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## *Friendship in Light of the Modern Philosophical Revolution*

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The narrow divide between Socrates and Kierkegaard can be seen in three comments David Walsh makes in *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*:

Socratic wisdom is indeed the deepest available to us, only now grasped as an existential condition rather than simply an attitude toward existence.<sup>73</sup>

The incompleteness of the Platonic revolution, with all its dispersed confusion in the history of philosophy, has been completed in the existential revolution.<sup>74</sup>

Ignorance, as Socrates understood, is the condition from which philosophy begins. The only thing that Climacus and the modern philosophical revolution add is the recognition of the necessity of ignorance. Ignorance is not just a factual condition that might some day be remedied, but the irremovable horizon of our existence.<sup>75</sup>

Modernity constitutes a completion over antiquity in the sense that it establishes the incompleteness of philosophy in a way antiquity failed to see. If Socrates represents the greatest

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<sup>73</sup> David Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

insights of antiquity, Kierkegaard represents the modern thinker who saw this advance the most clearly.

I wish to assess Walsh's claim with reference to friendship, the culmination of the ethical life – or existence – for the ancients. The modern philosophical revolution, with its turn toward existence, deepens our awareness of the unconditioned, personal love at the heart of existence.<sup>76</sup> Kierkegaard unsettles it and, according to a prevailing view, undermines it, but, if Walsh is correct, Kierkegaard shows us a friendship deeper than either the ancients or medievals understood.

Before providing some examples of the ancient Greek esteem of friendship, I should provide an example of Socrates' own ambivalence toward friendship. While in the *Lysis* he claims he seeks nothing else than to find a friend,<sup>77</sup> it is clear from the Platonic dialogues he was his own man in the sense that he had no equal friends. The beginning of the *Symposium* shows this vividly by portraying Socrates delaying his entrance into Agathon's home because he is contemplating. It seems Socrates is quite happy to resume contemplating in solitude after the party, whose speeches were about eros. With this qualification, permit me to discuss some examples of how the Greeks viewed friendship as the culmination of the ethical life.

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<sup>76</sup> In Immanuel Kant, it is expressed in the holiness of the “transcendent imperative of duty” whereby “our action partakes of the divine freedom of action as moved by nothing beyond itself” (Ibid., 70-1, 41); divine love is central to Hegel's early theological writings that work their way into his insight in the *Phenomenology* that existence is greater than the capacity of thought to capture it; in Schelling, it is the Christological insight that existence is in the “unsurpassable horizon of love” (Ibid., 167); love of the other is the foundation of Emmanuel Levinas' existential philosophy, expressed most clearly in his reflections upon fatherhood and motherhood (Ibid., 299, 311); in Derrida, it is expressed as love as infinite (Ibid., 353).

<sup>77</sup> Plato, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: An Interpretation of the Lysis*, trans., David Bolotin, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 211e.

## Aristotle

Aristotle's account of friendship is the clearest but not the deepest.<sup>78</sup> Near the end of Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he explains why friendship is the culmination of the ethical life:

But one's being is choiceworthy on account of the awareness of oneself as being good, and such an awareness is pleasant in itself. Therefore one also ought to share in a friend's awareness that he *is* (or share his friend's consciousness of his existence [*sunaisthanesthai hoti estin*]), and this would come through living together and sharing conversation and thinking; for this would seem to be what living together means in the case of human beings.<sup>79</sup>

*Sunaisthesis*, a rare term Aristotle uses to describe the peak of virtue-friendship, also expresses the very activity of the intellect in its fullest amplitude. Because we exist, and we know and love our existence, it necessarily follows we want to share our existence, our knowledge, and our love with a friend. Friendship is the form reason takes because our desire to know involves our desire to be known. In *sunaisthesis*, friends behold one another (including themselves) beholding the good. They are fully conscious of themselves as individuals, their "other selves" and the good that informs their activity.

As a form of intellectual perception, *sunaisthesis* cannot be judged by a standard outside itself. Our perception of the *ēthos* of our friend is the same as our perception that a triangle is the last figure into which a polygon can be divided: we take in its essence

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<sup>78</sup> This discussion of Aristotle summarizes my article, "Sunaesthetic Friendship and the Foundations of Political Anthropology," *International Political Anthropology*, 1.2 (November 2008): 179-92, <<http://www.ipa3.com/>>.

<sup>79</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans., Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002), 1170b10-12.

by a glance, and not by further reflection.<sup>80</sup> Just as there is no further standard telling us that *this* is a triangle, so too there is no further standard telling us that *this friend* embodies courage or justice, or more precisely, that *this friend is* courage or justice.

On the other hand, in observing we are capable of only a few friends because it takes a lot of time to learn their *ēthos*, Aristotle points out that *sunaisthesis* does not always take the form of a single glance. Our life with our friends takes the form of a story or *mythos*. As he avers in the *Poetics*, one's *ēthos* takes place within a drama that unrolls in time. Our life with our friends unrolls in time; we are characters in the same drama and our characters are inseparable from one another who compose that drama.

Aristotle holds out the possibility of consubstantiality with our friend in *sunaisthesis* but appears to point to an ineluctable mystery that we experience in striving to behold her *ēthos*. Aristotle's reasons for this mystery, including our individuation in becoming virtuous, do not entirely convince. This is partly due to the fact we never really know how the myth, and our friend's *ēthos* (not to mention our own), turns out. This is the deficiency in Aristotle's overall ethical theory: virtue purportedly produces happiness, but we cannot know whether our life has been a happy one until it is finished. Only the dead appear to know happiness. St. Thomas Aquinas would pick up on this aporia in his account of supernatural virtue; Dante would experiment with the completion of love and *ēthos* in the *Divine Comedy*.

## Socrates

While Socrates' accounts of friendship, in dialogues including *Lysis*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, or *Laws*, are important, at the center of any consideration is what Zdravko Planinc calls the "erotics of recognition": not only whether friends can recognize each other,

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<sup>80</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1142a28-30.

but whether we can recognize Socrates.<sup>81</sup> Just as the character flaws of Odysseus' crew prove their downfall in various episodes in the *Odyssey*, so too do character flaws prove the undoing of various Socratic interlocutors, including Lysis, Phaedrus, and others with whom he discusses friendship but who are not his friends.

The Platonic dialogues do not directly present Socratic friendship because no one seems prepared to befriend Socrates. There are two exceptions, notable for their obliquity. The first exception is the silent friend to whom Socrates narrates the action of the night's activities in the *Republic*. The reader must keep in mind that, unlike other dialogues, Socrates himself is the narrator of the action of the *Republic* and communicates the events of that evening in Cephalus' home directly to the unnamed reader. The second exception is Homer, for whom Socrates claims to have had a certain friendship since his youth.<sup>82</sup> He says he contemplates things "through Homer" and, in the *Phaedrus*, identifies Homer as the poet most likely to be a philosopher.<sup>83</sup> In refiguring Homer, Plato's Socrates seems to be an example of the text writing the author, a mark of the existential turn in antiquity.<sup>84</sup>

These prefatory comments are required to show, first, that the Platonic dialogue is a spiritual exercise for the reader, and the activity of following Socrates' journeys is one of becoming his friend.<sup>85</sup> Second, Socrates' "friendship" for Homer

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<sup>81</sup> "Unless we allow the *Republic* to address us as Socrates addresses his friend, understanding the erotics of recognition implicit in his first word, the dialogue will always seem remote and unfamiliar"—Zdravko Planinc, *Plato Through Homer: Poetry and Philosophy in the Cosmological Dialogues* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 125.

<sup>82</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 595d.

<sup>83</sup> *Republic*, 607c-d; *Phaedrus*, 278c-d.

<sup>84</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 339.

<sup>85</sup> Eva Brann describes the experience of gaining an "imaginative friend": "This harmonization of inner worlds with insuperably distinct centers seems to me, as I just indicated, to characterize a type of friendship that is the most intimate relation this side of love and the most unclouded delight anywhere to

helps explain his tendency to describe friendship, the “erotics of recognition,” in terms of myth. True, Homer presents myths and Plato’s Socrates refigures them. More to the point, however, is the myth’s function in communicating the types of flashing or liminal experiences that cannot be communicated discursively, and to convey his participation in the community of being. The advantage of the cosmological myth is that it reminds us of the participation of our creaturely personality in the cosmos, and patterns our existence upon an encompassing and enduring order to which we become attuned. This does not mean the cosmos provides a picture of necessary order for human beings, endowed with freedom, to follow. Rather, the cosmos provides a world in which human beings live their lives and tell their stories. Myth takes place in the cosmos that provides a stage or home for the human person whose personality also gets integrated into the cosmos.<sup>86</sup> If human action seems to demand an account of that action, then myth appears to be the form of accounting best suited for the highest liminal experiences, including friendship whereby, in participating in the narration of myth, we participate sympathetically in the perspective of our other self.

Moreover, the connection between myth and the cosmological stage upon which the action takes place appears close. Myths express liminal experiences, and the cosmos is the highest (most liminal?) stratum of being that points beyond itself while providing the worldly contents that constitute the contents of the myth. Cosmos is both luminous and intentional. The cosmos, or the world, is simultaneously not a thing but the encompassing order of things, and it is “thingly” because it

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be found: the friendship of sensibility, the imaginative friendship. This sturdily delicate friendship, the particular friendship of the soul, is the one in which we open to each other’s unintrusive gaze intermittent glimpse of our inner phenomena”—Eva Brann, *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992), 789.

<sup>86</sup> See Rémi Brague, *The Wisdom of the World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

contains the contents out of which analogical myths can be constructed.

Far from rejecting myth, the modern philosophical revolution opens up space, or perhaps deepens it, for myth, as exemplified by Kant's recognition that "our actions... cannot be understood to originate in time, for they partake of unconditioned eternity rather than the contingent necessity of time."<sup>87</sup> For his part, Derrida embraces myth in describing "*Khora*," Plato's term for the place where philosophy and creation take place, as the source of an "intermediate language" between intelligible and sensible, "defying the logic of noncontradiction because it is what contains such a logic of boundaries."<sup>88</sup> However, myths can be taken literally, which is one reason Søren Kierkegaard, discussed below, rejects them. In affirming friendship, however, one must ask whether Kierkegaard also rejects the basis upon which one can speak of friendship. If we reject myth, and the cosmos upon which myth is based, can we still speak of the highest things that surpass discursive speech? In rejecting the cosmos as our moral home, do we reject the home in which that speech is intelligible? Cosmos is not the source of the personalist, kenotic love that enables friendship, but it is the stage whereupon we receive it and by which we can speak of the "'intentionality' of transcendence," as, for instance, in Aristotle's observation that the universal can be found in the example.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 58. See *Ibid.*, 50-1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>89</sup> Quotation is of Emmanuel Levinas (*Ibid.*, 302). Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b39-40; Heyking, "'Sunaesthetic' Friendship and Political Anthropology," 185. Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* is a meditation upon myth in the modern world. It is this understanding of human action in eternity that enables Joseph to express his friendship with and to his Egyptian master as a story: "Literature is a great thing. But greater still, to be sure, is when the life one lives is a story – and that we are in a story together, a most excellent one at that, I am more and more convinced with time. You, however, are part of it because I took you into my story"—Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, trans., John E. Woods (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 1233.

These prefatory remarks on myth also force us to confront another vexing issue, which is whether, with the cosmological background, Socrates can recognize the person of the friend or whether a friend is simply a distant reflection of the good, a status that would make it difficult to justify the love for an individual. In the *Lysis*, Socrates seems to make a teleological claim that we love our friend on account of a “first friend” (*proton philia*).<sup>90</sup> All individual friends are somehow idols or icons of the *proton philia*, which seems to treat friends as mere occasions of love for the philosopher who would otherwise wish to be isolated under the canopy of the *agathon*, perhaps like Socrates whose most urgent philosophizing seemed to be done alone.

In the *Phaedrus*, he seems to lend greater importance to individual friends when he claims our beloved is the necessary and inseparable reminder of the good in whose gaze we discover ourselves. The highest lovers are philosophers, whose philosophizing consists of a liturgical rite of recollecting the Essence Really Being (*ousia ontos ousa*).<sup>91</sup> Yet, how can the Essence Really Being, or the Leader Reason (*hegemon nous*) of the *Laws*, bestow personhood when it itself is not a person?<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Plato, *Lysis*, 219d. However, as discussed below, James Rhodes demonstrates the dialogue actually affirms the love of the individual.

<sup>91</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. James H. Nichols (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 247c.

<sup>92</sup> *Laws* 631d. However, James Rhodes observes of Socrates: “He seems to need to symbolize a providence sensed by his soul at a time when the highest thing in his purview is the Good of the *Republic* (508e-509b), or the Leader Reason (*hegemon nous*) of the *Laws*, (... to which the gods look up, 631d5), or the Essence Really Being of the *Phaedrus* (*ousia ontos ousa*, 247c) – all of which might be identical”—*Eros, Wisdom, and Silence: Plato’s Erotic Dialogues* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 483. Rhodes’s observation concerning providence points toward the question of whether the Essence Really Being and its synonyms can be understood as persons. The discovery that “*epekeina*” or “beyond being” (as expressed by Plato, *Republic*, 508e-509b) is in fact a person, making it more appropriate to speak of “before being,” is the hallmark of the modern philosophical revolution (Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 331).

Socrates' account of Nous in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Laws* looks like the impersonal Prime Mover familiar to students of classical philosophy.<sup>93</sup> Nous, as the wisdom of the cosmos, is patterned on the cosmos, which cannot endow individuality or personhood. Socrates' shamanistic quest through the cosmos does not conclude with a vision of personhood as it does with Dante (which remains mixed with cosmology).<sup>94</sup> Thus, Socrates' oblique references to Homer, which bracket his discussions of friendship, can be seen as an attempt to break through the compact myth of the cosmos that predominates in the dialogues.

Socrates claims in the *Lysis* "when it comes to the acquisition of friends I'm quite passionately in love," and he also desires to understand what a friend is. However, he goes on to inquire about "the manner in which one becomes a friend of another," not the definition of a friend.<sup>95</sup> It seems the "erotics of recognition" implies a prior knowledge of friendship to which we then seek a particular friend. In other words, the philosophical quest for friendship is not so much for friendship in the abstract, but for the person of the friend. Socrates does not learn what a friend is from his main interlocutor, Lysis, a young libidinous fool. The dialogue is incomplete because Lysis, like one of Odysseus' foolish men, is incapable of opening his soul to love or

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<sup>93</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245c-246a; *Laws*, 895b-904a.

<sup>94</sup> "That circle which appeared - in my poor style-

Like a reflected radiance in Thee,  
After my eyes had studied it awhile,

Within, and in its own hue, seemed to be

Tinted with the figure of a Man,

And so I gazed on it absorbedly" (*Paradise*, trans., Anthony Esolen, (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), 33.127-132).

Dante's greeting of the person of Christ in his celestial journey, and indeed the tension in Plato's Socrates between cosmic Essence Really Being (*Phaedrus*) and the person of Homer, compares with Emmanuel Levinas' meditation that, "the face that elicits responsibility for the other is the beginning without beginning because it is what calls us into being" (Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 333).

<sup>95</sup> Plato, *Lysis*, 211e, 212a.

to the logos. If Socratic dialogue always begins with the opinions of his interlocutors, he likely expects to do nothing better than confuse Lysis by showing how his own views lead to dead ends.

Even so, the *Lysis* is not simply a will o' the wisp exercise to demonstrate Socrates' expertise in eristic. James Rhodes reminds us how the subtitle of the dialogue points to its substance: "On *Philia*: Obstetric."<sup>96</sup> Rhodes observes that: "Socrates will not give us a propositional "theory of *philia*." Rather, the "pregnant" characters in the play and we ourselves need to be delivered of the virtue of friendly love." Socrates as midwife does not himself give birth but induces birth in others. The careful reading of the dialogue transports us as one of the pregnant characters into the dialogue. Rhodes subsequently demonstrates how Socrates' "deconstruction" of Lysis' self-understanding is an attempt to purge his soul (and ours) of *libido dominandi*. The aporetic nature of the dialogue, if one can call it that, is due not to an alleged impossibility of understanding friendship. Rather, it is due to the vexing difficulty of purging *libido dominandi* and therefore being delivered to *philia*. The "incompleteness" of the dialogue also highlights the existential truth of friendship – its truth is found less in the definition than in the action, a point Aristotle makes in implying *sunaitesis* cannot be judged by a further standard. However, the Platonic dialogue makes the reader practice friendship, thereby understanding the standard is in the action itself.

Two characters of the *Lysis*, who do not speak, Ctesippus and Menexenus, are in fact pregnant. Rhodes observes: "Socrates apparently delivers them of their nascent virtues of friendship, either in the *Lysis* or offstage, for they turn up again in the *Phaedo* among Socrates' dearest comrades who attend his execution. Menexenus also serves as interlocutor in the dialogue that bears his name."<sup>97</sup> *Philia* is not demonstrated but seems to

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<sup>96</sup> James Rhodes, "Platonic *Philia* and Political Order," in *Friendship and Politics: Essays in Political Thought*, eds., John von Heyking and Richard Avramenko, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 25.

<sup>97</sup> Rhodes, "Platonic *Philia* and Political Order," 26.

be something better communicated indirectly, perhaps offstage. In the *Seventh Letter*, Plato explains his mystical philosophy by explaining how the highest things cannot be communicated by word or deed, but rather symbolizes it as a spark communicated between two people: “Hardly after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and visual and other sense perceptions, after scrutinizing them in benevolent disputation by the use of question and answer without jealousy, at last in a flash understanding of each blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light.”<sup>98</sup> Intellectual activity depends on moral virtue (“without jealousy”). Perhaps Menexenus has been sparked by Socrates’ manhandling of Lysis. Perhaps they express their *philia* for one another in direct dialogue, the one named after Menexenus.

Even so, Plato provides an account of the flash that flies between friends in the *Phaedrus*. Myth is the appropriate medium to convey the flash, especially as it is communicated between lover and beloved, each beholding each other while simultaneously beholding the good. Socrates’ myth that *philia* is a matter of recollecting the vision of the Good describes *sunaisthesis* more deeply than Aristotle’s description because Socrates describes *philia* as a mania, which “is given with a divine giving.”<sup>99</sup> *Sunaisthesis* is further differentiated in the *Phaedrus* as a divine gift in which Zeus, whose followers are philosophers, pours forth the waters of *eros* and *philia* between chastened lovers. We discover our beloved as an “icon” of the god we followed during pre-existence. Our beloved reawakens our love of the Good. He is not so much an occasion of our loving the Good as its inseparable cause. We are grateful to our beloved for awakening our longing, so much so that we allege “the beloved is

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<sup>98</sup> Plato, *Letter VII*, *Collected Dialogues*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 344b.

<sup>99</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a.

## F i d e l e s

the cause of these things.”<sup>100</sup> Our life with our beloved is a rite, a liturgical image of our life in pre-existence.

Socrates describes the sunaesthetic moment as one that astounds the lover, and one in which he “shudders” in the uncanny presence of the beloved. In doing so, he refigures a bawdy Greek myth in a more chaste direction:

And then he continues over time to do this and consorts together, with touching, in gymnasiums and in other places of association, then at last the stream of that flow, which Zeus in his love with Ganymede named longing (*himeros*), is borne in great amount toward the lover, and part of it enters into him, and part, when he is filled to the brim, flows away outward. And just as a breeze or perhaps an echo, springing from smooth and solid objects, is borne back whence it set forth, so the flow of beauty, going back into the beautiful one through the eyes, arrives where it is naturally disposed to go into the soul and sets him on the wing; it waters the wings’ passages and urges on the growing of wings and fills the beloved’s soul in its turn full of love. Therefore he loves; but what? He is at a loss. He does not know what he has experienced nor can he tell; but just as someone who has caught ophthalmia from another is not able to state the cause, so it escaped his notice that he is seeing himself in the mirror, in the lover.<sup>101</sup>

In beholding the beloved as the icon of the Good, the lover “shivers” or shudders, as he beholds his boyfriend’s face in a flash, as Plato uses language reminiscent of the *Seventh Letter*.<sup>102</sup> The Greek term for “shiver” is *deinatōn*, a cognate of *deinos*, uncanny. The beloved is a mystery whose mutual love, their longing (*himeros*), is likened to a river. The imagery, recalling Zeus and Ganymede, is not so much homoerotic, but, as Rhodes

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<sup>100</sup> *Phaedrus*, 253a.

<sup>101</sup> *Phaedrus*, 255b-d.

<sup>102</sup> *Phaedrus*, 251a, 254b.

observes, the mystical analogue of homoerotic coitus.<sup>103</sup> The lover and beloved would already have been purged of their illicit desires, most notably their *libido dominandi*. As Rhodes notes, the homoerotic desires would have been chastened by the continual references Socrates makes to images of cutting, irritation, itching, and boils, which would have repelled poor Phaedrus.

Even so, *himeros*, or longing, is described as the love that flows between lover and beloved. Recalling that in the myth, philosophers are also lovers of Zeus, *himeros* also represents the highest form of love, as well as the lovers' participation in the love that ties together the cosmos. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod explains that Himeros, with Eros, accompanies Aphrodite.<sup>104</sup> As waters that enter the eyes, *himeros* as longing represents spiritual waters. As it flows into the lovers, it also represents the longing that the lovers passively experience.

In the *Cratylus*, Socrates states *himeros* is that love one experiences when the beloved is present, as contrasted with the love or craving that one experiences when the beloved is absent:

Boiling of the soul *himeros* (desire) denotes the stream (*rhous*) which most draws the soul, because flowing with desire (*himeros*), and expresses a longing after things and violent attraction of the soul to them, and is termed *himeros* from possessing this power; *pothos* (longing) is expressive of the desire of that which is not present but absent, and in another place (*pou*); this is the reason why the name *pothos* is applied to things absent, as *himeros* is to things present.<sup>105</sup>

Perhaps one can associate *himeros* as delight, as one delights in the presence of one's beloved.

Socrates' account of the encounter of the lover and beloved in *philia* is an account of transcendence. In *himeros*, the

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<sup>103</sup> Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 500, 512.

<sup>104</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, 201.

<sup>105</sup> *Cratylus*, in *Collected Dialogues*, 419e-420b.

lovers are transported *illo tempore*, outside time. Socrates signals this when he indicates his entire speech has taken up no time at all. It begins and ends at high noon.<sup>106</sup> At least for philosophers, whose philosophizing gets described as imitating Zeus, *philia* for the beloved is transformative. This is the insight he gains in his shamanistic journey across the axis mundi.<sup>107</sup> The individual is not eclipsed by the idea because the individual, one might say, individuates the idea. Or as Rhodes observes, “the identity of the individual *is* to be an image of the divine.”<sup>108</sup> Insofar as philosophizing is the highest form of likening oneself to the divine, and life with one’s beloved is a life consisting of recollecting and imitating the divine (by drawing together a multiplicity of remembered perceptions), the *philia* of the philosophers constitutes the paradigmatic community of *imitatio Dei*.<sup>109</sup> Philosophy is not the transmission of doctrine, and existential truth of *philia* is not “proven.” Rather, the friendship of philosophers is a liturgy whose truth is in the action. Stated more precisely, the existential truth of philosophical friendship is seen in our experience that “eros comes to us as anamnesis” where “prophecy, philosophy, and eros are one.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Phaedrus*, 242a (first mention) and 259a2, 6 (second and third mentions, repeated, apparently, to emphasize the point). Rhodes observes: “All though Socrates’ long poem, the sun has not moved in the sky, and no time has passed! The prophecy was communicated from the god to Socrates’ soul and related by Socrates to Phaedrus in an eternal moment” (Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 522). “High noon” also performs an important symbolic role in conveying the revelation of Nous in the *Laws* (722c-723a).

<sup>107</sup> The conversation of the *Phaedrus* takes place under a plane tree (*platanos*), which gets mythically treated as the tree of the axis mundi: “plane tree” (229a, 230b, 236e); wrestling (236c). See Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 536 and Planinc, *Plato Through Homer*, 80, 84, 88, 99, 103-4, 119.

<sup>108</sup> Rhodes, “Platonic *Philia* and Political Order,” 46.

<sup>109</sup> *Phaedrus*, 252e-253a.

<sup>110</sup> Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 497, 505. See also Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 30-31. Walsh describes the anamnestic character of luminosity in the modern philosophical revolution: “Luminosity is not a light but rather the afterglow of an illumination that is always past when it reaches us.... Not only is luminosity

If our love of our friend comes to us through anamnesis, Socrates' love of Homer comes through Plato's refiguring of the erotic recognition of Odysseus of Nausicaa. Planinc demonstrates how the *Phaedrus* contains refigurations of various Homeric images of Odysseus' shamanistic journey, and the erotic recognition of lovers in the *Phaedrus* constitutes a refiguring of Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa, whose city (the Phaeacians) resides atop the cosmos.<sup>111</sup> Odysseus' wonder at beholding Nausicaa forms the basis of Socrates' anamnestic account of lovers. Accordingly, his description of *himeros* refigures Odysseus' purifying bath in the river Zeus has stopped.

Planinc explains all the Homeric tropes Plato uses to convey reality, but one central one stands out for our analysis of friendship. That is the multiple levels of erotic recognition at work in the *Phaedrus*. The lovers' anamnestic vision, which is Plato's account of sunaesthesia that is more differentiated than that of Aristotle, refigures that of Odysseus and Nausicaa, which, because it exists out of time, is also that of Odysseus and Penelope. One might think Socrates and *Phaedrus* have become friends (*Phaedrus* might think so). However, a more likely correspondence is the friendship Socrates has for Homer, which he states explicitly. Plato has him compare his own journey with that of Odysseus. Thus, one might say Socrates and Odysseus share erotic recognition of one another, as fellow travelers along the axis mundi. One might also say that Socrates and Homer are fellow travelers because Socrates seems to play the part both of Odysseus the traveler and Homer the storyteller. Of course, Odysseus is also the teller of his own story. Sitting under the plane tree (*platanos*), one wonders whether Plato, who tells Socrates' story which is filled with numerous puns and lyrics, is also present in this friendship. These multiple levels of *philia*

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not a light we shine but, as the light within which we exist, it always reaches us as past.... Responsibility for the other may be the point of epiphany, but it is not itself an epiphany, for it rather points toward that which is before all epiphany, before the other" (Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 330-1).

<sup>111</sup> Planinc, *Plato Through Homer*, 64-110.

## F i d e l e s

among the author of the Platonic dialogues and the reader, as well as the author and characters in the source materials he uses, suggest a myriad of meaningful levels of friendship. However, they all point to the personalist foundation of friendship, for as much as Socrates treats the souls loving one another as analogues to the divine cosmos, the actual experience of friendship is described as recollection of another person. Both the cosmological and personalist dimensions are present in Socrates' account of sunaisthesis, with neither one becoming dominant.

The multiple levels of meaning in the myths also make it difficult to treat the myths of recollection that ground the description of *philia* in the *Phaedrus* in a literal fashion. The multiple levels do make it exceedingly difficult to follow Socrates, as a friend, in his travels along the axis mundi. Even so, these relations all serve to highlight the fact that friendship is made possible within a community of being. The friendship of Socrates with Homer (or Odysseus) reflects the community of being all human beings share, which is grounded in the *himeros* that flows through the cosmos. Socrates' recollection of Homer in his own anamnestic tale of *philia* is an example of the truth of *philia* in action, and an illustration of his point that we recollect God in beholding the beauty of our beloved.

From the philosophical mania of the *Phaedrus*, Plato condescends with Athenian Stranger to form the second best regime in the *Laws*.<sup>112</sup> A direct comparison of the two dialogues lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, the key ingredients of the divine gift of *philia* appear in the *Laws* and infuse its political order. Citizens relate to one another as friends (though not in complete communism as with the ruling class in the *Republic*).<sup>113</sup> They experience their city as *nomos*, whose meaning is not simply legislation, but also liturgy, rhythm, and

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<sup>112</sup> "The *Phaedrus* marks the higher, longer way from the *Republic* to the *Laws*" (Planinc, *Plato Through Homer*, 24; see also 74).

<sup>113</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 840d.

poem. In fact, the citizens have little need for poets because they themselves are the poem of Nous.<sup>114</sup> Civic life is characterized primarily by festivals, not as incidental to their politics but the very essence of the political.<sup>115</sup> As Zeus pours *himeros* into the souls of philosophic friends, so too do the gods care for the affairs of the polis. In fact, Nous is the god that is revealed in the Athenian Stranger's *psychagogia*. He shows that the citizens do not so much believe that the gods care for their affairs but teaches them that divine intelligence (Nous) providentially orders every aspect of cosmic existence. In the case of divine intelligence, reason implies the rule of reason. Speculative intelligence is united with practical intelligence, which gets replicated in the composition of the Nocturnal Council, which should be more accurately, and less ominously, translated as "Nightly Meeting."<sup>116</sup> The *Laws* illustrates not sunaesthetic friendship as the *Phaedrus* does, but the regime seems to depend upon souls who have experienced sunaesthetic friendship. Accordingly, sunaesthetic friendship is not presented in the *Laws*; the lawgivers – the Athenian Stranger, Megillus, and Kleinias – do not seem to be virtue-friends, as the Athenian Stranger leads them to the cave of Zeus. The Athenian Stranger has something of Socrates, who stands outside the home of Agathon, about him. Yet, the colony, Magnesia, is to replicate philosophical virtues, most notably *sunaisthesis*. Planinc argues Magnesia, not the *kallipolis* of the Republic, is Socrates' perfect city: "Magnesia is the heavenly city where Socrates, disguised as Athenian Stranger, would be graciously received and recognized for who he is."<sup>117</sup> Odysseus learns justice in the city of the heavenly Phaeacians and returns home, disguised, to restore order; Socrates descends from the hyperouranian and, disguised, restores order by establishing Magnesia. His soul is the rule of

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<sup>114</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 817b-c.

<sup>115</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 828b-832b.

<sup>116</sup> V. Bradley Lewis, "The Nocturnal Council and Political Philosophy," *History of Political Thought*, XIX(1) 1998: 2-20.

<sup>117</sup> Planinc, *Plato Through Homer*, 110.

Nous over the city that enables its citizens to practice civic friendship.

## Kierkegaard

For Plato and Aristotle, friendship appears as the culmination of the ethical and contemplative life. Because friendship is the end to which everything else points, it is glimpsed only indirectly. Aristotle's description of sunaisthesis is overly compressed, and he leaves it up to the reader to replicate it through the exercise of his practical wisdom. Plato relies on myth to describe sunaisthesis because myth is the means of communicating that which cannot be understood directly.

Friendship as the end of ethical action helps explain its ambivalent place in Kierkegaard's thought. It is unclear whether, as part of his inward turn, he dismisses it as an example of self-projection onto another, or deepens our awareness of its complexities of otherness in a direction at which Aristotle and Plato (and Socrates) can only hint. Kierkegaard understood his account of the "moment" to surpass Socratic recollection. On the other hand, through the voice of Johannes Climacus, he states Socrates had a perfect understanding of the ways humans ought to relate to one another because he practiced self-sacrificial love.

A way into the enigma of Kierkegaard's connection with the ancient view of friendship is to consider an important insight he makes in *Philosophical Fragments*, in the voice of Johannes Climacus, concerning recollection: "Socratically understood, the individual has existed before he came into existence and recollects himself; thus recollection is pre-existence (not recollection of pre-existence)."<sup>118</sup> The Platonic myth of anamnesis, which grounds *philia* in the *Phaedrus* for instance, expresses existence, less so the contents of pre-existence.

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<sup>118</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. VII, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 96.

As we shall see, while Kierkegaard generally dismisses myth, Climacus understands the myth of recollection as a functional equivalent to a Kierkegaard's famous 1835 journal entry where he reflects upon the meaning of his existence: "What I really need is to be clear about what I am to do, not about what I must now, except insofar as knowledge must precede every action. It is question of understanding of my destiny, of seeing what the Deity really wants me to do; the thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die.*"<sup>119</sup> While this statement is frequently taken as a slogan for existentialism, it can better be understood as an expression of the desire for existential truth, whereby truth is found in the action of one's *ēthos*, and not simply in opinions. It is a way of expressing philosophy as luminosity instead of in terms of the intentionality of holding concepts. It reflects Aristotle's insight that *ēthos* is revealed in one's choices instead of opinions. One can see it as a functional equivalent to recollection by noting it also reflects the truth of the myth of the lots in Book X of Plato's *Republic* or the myth of pre-existence of *ēthos* in the *Phaedrus*. Kierkegaard is casting about for his lot, his *ēthos*. Kierkegaard seeks his lot and seeks the standard by which to judge his lot. This is an expression of the striving for self-knowledge. The ancient Greeks understood sunaesthetic friendship as the way into self-knowledge; friendship provides "another set of eyes" that enables one to view and judge one's lot. Kierkegaard will regard neighborly love as the most profound expression of what the Greeks aspired to with sunaesthetic friendship. However, neighborly love is "structured Socratically," that is, along the lines of sunaesthetic friendship, which suggests that Kierkegaard provides a way of practicing a kind of redeemed friendship while we are amidst our "deliberations" and "upbuilding" toward neighborly love.

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<sup>119</sup> Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Penguin, 1996), 32.

## F i d e l e s

Even so, Kierkegaard considers his approach to expressing existential truth, and friendship, as an advance on the Socratic. The young Kierkegaard of his dissertation dismisses myth as the flight of imagination after speculative philosophy (understood in a Hegelian, not Platonic, noetic, sense) reaches its limit.<sup>120</sup> Myth gets detached from noesis. The older Kierkegaard sees greater truth in myth, but, through Climacus, still thinks it represents “a muddiness of mind in which earthly distinction ferments almost grossly.”<sup>121</sup>

Kierkegaard through Climacus also generally avoids philosophizing in the mode of *analogia entis* whereby qualities of the other, God and neighbor, are analogized by our own creaturely experience. Climacus considers this mode as a form of self-projection.<sup>122</sup> Knowledge of the god comes from the god, and, it seems knowledge of another must come from us being able to receive the other, which depends on us being able to perceive him as at the frontier or paradox, as more wondrous than mythological monsters like Typhon, as Climacus notes of Socrates’ perplexity toward human beings.<sup>123</sup> Climacus explains why *analogia entis* is an inappropriate mode of knowing otherness, and why the Socratic points the way toward the appropriate mode: “Defined as the absolutely different, it seems to be at the point of being disclosed, but not so, because the understanding cannot even think the absolutely different; it cannot absolutely negate itself but uses itself for that purpose and consequently thinks the difference in itself, which it thinks

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<sup>120</sup> “But if we ask what the mythical is basically, one may presumably reply that it is the idea in a state of alienation, the idea’s externality – i.e., its immediate temporality and spatiality as such.... The dialectical clears the terrain of everything irrelevant and then attempts to clamber up to the idea, but since this fails, the imagination reacts. Weary of the dialectical work, the imagination begins to dream, and from this comes the mythical”—Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony, Kierkegaard’s Writings*, vol. II., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 101.

<sup>121</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 12.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–6.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–46.

by itself.”<sup>124</sup> The other is fundamentally different from us, and so we must practice self-sacrificial love in order properly to love him or her. The way to do that is to think “the difference in itself,” which one does by oneself. Climacus’ meditations upon Socratic recollection are the means by which one performs this thinking of the “difference” within oneself.

As with *analogia entis*, Kierkegaard rarely discusses what one might call philosophical and theological anthropology: the nature of the soul, including its parts like the intellect, spirited part, and appetites; Kierkegaard also avoids the language of *imago Dei*, which is so crucial for classical and medieval Christian accounts of personhood. This rejection of philosophical anthropology, along with the rejection of *analogia entis*, might be an example of what Walsh means by modernity postulating a new “ontotheological outlook.” He argues of the modern philosophical revolution that the language of soul, with its capacities to virtue, too easily “suggests that the virtues somehow preexist within us.”<sup>125</sup> However, whatever the limitations of the myth of the pre-existence of the soul (or rather, its contents), one would be hard-pressed to agree with this point: it is difficult to read Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* or Augustine’s *Confessions* and conclude one has already attained their respective models of virtue. If anything, the modern critique of ancient virtue theories has been that they have been too strenuous. Walsh’s claim that the modern philosophical revolution provides a more refined relational, or other-regarding view of self, than the ancient or medieval view has greater merit. This can be seen in his assessment of Heidegger’s Dasein whereby

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 45. Climacus seems to agree with the young Kierkegaard that myth is a Platonic distortion of the Socratic: “Each of these two interpretations has, of course, sought to give a complete characterization of Socrates – Xenophon by pulling him down into the lower regions of the useful, Plato by elevating him into the supramundane regions of the idea. But the point, one that lies between, invisible and so very difficult to grasp securely, is irony” (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, 127-28).

<sup>125</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 71.

“existence precedes essence – but because he can never contain the being by which he is in being.”<sup>126</sup> But even here the moderns reaffirm the older view almost as much as they appear to reject it, first insofar as they appear to maintain the content of ancient and medieval virtue theories. The difference is in the way the moderns, in establishing the practical over the theoretical, illuminate the horizon in which the moral exists, but the content of courage, moderation, justice, and practical wisdom remains remarkably stable.<sup>127</sup> Second, it is, surprisingly, Jacques Derrida who at least partially retrieves the language of soul and virtue when he observes Heidegger’s rejection of the language of spirit (*l’esprit*) left him open to its political misapplication in Nazism.<sup>128</sup>

Similarly, Kierkegaard avoids treating the individual as an analogue of the cosmos, which is a component of Plato’s account of the soul. Kierkegaard’s rejection might be, as Walsh suggests, the part of the modern turn that does not reject “nature” as a concept so much as “stand within the same light [as nature] that emanates from being itself.”<sup>129</sup> “Nature” becomes a secondary category as human beings become a question to themselves because they look to that which moves them to question. Kierkegaard, more than any other modern, in so far as he thought most deeply about philosophy, was most a question to himself. This seems to be behind the increased tonality of personalism some commentators have detected in Kierkegaard’s account of friendship and love.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>127</sup> One thinks of Rémi Brague’s comment on Benjamin Constant’s observation that Christianity merely replicates the “common morality” that it in fact “ennobles all the virtues” by providing them with a “nourishing environment in which finer versions of the practices dictated by common virtue might crystallize”: *The Law of God: The Philosophical History of an Idea*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 260. The modern philosophical revolution’s approach to moral virtue seems to stand in the same relation with ancient virtue.

<sup>128</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 361.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>130</sup> Liz Carmichael, *Friendship: Interpreting Love* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 159.

Even so, we should be careful in pushing this apparent rejection of *analogia entis* too far, as something like it is at work in Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms. Using pseudonyms allows Kierkegaard to explore various types of existence. Insofar as none can be completely identified with him, but rather partially identified with him, Kierkegaard as author engages in analogical thinking when experimenting with various modes of polyphony. Doing so permits him to take difference into himself, as the *mythos* of recollection, for example, permits Plato to take the difference of the beloved as icon of the Good into himself. The pseudonyms permit Kierkegaard to practice a form of sunaesthetic knowledge because they enable him to see a part of his *ēthos* – though a completed *ēthos* insofar as each pseudonym (e.g., the esthete) represents a certain character type – from outside, as a friend strives to behold his beloved's *ēthos*. Perhaps something similar is at work in Socrates' friendship for Homer, and for Odysseus. Kierkegaard, and we the reader, befriend the pseudonyms in the same way we befriend a character in a book. Reading this way is a practice into *sunaisthesis*, as Aristotle regarded viewing tragedy as a practice into *philanthropia*, or as Socrates beholds Odysseus in telling his *Phaedrus* myth.<sup>131</sup>

Kierkegaard, under the influence of Hegel, tends to overlook the noetic content of Platonic myth as the story of the soul, and the myth's capacity to take difference into oneself. Even so, Climacus' observation that "recollection is pre-existence" not "of pre-existence" illuminates a fundamental distinction that the myths themselves may not reveal in greatest clarity. If, as Voegelin observes, the myth is the truth of

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<sup>131</sup> Recent scholarship shows Kierkegaard sometimes adopted the pseudonym only after completing the manuscript. He seems to have originally written *Philosophical Fragments* in his own name, but substituted the name of Climacus only the day before sending the manuscript to the publisher: cf. M. Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 69.

## F i d e l e s

existence and not simply the contents,<sup>132</sup> we see how close Plato is to Kierkegaard's insight. Kierkegaard, in the voice of William Afham in *Stages on Life's Way*, admits recollection is not restricted to Greek experience: as a summing up of one's life (not simply in details, but for what it stands), it occurs regardless whether one's soul is created or is eternal.<sup>133</sup> Kierkegaard's famous journal entry of 1835 whereby he asks upon which way of existence he should live and die is an expression of recollection, or perhaps it can more accurately be described as a plea for the truth of existence that comes to us as recollection.

Even so, Kierkegaard thought modern philosophy constitutes an advance in our thinking of myth and *sunaithesis*. One way of seeing this is in Climacus' observation that Socratic recollection produces an interpretation of the self that is simultaneously too autonomous and one that loses the individual in the contents of eternal recollection, which makes it incapable of expressing genuine love: "He has the condition, therefore, within himself, and the bringing forth (the birth) is only an appearing of what was present, and that is why here again in this birth the moment is instantly swallowed by recollection. It is clear that the person who is born by dying away more and more can less and less be said to be born, since he is only reminded more and more clearly that he exists, and the person who in turn gives birth to expressions of the beautiful does not give them birth but allows the beautiful within him to give them birth by itself."<sup>134</sup> Even so, just as the Socratic is carried over into the passion of faith, so too does one's "recollection" or faith in the fact of one's creation constitute the more differentiated functional equivalent of recollection: "If the Socratic theory of recollection and of every human being as universal man is not

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<sup>132</sup> And so, myth can only be assessed in the mythic: Eric Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle, Order and History* III, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 183-194; Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 383 n. 40.

<sup>133</sup> *Stages on Life's Way, Kierkegaard's Writings*, XI, trans., Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 10-11.

<sup>134</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 31.

maintained, then Sextus Empiricus stands there ready to make the transition implied in 'to learn' not merely difficult but impossible."<sup>135</sup> We learn, which is to say, we communicate, commune, and practice friendship, in more or less the same manner as Socrates identified. Christianity represents a deepening and completion, not a rejection of Socrates.

Part of Kierkegaard's ambivalence toward friendship, expressed most directly in *Works of Love* but treated also in *Philosophical Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and *Either/Or* (Judge William is a friend of the esthete and his defense of marriage is an Aristotelian defense of friendship as well) is that Kierkegaard focuses on the paradox, the limit of philosophy, and so points past friendship. But he points past friendship in order to save it in light of what is higher. Climacus expresses this by claiming: "the paradox is the passion of thought, and the thinker without the paradox is like the lover without passion: a mediocre fellow. But the ultimate potentiation of every passion is always to will its own downfall, and so it is also the ultimate passion of the understanding to will the collision, although in one way or another the collision must become its downfall. This, then, is the ultimate paradox of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think."<sup>136</sup>

This statement by Climacus, who identifies himself as a poet, though Kierkegaard in his own name identifies him as a mystical and skeptical philosopher,<sup>137</sup> concisely expresses the problematical nature of "modernity": in seeking its own downfall, does eros – the passion of thought – seek its own annihilation (i.e., nihilism), or that beyond which it cannot love or think (mystical philosophy, in this formulation borrowed from Anselm)? Another way of considering this paradox is to see it as a way of expressing the manner in which both thought and love unseat itself. Self-love unseats itself in seeking its satisfaction in

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 26 (poet), all of *Johannes Climacus* (skeptical philosopher).

the beloved, and understanding also unseats itself by attempting to satisfy itself.<sup>138</sup> Kierkegaard through Climacus has put his finger on something essential about the structure of love and understanding. His insight also illustrates Walsh's contention that "modern philosophy, which began with the centering of attention on the self, has now recognized that its very project is constituted by what lies beyond it."<sup>139</sup> Kierkegaard focuses on the paradox which leads him to regard friendship in the same problematic light we saw with Socrates. Socrates seeks sunaesthetic friendship with potential philosophers like Menexenus, but he also contemplates in the marketplace, frequently in solitude as in the *Symposium*.

Existence not centered on the self obliges one not to claim authority for one's thoughts. For this reason Socrates was a walkabout, as Kierkegaard was as well in the streets of Copenhagen. Joachim Garff describes how Kierkegaard would peregrinate the streets of Copenhagen, taking the arm of an acquaintance and strolling with him for long periods of time, engaging in long discussions that would find their way into his writings. Kierkegaard would be the peripatetic in the morning, and retire to his study in the afternoon and evening to write. As with the *flâneur* of Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, one form of modern philosophical friendship seems to be the walkabout.<sup>140</sup> However, Kierkegaard's peripatetic models were

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<sup>138</sup> Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 74. This helps account for why Walsh can identify Christian resonances in such seemingly anti-Christian thinkers like Nietzsche. In rejecting dogmatic formulations of the divine horizon, they establish with greater clarity of what it consists.

<sup>139</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 310. Walsh's comment is in reference to Levinas, but, as he also argues, it was Kierkegaard who saw all this a century earlier but whose insights are only now being seen in their proper light.

<sup>140</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature* trans. P.E. Charvet (Viking 1972) 395-422; Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap, 1999). Hannah Arendt comments on Benjamin's evocation of the *flâneur*: "In Paris a stranger feels at home because he can

Socrates and Christ. By taking the daily routines of city life unto him, he undermined the potential for him becoming an authority.<sup>141</sup> Being a philosopher of the street enabled him to love many and all, as well as none in particular, though Garff mentions Kierkegaard did have friends, especially in his younger days. Moreover, Kierkegaard cultivated his image as a *flâneur*, especially while composing his esthetic *Either/Or*, as a form of irony, to convince the public he was a “street-corner loafer.” This was to distract the public from actually believing he could be capable of producing such a “great” work, and thereby praising him.<sup>142</sup>

Let us consider further Climacus’ claim that Socrates, in viewing himself as midwife, “understood how one human being is related to another.”<sup>143</sup> “He perceived that this relation is the highest relation a human being can have to another. And in that

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inhabit the city the way he lives in his own four walls. And just as one inhabits an apartment, and makes it comfortable, by living in it instead of just using it for sleeping, eating, and working, so one inhabits a city by strolling through it without aim or purpose, with one’s stay secured by the countless cafes which line the streets and past which the life of the city, the flow of the pedestrians, moves along. To this day Paris is the only one among the large cities which can be comfortably covered on foot, and more than any other city it is dependent for its liveliness on people who pass by in the streets, so that the modern automobile traffic endangers its very existence not only for technical reasons... Thus, ever since the Second Empire the city has been the paradise of all those who need to chase after no livelihood, pursue no career, reach no goal – the paradise, then, of bohemians, and not only of artists and writers but of all those who have gathered about them because they could not be integrated either politically – being homeless or stateless – or socially” – Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1983), 174. Arendt’s romantic view of Paris is exploded by the social pathologies and riots of those who “could not be integrated either politically... or socially” (see my “Riots of Ramadan,” Commentary for Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, November 2005:

<<http://www.ashbrook.org/publicat/guest/05/vonheyking/ramadan.html>>).

<sup>141</sup> Joachim Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 314-18.

<sup>142</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Point of View, Kierkegaard’s Writings*, XXII, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 61-3.

<sup>143</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 101.

he is indeed forever right, for even if a divine point of departure is ever given, this remains the true relation between one human being and another.”<sup>144</sup> In midwifery, one soul stands in an intimate contact with another but one that is simultaneously removed by a distance both close but separated by a gap of infinite depth. As Socrates insists, he helps give birth but he himself does not beget: “giving birth indeed belongs to the god.”<sup>145</sup>

In the paradox, Socrates shows us that we owe everything to the god, and nothing to another.<sup>146</sup> Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a teacher. “Teaching” is simply evoking from the depths of the student’s soul, which means there is nothing the student “learns.” This, at least, seems to be the meaning of the *Meno*. St. Augustine explicates this in his *De Magistro*, where he points out that teaching is only a matter of pointing. Only Christ, who is within, is the teacher. On the one hand, Climacus views Socratic friendship as characterized by an infinite chasm between teacher and student: “Between one human being and another, this is the highest: the pupil is the occasion for the teacher to understand himself; in death the teacher leaves no claim upon the pupil’s soul, no more than the pupil can claim that the teacher owes him something.”<sup>147</sup> On the other hand, Socratic ignorance, expressed in his midwifery, is the very unity between teacher and student: “what else was his ignorance but the unitive expression of love for the learner. But, as we have seen, this unity was also the truth.”<sup>148</sup> Or, as Climacus states in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, “The great merit of the Socratic was precisely to emphasize that the knower is an existing person

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>146</sup> “The one is not indebted to the other for anything, but both are indebted to the god for everything” (Ibid., 66)

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 30.

and that to exist is the essential.”<sup>149</sup> Just as the point of wisdom is self-knowledge and not that of facts, so too is the passion the truth itself: “The passion of the infinite, not its content, is the deciding factor, for its content is precisely itself. In this way the subjective ‘how’ and subjectivity are the truth.”<sup>150</sup> As Christ “is precisely the teaching,”<sup>151</sup> so too is the irruption of eternal truth in oneself, which Socrates as midwife is present to and absent from.<sup>152</sup>

As with Aristotle, where the truth of *sunaisthesis* is in its activity, and the truth of the Socratic myth of recollecting the soul of the beloved is a ritual, so too is the unity of Socratic teacher and learner the existential truth. Like Franciscan monks who meditate upon the “deliberations” of Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*, we need to remember Kierkegaard’s discussions of love and friendship are spiritual exercises where truth is in the act itself.

In Socratic friendship, we owe the god everything and Socrates (or our friend, the teacher) nothing because learning is self-discovery. Yet, it is experienced in the wondrous presence of the other: “In the Socratic view, every human being is himself the midpoint, and the whole world focuses only on him because his self-knowledge is God-knowledge. Moreover, this is how Socrates understood himself, and in his view this is how every

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<sup>149</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard’s *Writings*, vol. XII.1, trans., Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 203.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>151</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 55.

<sup>152</sup> “For the essence of the Socratic is that the learner, because he himself is the truth and has the condition, can thrust the teacher away” (*ibid.*, 62). Of course, for the learner to be the truth, must have “formed his judgments with the unbribability of one who is dead” (*Ibid.*, 23). In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard will recommend we cultivate our neighborly love by communing with the dead in graveyards as a way of cultivating our stamina for non-reciprocating love: Kierkegaard, *Works of Love, Kierkegaard’s Writings*, vol. XVI, trans., Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 278. This is also an example where the form of writing matches its content. Kierkegaard’s name in Danish means churchyard and specifically, “graveyard” (Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, 3).

human being must understand himself, and by virtue of that understanding he must understand his relation to the single individual, always with equal humility and with equal pride.”<sup>153</sup> “His relation, therefore, is at all times marked with autopathy just as much by sympathy.”<sup>154</sup> “In the Socratic view, every human being is himself the midpoint, and the whole word focuses only on him because his self-knowledge is God-knowledge... Socrates had the courage and self-collectedness to be sufficient unto himself, but in his relations to others he also had the courage and self-collectedness to be merely an occasion even for the most stupid person.”<sup>155</sup> The reason Socratic friendship is marked by both autopathy and sympathy is because, as Climacus notes of Socrates, it is the god that turns around the learner. The learner is independent of the teacher because the teacher is ultimately helpless to teach; it is the god that turns around the learner. Yet the teacher too has experienced this turning around; their friendship is revealed in their mutual participation in the god’s love.

In loving another as the end-point of the god’s irruption, we experience him as the paradox, the frontier.<sup>156</sup> The teacher is present, yet absent, at the “Moment” when divine being irrupts into our souls, which transforms us:

The temporal point of departure is a nothing, because in the same moment I discover that I have known the truth from eternity without knowing it, in the same instant that moment is hidden in the eternal, assimilated into it in such a way that I, so to speak, still cannot find it even if I were to look for it, because there is no Here and no There, but only an *ubique et nusquam*. If the situation is to be different, then the moment in time must have such decisive significance that for no moment will I be able to forget it, neither in time nor in

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<sup>153</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 11.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

eternity, because the eternal, previously nonexistent, came into existence in that moment.<sup>157</sup>

Climacus approvingly cites Socrates' statement, from the *Phaedrus*, that human beings are more wondrous from the Typhon, the mythological figure (of dual nature): "a more curious monster than Typhon or a friendlier and simpler being, by nature sharing something divine."<sup>158</sup> Humans too have a composite nature, but theirs runs deeper. Human beings are an enigma, at the frontier or paradox, and as such they are something "that thought itself cannot think."<sup>159</sup> Like Augustine, who exclaimed upon the death of his friend that he has become a question unto himself (*questio mihi sum*), the single individual is the site of the frontier, or the paradox.<sup>160</sup> Eternal being has irrupted in time in the other, as we saw in the *Phaedrus*. We have perceived the point where the passion of thought has reached that beyond which it cannot know or love. The learner is independent of the teacher. However, unlike the *Phaedrus* where the lover credits the beloved for constituting the immediate reminder of the Good, for Climacus, lover is now absent from beloved, and beloved from lover, as each experiences himself as created by the god. The god whom Socrates serves becomes the Christ who saves and the God who creates. Thus, the moment of

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, citing *Phaedrus* 230a.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 44.

<sup>160</sup> Walsh notices this Augustinian point among modern philosophers, especially Levinas and Derrida: in Levinas, "it is dispossession that makes thought and language possible, because a common world arises only where the world I thought I possessed has been put in question by the primacy of the other" and whereby "the death of the other affects me more than my own" (*The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 305, 325); in Derrida, in the recognition that in death is the ultimate gift of self possible (*Ibid.*, 377). It is in those two philosophers that Augustine's work takes on added weight in the self-understanding of the modern philosophical revolution (*Ibid.*, 332n.31, 358n.23), which is one way of considering the manner in which modernity necessarily brings back faith.

conversion constitutes a deeper expression of the human person than the Platonic *periagoge* which is constituted by recollection: “Whereas the Greek pathos focuses on recollection, the pathos of our project focuses on the moment, and no wonder, for is it not an exceedingly pathos-filled matter to come into existence from the state of ‘not to be’?”<sup>161</sup>

In the moment, our awareness of our neighbor as the paradox or frontier deepens. Kierkegaard explains this in his distinction between friendship and neighborly love in the meditative or “deliberative” *Works of Love*. In *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus explains this in terms of how Christians are closer to one another when they are closer in Christ, not when they are closer in proximity or in time. However, one can detect this deepening already in the meditations of Johannes Climacus.

Climacus complains of the bipolar nature of modern philosophy, or modern skepticism. The modern skeptic claims complete independence from tradition and all that has come before, a claim Climacus demolishes. Modern philosophy or skepticism, insofar as it is modern, is historical. It makes a claim about the eternal and the contingent. In so doing, Climacus complains it lacks awareness of the intermediate: “The philosopher’s consciousness must encompass the most dizzying contrasts: his own personality, his little amendment – the philosophy of the whole world as the unfolding of the eternal philosophy.”<sup>162</sup> “Doubt is precisely a polemic against what went before,” including one’s teacher.<sup>163</sup> Climacus, who enjoys solitude and mentions no teachers, learns the culmination of modern philosophy is to be masterless, which he, more than the modern philosophers, has achieved: “My visionary dreams about being a follower have vanished; before I was allowed to be young, I became old; now I am sailing on the open waters.”<sup>164</sup> Johannes Climacus is the most modern and most Socratic of philosophers.

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<sup>161</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 21.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 145, 158.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 118, 159.

In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus clarifies love and friendship in a way that attempts to reconcile Socratic sympathy and autopathy: “Existence-communication, however, understands something different by *unum* in the saying *unum noris, omnes* [if you know one, you know all], understands something different by ‘yourself’ in the phrase ‘know yourself,’ understands thereby an actual human being and indicates thereby that the existence-communication does not occupy itself with the anecdotal differences between Tom, Dick, and Harry.”<sup>165</sup> Contrary to moderns who, with their abstract rationalism, identify with “humanity,” the Socratic points one toward the other individual in the concrete. But one cannot perceive the other except how the god reveals him to you. Thus, the saying, *unum noris, omnes*, differs from abstract “humanity” because genuinely knowing one as an individual will be to know him as the paradox or frontier that the god has revealed. In knowing the other, we also know ourselves. To know the paradox as paradox is to know oneself as the site of the paradox. Thus, genuine self-knowledge is also knowledge of the other. As Climacus details in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the turn inward is also the form of turning outward that does not disperse oneself into the contents of the world: “Nature, the totality of creation, is God’s work, and yet God is not there, but within the individual human being there is a possibility... that in inwardness is awakened to a God-relationship, and then it is possible to see God everywhere.”<sup>166</sup>

Now, like the god and the king who “in love wants to be the equal of the most lowly of the lowly,” Climacus can become a genuine teacher, that is, learner. As with our confrontation of the paradox or frontier, the god’s love, and thus our love, of all is wondrous and terrifying: “And the situation of understanding – how terrifying, for it is indeed less terrifying to fall upon one’s face while the mountains tremble at the god’s voice than to sit

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<sup>165</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, 571-2.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-7.

with him as his equal, and yet the god's concern is precisely to sit this way."<sup>167</sup> While wonder seems unreflective insofar as it is immediate, it is also the most appropriate response to our collision with the paradox, for it is the most perfect expression of uncertainty of coming into existence.<sup>168</sup> We wonder, and indeed are astonished, at the god who seeks our friendship. Existence is given by the god who empties himself.

Climacus explains this at the end of Part II of *Philosophical Fragments*, when he explains that a human could not have poeticized the god seeking human beings:

Is not the whole thing wondrous, does not this word come to my lips as a felicitously foreshadowing word, for do we not, as I in fact said and you yourself involuntarily say, stand here before *the wonder* (*Vidunderet*). And since we both are now standing before this wonder, whose solemn silence cannot be disturbed by human wrangling about what is mine and what is yours, whose awe-inspiring words infinitely drown out human quarreling about mine and thine, forgive me my curious mistaken notion of having composed it myself. It was a mistaken notion, and the poem was so different from every human poem that it was no poem at all but *the wonder*.<sup>169</sup>

Despite the moment constituting an advance on Aristotle's *sunaisthesis* and the Socratic myth of *philia* in recollection, all three accounts of friendship and love place wonder at the center of the experience of *philia*. Wonder seems to be that experience of being disarmed of our own interests and projections. In wondering, we let the other come to us. Climacus thinks the moment is the best way of articulating that experience because he thinks otherness cannot be explained or symbolized: "Defined as the absolutely different, it seems to be at the point of

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<sup>167</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 34-35.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

being disclosed, but not so, because the understanding cannot even think the absolutely different; it cannot absolutely negate itself but uses itself for that purpose and consequently thinks the difference in itself, which it thinks by itself.”<sup>170</sup>

David Walsh observes of Kierkegaard’s alleged authorship that he discovered he was not the author. Rather, his works authored him. Here Climacus confesses these fragments have written him. Moreover, they have written him in community with the reader. The reader stands with Climacus (and Kierkegaard, who would about to leave behind the pseudonymous writings) in community in god.

Even so, Climacus is a pseudonym. Kierkegaard’s strategy for writing pseudonymously indicates a strategy that, for every positive statement made by a pseudonymous author (e.g., that inwardness leads to seeing God everywhere [Climacus]), Kierkegaard leaves open the possibility for contradicting that statement. Pseudonymous authorship is a strategy of irony. It is also a strategy of friendship. We discover the *ēthos* of the author because it is entirely poured directly into his authorship. There is no hermeneutic of suspicion as there is with a “real” author because the author is the authored in the pseudonymous writings. How Climacus’ pseudonymous authorship turns out is how his personality turns out. We catch a glimpse of his *ēthos* in the way Aristotle suggests of sunaesthetic friends.<sup>171</sup>

With irony, we have returned to the topic of Kierkegaard’s dissertation. However, he appears to have deepened his understanding of irony over the years. In his dissertation, Socratic irony is a ruse, a negative issuing in nothing. More dangerously, Socrates deconstructed the opinions of the youths so that, no longer confident of everything, they turned themselves into Socrates’ disciples.<sup>172</sup> Socrates, not the Good, becomes the beloved. Later in *Concluding Unscientific*

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>171</sup> Irony then becomes Kierkegaard’s response to the question he famously posed to himself in his journal in 1835, quoted above.

<sup>172</sup> *Concept of Irony*, 190-1.

*Postscript*, Climacus claims that we understand another in the same manner we understand a joke: we know it within ourselves: “To believe in the ideality on the word of another is like laughing at a joke not because one has understood it but because someone else said that it was funny.”<sup>173</sup> The conventions of the academy, and the souls of academics, force me to explain this. In order for us to find a joke funny, we must understand it, and we can only understand by turning within. The joke is no longer funny when it must be explained. Similarly, another cannot be completely understood through explanation. “Existence-communication,” as the hyphenated term suggests, is revealed in action.<sup>174</sup>

“Existence-communication,” like *sunaisthesis*, involves perceiving the other and the good both friends share. Kierkegaard wrote pseudonymously so his reader could focus on the substance of the argument, and not on the author. Even so, his writings are utterly biographical as well. All his writings reflect the tension of *Philosophical Fragments* that strives to explain how the eternal is present in historical contingency. We see Kierkegaard as much as we see that to which he points. These writings are all ironic. Irony is the way into otherness.<sup>175</sup> Kierkegaard, more so than Aristotle and more so than Socrates at least in the *Phaedrus*, illuminates the contours of friendship’s sunaesthetic vision and the distance between individuated friends.

For Climacus, and for Kierkegaard, while the modern philosophical revolution constitutes an advance upon the

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<sup>173</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, 325.

<sup>174</sup> Planinc regards Socrates’ discussion about mimesis in *Republic X* as a joke that Glaucon does not understand. Socrates narrates to his reader friend that Glaucon’s failure to understand as “laughable” (*Republic* 509c; Planinc, *Plato Through Homer*, 123).

<sup>175</sup> Roger Scruton appeals to Kierkegaard, Socrates, and Christ in defining irony as “the recognition and acceptance of otherness”: “Forgiveness and Irony: What Makes the West Strong,” *City Journal*, 19.1 (Winter 2009) <[http://www.city-journal.org/2009/19\\_1\\_the-west.html](http://www.city-journal.org/2009/19_1_the-west.html)>.

Socratic, it remains structured Socratically, meaning Christian faith constitutes a deepening of the paradox (into the absurd), and not its resolution. Climacus states this clearly: “Indeed..., if this is not the case, the teacher is not the god but only a Socrates who, if he does not go about things as Socrates did, is not even a Socrates”.<sup>176</sup> Or again: “Faith itself is a wonder, and everything that is true of the paradox is also true of faith. But within this wonder everything is again structured Socratically, yet in such a way that the wonder is never canceled – the wonder that the eternal condition is given in time. Everything is structured Socratically, for the relation between one contemporary and another contemporary, provided that both are believers, is altogether Socratic: the one is not indebted to the other for anything, but both are indebted to the god for everything.”<sup>177</sup> Human beings live the paradox and absurd as much in Christianity, which resists efforts to slide into dogma. Even so, Climacus notes that faith deepens our attachment to the other: “A believer is infinitely interested in the actuality of another. For faith, this is decisive, and this interestedness is not just a little inquisitiveness but is absolute dependence on the object of faith. The object of faith is the actuality of another person; its relation is an infinite interestedness.”<sup>178</sup> Love goes with the faith that must cross the infinite distance among individuals.

## Conclusion

In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard represents the gap between lover and beloved, revealed in faith, with the “dash” – that which connects us but also illuminates the infinite distance among existents. In *Works of Love* and *Upbuilding Discourses*, we see a starker critique of the shortcomings of Socratic love. However, Walsh is correct to observe that these writings constitute an

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<sup>176</sup> *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 58.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-6.

<sup>178</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, 325-6.

idealization of love's standard. They show its end and assume we are midway because they are "deliberations"; they reflect upbuilding practices of love and not doctrine.

Kierkegaard was not a political philosopher so much as he meditated upon the spiritual conditions of freedom. His occasional references to politics shows he disdained the revolution toward mass democracy.<sup>179</sup> Some have argued he provides the foundations for a radical democracy, whereas he also seems content with monarchy. The political form that best fits his understanding of friendship is unclear, though one thing that can be certain is that any political form would fall short from genuine friendship and neighborly love. As long as it promotes a degree of stable freedom under which people could live out the paradox, Kierkegaard might be content. Though it is unclear that the liberal order, at least currently constituted, actually does this. Kierkegaard's criticisms of mass democracy are similar to those of Tocqueville, who is a highly critical friend of liberal democracy. Kierkegaard may have agreed with Tocqueville's worries that envy would spur the degradations and centralization of power in mass democracy.

Tocqueville sees the practice of associational life as key to resisting leveling, and Kierkegaard's understanding of "existence-communication" better explains why this is the case than does Tocqueville. However, one wonders whether associations are enough. Recall Kierkegaard rejects myth. Yet, political societies organize themselves according to myth. The citizens of the Magnesian city in Plato's *Laws* call their city a poem, and Aristotle considers the polis a *mythos*. The myth ties together the dead, the living, and the yet to be born. Dante's

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<sup>179</sup> One example from the *Papers and Journals* suffices: "To live under [a people's government] is the most constructive for eternity, but the worst agony as long as it persists. One can long for only one thing – that Socratic wish to die and be dead. [...] A people's government is the true picture of hell. For even if one could endure its affliction, it would still be a relief to be allowed to be alone; but the torment is precisely that 'the others' tyrannize over one" (*Papers and Journals: A Selection*, 302).

*Divine Comedy* is perhaps the West's greatest evocation of this cosmopolis. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard does recommend we associate with the dead in graveyards as a way of exercising our capacity to love without expectation of reciprocity. Such love enhances the experience of reading the pseudonymous writings, where we befriend the totality of the author's personality, which is bound up with the actual writing. By associating with the dead, we also befriend the totality of the personality of the dead because we have glimpsed how their lives have turned out, just as we glimpse how the life of Johannes Climacus turns out in his discovery he is the quintessential modern philosopher.

However, by rejecting the myth of recollection, *imago Dei*, and *analogia entis*, does Kierkegaard counsel a version of friendship that ends up no different than the friendships of, say, Ivan Ilyich? Recall in Tolstoy's story, Ivan Ilyich's friends treat his dying state as an inconvenience because they have no way of relating to him. They simply did not know what to say to him. Kierkegaard is aware of the incapacity for speech from inadequate love in the example of Socrates. The best Socrates finally can do is to smile at his interlocutor as a way of acknowledging the distance between them.<sup>180</sup> The fact that Ivan Ilyich was dying in effect exiled him from humanity. How does one speak to the dying when the dying are falling off the stage of the world? Socrates at least provides a mythological account of that stage where one can speak with and about the dying as still participating meaningfully in the myth. Kierkegaard's Climacus rejects monasticism as an inferior form of inwardness that still demanded an external sign.<sup>181</sup> Yet monasticism precisely expresses the irruption of the eternal in time where the living and the dead perpetuate their community.<sup>182</sup> Kierkegaard would respond that only silence can be the proper communication

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<sup>180</sup> *Works of Love*, 276-77.

<sup>181</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 493.

<sup>182</sup> For the political significance of monasticism and divine law for modern times, see my "God's Co-workers: Rémi Brague's Treatment of the Divine Law in Christianity," *Political Science Reviewer*, XXXVIII (Spring 2009): 76-104.

between the living and the dead, and between the living and the dying, like Ivan Ilyich, and might even point to Ilyich's servant, Gerasim, who patiently holds up his feet to provide comfort, as the one who best understood how to commune with the dying. If dying marks the point at which the nature of our *ēthos* comes into light, then the silent gesture is an appropriate response because it acknowledges the impossibility of capturing that *ēthos*. However, on this, Kierkegaard and the most authentic of the monastic orders would agree. Then again, both Ivan Ilyich and his servant needed Tolstoy to tell their story.<sup>183</sup>

Let us conclude by noting the agreement between Kierkegaard and the monastic followers of Christ. Kierkegaard has shown that in considering modernity's relationship with the Socratic, as with Christianity's relationship with the Socratic, everything changes at the same time nothing has changed.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> It may well be that Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, which describes the move from the ethical to the religious (without sublating the ethical), can shed light on the person of the dying and the dead, for it is there we learn how the individual transcends the universal (Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 417-21). In narrating the story of the individual who transcends the universal, it may well be that our reservations concerning Kierkegaard's rejection of myth give way to the myth that is itself the event: "Narration, Derrida seems to be saying, is the event, from which events can indeed be events. There is nothing outside the narration, for that is what we exist within; the leap outside of narration is the leap outside of existence. But the narration cannot include the event that gives rise to it; otherwise the narration would contain itself, a redundancy that afflicts all presumptions of closure" (Ibid., 375-6). However, one must bear in mind the moderation of both Kierkegaard and Walsh in recalling that *Fear and Trembling* is written by the pseudonymous Joseph de Silentio, who has not reached the religious and therefore does not know clearly of what he speaks.

<sup>184</sup> "It is a reversal of accent that in the way of revolution returns the modern to the ancient starting point, only now with a more deeply held awareness of its genesis" (Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution*, 321).