaws with blood, forces its legs and haunches to the ground and causes it much pain. So when the bad horse has gone through the same experience again and again, it finally has enough of wantonness. Now it has been humbled and follows the driver's instructions; when it catches sight of the beautiful, it is like to die of fear. So from this time on the soul of the lover may follow the beloved with reverence and awe.

Now since the beloved is served with every attention, as though he were the peer of gods, by the lover who is making no pretense but loves in all sincerity; and since the beloved is naturally kind to one who serves him, in spite of the fact that in the past he may have rejected his friend, prejudiced by schoolmates or others who claimed that it was a disgrace to deal with a lover, yet as time goes on youth and destiny bring him to welcome the lover into his society. For it is a law of fate that no evil man may be a friend to another who is bad and no good man may fail to be a friend to another who is good.

And now that he has welcomed his lover and takes pleasure in his company and conversation, the lover's good will, discovered by this intimacy, astonishes the beloved who perceives that not all other men together, friends and relatives, can contribute even a tittle of affection in comparison with his inspired friend. So when this intimacy continues and the lover comes near and touches the beloved in the gymnasia and elsewhere, then the fountain of that stream, which Zeus, when he was in love with Ganymede, called the "flood of passion," pours abundantly upon the lover; some of it flows into him and some, when he is filled, passes away without. Just as wind or echo rebounds from smooth, hard surfaces and returns whence it came, so the stream of beauty flows back again into the beautiful beloved through his eyes, the natural inlet to the soul. There it comes and excites the soul, watering the outlets of the wings and quickening them to sprout; so in

his turn the soul of the loved one is filled with love.

He loves, but does not know whom or what; he does not understand, he cannot tell what has happened to him. Like one who has caught a disease of the eyes from another, he can give no reason for it; as in a mirror, in his lover he beholds himself and does not know it. When he is with him, he too ceases from pain; when he is away, he too yearns and is yearned for, possessing the image of love, requited love, though he calls it friendship, not love, and believes it to be so. He desires, like the lover, though less passionately than he, to see, to touch, to kiss, to lie down together. And indeed it is likely that this soon comes to pass.

So when they lie down together the lover's wanton horse has something to say to the charioteer, demanding a little enjoyment in return for all his sufferings. But the bad horse of the beloved has nothing to say; teeming with passion and confusion he embraces and kisses the lover in grateful acknowledgment of his many kindnesses. When they lie together he is minded, for his part, not to refuse any favor the lover might ask; yet his yoke-fellow joins with the charioteer, and with modesty and reason, in opposing any of this.

If, then, the better part of the intelligence wins the victory and guides them to an orderly and philosophic way of life, their life on earth will be happy and harmonious since they have attained discipline and self-control: they have subdued the source of evil in the soul and set free the source of goodness. At the end of life they will have full-grown wings and cast off the burdens of the flesh: they will stand victorious in the first bout of a truly Olympian victory. Nor can human discipline or divine madness confer any greater blessing on man than this.

If, however, they turn to a way of life less noble and without philosophy, yet ordained by a love of honor, then perhaps when they are drinking or otherwise careless, their two wanton beasts may catch the soul off guard and bring them together to that act and choice which most people regard as blissful. Once joined they will continue the act, though rarely, for it is not approved by the whole intelligence. So these two are friends, though less so than the others, both during their love affair and when it is past, believing that they have exchanged the most binding pledges which it would be wrong ever to break and so to become enemies. In the end, as they leave the body, they are still not fully

winged, though wings have begun to sprout. So that it is no small prize for their love-madness that they win: for it is the law that those who have once begun the journey to heaven shall never pass down into the dark path beneath the earth. Their life henceforward shall be a journey of radiant happiness together, and when they grow their wings, these shall be alike, because of their love.