Reinterpreting *Eros* in Plato’s *Symposium*

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P.G.C.
ABSTRACT

Redefining Eros in Plato’s Symposium

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At the heart of the Symposium there lies the conceptual problem of defining the term eros in a manner that remains faithful to both its linguistic and philosophical context. Beginning with the conversation between Apollodorus and his unnamed stranger and ending with Socrates departing for the Lyceum, eros remains the sole focus of the entire work. With such a burden of importance placed upon one single word and its subsequent meanings and interpretations, it is useful to apply a consistent and distinct methodology, whether to an overarching global theme or an individual speech, in order to reveal the subtle syntactical selections Plato makes to support his larger philosophical argument.

The common conceptualization of eros applied by scholars has tried to achieve a universal understanding, one overarching definition that can be applied to any context in which eros must have a one-to-one English equivalent. This technique has led to a problem in modern scholarship, in which translations vary to such a degree that the true
meaning of *eros* has become lost in the process. The cause of such confusion is not due to a lack of logical analysis, but a lack of a logical methodology on which to base such analysis.

The goal must be to strike a balance between the overarching concept of *eros* that pervaded the Greek consciousness, and the individual uses evidenced in the text of the *Symposium*. This paper proposes a new methodology which will be founded on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and his theories of general linguistics. This approach yields a new interpretation of the word that both defines its individual meaning and the greater philosophical lesson Plato is attempting to convey. *Eros* is the desire of the soul, a desire that has future aspirations of finding a partner in whom one can contemplate the true meaning of beauty. It inspires, instructs, and guides those whom it touches toward immortality through fame, procreation, and wisdom.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of Methodology

At the heart of the Symposium there lies the conceptual problem of defining the term *eros* in a manner that remains faithful to both its linguistic and philosophical context. Beginning with the conversation between Apollodorus and his unnamed stranger and ending with Socrates departing for the Lyceum, *eros* remains the sole focus of the entire work. With such a burden of importance placed upon one single word and its subsequent meanings and interpretations, it is useful to apply a consistent and distinct methodology, whether to an overarching global theme or an individual speech, in order to reveal the subtle syntactical selections Plato makes to support his larger philosophical argument.

*Eros*, as defined by Lidell and Scott’s Greek lexicon, is “love of a thing, desire for it.” This definition of *eros* as both love and desire of an object captures the essence of the Greek within a modern English equivalent that is conveniently succinct for translational purposes. This conceptualization of *eros* has been applied to the Symposium by scholars in several ways in order to achieve a universal understanding, one overarching definition that can be applied to any context in which *eros* must have a one-to-one English equivalent. This technique has led to a problem in modern scholarship, in which translations vary to such a degree that the true meaning of *eros* has become lost in the process. The cause of such confusion is not due to a lack of logical analysis, but a lack of a logical methodology on which to base such analysis.
For example, in his commentary, Kenneth Dover presents the following definition:

This word, which can denote any very strong desire (e.g. for victory) and is used also by Homer...to denote appetite for food and drink, usually means ‘love’ in the sense which that word bears in our expressions ‘be in love (with...)’...and ‘fall in love (with...): that is, intense desire for a particular individual as a sexual partner.\(^1\)

In contrast, R.E. Allen claimed “Eros meant love in the sense of romantic love, and included sexual passion. But Eros could be used broadly enough in Greek—Diotima will so use it—to include desire in all its forms. It may be contrasted with Philia, love in the sense of affection or friendship or liking.”\(^2\) Leo Strauss claimed “Eros, strictly understood, is love of human beings, a desire to be together with a human being or human beings whom one loves, and this means the being together of bodies, not in any narrow sense.”\(^3\)

In addition to these examples, other definitions of *eros*, as both love and desire, vary as wildly and haphazardly as suits the author’s particular style or poet license. Frisbee Sheffield offers a definition of “passionate desire,”\(^4\) signaling that level of intensity is the differing factor between *eros* and other desires, such as *epithumia*. Gary Alan Scott and William A. Welton also define *eros* as “passionate desire,”\(^5\) and yet they title the second chapter of their book “Six Speeches on Love (Erôs).”\(^6\) Seth Benardete, on the other hand, dismisses the concept of desire completely, and adopts the consistent translation of *eros* as “love,” *erastes* as “lover,” and *eromenos* as “beloved” throughout.

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1. K.J. Dover, *Plato’s Symposium*, p. 1
4. Sheffield, *Plato’s Symposium* p. 2
5. Scott & Welton, *Erotic Wisdom*, p. 29
6. Scott & Welton, p. 45
his works.⁷ These are only a few examples, but they help demonstrate the variations in modern translation of *eros* and the potential confusion that arises from them.

In their attempt to make a unifying classification of *eros*, each of these scholars has failed to develop a consistent and logical methodology explaining how any definition was reached. This is the cause for the various translations. Even though each definition seems to work within our translations, we have no way of justifying the correctness of one over another since we have no foundation on which to build our claims. This crisis of methodology is a true problem for interpreting the *Symposium* and, unless it is addressed in a thorough and logical manner, will continue to hinder our perception of *eros* within the text.

Although there is no explicit mention of any approach taken towards defining *eros*, each scholar uses an implied, default technique of equating one Greek word with an English equivalent. This is the source of the varying definitions of “love,” “desire,” and “passionate desire” as each attempts to achieve one overarching, universal truth concerning *eros*. This system, while useful for philosophical purposes, obscures the true meaning of *eros* by supposing, without evidencing through fact, that English actually contains a proper one-to-one equivalent word. In the search for such a definition, the true meaning of *eros* seems to have been lost in the process. Since *eros* plays such a crucial role in not only the *Symposium*, but other works as well, we must break out of the habits which have led to our current predicament and start with a new foundation.

Acknowledging this deficiency is the first step in truly understanding *eros* within Plato’s *Symposium*. The solution will not be found in a new definition, but rather in a more formal, logical and succinct methodology that strives to create a system in which

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⁷ Seth Benardete, *On Plato’s Symposium* and *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros*
the true meaning of *eros* will reveal itself, independent of any modern tinkering or influence. The goal must be to strike a balance between the overarching concept of *eros* that pervaded the Greek consciousness, and the individual uses evidenced in the text of the *Symposium*. Whether or not this approach yields one definition is not as important as the method being used by modern readers, thousands of years removed from Greek culture. We must not let some need for translational consistency intrude upon the precision of Plato’s language and message.

In order to achieve this balance between a global and local perspective of *eros* within the *Symposium*, this paper proposes a new methodology which will be founded on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. Within his creation of linguistic semiology, Saussure separated and defined the concepts of *langue* and *parole* as the system of language as a global phenomenon and the individual acts of physical speech, respectively. The title of one of his earlier manuscripts, *De l’essence double du langage* (‘On the dual essence of language’), plays upon the notion of *langue* first creating a concept in the mind of the *sujet parlant* followed by *parole* activating that same concept through speech. This duality of meaning, in which a word is first recognized globally (within the mind) and then executed locally (through individual speech), will be applied to this study of *eros*. It is Saussure’s perception of language, which consists of a series of relationships rather than fixed units, which will guide our understanding of Plato’s Greek. As Carol Sanders states, “it is therefore the richness, the constant folding-out of new potential found in the multiple functions of a sound or morpheme or in the polysemy of a word, that Saussure wishes to stress.”

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8 Ferdinand de Saussure, trans. Carol Sanders & Matthew Pires, *Writings in General Linguistics*, p. xx
This “richness” of language, is precisely the pervading complication that plagues modern translations of *eros*. In attempting to achieve that one-to-one overarching English definition, modern scholars have overlooked the intricate nature of *eros* in its role as a signifier (*signifiant*). Desire is a complex concept, full of the richness that Sanders refers to, both in English and Greek, and, therefore, should not be approached in such a linear and narrow fashion. In attempting to equate one English definition to the Greek word, the richness of meaning, the signified (*signifié*), is limited. As Saussure claimed:

> It is just as literally true to say that the word is the sign of the idea as it is to say that the idea is the sign of the word. The idea constantly fulfills this role, since it is likewise impossible to fix and limit a word materially within the sentence without an idea. Sign implies signification; signification implies sign. Taking sign (alone) as a basis is not only incorrect, it has absolutely no meaning since as soon as the sign loses the entirety of its meanings, it becomes a mere vocal figure.  

By limiting *eros* simply to “desire” or “love,” modern scholars are only considering the localized spoken word, as seen through the text of Plato’s work, rather than the global perception of *eros* which each speaker draws upon to form his speech. These modern definitions also focused more on easing the translation into English, rather than remaining faithful to the Greek. This disregards the global commonality or shared thought which is half of any word’s conceptualization. This linear approach does not incorporate the full Greek perception of *eros* as the global language system (*langue*) representing a collective idea of Greek culture, since any word must have a common definition or definitions in order to be useful for communication. Therefore each context of *eros* within the *Symposium* innately represents a balance between the mindset of the

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9 Saussure, p. 26
group influencing the expression of the individual, and the individual manipulating the common understanding in order to suit his or her particular purpose. The proposed methodology of this study seeks to approach ***eros*** from a dual perspective in terms of Saussure’s ***langue*** and ***parole*** in order to open the interpretation of the word and bring to light both its meaning and function.

To accomplish this, ***eros*** must first be viewed as a universal signifier. This is the realm of ***langue***. As Saussure points out, ***langue*** is both a mental and social reality made up of values defined by difference. Because ***langue*** relies on groups of oppositions, one sound can have many meanings, or one meaning may be indicated by several sounds. In other words, in a sign system such as language there is the possibility of overlap, but not redundancy. This explains how several words in Greek share some facsimile of the meaning “desire,” but also precludes the possibility of each word carrying the exact same meaning.

Saussure describes this phenomenon in the following way:

> Neither idea nor sign, nor different signs, nor different ideas may ever represent, innately and individually, a given term. The only given consists of different signs inseparably combined with different ideas, in a high degree of complexity. These two states of disorder, when brought together, lead to a state of order.\(^\text{10}\)

In its most basic state, it is not the form of the sign, but the speaker’s mental representation of it that operates in language. In terms of ***eros***, this means that there is no simple universal truth to be found, which modern scholars have attempted to create, as the only evidence available explicitly is individual interpretation of the abstract concept, made physical through speech. Our understanding of the word must come from an

\(^{10}\) Saussure, p. 31
analysis of both its use within the abstract *langue*, that is, the general, mental conception of the word which would be shared commonly among Plato and his audience, and the physical *parole*, the individual usage employed by each of the symposiasts. Through analyzing each context of *eros*, we will isolate every way in which the word is used in a similar manner by each symposiast, thus establishing their common perception of the word as a signifier. We will then have a baseline against which we can distinguish the ways in which each speaker takes the common *langue* and interprets it differently in order to make his point (*parole*).

Although preempted by his premature death, Saussure’s writings on *langue* give a clear interpretation of his thoughts, even if incomplete, on *parole*. According to Saussure, any word, aside from first being conceived within our consciousness, also depends on being activated through speech. In other words, “neither the word nor its meaning exist outside the consciousness that we have of them…(but)…a word only truly exists, however one views it, when it is sanctioned in everyday use.”¹¹ While *langue* explains the genesis of a word’s definition squarely within the mind, *parole* is the individual expression of that definition through speech. For that reason, there is value in analyzing speech itself and inferring the origin of that speech. As he later puts it, “the aim of language…is to make oneself understood.”¹² When taken in this context, the *parole* of *eros* is the individual use of the word by each of the speakers within the *Symposium*. These contexts, although subject to the agenda of the speaker, must contain some semblance of the shared group concept; otherwise, the speaker’s meaning would be unintelligible to his audience. In fact, the entire work can be seen as a rhetorical exercise.

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¹¹ Saussure, p. 56
¹² Saussure, p. 121
of *langue* and *parole* as the speakers are attempting to take the shared concept of global *eros*, qualify it into an individual representation that achieves a unique and specific definition, then re-apply the newly conceived definition back to the original shared idea, in order to redefine the universal concept of *eros*.

With this basic foundation, the full methodology can now be established. First, *eros* must be analyzed through the lens of *langue* in order to establish a standard baseline definition or interpretation of the word. This will be done through thorough examination of each of its uses throughout the *Symposium* and isolating the commonalities of use and understanding. These examples shed light into the global way in which *eros* is understood as a sign. In order to broaden the scope of this universal realization and avoid skewed data, other works will be analyzed in order to ensure as universal a concept as possible.

Second, each context must again be analyzed through the lens of *parole*, as each speaker takes the concept of global *eros* and applies it within a unique interpretation through their specific speech. This approach will highlight the differences as compared against the baseline of similarities, thus revealing the unique ways in which *eros* could be altered and yet still be understood within Greek syntax. This type of internal organization allows for close scrutiny, as any proposed theory of *eros* must reflect the specificity of the original Greek.

Finally, these similarities and differences must be used to reinterpret *eros* through both a global and local lens with the goal of a clear, succinct and faithful perception of both the word itself and the *Symposium* as a whole. The result will yield an idea of *eros* that can be applied across an array of different texts, as its fundamental principles will remain constant. This is possible through the definition of the *langue*, since this common
understanding of the word is shared in the language itself, regardless of the work or context in which it appears.

Within this basic framework, one extra caveat must be appended. *Eros* must be taken within the context of a group of three words which, in some form, all relate to the workings of desire: *eros, epithumia*, and *philia*. The reason for this grouping can again be attributed to Saussure’s concept of *langue*. If *langue* is based upon difference, as mentioned before, then language must be understood through relationships between words. Saussure asserts there are two types of relationships: syntagmatic and paradigmatic. The latter is associative and leads to groupings of words into clusters within the mind (e.g., learn, learned, learning, learner). Although these words are fundamentally similar, there must be the prerequisite of difference, in order to distinguish between one word and another within the group. As previously mentioned, sign systems allow for overlap, but not redundancy. Within the *Symposium*, *eros* is grouped with *epithumia* and *philia* in a complex relationship that allows specific interactions, depending on context, and yet retains a difference of meaning, to avoid superfluous repetition.

Although modern scholarship has difficulty separating the meanings of these terms, Saussure’s method concludes that, linguistically, a difference must exist. The usage in contexts of each of these three words, taken as a group, will each be analyzed according to our proposed methodology. Revealing their similarities and differences will allow for the best possible understanding of *eros* as these three words hold a special connection within both the context of the *Symposium* and the Greek language as a whole.
This proposed methodology will finally allow for a foundation upon which we can reevaluate the interpretations proposed by modern scholarship. Regardless of the discovery of any specific definition, it will lay the foundation for how *eros* should be approached and understood, introducing avenues of further research. If, at the conclusion of such analysis, one overarching philosophical truth may be extracted, it is a welcome, yet unnecessary surplus, for the goal of this paper is not to impose upon the ancient work the modern need for equivalency between English and Greek, but to allow Plato’s words to speak for themselves. Just as the individual symposiasts take the common perception, adjust it to suit their agenda through physical expression, and in turn reapply this new meaning to amend the original interpretation, this methodology seeks to do the same. By analyzing the global meaning of *eros* and comparing that to the individuality of each speaker, we are able to readjust our conception of the original shared meaning. By simply interpreting what is presented through context and applying a fundamentally sound methodology, this paper allows the truth of the *Symposium* to reveal itself to be more complex and detailed than modern interpretations have yet conceived.
Chapter 2: Setting a Global Baseline

The first step in analyzing the use of *eros*, *epithumia* and *philia* through *langue* and *parole* is to set a controlled baseline against which contextual comparisons can be made. This baseline should encompass the global conceptualization of *eros* shared by Plato and his audience. This standard, though often expressed indirectly, can be inferred through patterns of syntax, phrasing, and meaning across the contexts of the *Symposium*. By isolating each use of *eros*, and categorizing these into a relationship of linguistic units based upon similarity, a shared perception of *eros* can be identified. This relationship can then be compared with the uses of *epithumia* and *philia*, in order to distinguish the differences through Saussure’s paradigmatic approach. In other words, by analyzing the commonalities in speech concerning *eros* within the text, we can surmise the common conception of *eros* that each speaker is drawing upon. Having separated this global meaning of *eros* from its individual interpretation through a process of inferring, a standard meaning or group of meanings will reveal itself. With this common conceptualization of *eros* at our disposal, we will then be in a better position to identify individual variations in meaning.

Section A: *Eros* is always *of something*

Being the cognate noun for *erao*, an active verb of desire, *eros*, by definition, must always partake *of* something, or have an object. While seemingly self-explanatory, this concept distinguishes the *langue* of *eros* from its related *parole*, as the model of *eros*
taking an object is the universal constant, while the specific details of what that object might be is variable. Within the *Symposium*, the separate contexts of each of the seven speakers reflect this global understanding of *eros*.

Although incorporating their own individual ideals and interpretations, each of the symposiasts draws upon a common understanding of *eros*, which is reflected in the patterns of similarity within his diction. Specifically, each symposiast conceives of *eros* as taking a genitive. This grammatical construction works with both *eros* as a noun and its cognate verb *erao*. In our methodology, we will analyze the use of the verb *erao* in the same manner as *eros*. While a distinction must be made between a noun and its cognate verb, for our purposes they will be one and the same since the action of desiring through *erao* follows the same thematic baseline as *eros* functioning as a noun.

The first explicit use of this construction, *eros* + genitive, occurs in the speech of Phaedrus and his story of Achilles. Phaedrus attempts to refute the notion that Achilles was the *eromenos* of Patroclus by making him the *erastes*. It will be revealed that only the *erastes* partakes of *eros* and, therefore, Phaedrus makes Achilles the subject of the verb *erao* in order to distinguish his new role by claiming:

…Ἀχιλλέα Πατρόκλου ἐρᾶν…

…Achilles desired Patroclus…

This construction, subject + form of the verb *erao* + genitive, is prevalent throughout the text and serves as the standard means of expressing “*eros of*” an object. This explicitly connects *eros* and an object in a manner that reveals the nature of *eros* through the types of object(s) that modify it. Therefore, by categorizing the objective genitives of *eros*, we

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13 *Symposium*, 180a5
are categorizing the nature of *eros*. For the moment, we must first provide more examples in order to justify this construction as being common throughout the work and therefore within the realm of *langue*.

Pausanias also uses this construction in his descriptions of *eros*. Although his contexts vary, the grammar remains constant. This constancy is precisely what we need to establish our baseline. Within his speech, Pausanias describes the *eros* of boys (*καὶ ἔστιν οὗτος ὁ τῶν παιδῶν ἔρως*), the *eros* of freeborn women (*ἄσπερ καὶ τῶν ἐλευθέρων γυναικῶν προσαναγκάζομεν αὐτοὺς καθ' ὅσον δυνάμεθα μὴ ἔραν*), the *eros* of the body (*ὁ τοῦ σώματος μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔρως*), the *eros* of Aristogeiton (*ὁ γὰρ Αριστογείτονος ἔρως*), and the *eros* of the heavenly goddess (*ὁ τῆς οὐρανίας θεοῦ ἔρως*). In each example, the grammatical formula is consistent: *eros* always takes an objective genitive.

This construction persists across each speech as Eryximachus, through the perspective of a physician, describes several functions of *eros*, including: how the master physician can make the opposites of the body have *eros* for one another (*καὶ ἔραν ἀλλήλων*), the *eros* of the well-ordered man (*τὸν τούτων ἔρωτα*), and the *eros* of the heavenly muse (*ὁ τῆς Οὐρανίας μούσης Ἐρως*). Aristophanes, through his story

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14 *Symposium*, 181c4. For the desire of boys, see also 181d7 (*χρὴν δὲ καὶ νόμον εἶναι μὴ ἔραν παιδῶν*) and 181d1 (*οὐ γὰρ ἔρωςι παιδῶν*).
15 *Symposium*, 182a1
16 *Symposium*, 183e1
17 *Symposium*, 182c6
18 *Symposium*, 185b6
19 *Symposium*, 186d6
20 *Symposium*, 187d7
21 *Symposium*, 187e1
of the first human beings, tells of the *eros* of one another (ὁ ἔρως ἐμφυτος ἀλλήλων),\(^{22}\) which he later clarifies as being the name for the longing and pursuit of the whole (τοῦ ὅλου ὧν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ διώξει ἔρως ὄνομα).\(^{23}\)

At this point we arrive at the speeches of Agathon and Socrates. From the beginning of the work, these men are distinguished from their peers in terms of their ability to create and deliver speeches. Eryximachus acknowledges this before Agathon’s speech as he says:

\[
καὶ εἰ μὴ συνήδη Σωκράτει τε καὶ Ἀγάθωνι δεινοὺς σύσι περὶ τὰ ἐρωτικὰ, πάνυ ἄν ἐφοβούμην μὴ ἀπορήσωσι λόγων διὰ τὸ πολλὰ καὶ παντοδαπὰ εἰρήσθαι: νῦν δὲ ὅμως θαρρῶ.\(^{24}\)
\]

And if I was not aware that both Socrates and Agathon were formidable concerning erotics, altogether I would have feared they were at a loss of speech as many things of all kinds have been spoken, nonetheless now I am confident. This high praise by Eryximachus distinguishes the next two speakers as being superior rhetoricians, or at least considered so by their fellow symposiasts. Because of this, we might expect both Agathon and Socrates to wander from our emerging baseline, and yet both adhere to the same standard as the previous four speakers in terms of *eros* taking an object.

Agathon admits his own divergence from the themes of the previous speakers by claiming:

\(^{22}\) *Symposium*, 191d1
\(^{23}\) *Symposium*, 193a1
\(^{24}\) *Symposium*, 193e4-6
ἐγὼ δὲ δὴ βουλομαι πρῶτον μὲν εἰπεῖν ὡς χρῆ με εἰπεῖν, ἐπειτα εἰπεῖν.

dοκοῦσι γὰρ μοι πάντες οἱ πρόσθεν εἰρηκότες οὐ τὸν θεόν
ἐγκωμιάζειν...25

I wish first to say how it is necessary for me to speak, then to speak. For it seems
to me that everyone speaking before did not praise the god…

With this, he has distinguished himself from the group, thus commencing the pattern
described in our methodology, in which each speaker interprets the langue of eros
individually, through parole. At this point, we expect him to change the grammatical
construction of eros as he has decided that he will speak about the personified eros, not
his associated gifts to mankind:

οὗτω δὴ τὸν ἔρωτα καὶ ἡμᾶς δίκαιον ἐπαινέσαι πρῶτον αὐτὸν οἷς ἐστίν,
ἀπειτα τὰς δόσεις.26

Thus it is right that we praise Eros first for what sort he is, then for his gifts.

By claiming this, Agathon has announced his intention to deliberately focus on the nature
of eros as opposed to the objects it modifies. And yet, even with his intention not to focus
on the objects of eros, our grammatical baseline still applies as he describes beauty as
being the object of eros through the same genitive construction (ἐκ τοῦ ἐρῶν τῶν
καλῶν).27

Each of the first five speakers sets the stage for the speech of Socrates. Like
Agathon, although his skills have been distinguished from the others by Eryximachus, he
too will describe the objects of eros through the same grammatical construction we have

25 Symposium, 194e4-6
26 Symposium, 195a3-5
27 Symposium, 197b8
established. Where they were simply using this construction in terms of grammar, however, Socrates makes a point of encompassing the need for *eros* to have an objective genitive as a key theme of his entire speech. He accomplishes this through a preliminary line of questioning directed at Agathon. Although the exchange holds greater philosophical significance, at its heart it outlines the same basic principle: *eros* must have an object.

Socrates makes this point by first asking:

\[ ὁ Ἐρως ἔρως ἐστὶν οὐδενός ἢ τινός; \]

Is Eros the eros of something or nothing?

Agathon responds to this by saying, “πάνυ μὲν οὖν ἔστιν (surely it is (of something)).” With this question, Socrates has established our basic principle that *eros* must always take an object, both through his grammatical construction (*eros* + genitive) and his rhetorical point. He will then proceed to make use of this construction through contexts such as “the eros of that thing (ἐκείνου... ἔρως),” “eros of shameful things (αιδχρών... ἔρως),” “eros of beauty (κάλλους... ἔρως),” “eros of the good (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ... ἔρως),” and “the eros of immortality (τῆς ἀθανασίας τὸν ἔρωτα).”

Later, he even provides us with an example of *eros* outside the realm of a formal speech.

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28 *Symposium*, 199e6  
29 *Symposium*, 199e8  
30 *Symposium*, 200a2  
31 *Symposium*, 201a5  
32 *Symposium*, 201a9  
33 *Symposium*, 207a2  
34 *Symposium*, 207a4
as he asks Agathon for protection against “the eros of this man (Alcibiades) for me (ἐμοὶ ὁ τούτου ἔρως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου).”

Each of these contexts, while used for unique and separate purposes, all point to a universal understanding of *eros* in which *eros* must govern an object. Grammatically, this is reflected through *eros*, and its cognate verb *erao*, always taking a genitive. This perspective explicitly shows that *eros*, by nature, needs an object when described not as a pronoun, but as a general desire. This also applies for its cognate verb *erao*, since, as previously mentioned, it shares the same baseline as *eros* within our methodology. Since *eros* has the same basic grammatical function across each of the speeches, our methodology places it within the realm of *langue* and adds it to our evolving perception of the shared meaning of *eros*.

**Section B: The erastes/eromenos relationship is the vehicle for expressing eros**

Having established the grammatical formula in which the non-personified *eros* must have an object, we must now look to how *eros* is actually expressed in the daily activities described by the speakers. The vehicle for this expression is the relationship between the *erastes* and *eromenos*. These terms have several subtexts, as they refer to the active/passive, masculine/feminine, and lack/need natures of both the *erastes* and *eromenos*, respectively. By definition, the *erastes* partakes in *eros*, as he or she is the active participant whose name literally means “desirer” or one who has *eros*. In contrast, the *eromenos*, by definition, does not partake in *eros*, as he or she is the passive participant whose name means “the one who is desired (literally the passive participle of

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35 *Symposium*, 213c7
eran),” or the one without eros. This fundamental understanding, that eros only resides within the erastes, is pervasive throughout each of the seven speeches of the Symposium, and is stated in both indirect and explicit terms.

As the first speaker, Phaedrus provides the foundation for how this relationship is demonstrated through speech. He makes this distinction between erastes and eromenos obvious through his story of Alcestis, the wife who was willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of her husband, Admetus. Phaedrus claims:

οὓς ἐκείνη τοσοῦτον ύπερεβάλετο τῇ φιλίᾳ διὰ τὸν ἐρωτα...  

she (Alcestis) surpassed them (her in-laws) so far with her philia on account of her eros...

In this context, Alcestis partakes of eros, making her the erastes even though, as a woman, traditionally she would have been the eromenos. As a rhetorical counterpoint to the erastes, Phaedrus provides an example of a famous eromenos: Achilles. In sacrificing himself for his erastes, Patroclus, Achilles is duly honored by the gods and sent to the Isles of the Blessed. Being the eromenos of Patroclus, however, Achilles does not partake in eros. This makes his exploits even greater, which Phaedrus explicitly expresses when he claims:

…μᾶλλον μέντοι θανμᾶξουσιν καὶ ἀγανται καὶ εὔ ποιούσιν όταν ὃ ἐρώμενος τὸν ἐραστὴν ἄγαπα, ἢ ὂταν ὃ ἐραστῆς τὰ παιδικά. θειότερον γὰρ ἐραστῆς παιδικῶν: ἔνθεος γὰρ ἔστι.  

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36 Symposium, 179c1-2
37 Symposium, 180b1-4
...indeed they (the gods) admire and are amazed and do good things whenever the eromenos is fond of his erastes, rather than an erastes his favorite. For an erastes is more divine than his favorite, for he is full of the god.

With this assertion, Phaedrus has explicitly stated that the erastes partakes in eros, while the eromenos does not. This is reflected in his word choice, as he makes a distinct point of saying that Achilles did not desire (erao) Patroclus, but, rather, showed “ἀγαπᾶ” towards him, expressing a type of fondness or brotherly affection. Again, we must return to Phaedrus’ original claim of whether or not Achilles desired Patroclus (Ἀχιλλέα Πατρόκλου ἐρᾶν). Phaedrus states that it was Aeschylus who made Achilles the eromenos of Patroclus, and did so incorrectly. According to Phaedrus, Aeschylus “talks nonsense (Αἰσχύλος δὲ φλυαρεῖ)” in reversing the roles. Either way, both men defer to the concept that whoever is partaking of eros must be the erastes.

Phaedrus continues this pattern throughout his speech as he describes “the man who desires (ἄνδρα ἐρᾶ)” who, if caught partaking in a something shameful (τι αἰσχρὸν), “would not suffer so much as by his favorite (ἀν... ἀλγῆσαι... ὡς ὑπὸ παιδικῶν). In this context, as well as throughout the Symposium, the “favorite” is equivalent to the eromenos. Therefore, we can equate the man who desires with the erastes, the one who has eros through desiring (erao). This syntax repeats as Phaedrus

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38 Symposium, 180a5  
39 The reference comes from the lost work Myrmidons, in which Aeschylus makes Achilles the erastes of Patroclus, possibly being the first to do so.  
40 Symposium, 180a4  
41 Symposium, 178d4-5  
42 Symposium, 178d6-e1
describes “the man desiring, seen by his favorite (ἐρων γὰρ ἀνήρ ὑπὸ παιδικῶν ὀφθηναί).”

In terms of langue, Phaedrus’ speech is the first example of the overarching concept of eros residing only within the erastes. Since he holds the position of speaking first, there is no comparison against which to evaluate his claims. Nevertheless, his individual contexts are beginning to reveal deference to a shared conceptualization of eros. As we will see beginning with Pausanias, Phaedrus is not the only speaker who describes the erastes/eromenos relationship in this way.

Whereas Phaedrus was interested in the deeds done within the erastes/eromenos relationship, Pausanias chooses to focus on its sexual aspect. Even though the theme and overall argument is different, our baseline remains constant, as Pausanias also describes the erastes as having eros. In explaining the laws concerning eros, Pausanias claims:

…ὡστε τινὰς τολμᾶν λέγειν ὡς αἰσχρὸν χαρίζεσθαι ἑρασταῖς.44

…some people dare to say it is shameful to gratify one’s lover.

Within this context, the eromenos, who performs the gratification, does not desire (erao) his erastes, but gratifies (χαρίζεσθαι) him. This construction, of the eromenos gratifying the erastes is Pausanias’ standard means of expressing the action of the eromenos, who is not inspired by eros, and occurs five more times: ἀπλῶς

νενομοθέτηται καλὸν τὸ χαρίζεσθαι ἑρασταῖς,45 οὕτως οὐ μὲν αἰσχρὸν ἔτεθη χαρίζεσθαι ἑρασταῖς,46 εἰ μέλλει καλὸς χαριεῖσθαι ἑραστῇ παιδικὰ,47 εἰ

43 Symposium, 179a3
44 Symposium, 182a2-3
45 Symposium, 182b2-3
46 Symposium, 182c7-d1
μέλλει συμβηνai καλὸν γενέσθαι τὸ ἐραστὴ παιδικὰ χαρίσασθαι, ἐνταύθα συμπίπτει τὸ καλὸν εἶναι παιδικὰ ἐραστὴ χαρίσασθαι. Pausanias’ syntax reveals that individually on the level of parole he, like Phaedrus, still follows the accepted standard that restricts the eromenos from partaking in eros. For this reason, we are able to claim that Pausanias is following the same global langue of eros.

Like Phaedrus, Pausanias also employs an anecdote to defend his stance, specifically, the story of the tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Pausanias claims:

ἔρως καὶ Ἡρμοδίου φιλία βέβαιος γενομένη κατέλυσεν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρχήν.

Even the tyrants learned this, for the eros of Aristogeiton and the philia of Harmodius becoming steadfast loosened their power.

Within this context, Pausanias echoes Phaedrus’ notion of eros by placing it squarely within the realm of the erastes, not the eromenos, who partakes of philia. In making these claims, Pausanias seems to be drawing upon the same notion of eros as Phaedrus, albeit for different purposes. Their common conceptualization is becoming clearer, as both appear to believe that within the erastes/eromenos relationship, eros is selective, belonging only to the erastes.

Eryximachus also recognizes this distinction between erastes and eromenos and although his speech differs greatly in subject matter, the basic principle remains constant.

47 Symposium, 184b5-6
48 Symposium, 184d1-3
49 Symposium, 184e3-4
50 Symposium, 182c4-7
In speaking about balance and harmony within the body, he describes well-ordered men (τοῖς μὲν κοσμίοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων)\textsuperscript{51} and claims:

\[...δεῖ χαρίζεσθαι καὶ φυλάττειν τὸν τούτων ἔρωτα...\]

\[...it is necessary to gratify and preserve the eros of those (the well-ordered men)...\]

Without explicitly mentioning either the erastes or eromenos, Eryximachus still follows the abstract concept of eros. Following the syntax of Pausanias, we can identify those being gratified as those who have eros: the erastai. Likewise, those who are connected to the erastai are said to “gratify,” with no mention of eros, or erao, making them the eromenoi. He makes the selective nature of eros more explicit as he claims the physician must be able to distinguish between those who have eros (the erastai) and “those in whom there is no eros (καὶ οἷς μὴ ἔνεστιν ἔρως),”\textsuperscript{53} the eromenoi.

Eryximachus goes on to say that one should “gratify the well-ordered eros (τῷ κοσμίῳ Ἐρωτὶ χαρίζηται).”\textsuperscript{54} He has connected eros to the erastes through the term “well-ordered,” which is used to describe both eros and the erastes, as the erastes partakes in eros. Also, the erastes is “gratified” by the implied eromenos, who does not partake in eros. These are the same eromenoi mentioned by Phaedrus and Pausanias, and are described with the same language. Once again, we are told that the erastes partakes in eros, while the eromenos does not.

\textsuperscript{51} Symposium, 187d4-5
\textsuperscript{52} Symposium, 187d6-7
\textsuperscript{53} Symposium, 186d3
\textsuperscript{54} Symposium, 188c3
Aristophanes also follows this pattern through his new creation myth of *eros*. In his description, Aristophanes tells of the *eromenoi*, who lay with older men at a very young age. He claims that “when they have reached manhood, they desire boys (ἐπειδὰν δὲ ἀνδρωθώσι παῖδεραστοῦσι).”\(^{55}\) Where before they did not partake of *eros*, these boys have now become *erastai* as men, and therefore partake in *eros*, as evidenced through the verb *paiderasteo*. He reiterates this point by saying that “a man of such a kind becomes…a desirer of boys (πάντως μὲν οὖν ὁ τοιοῦτος παῖδεραστής…γίγνεται),”\(^{56}\) again showing that the *erastes* has the *eros*. Finally, Aristophanes makes the entire relationship more explicit by claiming that the wish of the *erastes* is for “joining and fusing with his *eromenos*, to be made one from two (συνελθὼν καὶ συντακεῖς τῷ ἑρωμένῳ ἑκ δυνών εἰς γενέσθαι).” This joining and fusing is labeled as *eros*, and it is the *erastes* who partakes in *eros* through the relationship with his *eromenos*.

Like the previous speakers, Socrates also follows this syntax. Through his conversation with Diotima, he makes the point that *eros* must reside within the *erastes* by describing his ignorance on the subject which Diotima corrects:

\[ ὁ ἴθη θεὸς δὲ, ὡς ὑμοὶ δοκεῖ τεκμαίρομενή ἡ ἤς ὁν σὺ λέγεις, τὸ ἑρώμενον ἑραστὰ εἶναι, οὐ τὸ ἑρών.\(^{57}\)\]

You supposed, as it seems to me from those things which you said, the thing being desired is *eros*, not the thing which is desiring.

\(^{55}\) *Symposium*, 192a7-192b1
\(^{56}\) *Symposium*, 192b4
\(^{57}\) *Symposium*, 204c1-2
Within this context, Diotima has taken the argument that the eromenos has eros, and disproves it by distinguishing the eromenos as being the object of eros, not the subject. Later, she explicitly makes this point when she says that eros “at the same time is, by nature, an erastes (καὶ ἄμα φύσει ἐραστής ἂν).” With these lines, Socrates, through Diotima, explains that eros only belongs to the erastes, thus eliminating any possibility that the eromenos would partake in eros.

Finally, when Alcibiades arrives, he too uses the example of the erastes and eromenos to make his point about eros. He claims that Socrates’ method of being an erastes is so deceitful that he might rather be their favorite than their erastes (καὶ ἄλλος πάνω πολλούς, οὐς οὖτος ἔξαπατών ὡς ἐραστής παιδικὰ μᾶλλον αὐτός καθεσταται ἀντ᾽ ἐραστοῦ). Even though Alcibiades has not heard any of the previous speeches, nor any of the new contexts in which they may have used eros, he is clearly subscribing to the overall point that eros must always be of the erastes. His distance from the earlier speeches strengthens the argument that this conceptualization of who partakes of eros was a commonality outside of the original six symposiasts.

Although each of the speakers is using the erastes/eromenos relationship in a different way, the fundamental principle of eros remains the same: the erastes has eros while the eromenos does not. This concept extends beyond the scope of the Symposium, as Plato, in the Phaedrus, explicitly claims that the eromenos actually feels a “counter-desire (ἀντέρωτα),” not eros. By analyzing each context, we see that while the individual expressions of eros vary in terms of the themes and style of each speech, there

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58 Symposium, 203c3
59 Symposium, 222b2-b4
60 Plato, Phaedrus, 255e1
is a commonality in the way in which this relationship operates. It is precisely for this reason that we are able to gain insight into the realm of *langue* through analysis of the *parole*.

**Section C: Eros is a causal agent**

One of the basic understandings of desire, both in Greek and English, is that actions are performed *on account* of it. In this sense, *eros* can be thought of as a causal agent, something that provides a reason or gives agency to particular people to perform particular actions. In other words, certain actions are intrinsically changed when they are done on account of *eros*.

Once again, this trait first appears in the speech of Phaedrus with his story of Alcestis as he claims she “surpassed (her in-laws) so far with her *philia* on account of her *eros* (οὓς ἐκείνη τοσοῦτον ὑπερεβάλετο τῇ φιλίᾳ διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα).”\(^61\) As previously mentioned, Alcestis is described as being the *erastes* and therefore partaking in *eros*. At the same time, the context reveals how it is not simply Alcestis’ *philia* that allowed her to surpass her in-laws, but her *philia on account of eros*. In this sense, *eros* has acted as a causal agent on Alcestis, spurring her to achieve her goal. Phaedrus goes on to claim that “the gods honor most of all both zeal and courage *concerning desire* *(θεοὶ τὴν περὶ τὸν ἔρωτα σπουδὴν τε καὶ ἀρετὴν μᾶλιστα τιμῶσιν)*.”\(^62\) Again, it is not simply the fact that one has zeal and courage (*σπουδὴν τε καὶ ἀρετὴν*), but zeal and courage *concerning eros*. The appearance of causal prepositions alters the description of the

\(^{61}\) *Symposium*, 179c1-2
\(^{62}\) *Symposium*, 179d1-2.
behavior by implying that the intangible apparatus, *eros*, acting within the *erastes* is the justification behind such abnormal action.

By acting as the behavioral cause within the *erastes*, *eros* provides agency to words that may not otherwise possess it, like zeal and courage. Phaedrus repeats this causal process of *eros* with the story of Orpheus, who did not have “the courage to die for the sake of *eros* as Alcestis (τολμᾶν ἐνεκά τοῦ ἔρωτος ἀποθνῄσκειν ὅσπερ Ἀλκηστίζ).”63 In each case, *eros* is the spark that brings forth the true nature of an *erastes* and drives them to achieve something great. This is reflected through the grammatical construction, verb of action + causal preposition + *eros*. Whether they are successful in this endeavor is another issue.

Like Phaedrus, Pausanias also draws upon a common conception of the causal nature of *eros* in his description of homosexual relationships. In his speech, he refers to men “who are inspired out of this *eros* (οἱ ἐκ τοῦτον τοῦ ἔρωτος ἐπιπνοι).”64 The nature of *eros* is likened to a spiritual inspiration (ἐπιπνοι) that enters into the aspiring *erastes*. He demonstrates this inspirational *eros* as being easy to spot as “even in the *eros* of boys itself someone would come to know those who were purely impelled by this *eros* (καὶ τις ἂν γνοίη καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ παιδεραστίᾳ τοῦς εἰλικρινῶς ὑπὸ τοῦτον τοῦ ἔρωτος ὑμημένους).”65 In claiming this, he is drawing upon the speech of Phaedrus, who cited the Homeric epics as portraying *eros* as a mental force the gods breathe into heroes:

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63 Symposium, 179d5-6
64 Symposium, 181c5
65 Symposium, 181c7-d1
καὶ ἀτεχνῶς, ὁ ἔφη Ὀμηρος, μένος ἐμπνεῦσαι ἐνίοις τῶν ἥρων τὸν θεόν,
touto ὁ Ἕρως τοῖς ἐρώσι παρέχει γιγνόμενον παρ' αὐτοῦ.66

And absolutely, what Homer said, (namely) that the god breathes anger into some
of those heroes, and Eros produces this for those desiring, bringing it about from
himself.

In each case eros is portrayed as the instigator, the active and unseen force that “inspires”
and “impels” the erastes towards its object.

Although Eryximachus is more concerned with manipulating eros within the
human body (the role of the physician), he too makes indirect mention of its causative
nature. This occurs in his discussion of the different types of eros, one of which is a
violent manifestation. Eryximachus describes the process of inspiration as being
“whenever the eros of excessive violence becomes more in control (ὅταν δὲ ὁ μετὰ τῆς
ὀβρεώς Ἕρως ἐγκρατέστερος...γένηται).”67 Like Phaedrus and Pausanias,
Eryximachus imagines eros as being the cause that spurs action in the erastes. The
moralistic viewpoint of such actions will be discussed later. Regardless, another distinct
pattern in the global conception of eros, its function within langue, is becoming clear
through the individual uses within parole.

Like those before him, Aristophanes also follows this pattern of the nature of eros
within the erastes. In his speech, he warns that humans must show piety to the gods in
order that we do not get split in two once more, like our original human ancestors.

According to Aristophanes, we must follow eros “in order that we may flee that fate, and

66 Symposium, 179b1-3, “μένος ἐμπνεῦσαι” comes from Iliad 10.482, 15.262
67 Symposium, 188a7
chance upon another, since *eros* is the leader and general for us (ἵνα τὰ μὲν ἐκφύγωμεν, τὰν δὲ τυχώμεν, ὡς ὁ Ἔρως ἡμῖν ἤγεμὼν καὶ στρατηγός). Again, *eros* is the inspiration and the guide that leads the *erastes* towards his or her ultimate goal. Although Aristophanes has altered his individual language to describe this causative action, he defers to the same basic formula as the previous speakers.

We would expect this basic principle of *eros* as a causal agent to break down within the speech of Agathon, since, as previously mentioned, he has been marked as being separate from the speakers before him. Although his speech does encompass a different scope from those previous, the causal nature of *eros* remains. Agathon refers to this through his description of *eros* as the inspiration of poets:

\[πᾶς γονὸν ποιητὴς γίγνεται, καὶ ἀμόνους ἢ τὸ πρίν, οὔ ἢν Ἔρως ἅψηται.\]

So at least everyone becomes a poet, even if he was without the Muses before, whomever *Eros* lays hold of.

As the subject of the verb ἄπτω, *eros* is again functioning in the role of the causal agent. Those who are touched by *eros* develop the skills of a poet, even though they were devoid of such skills before. Agathon adds to this notion by claiming:

\[...ὅτι οὐ μὲν ἀν ὁ θεὸς οὗτος διδάσκαλος γένηται, ἐλλόγιμος καὶ φανός ἀπέβη, οὗ δὴ Ἐρως μὴ ἅψηται, σκοτεινός.\]

...that he of whom this god becomes a teacher, he turns out notable and conspicuous, but of whom *Eros* does not lay hold of, turns out obscure.

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68 Symposium, 193b1
69 Symposium, 196e2-3
70 Symposium, 197a4-6
The same verb, ἅπτω, is used in both contexts, as eros is the teacher who inspires those whom it touches.

Agathon explicitly summarizes this causative nature of eros at the end of his speech when he claims:

σύντως ἔμοι δοκεῖ, ὦ Φαίδρε, Ἕρως πρῶτος αὐτὸς ὁν κάλλιστος καὶ ἀριστος μετὰ τοῦτο τοῖς ἄλλοις ἄλλων τοιοῦτων αἰτίος εἶναι. 71

So eros seems to me, Phaedrus, himself being supreme as the most beautiful and best and after this to be the cause of all other such things for others.

The “αἰτίος” Agathon mentions is the same function described in his previous contexts, as well as those of Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus and Aristophanes. Even though the explicit reference is not made until the end of his speech, and even though the speech is in many ways different from its predecessors, Agathon still conceptualizes eros as a causal agent in the same manner as the previous speakers. This shared understanding of eros is the common thread that connects its meaning in each speech and forces us, not being a part of this culture, to form a similar interpretation based on this common conceptualization.

Like Agathon, Socrates also makes a speech with a unique scope unlike any of his predecessors, and, yet, he too falls into the same pattern of describing eros. This main expression of eros as the causative agent occurs at the end of his speech where he summarizes the role eros plays for humans in obtaining what they desire:

…τῇ ἄνθρωπείᾳ φύσει συνεργῶν ἀμείνω Ἕρωτος οὐκ ἀν τις ῥάδιως λάβοι. 72

71 Symposium, 197c1-3
...for human nature no one would easily take a better helper than Eros.

In equating eros to a partner that works with an individual and aids in performing actions to achieve an end, Socrates has utilized eros as a causative agent in the same manner as the previous speakers.

Within each of these contexts, certain features of eros are brought to light. First, eros provides agency to the words associated with it within each sentence. This appears through causal prepositions such as on account of, concerning, or for the sake of eros (διὰ τὸν ἐρωτα, περὶ τὸν ἐρωτα, ἐνεκὰ τοῦ ἐρωτος). Each of these designations takes the original concept (the philia of Alcestis, for instance) and attempts to relate how it has been altered by the presence of eros. For instance, Alcestis’ philia is not what made her famous, but her philia on account of eros. This is a standard formula that occurs throughout the Symposium, across each of the seven speeches.

Second, eros demands active verbs of inspiration that describe its action as the motivating force that enters the human body and provides the agency for achieving certain deeds. These verbs show that mankind is, by nature, neither able to have nor act upon certain desires without the presence of eros. While this may seem straightforward, it will, in fact, have greater ramifications in terms of the individual ways in which each speaker applies this concept. Eros is the conceptualization of an unseen force, which propels the erastes towards the object of his desire. What this desire consists of, and how it will be achieved is not the concern of the global idea of eros (langue), but will be addressed on a more specific and individualized level through each speech (parole).

72 Symposium, 212b3-4
The uses of *eros* within both *langue* and *parole* establish *eros* as the cause of certain types of human behavior. *Eros* is the leader, the guide, the unseen force, and the motivation behind the deeds of the *erastes*. This fundamental description helps to explain the variations in interpretation of the workings of *eros* by each of the speakers. While each of the seven understands *eros* to be a causative agent, they all have distinct ideas about how *eros* inspires and what goals *eros* seeks. Even though these speeches are different, the prevailing notion of causal behavior runs through each. By identifying the similarities in each of the localized uses of *eros* (*parole*), we are able to draw a consistent understanding of the global perception of how *eros* must work (*langue*). This notion of *eros* as the causative agent will help us to understand the differences of each speech later on.

**Section D: Eros is morally neutral**

Now that we are confidently molding a more consistent picture of *eros* across each of the seven speeches, one prevailing question arises: does *eros* have a moral aspect? This question has its origins in the speech of Phaedrus and prevails all the way to the arrival and speech of Alcibiades. The morality of *eros* is interpreted in various ways, as each of the speakers introduces his own agenda into the rightness and wrongness of *eros*, but the fact remains that *eros* appears to have a bivalent role as enabling both right and wrong actions without distinguishing between the two. This moral ambiguity is revealed as each speaker attempts to introduce his understanding of laws and social morality in an attempt to justify his own share in *eros*. Even though these are different, the fact that each speaker feels the need to justify the morality of *eros* points to a larger
concept of neutrality, in which eros inspires all desires as long as they can be categorized under the realm of its meaning. The way in which these desires are obtained or the purpose for which they are sought is not the concern of eros.

Returning to the speech of Phaedrus, we can apply this concept of moral ambiguity to his stories of famous erastai: Alcestis and Orpheus. As previously mentioned, Phaedrus claims that Alcestis “surpassed (her in-laws) so far with her philia on account of her eros (σὸς ἐκείνη τοσούτον υπερεβάλετο τῇ φιλίᾳ διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα).” Phaedrus claims that as a result of this behavior, the gods sent her soul up from Hades:

καὶ τούτῳ ἐργασαμένη τῷ ἔργῳ οὕτω καλὸν ἐδοξεῖν ἐργάσασθαι οὐ μόνον ἄνθρωποις ἄλλα καὶ θεοῖς, ὡστε πολλῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἐργασαμένων ἐναριθμητοῖς δὴ τισιν ἐδοσαν τούτο γέρας οί θεοὶ, ἐξ Ἅιδου ἀνείναι πάλιν τὴν ψυχήν, ἄλλα τὴν ἐκείνης ἀνείσαν ἀγαθέντες τῷ ἔργῳ.

And when doing this deed she seemed to do it so well not only to men but also to the gods, so that although many have done many noble deeds to whom the gods have given this honor are few, that they should send up their souls again from Hades, but that (soul) of that one (Alcestis) was sent up in admiration of her deed.

In terms of morality, Phaedrus explicitly states that the deed was deemed noble (καλὸν ἐδοξεῖν) by the gods, implying that it just as easily could have been deemed ignoble.

Phaedrus emphasizes the magnitude of Alcestis’ achievement by noting “those to whom the gods have given this honor are few.” Although the action has been judged based on

73 Symposium, 179c1-2
74 Symposium, 179c3-d1
its morality, Phaedrus is clear in stating that the deed was noble (τὸ ἔργον...καλὸν), not the causative eros behind that deed. The deed itself only became noble through the judgment of an outside party.

Phaedrus expresses the counterpoint to noble deeds through Orpheus, who was also inspired by eros, being an erastes:

Ὄρφεα δὲ τὸν Οἰάγρον ἀτελὴ ἀπέπεμψαν ἐξ Αἰαῦ, φάσμα δειξαντες τῆς γυναικός ἐφ᾽ ἦκεν, αὖτιν δὲ οὐ δόντες, ὅτι μαλακίζεσθαι ἐδόκει, ὁτε ὁν κιθαρωδός, καὶ οὐ τολμάν ἑνεκα τοῦ ἔρωτος ἀποθνήσκειν ὀσπερ Ἀλκηστίς, ἀλλὰ διαμηχανάσθαι ζῶν εἰσίεναι εἰς Αἰαῦ.\(^{75}\)

But Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, they sent back in failure from Hades, showing a phantom of the woman for whom he came, but not granting her, for he seemed to be faint-hearted, being just as the kithera-player, and did not seem to have the courage to die for the sake of eros as Alcestis, but to contrive to enter into Hades alive.

Orpheus, like Alcestis, was also inspired by eros, and yet he fails in his quest. Nowhere does Phaedrus make the claim that the failure was a result of eros. Rather, the failure is a result of the action (contriving to enter Hades alive) rather than the causal agent of that action. Once again, the decision of whether this action was right or wrong does not lie with eros, but with an outside party, reflected through the verb of judgment, ἐδόκει.

Phaedrus makes the distinction clear: even though both were inspired by eros, with Alcestis deemed to have used her eros in the right way and Orpheus the wrong, the morality of each situation does not lie with eros, but with how the performance of the

\(^{75}\) Symposium, 179d2-7
action was judged by an outside party (in this case, the gods). Phaedrus summarizes this concept through his claim that *eros* within the *erastes* can lead to both “shame for shameful things and the ambition towards those noble things (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνην, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαιν).” Once again, the concepts of shame and nobility are attributed to the action, not *eros*. With these lines Phaedrus is the first to introduce a concept that is constant throughout the *Symposium*: wicked deeds and noble deeds are two outcomes of the same cause; however, the morality lies with the deeds themselves, not *eros*. Each of the speakers will clearly envision *eros* in the role of the external instigator, who spurs others to action but is not affected himself.

Whereas Phaedrus simply introduced the tip of a much larger concept, Pausanias will be obsessed with it and expand it in great detail. He seeks to clarify Phaedrus’ argument by claiming:

\[\piὰσα \gammaάρ \πραξίς . . . \οὔτε \καλὴ \οὔτε \αισχρά.\]

Every action…is neither noble nor shameful.

With this, Pausanias has explicitly stated what Phaedrus implied, that how the action is performed determines its morality. He summarizes this by saying, “for when done rightly and nobly it becomes noble, when not rightly it is shameful (καλῶς μὲν γάρ πραττόμενον καὶ ὀρθῶς καλὸν γίγνεται, μὴ ὀρθῶς δὲ αἰσχρὸν).”

In terms of *langue*, Pausanias is adhering to the same baseline as Phaedrus: *eros* is morally neutral. And yet, in order to make his argument he decides to introduce a duality of *eros*, in order to explain right and wrong behavior. Pausanias describes the wrong type

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76 *Symposium*, 178d1-2  
77 *Symposium*, 180e4-5  
78 *Symposium*, 181a3-4
of eros, which he calls “popular (ὁ πάνδημος),”79 as influencing the man who “desires of bodies more than souls (ὁ τοῦ σώματος μᾶλλον ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔρων),”80 and “along with the flower of the body ceasing, the very thing which he desired, he departs flying away (άμα γὰρ τῶ τοῦ σώματος άνθει λήγοντι, οὔπερ ἦρα οἰχεται ἀποπτάμενος).”81 Pausanias is describing a scenario in which the erastes only pursues his eromenos for purely physical reasons (the body). Once the beauty of the body dissipates with old age, the erastes leaves his eromenos in search of a new, younger partner. Pausanias imparts a moral judgment upon this behavior by claiming:

...οὖ δήπου κοσμίως γε καὶ νομίμως ότιον πράγμα πραττόμενον ψόγον ἀν δικαιώς φέροι.82

...surely any deed whatsoever not being done in an orderly and lawful manner should justly bring reproach.

If we look closely at the syntax, however, we realize that even though Pausanias has created a dual eros in order to explain the cause of right and wrong behavior, the moral judgment is not of eros, but of the deed.

On the other hand, the right type of eros, which he calls “heavenly (Οὐρανίας),”83 governs such behaviors as honesty and a genuine care for the education of the eromenos. Pausanias describes this erastes as being praised by the law:

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79 Symposium, 183d8
80 Symposium, 183e1
81 Symposium, 183e3-4
82 Symposium, 182a4-6
83 Symposium, 181c1
...ὁ νόμος δέδωκε τῷ ἐραστῇ θαυμαστὰ ἔργα ἐργαζομένῳ
ἐπαίνεισθαί...  

...the law granted opportunity to be praised for the erastes who accomplishes amazing deeds...

Again, the moral judgment is being passed upon the deeds themselves, not eros.

Pausanias acknowledges this by describing the role of eros as “the one urging us to desire in a noble manner (ὁ καλῶς προτρέπων ἐρήμαι)”. Eros is once again the outside force that propels the erastes towards action; the morality of that action is not ascribed to eros.

Pausanias goes on to pit these two types of eros against one another. He begins by describing the actions of wrong desire:

eἰ γὰρ ἡ χρῆματα βουλόμενος παρὰ τὸν λαβεῖν ἢ ἄρχην ἄρξαι ἢ τινα ἀλλὰν δύναμιν... ἰκετείας τε καὶ ἀντιβολῆς ἐν ταῖς δεήσεισιν ποιοῦμενοι, καὶ ὅρκους ὁμώνυμους, καὶ κοιμήσεις ἐπὶ θύραις, καὶ ἐθέλοντες δουλειάς δούλευειν οίας οὐδὲ ἄν δοῦλος οὐδέείς...  

For if either wishing to take money from anyone or to hold office or any other power...making supplications and entreaties in their requests, and swearing oaths, and sleeping at doors, and willing to do acts of slavery as not even any slave would do...

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84 Symposium, 182e2-3
85 Symposium, 181a6
86 Symposium, 183a2-7
He goes on to claim that by doing these actions, the erastes “would garner the greatest reproach (τὰ μέγιστα καρποῖτ’ ἀν ὄνειδη).”87 On the other hand, the erastes who performs lawful actions is deemed by the law “to act without reproach (ἀνευ ὄνειδους πράττειν).”88 Once again, in these contexts the moral judgment is placed upon the actions, rather than the cause of the actions. Pausanias himself summarizes this sentiment by saying that any deed “is neither noble itself just as it is not shameful itself, but noble if nobly performed and shameful if shamefully performed (οὔτε καλὸν εἶναι αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό οὔτε αἰσχρὸν, ἀλλὰ καλῶς μὲν πραττόμενον καλὸν, αἰσχρῶς δὲ αἰσχρὸν).”89

By pitting both sides of eros against one another, Pausanias is showing how the erastes, though inspired by eros, does not always seek the most noble of goals. This does not mean, however, that eros bears the moral judgment. On the contrary, Pausanias is clear in expressing the act itself as the moral indicator, while eros remains morally neutral, as it simply fulfills its role as the causal agent no matter what type of action that agency might produce.

Eryximachus takes this concept of eros causing right and wrong actions and translates it into a discussion on sickness and health within the body. He does this by claiming “indeed it is, as Pausanias was saying, that it is right to gratify good men, and wicked to gratify immoral men (ἔστιν δὴ, ὡσπερ ἄρτι Παυσανίας ἔλεγεν τοῖς μὲν

87 Symposium, 183a1-2
88 Symposium, 183b4
89 Symposium, 183d4-6
The verb χαρίζεσθαι ("gratify") tips us off to the subject being the eromenos, the one who gratifies the erastes, which in turn identifies the good and wicked men as erastai. And yet, even though the erastai are categorized as either morally right or wrong, Eryximachus makes no mention of the morality of eros, just the actions of those who are inspired by eros.

He clarifies exactly what he means by good (καλὸν) and wicked (αἰσχρὸν) by claiming:

...οὕτω καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς σώμασιν τοῖς μὲν ἀγαθοῖς ἑκάστου τοῦ σώματος καὶ ὑγιεῖνοις καλὸν χαρίζεσθαι καὶ δεῖ...τοῖς δὲ κακοῖς καὶ νοσώδεσιν αἰσχρὸν τε καὶ δεὶ ἀχαριστεῖν...

...thus in these bodies themselves it is necessary to gratify the good and healthy of each body...but it is necessary to be thankless to the bad and sickly parts...

Finally, he equates the one who judges this morality to be the physician:

...καὶ ὁ διαγιγνώσκων ἐν τούτοις τὸν καλὸν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν ἔρωτα, οὕτως ἔστιν ὁ ἰατρικῶτατος.

...he who distinguishes between the noble and wicked eros in these, he is the most skilled at healing.

These two contexts establish that there is a judgment of morality towards the erastes, similar to the speeches of Phaedrus and Pausanias. Unlike his predecessors, however,

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90 Symposium, 186b8-9
91 Symposium, 186c1-4
92 Symposium, 186c7-d1
Eryximachus seems to be applying the moral value directly to *eros* (ἐν τούτοις τὸν καλὸν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν ἔρωτα). This seems to be contradictory to our baseline of a morally neutral *eros*.

In order to understand this discrepancy, we must look to the specific description Eryximachus is giving of this dual *eros*. His argument revolves around the concepts of balance, or harmony (ἁρμονία). As he explains the type of harmony within what he calls the right and wrong *eros*, we would expect to be presented with an argument on the nature, not the deeds, of *eros* to support his claim. Eryximachus presents his evidence in the following manner:

...καὶ ἐπειδὰν μὲν πρὸς ἄλληλα τοῦ κοσμίου τύχῃ ἔρωτος ἀ νυνδὴ ἐγὼ ἐλεγον, τά τε θερμὰ καὶ τά ψυχρὰ καὶ ἕηρα καὶ ὑγρα, καὶ ἁρμονίαν καὶ κράσιν λάβῃ σῶφρονα, ἢκει φέροντα εὐετηρίαν τε καὶ ὑγίειαν ἀνθρώπως καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ζώοις τε καὶ φυτοῖς, καὶ οὐδὲν ἥδικησεν: ὅταν δὲ ὁ μετὰ τῆς υβρεως Ἐρως ἐγκρατέστερος περὶ τὰς τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἡρας γένηται, διέφθειρέν τε πολλὰ καὶ ἥδικησεν.\(^\text{93}\)

...and when the others of the well-ordered *eros*, as I said just now, hot and cold, dry and wet, and he takes on a temperate harmony and mixture, he comes bearing both a good season and good health to men and the other animals and plants, and does no damage. But whenever the violent *eros* becomes more in control concerning the season of the year, he utterly destroys and does great damage.

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\(^{93}\) *Symposium*, 188a2-8
The syntax of this passage points not to the nature of *eros* as morally right or wrong, but as the *cause of actions* that are morally right or wrong. In other words, it’s not *eros* that is good, but its action of bringing a good season and good health. The term φέροντα changes the sentence from focusing on *eros* to focusing on the actions resulting from *eros*. The same applies for the wrong *eros*, as the morality is being applied to the outcome: the great damage as a result of an action inspired by *eros*.

Eryximachus provides one last summary of his argument in which he attempts to describe the morality of *eros*:

...ο δὲ περὶ τὰ γαθὰ μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀποτελούμενος καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν καὶ παρά θεοῖς, ὁτός τὴν μεγίστην δύναμιν ἔχει καὶ πάσαν ἡμῖν εὐδαιμονίαν παρασκευάζει...

...but the one (of the dual *eros*) which is completed for good with moderation and justice both among us and for the gods, this one has the greatest power and provides for us all good fortune...

Once again, even though Eryximachus originally claimed to be talking about *eros* itself, the emphasis lies with the action as a result of *eros* (“completed for the good”). By analyzing these contexts, we see that even though the scope of Eryximachus’ speech was dissimilar from those of Phaedrus or Pausanias, he still is drawing upon the same concept of a morally neutral *eros*, as it is the actions as a result of the causative agent that receive the moral judgment. Once again, *eros* is not concerned with the actions it inspires, whether they be destructive or beneficial for mankind or the gods. It remains neutral, and allows those affected by these actions to enforce morality upon them, while *eros* remains

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94 *Symposium*, 188d5-8
the instigator who spurs morally twofold behavior, but avoids such moral judgments itself.

While Aristophanes presents a creation myth that seems incongruous with the previous speeches, he still describes *eros* in the same morally neutral manner as his predecessors. He does this by first praising the *erastes*, in the form of the original humans, as they “delight in lying together and being intertwined with men, and these are the best of boys and lads since they are the most manly in nature (καὶ χαίροντι συγκατακείμενοι καὶ συμπεπλεγμένοι τοῖς ἀνδράσι, καὶ εἰσὶν οὗτοι βέλτιστοι τῶν παίδων καὶ μειρακίων, ἀτε ἀνδρειότατοι ὄντες φύσει).” He then presents the counterargument to his praise by claiming that “some say they are shameless, but falsely; for they do not do this by shamelessness but by courage and manliness and masculinity (φασὶ δὲ δὴ τινὲς αὐτοὺς ἀναισχύντους εἶναι, ψευδόμενοι: οὐ γὰρ ἅπι ἀναισχυντίας τούτω δρῶσιν ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ θάρρους καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ ἀρρενωπίας).”

This counterargument is referring to Pausanias’ speech of the right and wrong actions inspired by *eros*, in which he too refers to the wrong type of action as shameless. Aristophanes, although he avoids bringing the judgments of law and custom into his speech, is still participating in a moral evaluation of the actions spurred by *eros*, rather than *eros* itself. This is evident through his word choice, as the ambiguous “some (τινὲς)” are judging these progenitor humans based upon what they do (δρῶσιν), not based upon their nature. The presence of this verb of doing alerts the reader to the shift in perspective, as Aristophanes is not describing *eros*, but the *erastes*. Again, this distinction

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95 Symposium, 191e8-192a2
96 Symposium, 192a2-5
is subtle, yet important, as *eros* itself remains morally neutral while the actions done on account of *eros* are subject to moral scrutiny by an outside observer. While Aristophanes is applying the concept of right behavior versus wrong behavior, he is still placing the moral judgment on the action, not the cause of that action. In this way, even though the theme and scope of his speech is unlike anything prior, his description of *eros* points to its moral ambiguity.

These opinions on the morality, or lack thereof, of *eros* culminate in the speech of Socrates, who, through Diotima, will take each opinion and attempt to provide an overarching truth in order to unify the apparent contradictions in each speech. While this might seem necessary, as each of the previous speakers has described the morality involving *eros* through a different approach, our baseline shows that the differences actually reside in the *parole*, while there is still unity within the *langue*. In other words, there is no discrepancy in whether or not *eros* can be right, wrong, or neither, as each symposiast has deferred to a common construction in which the moral judgment of noble (*καλός*) or good (*ἀγαθός*) versus shameful (*αἰσχρός*) is applied to the action of the *erastes*, not the *eros* which inspired that action. It is through each of the individual interpretations of that fact, through *parole*, that we find the differences, not through the global understanding of *eros* as morally neutral. We can safely assume, therefore, that if Socrates is attempting to persuade the others (the same goal that the previous speakers had), his usage through *parole* should be different, but the overall adherence to the baseline (*langue*) should remain constant.
Socrates begins his interpretation of the morality of *eros* through analyzing its objects. In his encounter with Diotima, Socrates tells how Diotima challenged his assertions of the rightness or wrongness of *eros*:

…ἡ οἴει, ὅτι ἂν μὴ καλὸν ἡ, ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὸ εἶναι αἰσχρὸν; ⁹⁷

…or do you think, that whatever is not noble, it is necessary to be shameful?

These terms, καλὸν and αἰσχρὸν, are the exact ones used by the previous speakers in their attempt to qualify the morality of behaviors spurred by *eros*. By phrasing her question in this manner, Diotima has taken the idea of right and wrong behavior and applied it to *eros* itself, much in the manner of Eryximachus. She then rephrases the question in terms of ignorance and wisdom:

ἡ καὶ ἂν μὴ σοφὸν, ἀμαθές; ἡ οὐκ ἴσθησαι ὅτι ἔστιν τι μεταξὺ σοφίας καὶ ἀμαθίας; ⁹⁸

And if it is not wise, would it be ignorant? Did you not perceive that there is something between wisdom and ignorance?

She finally comes to her conclusion by claiming:

μὴ τοῖνυν ἀνάγκαξε ὃ μὴ καλὸν ἔστιν αἰσχρὸν εἶναι, μηδὲ ὃ μὴ ἀγαθὸν, κακὸν. οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα ἐπειδὴ αὐτὸς ὁμολογεῖς μὴ εἶναι ἀγαθὸν μηδὲ καλὸν, μηδὲν τι μᾶλλον οἶον δεῖν αὐτὸν αἰσχρὸν καὶ κακὸν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τι μεταξὺ τούτων. ⁹⁹

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⁹⁷ Symposium, 201e10-11
⁹⁸ Symposium, 202a2-3
⁹⁹ Symposium, 202b1-5
Then do not compel what is not beautiful to be ugly, or what is not good to be bad. In this way even *eros* since you yourself agree that he is neither good nor beautiful, suppose no longer that it is necessary for him to be ugly and bad, but something between these two.

With this, Diotima has, in essence, eliminated any possibility of *eros* having morality. This is the culmination of the previous speakers, who, although they described *eros* in the same manner to make their point, did not use such a thorough dismissal of all morality. If *eros* itself cannot be right or wrong, we must look to the objects of *eros* to find the morality of any behavior. This is the overarching claim expressed by each of the previous speakers, which Diotima explicitly claims:

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\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\iota\nu \delta\acute{e} \tau\iota \nu \betao\upsilon\lambda\eta\iota\sigma\iota\nu \kappa\ai\iota \tau\iota \nu \varepsilon\rho\omega\tau\alpha \tau\o\omicron\upsilon \pi\omicron\acute{e}\rho\alpha \kappa\omega\ion{\iota}{n} \circ\epsilon \iota \epsilon \iota \nu \iota \nu \iota \nu \pi\acute{a}\nu\tau\omicron \alpha\nu\theta\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\omicron, \kai \pi\acute{a}\nu\tau\omicron \tau\acute{a} \varepsilon\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{a} \betao\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\sigma\theta\ai \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\zeta \epsilon\iota \iota \iota \epsilon \iota \iota \iota;^{100}
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Do you suppose this wish or this *eros* to be common to all mankind, and that everyone always wishes to have good things?

With this question, Diotima places the burden of morality squarely on the object of *eros*, as *\tau\acute{a} \gamma\alpha\theta\acute{a}*, in its neuter form, expresses the idea that things *eros* seeks are deemed as good, not *eros* itself.

In support of her claim of *eros* as the moral intermediate, Diotima describes the ways in which an *erastes* can desire objects deemed wrong, according to the general consensus. These behaviors include “money-making (*\chi\rho\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\iota\mu\omicron\omicron\omicron*),”^{101} which echoes the speech of Phaedrus who claimed that those who “intend to live nobly (*\mu\acute{e} \lambda\lambda\omicron\nu\omicron\iota*
καλῶς βιώσεσθαι,” produce “wealth (πλοῦτος).” Likewise, Apollodorus, in the prologue, mentioned the “money-making (χρηματιστικῶν)” friends of the unnamed stranger, who “think (they) are doing a lot when (they) are doing nothing (ὅτι οἴεσθε τι ποιεῖν όνδέν ποιοῦντες).” These examples both refer to behavior as being either right or wrong (right in the case of Phaedrus, wrong in the case of Apollodorus). This shows how moral judgment is purely subject to the bias of the outside party creating the judgment. Diotima has taken this relative nature of morality and identified it as being such, and in doing so she has equated the morality with the object of eros, such as “money-making,” rather than with eros itself. In this way, even though Socrates, through Diotima, has created a new interpretation of the morality of eros through individualized parole, the underlying factor is still that eros is morally neutral and therefore our baseline remains intact.

Alcibiades, although his speech covers a much different topic from that of his predecessors, also adheres to this concept. The context specific to the morality of eros occurs in 217c8, when he describes his method of making Socrates desire him as being “like an erastes plotting against his beloved (ἀσπερ ἑραστῆς παιδικῶς ἐπιβολεύων).” With this line, Alcibiades reveals his intentions towards Socrates as being morally wrong, since an erastes, as Pausanias claims, is not supposed to resort to tricking his eromenos. Alcibiades even recognizes this as he later claims that “on that occasion (he) was ashamed and let him (Socrates) go (καὶ τότε μὲν αἰσχυνόμενος

102 Symposium, 178c7
103 Symposium, 173c7-d1
104 Symposium, 217c7-8
The shame Alcibiades confesses is the shame of wrongful behavior, not the cause of that behavior. Alcibiades is equating his shame to the plotting, which deflects the moral judgment away from *eros*. In this way, Alcibiades, like all the speakers before him, is deferring to the global concept of *eros*, in which it remains morally neutral.

What each of these contexts shows is that while any *erastes* is inspired by *eros*, the ultimate goal of that inspiration is unique to the morality of the individual. Some use *eros* for good deeds, other for bad ones; however, as Diotima points out, no matter what one desires, be it shameful or laudable, that desire falls under the umbrella of *eros*. In this way, *eros* distances itself from the judgment of morality as it simply inspires action. How an *erastes* chooses to manifest that action is not the concern of *eros*, but relates to the moral character of the individual. Through our analysis of each context in which morality is a factor, it becomes clear that each of the symposiasts understands that actions have consequences and receive public scrutiny. Whether that is praise or reproach is not the concern of *eros*, since as a linguistic signifier *eros* encompasses both.

**Section E: Eros desires through social relationships**

So far, we have established some basic qualities of *eros* based upon the similarities across the *Symposium*. First, *eros* has been identified as always taking an object: an intrinsic quality for any word that expresses desire. Second, the *erastes/eromenos* relationship has been identified as the main vehicle for expressing *eros* in everyday life. Third, *eros* functions as a causal agent, in that *eros* inspires the *erastes* as an external stimulus. Lastly, *eros* has been deemed morally neutral, since the concepts

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105 *Symposium*, 217d2-3
of right and wrong refer to the behaviors on account of *eros*, rather than *eros* itself. Now that we have covered the object, means of expression, inspirational nature, and moral neutrality of *eros*, the last common feature that must be explained is the type of desire expressed by *eros*. In doing this, we find that each of the speakers believes that the type of desire that only *eros* designates functions through social relationships.

To keep our approach sound, we must first clarify exactly what we mean by desires specific to *eros*. In our paradigm, *eros* and *epithumia* both operate as terms indicating desire. For this reason, their meanings will overlap, something that our methodology allows under the concept of Saussure’s sign systems. The overlap between *eros* and *epithumia* occurs within the context of desires that do not involve society as a whole. For example, the *erastes/eromenos* relationship will be revealed as a public relationship, in that it was meant and expected to be seen and judged by society. This relates to the morality of *eros*, as moral judgments can only be made of public acts.

*Epithumia*, on the other hand, does not partake in the *erastes/eromenos* relationship and has no vehicle for public expression. This type of desire usually involves something in private, such as the desire for food or a sexual encounter without a lasting relationship. This difference will be explained in detail through our analysis of *parole*, as each speaker envisions the ultimate relationship between *epithumia* and *eros* in varying ways. For the purposes of *langue*, however, it is sufficient to analyze both *epithumia* and *eros* in terms of their place within society. Whereas *epithumia* has no social obligation, *eros* does and actively seeks objects that lead to interaction between the *erastes* and society.

Within the text, Phaedrus is the first to make the social aspect of *eros* clear, as he claims that *eros* is “the shame towards shameful deeds and the ambition towards those
noble things (τίν ἐπὶ µέν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνην, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς)

As previously established, the judgment of deeds as shameful and noble is not decided by eros but by the common perception of the larger society. This alters our understanding of the passage as eros, at least in this context, is seeking noble things. Phaedrus indicates these noble things as including “public honor (τιμαὶ),” a term which implies a social relationship. Society deems these noble things (τοῖς καλοῖς) and behaviors performed to obtain them as either noble or shameful. For Phaedrus, the ultimate goal of eros is to obtain public praise.

This brings us back to the story of Alcestis. Phaedrus describes Alcestis’ actions in the following way:

...ἐθελήσασα µόνη ὑπὲρ τοῦ αὐτῆς ἀνδρός ἀποθανεῖν, ὃντων αὐτῷ πατρός τε καὶ µητρός, οὓς ἐκείνη τοσοῦτον ὑπερβάλετο τῇ φιλίᾳ διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα, ὃστε ἀποδεῖξαι αὐτοὺς ἀλλοτρίους ὃντας τῶν ὑπερβαλλόντων οἷς ἐκείνη τοσοῦτον ὑπερβαλλόντων ἐργασασθεὶς εἰς µόνον προσήκοντας, καὶ τούτ’ ἐργασασμένη τὸ ἐργὸν οὕτω καλὸν ἐδοξεῖν ἐργάσασθαι οὐ µόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοῖς...

...who alone was willing to die for her husband, though he had both father and mother, whom she surpassed so far with her philia on account of eros, as to make them appear as being alien to their son and relations in name only, and when doing this deed she seemed to do it so well not only to men but also to the gods...

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106 Symposium, 178d2
107 Symposium, 178c7
108 Symposium, 179b7-c5
If we analyze this passage through the lens of the goal of *eros*, we see that it clearly involves a social relationship. First, Phaedrus makes a point of mentioning that Admetus had a mother and father, whose responsibility it should have been to die for the sake of their son. This, in turn, alerts us to rethink the presence of *philia*, which is the force through which Alcestis is accomplishing this deed. *Philia* denotes a social relationship in which two people are connected to each other in a particular manner. This will be addressed in the next section, but for now its presence indicates that the social relationship, and subsequent obligation, between Admetus and his parents has failed, while the relationship between Alcestis and Admetus has allowed her to succeed in her *eros*. This is again reflected in the phrase “to appear as being alien to their son and relations in name only,” as the relationship between parents and children (*philia*) has failed.

Second, we should take note of the presence of the verb ἔδοξεν, which indicates a judgment. In this case, it is the judgment of Alcestis’ behavior by the gods that allows her to achieve her ultimate prize of immortal glory. This ultimate goal of immortality will be crucial to our understanding of *eros* as we proceed through our analysis. For the moment, we should take this to mean that Alcestis has achieved an immortal name, something that can only be achieved through a social relationship. In other words, the only way to achieve glory is to have actions recognized as being glorious by society.

Pausanias follows the example of Phaedrus and also claim that *eros* desires through social relationships:
...ὁ νόμος δέδωκε τῷ ἐραστῇ θαυμαστὰ ἐργα ἐργαζομένῳ ἑπαινεῖσθαι...\textsuperscript{109}

...the law granted the opportunity to be praised for the erastes who accomplishes amazing deeds...

Here, the goal of the erastes is described as the desire for praise: something which can only be accomplished through the laws and customs of society. This plays directly into his example of Harmodius and Aristogeiton:

\[ ὁ γὰρ Ἀριστογείτονος ἔρως καὶ Ἡ Ἀριστοδίου φιλία βέβαιος γενομένη κατέλυσεν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρχήν.\textsuperscript{110} \]

For the eros of Aristogeiton and the philia of Harmodius, having become steadfast, loosened their (the tyrants) power.

As with Alcestis, the eros of Aristogeiton on its own is not enough to accomplish the expulsion of the tyrants. His eros is paired with the philia of Harmodius in order to achieve that goal. This construction is the same as that of Alcestis, in that only through the social relationship contained within philia was Aristogeiton able to fulfill his eros. Likewise, the ultimate goal remains constant: immortality of name. Through his actions, Aristogeiton, and through association Harmodius, would be immortalized forever. While one could argue that they were not actively seeking immortality, they knew that their actions would be remembered by their fellow Athenians.

In each context, the final goal that eros is seeking is public recognition through praise and glory. This is only accomplished through the erastes/eromenos relationship,

\textsuperscript{109} Symposium, 182e2-3  
\textsuperscript{110} Symposium, 182c5-7
since it is the *eromenos* who provides the necessary social relationship (*philia*) for bringing about the obtainment of the goals of *eros*. Without the *philia*, both between the *erastes* and *eromenos*, and between the *erastes* and his society, *eros* would not be able to achieve its aspirations of public praise, which, as our analysis of morality showed, is the consequence of worthy behavior.

In his speech on medicine and the role of the physician, Eryximachus attempts to ground his argument of *eros* in reality through analysis of the human body. Therefore, we would not expect to find any sort of social connotations within his speech. And yet, as in his description of *eros*, he claims that:

> οὕτω πολλὴν καὶ μεγάλην, μᾶλλον δὲ πᾶσαν δύναμιν ἔχει συλλήβδην
> μὲν ὁ πάς Ἐρως, ὁ δὲ περὶ τάγαθα μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης
> ἀποτελούμενος καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν καὶ παρὰ θεοῖς, οὕτως τὴν μεγίστην
> δύναμιν ἔχει καὶ πᾶσαν ἡμῖν εὐδαιμονίαν παρασκευάζει…

Much and great power the whole *eros* has, rather, all the power, but the one which is completed for good with moderation and justice both among us and for the gods, this one has the greatest power and provides for us all happiness…

Here, Eryximachus has defined power (*δύναμιν*) as being the object of *eros*. We must analyze the specific syntax in order to see how this power is achieved in order to understand the social connection. Eryximachus has said that he who holds this power is the one whose *eros* led to “good with moderation and justice both among us and for the gods.” This line indicates that a social relationship has been established between gods and men which led to the obtainment of power. He makes this clear when he claims, “*φιλίας*

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111 *Symposium*, 188d4-8
\( \theta \varepsilon \omega \nu \, \kappa \alpha \iota \, \alpha \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi \alpha \nu \cdots \varepsilon \pi \iota \sigma \tau \alpha \sigma \theta \alpha i \) (He (eros) creates philia between gods and men). \(^{112}\) Eros is now being portrayed as the causal agent that is seeking a goal (\( \delta \upsilon \alpha \mu \gamma \nu \) that, in this context, can only be achieved through the social relationship between gods and men (brought about by philia).

Even though Eryximachus alters the pattern set forth by Phaedrus and Pausanias in making his speech (parole), the implications of each context point to a greater overarching concept (langue) in which eros seeks the qualities that can only be granted through social relationships. It is impossible for one to acquire power without associating with those whom one intends to have that power over. In the case of Eryximachus, the reverse is true as well, as the gods are the ones granting power and only through philia with the gods can eros acquire power. The objects of this type of desire have been identified, so far, as power, happiness, beauty, goodness, and praise. As we are halfway through our analysis, it is becoming clear that these types of desires can only occur within a society. One cannot have power without a group to rule over; one cannot have happiness without a societal norm that establishes what happiness is; and one cannot have beauty without an agreed standard of what beauty should be.

Following Eryximachus, Aristophanes uses his speech to re-imagine the origin myth of eros. We would expect that, being a comic playwright, Aristophanes’ goal of eros might reflect the fantastic qualities of his speech. What we find is that, although encapsulated within a speech very different from those before it, Aristophanes, too, defers to the notion of eros seeking objects through societal relationships. This deference occurs in the summary of his speech, as he claims “but in fact I speak about both men and

\(^{112}\) Symposium, 188d1
women that thus our race might be happy, if we fulfill \textit{eros} and each obtain his own favorite and departing toward his original nature (λέγω δὲ οὖν ἡγεῖ καθ’ ἀπάνταν καὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν, ὅτι σύνις ἂν ἡμῶν τὸ γένος εὐδαίμον γένετο, εἰ \ekτελέσαμεν τὸν ἔρωτα καὶ τῶν παιδικῶν τῶν αὐτῶν ἕκαστος τύχοι εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἀπελθὼν φύσιν)."\textsuperscript{113} With this phrase, Aristophanes has identified the ultimate goal of \textit{eros} to be happiness, the same goal as Eryximachus’ \textit{eros}.

This happiness is identified as completion of the whole, as humans, having been cut in half by Zeus, are constantly looking for their other half. In order to achieve this fulfillment of the whole, however, humans needed to find a specific partner who matches with their body and soul in a way that indicates they are two halves of the same original form. In his description, Aristophanes is very clear about how this relationship works:

\begin{quote}

\textit{ὅταν μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ ἐκεῖνῳ ἐντύχῃ τῷ αὐτοῦ ἡμίσει καὶ ὁ παιδεραστής καὶ ἄλλος πᾶς, τότε καὶ θαυμαστὰ ἐκπλήττονται φιλία τε καὶ οἰκειότητι καὶ ἔρωτι, οὐκ ἔθελοντες ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν χωρίζεσθαι ἀλλήλων οὐδὲ σμικρὸν χρόνον.}\textsuperscript{114}

And so whenever both a desirer of boys or any other kind, that person himself meets his own half, then they are wonderfully overcome with friendship and kinship and desire, so as to say they are not wishing to be separated from each other even for a little time.

Here, Aristophanes has described the moment of obtaining the happiness sought by \textit{eros}, as each human has found his or her soulmate. Once again, this type of encounter is

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Symposium}, 193c2-5

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Symposium}, 192b5-c2
marked by a specific social relationship, as indicated by the presence of *philia*. Only through that social relationship, which will later become that of the *erastes* and *eromenos*, can one obtain the ultimate goal of happiness. Additionally, Aristophanes has introduced a key aspect into what sort of social relationship the *erastes* and *eromenos* create, as the feelings they share for one another are given permanence and a future aspect. This becomes a key attribute of the relationship in our analysis of *parole*. In terms of *eros*, the main point to observe is that once again the ultimate goal is a social value, happiness, and therefore *eros* requires a social relationship in order to obtain this goal. Without the appearance of the other half, humans would never be able to understand or find what they are missing. It is the reciprocal nature of the relationship that gives substance to the desire for happiness.

The speech of Agathon will also identify happiness as one of the goals of *eros*, albeit through a different context. Agathon indicates this abstract goal of *eros* at the beginning of his speech by saying that “of all the gods who are happy...*eros* himself is the most happy, being the most beautiful and the best (φημὶ οὖν ἐγὼ πάντων θεῶν εὐθαμιόνων ὁντῶν ἔρωτα... εὐθαμιομέστατον εἶναι αὐτῶν, κάλλιστον ὄντα καὶ ἄριστον).”115 Like his predecessors, Agathon acknowledges happiness as a trait of *eros*, along with beauty and being the best. What Agathon has not done, however, is to say that *eros* desires any of these traits. This discrepancy must be resolved if we are to apply it to our baseline. Fortunately, Agathon’s speech provides the necessary resolution.

Within his speech, Agathon claims that in order to truly understand *eros* we must “praise him first for what sort he is, then for his gifts (ἐπαινέσαι πρώτον αὐτὸν οἴος
He justifies this approach through the saying “like always draws near to like (ὡς ὁμοιον ὁμοιω ἄει πελαζει).”

If these two statements are taken to their logical conclusion, then if, according to Agathon, he is attempting to describe the nature of _eros_, _eros_ associates with similar things, and _eros_ is the most happy, beautiful and best, then it must hold true that Agathon equates the fact that _eros_ is happy with _eros_ being the desire for happiness. In Agathon’s mind, one must first _possess_ what one desires. Therefore, if _eros_ possesses happiness and beauty, then it must also have desired those same traits.

Agathon is even more explicit in the desire of beauty when he describes the gifts of _eros_ which he previously mentioned. These gifts are related through the creation myth of _eros_, in which Agathon claims that “once this god (_eros_) grew, from this desiring of beauty all good things came to be (ἐπειδὴ δ´ ὁ θεός οὕτος ἐφύν, ἔκ τοῦ ἐράν τῶν καλῶν πάντ’ ἀγαθὰ γέγονεν).” With this claim, he directly equates _eros_ to the desiring of beauty, the same concept he associated with the nature of _eros_ at the beginning of his speech. When taken together, both contexts relate the desire of _eros_ to the concepts of beauty and happiness: the same words used by the previous speakers.

For the use of our baseline, we must now look to see how _eros_ obtains these social goals. The answer lies in Agathon’s story of _eros_ as the teacher:

For the use of our baseline, we must now look to see how _eros_ obtains these social goals. The answer lies in Agathon’s story of _eros_ as the teacher:

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116 Symposium, 195a4-5
117 Symposium, 195b5
118 Symposium, 197b7-9
Apollo invented archery and medicine and prophecy with *eros* and *epithumia* taking the lead, so that also this god would be a student of *eros*, and the Muses in connection with music and Hephaestus in connection with metal-work and Athena in connection with weaving and Zeus in governing both gods and men. Hence, the doing of the gods were also constructed when *eros* had been born among them, clearly in connection with beauty...

This passage tells us that these particular skills of the gods were invented as a result of a particular relationship between the gods and *eros*, in which *eros* acted as the teacher. Once again we see that the ultimate object of *eros* is beauty. Agathon is claiming that the manner in which *eros* obtains beauty is through a relationship with the gods. This is the same type of social construct that the previous speakers have mentioned.

Agathon goes on to claim that “from this desiring of beauty, all good things came to be for gods and humans (ἐκ τοῦ ἐραν τῶν καλῶν πάντ᾽ ἀγαθὰ γέγονεν καὶ θεοῖς καὶ ἄνθρωποις).” The positioning of this line directly after the description of the gods’ skills implies that the good things Agathon is referring to are in fact the skills. This explains why the relationship is described as between gods and men. Each *techne* that Agathon mentions (archery, medicine, prophecy, music, metal-work, weaving) are skills that are invented by gods, but given to humans. This social relationship is the same as that of the earlier speakers, and through it, *eros* is able to obtain beauty and happiness.

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119 Symposium, 197a6-b5
120 Symposium, 197b8-9
Although Agathon’s speech covers a unique topic, the description of *eros* still falls within our baseline of *langue*, as *eros* obtains certain social values through relationships.

In the speech of Socrates, we see the culmination of the social relationship *eros* seeks to obtain certain desires. First, Diotima asks Socrates, “So what *eros* is in need of and does not have is beauty (ἐνδεής ἄρ’ ἐστὶ καὶ οὐκ ἔχει ὁ Ἐρως κάλλος)?” \(^{121}\) She goes on to claim that “at the same time by nature (*eros*) is an *erastes* concerning beauty (καὶ ἀμα φύσει ἔραστής ὃν περὶ τὸ καλὸν).” \(^{122}\) These contexts place the goal of *eros* squarely in the realm of beauty, just as the previous speakers. Diotima does not stop there, however, and goes on to equate beauty and goodness, saying that “men desire the good (οἱ ἀνθρώποι τὰ γαθεὶ ἔρωσιν).” \(^{123}\) Diotima continues this abstraction from beauty to the good and finally to the form of beauty which she labels as the end result of “all those previous toils (οἱ ἐμπροσθεν πάντες πόνοι).” \(^{124}\)

With these, Diotima has labeled the ultimate goal of *eros* as beauty and goodness, the same goals from the previous speeches. Additionally, Diotima provides a new argument which provides the ways in which humans seek these goals: immortality. She lays out three main paths by which mortals can obtain immortality: procreation, fame, and wisdom through philosophy. Each of these paths requires the same type of relationship as described by prior speakers. First, she describes the immortality of name by claiming:

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\(^{121}\) *Symposium*, 201b5  
\(^{122}\) *Symposium*, 203c3  
\(^{123}\) *Symposium*, 206a4  
\(^{124}\) *Symposium*, 210e6
ἐπεὶ οἶει σὺ Ἀλκηστὶν ὑπὲρ Ἀδμητοῦ ἀποθανεῖν ἂν, ἢ Ἀχιλλέα
Πατρόκλῳ ἐπαποθανεῖν...μη οἰομένους ἀθάνατον μνήμην ἀρετῆς πέρι
ἐαυτῶν ἐσεσθαί, ἢν νῦν ήμείς ἐχομεν;  

Do you suppose that Alcestis would have died on account of Admetus, or Achilles sought death for Patroclus...unless they thought to achieve immortal memory concerning this virtue, which we now keep?

In this way, immortality is achieved through name, as one’s name will be preserved through all time. In order for this to happen, however, one needs the proper relationship in order to achieve social recognition. This relationship is that of the erastes and eromenos, as evidenced by Achilles and Alcestis. Through this, their deeds were made known to all as Diotima identifies a general “us” (implying the symposiasts and the reader) as the ones preserving the immortal name. This social relationship is twofold as, without the erastes/eromenos relationship, there would be no way to have one’s deeds recognized and without society as a whole (including the reader) there would be nobody to preserve the name.

This pattern continues to her example of procreation as well, as through the erastes/eromenos relationships between a man and woman children are produced. This type of relationship is different from one that is strictly for pleasure, as the act of procreation requires a future aspect in which one wishes to be with his or her partner in the future as well as the present. Additionally, procreation only produces immortality if done within a society, as the goal of having children is to have them surpass the parents’ deeds within society.

125 Symposium, 208d2-6
Finally, the same sort of principle applies to wisdom through philosophy, since it is made clear that only through the eromenos can the erastes gain wisdom. Diotima claims that through the contemplation of beauty through the eromenos, the erastes is able to behold the form of beauty and in doing so, to connect with divinity, thus becoming immortal:

τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετήν ἀληθῆ καὶ θρεψάμενον ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι,
καὶ εἰπέρ τῷ ἄλλῳ Ἀνθρώπων ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἑκεῖνῳ;¹²⁶

But in begetting true virtue and nurturing it, he begins to become dear to the god, and if any other among men is immortal then that person is also? By contemplating beauty and abstracting it all the way to its purest form, one is able to enter a social relationship with the god, through philia, and in doing so become immortal.

With these contexts, Socrates, through Diotima, has taken the statements of the previous speakers and brought them to their logical conclusion. If, as Diotima claims, the true goal of eros is immortality, then the three methods of obtaining it must involve social relationships, whether between the erastes and eromenos, the erastes and society, or the erastes and the gods. Although he has incorporated a philosophical abstraction to make his point, at the core of his argument Socrates is referring to the same global conceptualization of eros as the other symposiasts: the ultimate goals of eros are obtained through particular social relationships.

Even though Alcibiades claims he will not be making a speech about eros, what he does speak about is the erastes/eromenos relationship. Within this context, he addresses his own role as the erastes of Socrates as he claims that “nothing is more

¹²⁶ Symposium, 212a5-7
important to me than to become the most excellent (ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἐστὶ πρεσβύτερον τοῦ ὡς ὅτι βέλτιστον ἐμὲ γενέσθαι)."127 Being an erastes, and therefore inspired by eros, the goal of Alcibiades reflects the ultimate goal of eros: obtaining the highest excellence. While the story of Alcibiades’ affection for Socrates represents the unfulfilled erastes/eromenos relationship, through the context of his words we can still extrapolate the same global concept he draws upon to make his point. That concept is the aspirations of eros and the need of a social relationship. Even though Alcibiades failed in his goal to become the most excellent, he still attempted to obtain that goal through an erastes/eromenos relationship with Socrates. The fact that Alcibiades was not present to hear their speeches enhances the fact that this conceptualization of eros must be one that is shared by all the men, making it exactly what we need for our global baseline.

Although each of the seven speakers is manipulating the desires of eros to suit his individual rhetorical needs, the similarities are striking and run through each speech. Ultimately, eros is seeking something more than simple sexual gratification at any particular moment. This understanding of eros will become especially important when analyzing the differences in each speech, as each speaker understands the way in which eros achieves these goals differently. For now, it is essential to identify that uniform understanding of eros seeking goals beyond simple sexual pleasure and requiring social relationships to do so. This baseline provides the reference point against which to recognize the differences in each argument. The comparison of these similarities and

127 Symposium, 218d1-2
differences will lead to a new understanding of exactly why *eros* seeks these abstract goals and the role of *epithumia* and *philia* in that quest.

**Section F: Philia is the relationship through which eros obtains its desires**

Having established the baseline qualities of *eros* within the *Symposium*, we must now focus our analysis on how *eros* obtains its desires. This issue has a direct correlation to the *erastes/eromenos* relationship as being the vehicle through which *eros* obtains the objects of its desire. This relationship is an expression of *philia*, a word often translated in English as “love,” but more fundamentally representing a relationship that forms a social connection or bond between the parties involved. With *philia* playing such a major part in the workings of *eros*, we must establish a baseline of what exactly *philia* entails in order to understand its relationship with *eros*.

Once more we must start with the speech of Phaedrus, since, as previously mentioned, he connected *eros* and *philia* within the word “ambition (φιλοτιμίαν).” Phaedrus claims *eros* is “the shame towards shameful deeds and the ambition towards those noble things (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνην, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαν).” The key part within this word is “-timian,” or “honor,” which gives the literal meaning of ambition as love of honor. Phaedrus goes on to say that “even the gods honor most of all both zeal and courage concerning *eros* (οὕτω καὶ θεοὶ τὴν περὶ τὸν ἔρωτα σπουδὴν τε καὶ ἀρετὴν μᾶλιστα τιμῶσιν).” Phaedrus repeats this claim by saying “in fact, the gods honor better than any other this excellence concerning *eros*

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128 Symposium, 178d2
129 Symposium, 179d1-2
(ἀλλὰ γὰρ τῷ ὄντι μάλιστα μὲν ταύτην τὴν ἀρετὴν οἷς θεοὶ τιμῶσιν τὴν περὶ τὸν ἔρωτα).”

As previously established within our baseline, Phaedrus has made honor one of the ultimate goals of *eros*. The act of honoring is, in fact, a social or community activity, as one cannot honor his or her self, but must be honored by the larger society as a group. This dependency on society echoes the dependency of *eros* on *philia*, in that only through *philia* can *eros* achieve its goal, such as honor. This explains Phaedrus’ use of *philotimia*, since if we break the word down into its constituent parts, it is incorporating *philia* through the root “phil-,” indicating the operation of a social relationship. In other words, ambition as a concept only works when the acts of an individual are performed in sight of the group, and then judged by that group as either worthy or shameful. If, as our baseline has shown, *eros* seeks these types of social praises, the only way it can accomplish its goal is through the use of *philia*.

This is reflected through Alcestis, the one who received the honor of the gods. In his description, Phaedrus claims that she surpassed her in-laws “with her *philia* on account of *eros* (τῇ ὕπιλίᾳ διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα).” The syntax of this passage indicates that it was the relationship, *philia*, which allowed Alcestis to surpass her in-laws who should have been the first to sacrifice themselves for their son. This represents the duality of *philia*, in that just as Alcestis was honored through upholding and exceeding her social obligation, the parents of Admetus failed in theirs. Within this example, Alcestis has created another relationship to the gods, which is logical since they are the ones who will immortalize her soul forever. Additionally, Phaedrus has clearly stated that the *philia*.

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130 Symposium, 180a7-b1
131 Symposium, 179c1-2
arose from *eros*, indicating that, while the desire originated within *eros*, the execution of that desire is performed through *philia*.

Pausanias, too, uses *philia* in this manner as he speaks on the morality of behaviors instigated by *eros*. Within his speech, he describes how *eros* is the bane of tyranny:

\[
\text{τοῖς γὰρ βαρβάροις διὰ τὰς τυραννίδας αἰσχρόν τούτο γε καὶ ἡ γε φιλοσοφία καὶ ἡ φιλογυμναστία: οὐ γὰρ οἶμαι συμφέρει τοῖς ἀρχονσι φρονήματα μεγάλα ἑγγίγνεσθαι τῶν ἀρχομένων, οὐδὲ φιλίας ἱσχυρὰς καὶ κοινωνίας, ὃ δὴ μάλιστα φιλεῖ τὰ τε ἄλλα πάντα καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐμποιεῖν. }^{132}
\]

For this thing (*eros*) is shameful to barbarians, because of those tyrannies, and both philosophy and love of exercise. For, I suppose, it is not useful for the rulers that great ideas arise among their subjects, nor strong friendship and partnerships and all those other things which *eros* loves to create.

Like Phaedrus, Pausanias has depicted *philia* as the relationship (φιλίας ἱσχυρὰς) that arises from *eros*. The words *philosophia* and *philogumnastia* both carry the phil- prefix since both represent social acts; philosophy and exercise are both activities that must be done within a group.

This interpretation of *philia* comes through in the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton:

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132 *Symposium*, 182b7-c4
ὁ γὰρ Ἀριστογείτονος ἔρως καὶ Ἡρμοδίου φιλία βέβαιος γενομένη
cατέλυσεν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν.133

For the *eros* of Aristogeiton and the *philia* of Harmodius, having become steadfast, loosened their (the tyrants’) power.

Here, Pausanias reveals the mechanics of how the *erastes/eromenos* relationship is the vehicle for obtaining the desires of *eros*. In this example, the *erastes*, Aristogeiton, has sought the relationship (*philia*) with his *eromenos*, Harmodius. Pausanias is very clear in mentioning both of these aspects as the reason for the ultimate overthrow of the tyrant’s power, as the *eros* of Aristogeiton alone would not have been enough to accomplish the deed. Through the *philia* only obtainable for the *erastes* through a relationship with an *eromenos*, both were able to achieve the ultimate goal of immortality of name.

While this example shows the positive outcome of such a relationship, this is not the only result, as all behaviors are judged by one’s peers. This is explored in more detail as Pausanias claims that an *erastes* acting in an improper manner “would be prevented from performing such an act both by friends and by enemies (ἐμποδίζοιτο ἂν μὴ πραττειν οὗτω τὴν πράξειν καὶ ὑπὸ φίλων καὶ ὑπὸ ἕχθρων).”134 Here, the relationship is twofold, as the *erastes* has a responsibility both to those with whom he has a good relationship (his friends) and those with whom he does not (his enemies), as each group is part of the larger society as a whole. Even though the outcome earns the *erastes* reproach, the fact remains that he had to engage in a social interaction in order to attempt to achieve immortality of name through the *erastes/eromenos* relationship.

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133 *Symposium*, 182c5-7
134 *Symposium*, 183a7-8
Pausanias provides an example of this type of immortality of name as he says that such a goal of the erastes/eromenos relationship could be “wishing to obtain money from anyone or to hold office or gain any other power (εἰ γὰρ ἡ χρήματα βουλόμενος παρὰ τὸν λαβεῖν ἢ ἀρχήν ἢ τίνα ἄλλην δύναμιν).”\(^{135}\) Again, power, receiving money from another, and holding office are all goals that require society and a certain type of relationship within that society. Eros seeks these goals, and only can achieve them through the relationship involved with philia.

Eryximachus, although straying from the themes of the speeches of Phaedrus and Pausanias with his excursion into medicine, also uses philia in this manner. One such instance occurs during his explanation of the role of the physician:

\[\text{δεῖ γὰρ δὴ τὰ ἔχθιστα ὑπὸ τὸν ἁρ rtc σώματι φίλα ὀἶνος τὸ εἶναι ποιεῖν καὶ ἐρᾶν ἄλληλαν.}^{136}\]

For indeed it is necessary that he (eros) make the things which are most hateful in the body friends.

In his speech, Eryximachus has identified the goal of eros as harmony within the body. Here, he has described the manner in which eros achieves that harmony: balancing the most extreme of opposites. He lists these opposites as hot and cold, bitter and sweet, and dry and wet. The key to understanding this operation is the word used to describe the outcome, φίλα. Eryximachus is saying that the things that were once the most opposite have engaged in a social relationship, through philia, and through this relationship eros is able to achieve its ultimate goal of harmony. This description, although based in

\(^{135}\) Symposium, 183a2-3
\(^{136}\) Symposium, 186d5-6
medicine and science, follows the exact same pattern as the previous speeches: *eros* partakes of *philia* in order to achieve its goal.

He continues this line of thought as he describes how *eros* is able to bring to humans the greatest fortune:

...δὲ περὶ τάγαθα μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀποτελούμενος καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν καὶ παρὰ θεοῖς οὕτος τὴν μεγίστην δύναμιν ἔχει καὶ πᾶσαν ἡμῖν εὐδαιμονίαν παρασκευάζει καὶ ἀλλήλοις δυναμένους ὁμιλεῖν καὶ φίλους εἶναι καὶ τοῖς κρειττοσιν ἠμῶν θεοῖς.

...but the one (*eros*) which is completed for the good with moderation and justice both among us and for the gods, this one has the greatest power and provides for us all *good fortune* and being able to associate with each other and have *philia* even with the gods stronger than us.

Once again, *eros* is depicted as requiring the relationship of *philia* in order to achieve its goal. In this example, that goal is the good (*τάγαθα*), something which is a recurring aim of *eros* throughout the work. Eryximachus states that the good is acquired through moderation and justice “both among us and for the gods.” This is simply a description of *philia*, as through this relationship *eros* is able to obtain the good, along with power.

Likewise, humans, specifically *erastai* who partake of *eros*, are able to obtain the same good (*good fortune* (*εὐδαιμονίαν*)) through a *philia* between humanity and the gods.

Here, as before, the ultimate goal of *eros* can only be achieved through the social relationship encompassed within *philia*.

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137 Symposium, 188d5-9
Aristophanes takes these three previous contexts of *philia* and applies them to his own creation myth, in which he explains the origin of both *eros* and mankind. As previously stated, Aristophanes explains *eros* as being the desire of the whole and the search for one’s literal other half. This is accomplished through procreation, an act that requires *philia* through the *erastes/eromenos* relationship.

He goes on to explain this phenomenon through his creation myth, as Zeus cuts these progenitor humans in two for their licentious behavior in attempting to overthrow the gods. The inherent problem in this splitting is that these humans have backwards genitals and therefore cannot procreate. Pitying them, Zeus “changes their genitals to the front, for until this they had these on the outside, and they both beget and bear not into each other but into the earth, just as cicadas (καὶ μετατίθησιν αὐτῶν τὰ αἴδοια εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν—τέως γὰρ καὶ ταύτα ἐκτὸς εἶχον, καὶ ἐγέννων καὶ ἐτικτον ὁυκ εἰς ἀλλήλους ἀλλ’ εἰς γῆν, ὅσπερ οἱ τέττιγες).” By changing the genitals to the front, Zeus “made procreation in each other (τὴν γένεσιν ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἐποίησεν),” thus making procreation one of the possible outcomes of sexuality between men and women.

As previously mentioned, Aristophanes describes how Hephaestus introduced mankind to *eros* through the *erastes/eromenos* relationship. In doing so, he also provided them with the ability to have desires of the soul, rather than the body, which led to the desire, through *eros*, of procreation. According to our baseline, however, *philia* must be involved in order for this procreation to lead to the ultimate goal of immortality. This

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138 Symposium, 191b6-c2
139 Symposium, 191c3
type of immortality will be described in detail by Diotima as being an act through which mankind is able to keep his family name and honor alive through all time.

Like the previous speakers, he describes this through the exact same formula of *eros* leading to *philia* which leads to immortality. He does this through his description of those who procreate, which he calls “woman-lovers (φιλογυνακες)”\(^{140}\) and “man-lovers (φιλανδροι),”\(^{141}\) depending on whether they are women seeking men or men seeking women. The goal of either type of lover, however, is again procreation. Aristophanes explicitly makes this claim by saying that “if a man might meet with a woman, they might beget and be a family (ει ἄνηρ γυναικι ἐντύχοι, γεννώεν και γίγνοιτο τὸ γένος).”\(^{142}\) This provides justification for the presence of the *phil-* prefix, which we have seen before. The immortality Aristophanes is describing can only be achieved through the social relationship between both the *erastes* and *eromenos*, which encourages contemplation of the future and desires of the soul, and between the *erastes* and society as whole. This second aspect is critical, as procreation is a social symbol which allows society to deem one worthy of praise due to one’s fertility and production of offspring. Without the social interaction between *erastes* and society through *philia*, there would be no such praise and, therefore, no immortality of name and race. Like those before him, Aristophanes is drawing upon the same global idea of *philia* as the social relationship that leads to obtainment of the goals of *eros*, in order to create his argument. This unifies his speech to the *Symposium* as a whole, where otherwise it may have seemed unrelated due to his fantastic content.

\(^{140}\) *Symposium*, 191d7  
\(^{141}\) *Symposium*, 191e1  
\(^{142}\) *Symposium*, 191c5-6
Agathon, in his attempt at rhetorical manipulation, incorporates aspects of each of the previous speakers into his own encomium of eros. One such aspect is the same concept of philia as the path of eros towards its object. This object proves to be the familiar goal of balance and harmony, which Eryximachus introduced in his speech. This can be seen through his description of eros as the ruler of the gods:

οὐ γὰρ ἀν ἐκτομαί οὐδὲ δεσμοὶ ἄλληλων ἐγίγνοντο καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ καὶ βίαια, εἰ Ἐρως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἦν, ἄλλα φιλία καὶ εἰρήνη, ὥσπερ νῦν, ἐξ οὗ Ἐρως τῶν θεῶν βασιλεύει.143

For there would have been no cutting nor fettering of each other nor many other violent things, if eros was among them (the gods), but friendship and peace, as now, from the time when eros rules over the gods.

Here, Agathon has equated the goal of eros to peace among the gods. The role of philia is again marked as being the path through which the goals of eros are achieved. Agathon demonstrates this through a clever rearrangement of Hesiod’s Theogony. Agathon claims that the violent acts of cutting and fettering were done before eros was ruler of the gods. This absolves eros of responsibility and paves the way for the ultimate goal of peace. In terms of philia, Agathon’s rearrangement of the creation myth is, in fact, a rearrangement of philia, as he is manipulating the relationship eros has to the rest of the gods. By making eros ruler, whereas before he was not, Agathon has enabled his eros to create peace through the newly formed relationships.

This understanding does not exactly match those of the prior speakers, since Agathon has decided to “praise eros first for what sort he is, then for his gifts (πρῶτον

143 Symposium, 195c4-6
In claiming this, Agathon has announced his intention to speak of *eros* as the personified god, while omitting his relationship to mankind. And yet, even with this change in *parole*, Agathon still adheres to the conceptualization of *philia* as the relationship through which *eros* obtains its desires. Through creating *philia* among the other gods, *eros* is able to create peace. Again, it is only through the *philia* that such an arrangement is possible. Therefore, the *langue* of *philia* from which Agathon creates his speech is the same fundamental principle as that of the earlier speakers, thus connecting the *philia* of Agathon to the baseline of *philia* throughout the *Symposium*.

The last speaker to address the role of *philia* in terms of *eros* is Socrates. Through Diotima, he addresses several of the previous speakers and their contexts of *philia*, and applies these to a new context. For example, Diotima elaborates on the path to immortality, something first alluded to by each of the previous speakers. She claims that all men are driven by "a zeal and *eros* to follow immortality (ἀθανασίας...ἡ σπουδή καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἔπεται)." With this, immortality is explicitly declared the ultimate goal of *eros*, and thus justifies our interpretation of the previous speeches. She then clarifies what the previous speakers had claimed by saying that all one needs to do to understand this concept is to "look at the ambition of men (τῶν ἀνθρώπων...τὴν φιλοτιμίαν βλέψαι)." This is a direct reference back to the speech of Phaedrus, who also spoke of the ambition of men.

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144 *Symposium*, 195a4-5
145 *Symposium*, 208b5-6
146 *Symposium*, 208c2-3
Diotima has simply taken the argument of the previous speakers and brought it to its logical conclusion, making immortality the goal of *eros*. Once again, *philia* is associated with the concept that leads to immortality (ambition). She continues this line of reasoning in the summary of her argument, in which she claims the proper *erastes* is the one who is “bringing forth and nourishing true virtue he begins to become dear to the gods, and he above all other men is immortal (τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετήν ἀληθῆ καὶ θερψαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι, καὶ εἴπερ τῷ ἀλλῳ ἀνθρώπῳ ἄθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ).” Here, Diotima has explicitly stated that in order to achieve procreation, a goal of *eros*, the *erastes* creates a relationship with the immortal, since he is seeking immortality. Again, the emphasis is placed on the relationship as through *philia*, the *erastes* is able to achieve his ultimate goal.

The importance of setting this baseline for *philia* cannot be overemphasized, as *philia* must be understood in this manner in order to make relevant comparisons to *eros*. Both words are locked in a complex relationship that can only be unpacked through comparison of the differences against the baseline of similarities. Even though each of the speakers is applying *philia* in a different way, they are all drawing upon a similar concept of how *philia* must function in any context. This is the *langue* of *philia*, which is equally important to the *langue* of *eros*. Through the individual *parole*, we are able to draw a clear picture of the *langue*. In this case, *philia* is always portrayed as the pathway to obtaining the goals of *eros*. This baseline lays the foundation for understanding exactly how this relationship works, and why it is important in distinguishing *epithumia*, *eros*, and *philia* from one another.

147 *Symposium*, 212a5-7
Section G: *Epithumia is desire of the body*

The last of the three words in our evolving paradigm is *epithumia*. This term is used across the *Symposium* in a variety of ways, appearing in the same contexts as *eros* and even *philia*. For this reason, it must be considered both distinct and important within the relationship of all three words. Whereas *eros* is the associated with desires of the body and soul, *epithumia* is on associated with desires of the body. This sets up a hierarchy of whereby *eros* is able to draw upon *epithumia* in order to obtain more lofty objects, such as the immortality gained through *philia*. In order to approach this evolving hierarchy, we must first address the nature of *epithumia*.

Within the text, *epithumia* does not appear until the speech of Eryximachus. Nevertheless, we can still draw a baseline of similarity using the contexts in which it appears in the last five speeches. Even though Phaedrus and Pausanias do not use the term, this does not mean that they would deviate from the common conceptualization if they had. This ambiguity, though not useful for advancing our methodology, certainly does not obstruct it either. Therefore, the integrity of our methodology is still intact and we can use it to ascertain the true nature of *epithumia*.

Not only is Eryximachus the first to use *epithumia* and its family of cognates, but he is also the first to distinguish between *epithumia* and *eros*. The reason for this is telling, as Phaedrus and Pausanias have focused their speech on the desires of the soul through the *erastes/eromenos* relationship. *Epithumia*, as desire of the body, had no place within this context and therefore is absent. Eryximachus broadens the dialectic to include
the desires of bodies, including both humans and animals. This paves the way for
Socrates later to expand his encomium of eros to include all of reality through the forms.

Eryximachus makes the first mention of epithumia through its cognate verb
epithumeo and does this in terms of similar and dissimilar things within the human body.
He claims “the dissimilar desires and desires dissimilar things (τὸ δὲ ἀνόμοιον
ἀνομοίων ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἐποὶ).”^148 As we established previously, our methodology
allows for cognate verbs to fulfill the same role in our paradigm as their cognate nouns
since they adhere to the same qualities within our baseline. According to Saussure, in
Eryximachus’ claim the two verbs, epithumeo and erao, must be different since sign
systems allow for overlap, but not redundancy. Having established that there is a
difference, Eryximachus then provides clues as to the type of desire encapsulated within
epithumia. He does this by claiming, “just as in our craft great importance is made of the
right use for enjoying epithumia concerning cookery (ὁσπερ ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ τέχνῃ
μέγα ἐργον ταῖς περὶ τὴν ὀψοποιικήν τέχνην ἐπιθυμίαις καλὸς χρησθαι).”^149

Here, the type of desire associated with food is not eros, but epithumia. This is a
deliberate choice by Eryximachus. Since we know that eros is used for seeking desires
that require social relationships, it seems appropriate that it would not appear in this
context, since the act of eating does not require any such social aspect. In this passage,
epithumia seems to be desire of the body, not the soul. This difference is valuable within
our study since Plato was one of the first to make the distinction between body and soul
as two separate concepts.

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148 Symposium, 186b6-7
149 Symposium, 187e3-5
In terms of thematic context, Eryimachus is attempting to describe harmony of opposing forces: body versus soul. This is reflected through his original claim, “the dissimilar desires and desires dissimilar things (τὸ δὲ ἀνόμιον ἀνομοίων ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἔρα).” These dissimilar things include sickness and health, fullness and emptiness, hot and cold, bitter and sweet, dry and wet. By using these comparisons, Eryximachus is attempting to prove that *eros* acts as the mediating factor providing balance within the body and soul. If *eros* is desire of the soul, then its opposite must be desire of the body, which explains the presence of *epithumia*. As we will see later, *eros* is able to function in this manner because there is an overlap of meaning in which *eros* can actually encompass desires of both body and soul, whereas *epithumia* is only the body. For the moment, the overall function of *epithumia* as bodily desire is unclear. Eryximachus has only hinted at its function by describing it as residing within the body, encompassing bodily functions (such as eating), and being the opposite of *eros*. Although limited, Eryximachus’ speech is instrumental in establishing our foundation of similarity as the following speakers will expand upon these basic ideas.

While Eryximachus introduced some of the characteristics of *epithumia*, Aristophanes will advance the notion even further. He begins by making a joke at the expense of Eryximachus. Earlier in the dialogue, Aristophanes fell victim to a fit of hiccups, and was not able to proceed with his speech. Eryximachus then takes his place, altering the order of speakers. This is a significant change, as, thematically, Aristophanes’ speech could only come after that of Eryximachus, based upon the content. Aristophanes has finished hiccupping after Eryximachus’ speech and jokes that he now wonders if “the

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150 *Symposium*, 186b6-7
balance of the body desires such noises and ticklings (τὸ κόσμιον τοῦ σώματος ἐπιθυμεῖ τοιοῦτων ψόφων καὶ γαργαλισμῶν).”\(^{151}\) While he is, of course, referring to his own bout of hiccups, we should notice how he uses epithumeo, not erao, to describe the desire of such bodily functions. This expands upon the concept Eryximachus proposed in which epithumia is the term for desires of the body, such as food.

Aristophanes continues this use of epithumia for desires of the body and expands upon it with his creation myth of eros. In describing the original humans he claims they were “desiring to grow together (ἐπιθυμοῦντες συμφύναι).”\(^{152}\) This is telling, since contextually he is describing the original humans seeking sexual contact. Although eros was also involved in sexual activity, it carried the context of sex for the sake of procreation, a process which we established involved a social relationship. Here epithumia is involved simply in the merging of bodies, with no indication of any ongoing connection beyond the act of sex. Since eros is notably absent from the syntax, we can assume that this type of relationship is not that of the erastes/eromenos. In this way, the sexual contact Aristophanes is describing cannot have the desire for procreation (a desire of the soul), which requires a social aspect in order to obtain the future goal of immortality. Like the hiccups comment, Aristophanes has used epithumia in the context of merging bodies, not souls.

Epithumia appears in this same context once more as Hephaestus asks the humans:

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\(^{151}\) Symposium, 189a3-4

\(^{152}\) Symposium, 191a8
ἀρά γε τούδε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὡς μᾶλις ἀλλήλοις ὧστε καὶ νύκτα καὶ ἕμεραν μὴ ἀπολείπεσθαι ἀλλήλων;¹⁵³

Do you desire this, to be together as much as possible for each other, so as not to be left behind from each other both by night and day?

Again, the “being together” that Hephaestus is referring to is simply the joining together of bodies, not souls. Aristophanes explicitly describes this sort of desire in the previous line as he says “but clearly the soul of each is wishing for something else, that it is not able to say (ἄλλ᾽ ἀλλο τι βουλομένη ἐκατέρου ἡ ψυχή δῆλη ἔστιν, ὁ οὐ δύναται εἰπεῖν).”¹⁵⁴ Aristophanes has distinguished the soul as not being part of epithumia, thus justifying our earlier baseline of eros. These early humans are acting solely upon the desire of epithumia, as they have not yet learned about the erastes/eromenos relationship that would allow for the soul to express its desire through eros.

This dichotomy between eros and epithumia is clear as Hephaestus says:

ἀρά γε τούδε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὡς μᾶλις ἀλλήλοις, ὧστε καὶ νύκτα καὶ ἕμεραν μὴ ἀπολείπεσθαι ἀλλήλων; εἴ γάρ τοῦτον ἐπιθυμεῖτε, θέλω ὑμᾶς συντήξαι καὶ συμφυσῆσαι εἰς τὸ αὐτό, ὥστε δὺ ὅντας ἑνα γεγονέναι καὶ ἑως τ’ ἄν ζήτε, ὡς ἑνα ὅντα, κοινὴ ἀμφιτέρους ζήν, καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἀποθάνητε, ἐκεῖ αὐ ἐν Αἰδοῦ ἀντὶ δυοίν ἑνα εἰναι κοινη τεθνεάτε.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Symposium, 192d5-8
¹⁵⁴ Symposium, 192c7-d1
¹⁵⁵ Symposium, 192d5-e4
Do you desire of this, to be together as much as possible for each other, so far as not to be left of each other both by night and day? For if you desire this, I am willing to fuse and weld you together, as the two become one and as long as you might live, being as one, both living in common, and when you die there also in Hades to be one instead of two.

With this, Hephaestus has explained a new relationship in which, instead of desiring just sexual pleasure, the two partners would be together forever, caring for each other even through death. This is something markedly different from his previous offer of simply fusing bodies together. The relationship he has proposed now is that of the erastes and eromenos. This becomes more explicit, as in the next line Hephaestus says:

\[
\text{ἀλλ᾽ ὃ ἔρατε εἴ τοῦτον ἔρατε καὶ ἔξαρκεῖ ὑμῖν ἂν τοῦτον τύχητε.}\]

But consider whether you desire this and whether it is sufficient for you if you should obtain this.

Hephaestus has shifted his verb choice from epithumeo to erao and in doing so has indicated the presence of the erastes/eromenos relationship. At this point, Aristophanes claims:

\[
\ldots\text{ἀλλ᾽ ἀτεχνῶς οἶοιτ ἂν ἀκηκοόναι τοῦτο δ ἡλαὶ ἄρα ἐπεθύμει, συνελθὼν καὶ συντακεῖς τῶ ἐρωμένω ἐκ δυοῖν εἰς γενέσθαι.}\]

\ldots but he (the human) would simply think he had heard that which he was desiring all along, joining and fusing with his eromenos to be made one from two.

Aristophanes introduces the term eromenos, making it clear that the human has learned of a relationship beyond simply sexual contact. This is also a reference back to the comment

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156 Symposium, 192e4-5
157 Symposium, 192e7-9
of the soul not knowing what it wanted. Having heard Hephaestus’ offer, the human now has been given the description of “that which he was desiring all along,” a direct reference to the longing of the soul. In this sense, the soul wants the erastes/eromenos relationship, which, fittingly, includes the desires of the soul. The implication is clear: before Hephaestus’ offer, these humans were simply partaking in desire of the body through epithumia.

Epithumia as the desire of bodies rather than souls is also expressed through the speech of Agathon, although in a very different manner. Epithumia appears in a context that, at first glance, seems disconnected from the baseline that was created by Eryximachus and Pausanias. Agathon claims that “Apollo invented archery and medicine and prophesy, with desire and eros taking the lead (τοξικήν γε μήν καὶ ἰατρικήν καὶ μαντικήν Ἀπόλλων ἀνηρόν ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ἔρωτος ἧγεμονεύσαντος).”158 This statement requires some interpretation in order to understand the point Agathon is making. He has associated epithumia and eros as sharing a similar, yet distinct, function (leading Apollo to invent archery). On the surface, we are not entirely sure how eros, desires of the soul, and epithumia, desires of the body, can both lead to the creation of these crafts of Apollo. When we think in terms of what baselines have already been established, and interpret the passage through the larger context surrounding it, a clearer picture emerges.

First, we must look at how Agathon envisions epithumia and eros in relation to one another. In comparing the two he says:

158 Symposium, 197a6-7
πρὸς δὲ τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σωφροσύνης πλείστης μετέχει. εἶναι γὰρ
ὁμολογεῖται σωφροσύνη τὸ κρατεῖν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμίων. Ἕρωτος δὲ
μηδεμίαν ἡδονὴν κρεῖττω εἶναι. 159

He (erōs) partakes in addition to justice of the most moderation. For moderation is
agreed to be the mastering of pleasures and desires, but no pleasure is stronger
than erōs.

Here Agathon has equated epiθumia to hedone, a pleasure associated with the body. In
making this comparison, Agathon is making epithumia the desire of the body rather than
the soul. Within our baseline this makes sense, as erōs encompasses both desires of the
body and the soul. Agathon acknowledges this dual aspect of erōs, by explicitly saying it
is the master of epithumia, through its connection to moderation (σωφροσύνη).

Σωφροσύνη carries an association with the mind, as soundness of mind is equivalent to
the self-awareness to be moderate. It is, therefore, logical that erōs, involving the soul, is
equated with σωφροσύνη, involving the mind. Both are being separated from epithumia
and its desires of only the body.

This connotation of erōs as moderation is a reference to Eryximachus’ association
of erōs with balance and harmony. Both descriptions place erōs within an elevated role as
the moderator of lesser desires and pleasures. We may now return to Agathon’s
description of erōs as the teacher of skills to the gods. In his description of erōs as
creator, Agathon returns to the notion of erōs as that which leads to social relationships,
through philia:

159 Symposium, 196c3-6
...ὅτι οὐ μὲν ἄν ὁ θεός οὗτος διδάσκαλος γένηται, ἔλλογιμος καὶ φανός ἀπέβη, οὐ δὲ Ὅρως μὴ ἐφαψηται, σκοτεινός.¹⁶⁰

...he of whom this god (eros) becomes a teacher, he turns out notable and conspicuous, but whom eros does not touch, turns out obscure.

These terms, notable (ἐλλόγιμος), conspicuous (φανός) and obscure (σκοτεινός), are all references to social standing. This is the same argument of eros seeking social relationships and immortality; Agathon is describing what Diotima will call immortality through name. By being touched by eros one gains the acclaim and glory of society and, therefore, immortality.

In terms of the skills of the gods, we can apply this same relationship between eros and epithumia. Again, Agathon claims that the gods learned their skills “with epithumia and eros taking the lead (ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ἔρωτος ἡγεμονεύσαντος). The word order within the syntax is reflection of the relationship between the two words. Epithumia is mentioned first, as it is the desire of the body, or the desire that does not have a social relationship through philia. In this sense, the gods, before eros, are echoes of the humans Aristophanes described: they may desire something else (through the soul) but without eros have no way of obtaining these goals. Eros as the master of epithumia is mentioned second, as it is the term that incorporates social relationships through philia. With eros taking the lead, the gods now have the means to achieve social relationships. Since Agathon is personifying eros as an actual being or deity, the relationship that leads to creation of skills is between eros, the teacher, and the individual god, the student.

Agathon makes this clear in the case of Apollo by saying “so that also this god (Apollo)

¹⁶⁰ Symposium, 197a4-6
would be a student of *eros* (ὡστε καὶ οὖν ἔρωτος ἂν εἰη μαθητής). Through *eros*, Apollo has achieved the social relationship necessary to create his skills. This relationship is between himself and the personified *eros*. If we now assess the entire context as a whole, *epithumia* plays the role of desire of the body, while *eros* represents desire of the soul which is accomplished through social relationships.

With so many interpretations of a similar baseline, Socrates takes the initiative to present a correction to the previous speeches. In terms of *epithumia*, he will agree that it is desire of the body, but he will modify the context in which it is used. He begins by questioning Agathon on exactly what someone does and does not desire, saying:

\[
ei \gamma \alpha \rho \text{ καὶ } \iota \sigma \chi \nu \rho \omicron \omicron \zeta \text{ ὃν } \beta \omega \lambda \lambda \omicron \iota \tau \iota \omicron \omicron \omicron \tau \omicron \iota \omicron \nu \iota \iota \epsilon \text{ καὶ } \tau \alpha \chi \nu \zeta \\text{ ὃν } \tau \alpha \chi \nu \zeta, \text{ καὶ}
\]

\[
\upsilon \gamma \iota \zeta \zeta \text{ ὃν } \upsilon \gamma \iota \zeta \zeta—\iota \omega \zeta \text{ γάρ } \acute{\alpha} \nu \tau \iota \varsigma \text{ ταύτα } \iota \iota \theta \theta \epsilon \iota \iota \iota \text{ καὶ } \pi \alpha \nomicron \varsigma \tau \alpha \iota \varsigma \tau \alpha \iota \varsigma \text{ ταύτα } \tau \upsilon \tau \upsilon \omega \nu \alpha \pi \epsilon \acute{\alpha} \rho \acute{\epsilon} \chi \omicron \omicron \text{ καὶ}
\]

\[
\epsilon \pi \iota \theta \omicron \omicron \omicron \epsilon \iota \iota \iota \omicron \omicron \zeta\ldots
\]

For if being strong he wished to be strong, and being swift to be swift, and being healthy to be healthy—for perhaps someone might think in these and things of such a kind, that those who both are such and have those also desire those things which they have…

Here, Socrates has explicitly listed the objects of *epithumeo* as strength (*ισχυρός*), swiftness (*ταχύς*), and health (*υγιής*). These objects are directly related to the physical body, as opposed to the soul. Therefore, the use of *epithumeo* is justified.

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161 *Symposium*, 196b1  
162 *Symposium*, 200b9-c2
As he begins the story of his encounter with Diotima, Socrates shifts to a more philosophical argument of desire. Although the theme of the usage has changed, the contexts still follow the pattern of *epithumia* representing desires of the body. For instance, in her discussion on procreation, Diotima begins by saying:

κυοῦσιν γὰρ, ὦ Σώκρατε, πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχήν, καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἐν τινὶ ἡλικίᾳ γένωνται, τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡμῶν ἡ φύσις.\(^{163}\)

For all men are pregnant, Socrates, both within the body and within the soul, and upon reaching a certain age, our nature desires to beget.

With this, Diotima has claimed the same dichotomy between body and soul that distinguishes *epithumia* and *eros*. The verb she uses to describe this type of desire is *epithumeo*, which we associate with the desire of the body that does not carry the social relationship that leads to immortality of the soul. At this point, however, it is not explicitly stated whether *epithumeo* is referring to the body or the soul.

To ascertain the use of *epithumeo*, we must look at the entire context. What Diotima is describing is the biological state of a human male upon entering puberty. This is justified by her use of the temporal marker “upon reaching a certain age.” By forming her syntax in this manner, Diotima is making age the causal agent of the desire. This age is related to the body, not soul, through the biological process of puberty. This is reflected through her use of “nature (φύσις),” which in this case is being used in the biological sense of bodily processes. These markers all point to the desire being felt for procreation being that of biological instinct of the body, rather than the more conscious desire of the

\(^{163}\) Symposium, 206c1-4
soul. Therefore, the use of *epithumeo* is justified, as it relates to a sexual encounter that lacks *eros* and does not include the more permanent and lasting relationship of an *erastes* and *eromenos*.

This context appears again as Diotima claims:

\[ ἢ ὁ ὑκ αἰσθάνη ὡς δεινῶς διατίθεται πάντα τὰ θηρία ἐπειδὰν γεννάν ἔπιθυμησθη...νοσοῦντα τε πάντα καὶ ἐρωτικῶς διατιθέμενα, πρῶτον μὲν περὶ τὸ συμμιγνημ αἰλλήλοις, ἐπειτὰ περὶ τὴν τροφὴν τοῦ γενομένου...^{164} \]

For you must have observed the terrible state into which animals are thrown whenever they should desire to beget...all are sick and erotically disposed, first concerning the intermingling with each other, then concerning the raising of their offspring...

Once again, *epithumia*, through *epithumeo*, is being used in a linear progression with *eros*, through *erotica*. To explain the use of both we must follow the chronology Diotima has created. First, they desire (*epithumeo*) sexual intercourse. She describes this encounter with *συμμιγνημα*, or intermingling, which relates back to Aristophanes’ speech in which sexual activity is described as “intertwining (*συνεπλέκετο*)”,^{165} or a literal fusion of bodies. It is not until *eros* is introduced, through the idea of being “erotically disposed,” that the animals then turn towards raising their offspring. She then goes on equate this erotic disposition with the rearing of offspring and sacrificing for the sake of others, all of which lead to the same immortality that humans seek. This is

^{164} *Symposium*, 207a7-b2

^{165} *Symposium*, 191b3
reminiscent of each of the previous speakers, especially Phaedrus and his account of Alcestis.

By ordering her words in this manner, Diotima is equating *epithumia* with the desire of sexual contact through bodies, and *eros* with the social relationship that leads to immortality. This is a play on the formula of body versus soul, with *epithumia* once again encompassing desires specifically of the body with no sense of any future aspect or goals beyond the body. These desires do not incorporate any social values or relationships, and therefore have no reference to *philia*. Even though Diotima has expanded her theme to a higher level of philosophical discourse and imagery, at the core of her words lies the same principles that describe the fundamental essence of *epithumia* and its relationship to *eros*.

Taken as a whole, these contexts, while different, provide a baseline for understanding *epithumia*. We are now developing an understanding of *epithumia* in which it encompasses desires that lack the relationship to society that would allow for social praise and, thus, immortality. These types of desires, at least in the context of the *Symposium*, tend to encompass desires of the body, rather than the soul. While this need not necessarily be taken in the strictest sense, it does provide a useful foundation for future interpretation. The main aspect for our purposes is the lack of the type of interpersonal relationship described by *philia*. This is because the one who partakes of *epithumia* does not partake of *eros* and, therefore, cannot have an *erastes/eromenos* relationship. We now have a complete set of similarities for *eros, epithumia, and philia* and are in a better position to begin evaluating them on the basis of differences. The foundational concept of *epithumia* points to its position on the bottom rung of the
emerging progression from desire of the body, to desire of the soul, to desire of immortality. This hierarchy marks *epithumia* as being related, yet distinct from *eros*, while still justifying its relationship within the paradigm. Now that the similarities have been established, we can begin analyzing the differences that distinguish each term from the others. In doing so we will be able to compare the similarities in differences in order to understand *eros*, and its meaning within the *Symposium*, in the most thorough way possible.
Chapter 3: Deviation from the Baseline through Parole

The similarities in use of *eros, epithumia*, and *philia* across the speeches provide us with a baseline of how each speaker conceives of the nature of *eros* and its use within any given context. While this baseline serves as a useful foundation, a complete picture of *eros* within the *Symposium* can be revealed only through the analysis of contexts in which its use and meaning depart from or elaborate on the established baseline. In terms of our methodology, these deviations show where the speaker has taken the global *langue* of *eros* and used it in a modified manner. This is possible due to the open system of language, in which a speaker can introduce new words or modify the meanings of existing ones in order to expand the richness of vocabulary. The same methodology must be applied to *epithumia* and *philia*, since both play crucial roles within the paradigm. *Epithumia* provides a second word that carries the general meaning of desire and therefore provides a point of comparison against *eros*. The features of this type of desire along with the objects it takes has begun to emerge through our baseline discussion, but will become apparent through analysis of different, individualized usages. *Philia*, while not a word for desire, must be analyzed nonetheless as it refers to the social relationship that brings about obtaining the objects of *eros*. We cannot appreciate how *eros* truly functions, or at least the way in which the speakers use it, unless we can explain its relationship to both *epithumia* and *philia* through analysis of the speaker’s *parole*.
Whenever a speaker within the Symposium introduces a new context of eros that is distinct from the common baseline, they are modifying the global concept of eros, its langue, and expressing that modified notion through individualized parole. This is the nature of their encomia on eros, as each speaker must take the global concept and modify it in order to distinguish his own speech from the one prior. This is justified by claiming that he knows the actual truth, while his predecessor(s) did not. In other words, each speaker draws upon the langue of eros, adapts its meaning through his parole, and in doing so attempts to persuade others in order to change the shared langue. This cyclical pattern is a key to understanding eros within the Symposium, and it becomes clear once the divergent uses are isolated and compared against the baseline of similarity. Our methodology demands that signifiers within sign systems offer the possibility of overlap, but not redundancy. Each context that deviates from the baseline provides an opportunity to isolate differences of meaning within our paradigm. At the end of our survey, it will become increasingly clear that the relationship among these three words is more complex than can be expressed through simple English equivalents. The uses of epithumia, eros, and philia overlap in a manner that produces a linear progression from epithumia to eros to philia. Creating a model of this progression that distinguishes the different uses into several fundamental categories will guide our understanding of the entire paradigm.

Section A: Eros is self-predicative

While our commonalities establish the grammatical objects of eros, specifically the taking of an objective genitive, they do not address what types of verbs eros makes use of in order to perform actions. Given the role of eros as a signifier of desire, we need
to specifically address contexts in which it acts as the subject of a desiring verb. Taking this approach, the first significant piece of data that emerges is that *eros* can act as the subject of its cognate verb *erao*, thus making *eros* self-predicative.

While the verb *erao* is common throughout the text, instances of *eros* operating as its subject are rarer. The reason for this has to do with the nature of each speech. As Agathon says, the first five speakers were not praising *eros*, but praising his works and gifts for mankind. Agathon then claims that he will be the first to speak of the nature of *eros* as distinct from its works. Although Agathon will not actually use *eros* as the subject of *erao*, his statement paves the way for Socrates to do so. By attempting to explain the nature of *eros*, rather than its works, Agathon introduces the concept of a personified *eros* which performs actions and therefore can operate as the subject of a verb rather than an object. For this reason, instances of *eros* as the subject of *erao* prior to Socrates amount to only one context, which is indirect.

Surprisingly, this first context occurs within the speech of Eryximachus. At the beginning of his speech, he takes the moral ambiguity of *eros*, first established by Phaedrus and Pausanias, and equates it to sickness and health within the human body. These opposites, he claims are actually two sides of the same phenomenon, *eros*, which he equates to that which is “dissimilar (τὸ ἀνόμοιον).”\(^{166}\) Then, he continues this line of thought by claiming:

\[\ldots 
\text{τὸ δὲ ἀνόμοιον ἀνομοίων ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἔρα.}\(^{167}\)

\[\ldots \text{that which is dissimilar desires and desires dissimilar things.}\]

\(^{166}\) *Symposium*, 186b6

\(^{167}\) *Symposium*, 186b6-7
Since he has established that the “dissimilar” is functioning as a stand-in for *eros*, Eryximachus is indirectly claiming that *eros* functions as the subject of *erao*. This is the first time that the personified *eros* is thought of as “desiring.” Also, Eryximachus has identified a difference between *eros* desiring through *erao* and desiring through *epithumeo*. This distinction will later be discussed in terms of the temporal nature of both verbs and will play a critical role in redefining our understanding of both *eros* and *epithumia*.

Whereas Eryximachus was indirect in his treatment of *eros* as the subject of *erao*, Socrates will make the construction explicit. In interrogating Agathon, Socrates addressed the problem of what exactly *eros* desires by asking:

\[
\pi\omicron\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu\;\dot{\epsilon}\chi\omega\nu\;\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\;\omicron\upsilon\;\dot{e}\pi\theta\nu\mu\epsilon\iota\;\tau\epsilon\;\kappa\alpha\iota\;\dot{\epsilon}\rho\dot{\alpha},\;\epsilon\iota\tau\alpha\;\dot{e}\pi\theta\nu\mu\epsilon\iota\;\tau\epsilon\;\dot{\epsilon}\rho\dot{\alpha},\;\eta
\]

And does he have that which he both desires and desires, when he both desires and desires, or does he not have it?

The subject of these verbs, “he,” is referring to *eros*, and therefore explicitly shows that *eros* can act as the subject of its cognate verb, *erao*. Later on, during the narrative of his lesson with Diotima, he uses this construction once more:

\[
\omicron\upsilon\;\dot{e}\nu\dot{d}e\acute{h}\acute{z}\;\dot{e}\sigma\tau\iota\;\kappa\alpha\iota\;\mu\eta\;\dot{e}\chi\acute{e}i,\;\tau\omicron\upomicron\tau\omicron\;\dot{e}\rho\acute{a}n;\]

that which he is in need and does not have, does he desire this?\(^{169}\)

Once again, the subject (“he”) is *eros* as Socrates is attempting to ascertain the true nature of *eros* through its behaviors. This is the same personification that Agathon introduced,

\(^{168}\) Symposium, 200a5-6

\(^{169}\) Symposium, 201b1-2
except that where Agathon avoided the issue of whether or not *eros* desires, Socrates makes it the focus of his argument.

These contexts reveal two main points of how *eros* operates as the subject of its cognate verb. First, they reaffirm our assertion that the cognate verb *erao* functions as a derivative of its cognate noun *eros* and follows the same baseline. The same will be shown for *epithumeo* and *phileo* in connection to *epithumia* and *philia*. In other words, just as *eros*, *epithumia*, and *philia* are related, yet distinct, as signifiers, so too are their verb forms. This explains why both Eryximachus and Socrates describe *eros* as being able to act both as the subject of *epithumeo* and of *erao*. This makes these verbs related, yet different, mimicking their cognate nouns. Second, if *erao* is used of the same type of desire as *eros*, then it too must represent desire of objects of the soul that require a social relationship, a concept established in our methodological baseline. When applied to Socrates’ contexts, the use of *erao* becomes clear, since in 204d5 the object of *erao* is beauty (ἐρᾷ ὁ ἐρῶν τῶν καλῶν), the same abstract concept that was established as requiring *philia*, since only through the judgment of society are objects deemed beautiful or not.

Likewise, Eryximachus equates *eros* to health, and health to beauty by claiming:

\[…οὔτω καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς σώμασιν τοῖς μὲν ἀγαθοῖς ἐκάστου τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἵπτεινοις καλῶν χαρίζεσθαι καὶ δεῖ…]\(^{170}\)

…thus in these bodies themselves it is noble and necessary to gratify the good and healthy of each body…

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\(^{170}\) *Symposium*, 186c1-3
This context relates to the morally ambiguous *eros*, which was the subject of *erao* in Eryximachus’ context. If gratification, as previously established, is the action of the *eromenos* towards the *erastes*, then Eryximachus is making it clear that the “noble (καλὸν)” and “good (ἀγαθοῖς)” are epithets for *eros*. Therefore, *eros* is once again seeking a goal that can only be achieved through a specific social relationship, and the verb describing that desire is *erao*. This implies that *erao* is used as a reflection of *eros*, in that it, too, is a description of desires distinct from *epithumia* and in need of *philia* to be brought to fruition. This explains the self-predicative nature of *eros*, as *erao* is simply the verbal representation of the same concept.

While there is less evidence in this analysis compared to the previous baseline of similarities, this is due to the speakers, not our methodology. The text is clear in stating that Socrates has the proper understanding of the self-predicative *eros* where his fellow symposiasts did not. This is reflected through his interrogation of Agathon in which he describes this new perspective of *eros*. In agreeing to every point Socrates makes, Agathon is acknowledging his mistake in the way he understood *eros* prior to Socrates. This explains the lack of evidence, as Socrates is following the pattern of our methodology. He is drawing upon the accepted *langue* which explains the *types* of objects *eros* is associated with, and then applying his own *parole* by interpreting how these objects are actually obtained. His answer lies in the self-predicative *eros: eros* desires certain objects through *erao*. Socrates then uses this new interpretation to persuade his audience of the validity of his claim, as reflected through the agreement of Agathon, and in doing so reshapes the agreed-upon *langue*. This explains why *eros* as self-predicative is not fully explained until Socrates, as each of the previous speakers was
not interpreting *eros* in the same manner as he was. Only through analysis of Socrates’ *parole* are we able to analyze a difference against which to compare our baseline of similarities. While the self-predicative nature of *eros* is implied by Eryximachus and Agathon, it is only explicitly stated by Socrates. This places it within the realm of Socrates’ *parole*; yet through comparison to the *langue*, we create a new interpretation of the function of *eros*.

**Section B: Eros partakes of epithumia**

Although our baseline established that *eros* is distinct from *epithumia*, it does not restrict the two from overlapping. In fact, within our paradigm we would expect such overlap to occur as both are signifiers within the general concept of desire. Therefore, we must analyze the use of *eros* in terms of *epithumia* in order to establish how the two interact. In doing this, we find that *eros*, while self-predicative, also overlaps with the realm of *epithumia* as often both appear in the same context.

Once more we must return to the speech of Eryximachus, as he is the first to establish this explicit connection with his claim:

…τὸ δὲ ἄνομοιον ἄνομοιῶν ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἐρᾶ.\(^{171}\)

…that which is dissimilar desires and desires dissimilar things.

Again, the subject of this phrase has been established as being *eros*. Therefore, Eryximachus is clearly stating that *eros* can both desire through *epithumeo*, and desire through *erao*, and by using both verbs in the same context he has distinguished their meanings as being distinct from one another. If we acknowledge that *erao* adheres to the

\(^{171}\) *Symposium*, 186b6-7
same qualities established in our baseline for *eros*, we must do the same for *epithumeo*. In this sense, the type of desire expressed by *epithumeo* must reflect the baseline of its cognate noun, *epithumia*, which encompasses desires that do not involve social relationships or connections to the group.

In order to extrapolate some sense of this conceptualization of the relationship between *eros* and *epithumia*, we must analyze how exactly Eryximachus describes each. If both *eros* and *epithumia* are residing within the body, there must be qualities within each body that Eryximacus is attributing to social and non-social desires. He actually explains some of his reasoning by distinguishing between what he calls the disordered or violent eros (ὅ ὑβρεως Ἔρως)\(^{172}\) and the well-ordered eros (τοῦ κοσμίου ἔρωτος).\(^{173}\) This well-ordered eros lines up with our established baseline as it is:

\[...ο δὲ περὶ τὰ γαθα μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαίωσιν ἀποτελούμενος καὶ παρὰ ἡμῖν καὶ παρὰ θεοῖς...\]\(^{174}\)

...the one which is completed for the good with moderation and justice both among us and for the gods...

This well-ordered *eros* is aiming for the good, an objective that our baseline established as requiring a social relationship in order to achieve. This relationship is explicitly mentioned as being characterized by “moderation and justice both among us (humans) and for the gods.” This phrase is describing two social interactions: one between human beings and one between the gods. Both lead to *eros* being able to obtain the good.

On the other hand, Eryximachus advises caution towards the violent eros:

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\(^{172}\) *Symposium*, 188a7  
\(^{173}\) *Symposium*, 188a2-3  
\(^{174}\) *Symposium*, 188d5-7
ὁ δὲ Πολυμνίας ὁ πάνδημος, ὃν δεῖ εὐλαβοῦμεν προσφέρειν οἰς ἂν προσφέρῃ, ὡσποδ’ ἂν τὴν μὲν ἤδονην αὐτοῦ καρπώσηται, ἀκολασίαν δὲ μηδεμίαν ἐμποίησῃ…

But the popular one, that of Polynia, it is necessary that one apply it being cautious to those whom one applies it, so that if one should reap the pleasure of it, he makes no debauchery…

This sort of eros is equated with pleasure, a term which our baseline established as being associated with epithumia as a desire of the body, not the soul and therefore requiring no social interaction. Eryximachus then makes its relationship with epithumia explicit by claiming that ἤδονήν is equivalent to the desire for sustenance:

...ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ τέχνῃ μέγα ἐργον ταῖς περὶ τῆς ὑψιποικήν τέχνης ἐπιθυμίαις καλῶς χρῆσθαι…

...just as in our art great importance is made to use well epithumia; concerning the art of cookery…

In this sense, epithumia is connected to the pleasure through the adverb “just as (ὡσπερ).” In other words, the type of pleasure sought by the violent form of eros is the same as epithumia for food.

When the entire context is reanalyzed through this lens, we are now able to understand why Eryximachus has distinguished between erao and epithumeo. His dual eros seeks different goals, which are determined by its dual natures. The well-ordered eros seeks desires of the soul, such as the good, and therefore partakes in eros. The

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175 Symposium, 187e1-3
176 Symposium, 187e3-5
violent *eros*, however, seeks desires of the body, such as pleasure, and therefore is more suitable for the desire expressed through *epithumia* which requires no social relationship through the *erastes* and *eromenos*. This explains why the term *eros* participates in both *eros* and *epithumia*, as it partakes in actions that fall under the realm of both types of desire. This is related to the moral ambiguity of *eros*, as it distinguishes between what type of desire one seeks, be it of the body or soul, as it encompasses both. This is because often desires of the body will progress towards desires of the soul. It is exactly at this moment of transition that *epithumia* and *eros* overlap.

This concept is elaborated by Aristophanes, as he explains the creation myth of both humanity and *eros*. In his speech, he claims that *eros* stems from the progenitor humans searching for completion through fusion with their other half. At the end of his speech, Aristophanes summarizes his point by claiming:

…τοῦ δόλου οὖν τὴν ἐπιθυμία καὶ διώξει ἔρως ὀνομα.¹⁷⁷

…eros is the name for the pursuit and *desire* of the whole.

In this context, Aristophanes has equated *eros* to *epithumia*, picking up on the original claims of Eryximachus. Like Eryximachus, however, Aristophanes’ context on its own does not explicitly reveal what the relationship is between the two words, only that *eros* partakes of *epithumia*. Once again we must look more closely at the entire speech in order to understand how Aristophanes is envisioning the connection between these two concepts.

The key to understanding *eros* in terms of *epithumia* within Aristophanes’ speech resides in the scene between Hephaestus and the original humans. In returning to the

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¹⁷⁷ *Symposium*, 192e10-193a1
example from our baseline of *epithumia*, we see that the original humans are described as partaking in *epithumia*, not *eros* as they are described as “ἐπιθυμούντες συμφύναι (desiring to grow together).”¹⁷⁸ This type of desire is of the body, as these humans are literally searching to fuse their bodies together. When Hephaestus arrives, he asks:

άρα γε τούδε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα ἀλλήλοις;

Do you desire this, to be together as much as possible for each other?¹⁷⁹

Upon hearing this question, the humans are confused (ἀποροῦντας), since Hephaestus’ offer has taken their desire to be fused in body and added a temporal, future element (“as much as possible”). This future element will later be described as the desire to be together through life and even until death. The idea of being together in the future incorporates the social relationship present in *eros* but lacking in *epithumia*. Since these original humans are lacking *eros*, they do not understand and Hephaestus is required to explain his offer:

…θέλω ύμας συντήξαι καὶ συμφυνήσαι εἰς τὸ αὐτό, ὡστε δὺ ὄντας ἕνα γεγονέναι καὶ ἔως τ’ ἀν ζητε, ὡς ἕνα ὄντα, κοινὴ ἀμφοτέρους ζῆν, καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἀποθάνητε, ἐκεῖ αὐ ἐν Αἰδοῦ ἀντὶ δυοῖν ἕνα εἶναι κοινὴ τεθνεῶτε.¹⁸⁰

…I am willing to fuse and weld you together, as the two become one and as long as you may live, being as one, both living in common, and when you die, there also in Hades to be one instead of two, being dead together.

At this point, he presents this as his final offer by saying:

¹⁷⁸ Symposium, 191a8
¹⁷⁹ Symposium, 192d5-7
¹⁸⁰ Symposium, 192d8-192e4
ἀλλ᾽ ὀράτε εἰ τοῦτον ἔρατε καὶ ἔξαρκεί ύμιν ἀν τοῦτον τύχητε...¹⁸¹

But consider whether you desire this and whether it is sufficient for you if you would obtain this...

The syntax of Hephaestus’ final offer is different from that of his previous one as the verb has now shifted from *epithumeo* to *erao*. This scene is reflective of the transition between *epithumia* and *eros* since, once the social aspect is incorporated, the type of desire is no longer the same. This explains why *eros* partakes in *epithumia*, as the desire that began with *epithumia* is brought to fruition through *eros*. Without the original *epithumia* for desiring of bodies, there would be no moment of clarity in which one realizes that his or her soul is searching for more. This is the overlap of *eros* with *epithumia*, as the desire is a matter of both. Even with this overlap, however, there is still a clear distinction in how both words function.

The key to this story is the verb choices employed by Aristophanes. At the beginning, the progenitor humans have no idea that they are lacking anything. Their desire for each other is to physically join bodies through sexual intercourse. This is explained through our baseline as being the realm of *epithumia*; hence, the verb that Hephaestus uses when first presenting his offer is *epithumeo* (ἀρά γε τοῦδε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὧτι μάλιστα ἀλλήλοις). During his explanation of the offer, however, Hephaestus describes a relationship that differs from being purely sexual, as the two partners live and die together, spending every moment in each other’s company. This type of situation is the foundation of the *erastes/eromenos* relationship, as this description of a mutual death echoes the stories of Alcestis and Achilles. It comes as

¹⁸¹ *Symposium*, 192e4-5
no surprise, then, that at this point Hephaestus changes his verb of desire from \textit{epithumeo} to \textit{erao}, as the humans have now been introduced to a new type of desire, the \textit{erastes/eromenos} relationship.

We are now able to return to Aristophanes’ claim that \textit{eros} is the desire (\textit{epithumia}) of the whole. The story of Hephaestus shows that \textit{eros} originally stems from \textit{epithumia}. Once the one desiring through \textit{epithumia} has the moment of recognition of what its soul, rather than body, desires, the type of desire shifts to the realm of \textit{eros}. The line of demarcation between \textit{epithumia} and \textit{eros} is blurred, as one seems to lead to the other; however, it is clear that there is a difference between the two. The reason for Aristophanes’ choice of words is that \textit{eros} must encompass \textit{epithumia} in order to switch from desire for the body to desire for the soul.

Agathon is the next speaker to apply this concept to his speech. During his discussion on the nature of \textit{eros}, he claims:

\begin{quote}
\begin{greek}
πρὸς δὲ τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σωφροσύνης πλείστης μετέχει. εἶναι γὰρ ὁμολογεῖται σωφροσύνη τὸ κρατεῖν ἥδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν...
\end{greek}
\end{quote}

He partakes, in addition to justice, of the most moderation. For moderation is agreed to be mastering of pleasures and desires…

Like Eryximachus, Agathon has connected \textit{epithumia} and pleasure. Additionally, Agathon has claimed that \textit{eros} is the mastering of both \textit{epithumia} and pleasure. In this sense, \textit{eros} must partake of \textit{epithumia} in order to master it. Here, the context reveals the nature of both terms, as Agathon has made \textit{eros} more abstract than \textit{epithumia}. \textit{Eros}, in this context, is equated to moderation (\textit{σωφροσύνης}), which on its own suggests the

\begin{footnote}
182 \textit{Symposium}, 196c3-5
\end{footnote}
realm of the mind or soul rather than the body. This refers back to our baseline, in which *epithumia* was connected to the body, while *eros* was of the soul. The distinction Agathon is making is that in order to pursue desires of the soul, one must first begin by mastering those of the body. Like Aristophanes, Agathon is alluding to a hierarchy in which desire begins with *epithumia* and proceeds to *eros*. *Eros* must partake in *epithumia* in order to pursue the more complex social relationship that leads to immortality.

In order to expand our approach towards Agathon’s perception of *eros* and *epithumia*, we must return to his claims about the intrinsic skills of the gods. As previously stated, Agathon claims that:

> τοξικὴν γε μὴν καὶ ἰατρικὴν καὶ μαντικὴν Ἀπόλλων ἀνήφρεν ἔπιθυμίας καὶ ἔρωτος ἡγεμονεύσαντος…

Apollo invented archery and medicine and prophecy, with *epithumia* and *eros* taking the lead…

Whereas before the relationship between these two was vague, we can now apply the new analysis to clarify the meaning. As stated in our baseline, *epithumia* is present due to its connection to desire that lacks social interaction. Conversely, *eros* is present due to its connection with social relationships and interactions. Agathon makes this clear as he claims:

> …ὅτι οὐ μὲν ἀν ὁ θεὸς οὗτος διδάσκαλος γένηται, ἐλλόγιμος καὶ φανὸς ἀπέβη, οὐ δ᾿ ἂν Ἐρως μὴ ἐφάψηται, σκοτεινός…

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183 *Symposium*, 197a6-7

184 *Symposium*, 197a4-6
…he of whom this god (eros) becomes a teacher, he turns out notable and conspicuous, but of whom eros does not touch, turns out obscure.

Again, these terms notable (ἐλλογιμος), conspicuous (φανος) and obscure (σκοτεινος) are all references to social standing. Agathon is describing what Diotima will call immortality of name, as being touched by eros brings the recognition of society as a whole as they judge behavior worthy of praise.

As stated in our baseline discussion of epithumia, the syntax of Agathon’s claims is critical. The presence of epithumia is due to its nature as the type of desire that lacks the social interaction of the erastes/eromenos relationship. This makes the gods similar to the humans Aristophanes describes, who desire something through their soul which they cannot explain. Without eros, the gods have clearly not been able to create these skills. With eros taking the lead, the gods now have the means to achieve social relationships. Since Agathon is personifying eros as an actual being or deity, the relationship that leads to creation of skills is between eros, the teacher, and the individual god, the student. Agathon makes this clear in the case of Apollo by saying “so that also this god (Apollo) would be a student of eros (ὡστε καὶ οὗτος Ἕρωτος ἀν εἰη μαθητής).” Through eros, Apollo has achieved the social relationship necessary to create his skills. If we now assess the entire context as a whole, epithumia plays the role of desire of the body, while eros represents desire of the soul which is accomplished through social relationships. Only through both, with epithumia leading to eros, can the gods create these skills. Agathon has taken the common understanding that epithumia is of the body and eros is of

185 Symposium, 196b1
the soul and incorporated aspects of both into a new representation of *eros* as the master of *epithumia*.

Each of these points culminates within the speech of Socrates, as he takes these elaborations but uses them in a more precise manner. This process begins with the same interrogation of Agathon we examined previously, as he asks:

τοσάνδε δὲ εἶπέ, πότερον ὁ Ἑρως ἐκεῖνον οὐ ἔστιν ἔρως, ἔπιθυμει αὐτόν ἢ οὐ;\(^{186}\)

Tell me this much, whether Eros desires that thing of which it is *eros*, or not?

Socrates has identified *eros* to be the subject of the verb *epithumeo* and has done so in the most explicit way we have seen thus far. He continues by asking:

πότερον ἔχων αὐτῷ οὐ ἔπιθυμει τε καὶ ἔρα, εἶτα ἔπιθυμει τε καὶ ἔρα, ἢ οὐκ ἔχων;\(^{187}\)

And when he has that which he desires and desires, does he then desire and desire it, or not?

Once again, *eros* is the subject of both *erao* and *epithumeo*, with a clear distinction being drawn between the meanings of both actions. In terms of *eros* partaking of *epithumia*, the key to these two contexts is the ordering of Socrates’ questions. He first establishes that *eros* desires (*epithumeo*), with no mention made of the verb *erao*. Then, he expands his question to ask whether *eros* both desires (*erao*) and desires (*epithumeo*). By ordering his questions in this manner, Socrates is playing on the concepts established by the previous speakers; specifically, the linear progression through which desire expressed by *eros*

\(^{186}\) Symposium, 200a2-3

\(^{187}\) Symposium, 200a5-6
begins with *epithumia*. The reason for this has not yet been established by our analysis, but it will become clear as we move to our interpretation of *epithumia* through the lens of *parole*.

Each of these four speakers has engaged the conceptualization of *eros* within the *langue* and used it to express their own understanding of it (*parole*). This, in turn, has developed the relationship between *eros* and *epithumia* into two words inextricably connected to one another. According to the speakers, desire is something that begins in a most raw and undeveloped form, and it will remain that way until another force takes it to more abstract realms. This pattern, while not consistent across each speech, forces us to reconsider our understanding of *eros, epithumia* and the interaction between the two. In doing this, we can then apply this new interpretation to better understand the universal understanding residing in the background of each speech, the *langue* of *eros*. While the overall relationship has not yet been completely revealed, we are beginning to distinguish some key aspects of this complex system; specifically, that *eros* partakes of desires of the body (*epithumia*) in order to obtain the desires of the soul.

**Section C: The True Nature of Epithumia**

Having established that *eros* partakes of the desires described by *epithumia* through its function as the subject of *epithumeo*, we now must turn our attention towards understanding how and why such an intertwined relationship exists between the two. The first clue that emerges from such analysis is that *epithumia*, like *eros*, is self-predicative. At face value this seems reasonable, since *epithumia* is also a signifier of desire and therefore its personified form must also act as the subject of desiring verbs in a similar
manner to *eros*. If we look more closely, however, it becomes evident that *epithumia* can only desire particular objects and cannot partake in *eros*. This difference distinguishes the term from *eros* and alerts us to a particular realm of influence which *eros* can cross but *epithumia* cannot. In other words, for reasons yet unknown, *epithumia* is restricted in the function of its meaning in a way that *eros* is not. The first step towards understanding this difference is to analyze the self-predicative quality of *epithumia*.

The first instance of a self-predicative *epithumia* occurs in Socrates’ interrogation of Agathon, as he says:

σκόπει δή... ἀντὶ τοῦ εἰκότος εἰ ἀνάγκη οὖτως, τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν ἐπιθυμεῖν
οὐ ἑνδεῖς ἐστίν, ἢ μὴ ἐπιθυμεῖν, ἢ ἀν μὴ ἑνδεῖς ἢ;\(^\text{188}\)

Consider then...instead of it being likely, if it is necessary, does that one desiring desire the thing of which he is in need, or does he not desire it, if he is not in need of it?

Socrates has clearly named the subject of this sentence as being something partaking in *epithumia* (τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν). Therefore, he has made *epithumia* self-predicative as the one desiring desires (ἐπιθυμεῖν). In this sense, *epithumia* is operating in the same manner as *eros*, in that someone under its influence desires an object by using the cognate verb, *epitheuo*.

Within the text, Socrates is the only speaker to use *epithumia* in this manner. Even though the previous speakers do not use the same construction, Socrates’ word choice is still understood by his audience. This can be seen through Agathon’s responses, which are always affirmative. As we established in our methodology, in sign systems the

\(^{188}\) *Symposium*, 200a8-b1
speaker, in forming his parole, must draw upon some measure of the common langue in order to be understood. Agathon’s affirmation of Socrates’ use of epithumia indicates that the conceptualization of epithumia as a self-predicative has to be drawing upon a concept that the group understood, otherwise Socrates’ speech would be unintelligible. Therefore, epithumia as self-predicative has to agree with our global baseline, in order for the meaning to come across. In this case, it does just that as Socrates has equated epithumia to necessity, a term that Agathon previously equated to epithumia and desires of the body which do not partake in the social relationship of philia.

With this new view of epithumia as equal to necessity, we are in a better position to interpret Socrates’ context. Prior to this context, Socrates asks a slightly different question of Agathon:

\[
\text{πότερον ἔχων αὐτὸ ὦν ἐπιθυμεῖ τε καὶ ἔρα, εἴτε ἐπιθυμεῖ τε καὶ ἔρα, ἢ οὐκ ἔχων},^{189}
\]

And when he has that which he both desires and desires, does he both desire and desire it, or does he (desire it) when he does not have it?

We should notice that the subject of this question is explicitly eros, as Socrates is trying to address the problem of whether one who desires lacks or possesses that which one desires. This explains the presence of both epitumáo and erao, as we know that eros is able to function as the subject of both verbs. And yet, when we look once more at the context of our first passage, the subject has shifted to epithumia (“τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν”). This again proves the relationship between the nouns of our paradigm and their cognate verbs.

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189 Symposium, 200a5-6
as to *epithumoun* is acting in the same manner as *epithumia* as self-predicate. It is only after this change of subject that the concept of necessity appears:

σκόπει δὴ... ἀντὶ τοῦ εἰκότος εἰ ἀνάγκη οὕτως, τὸ ἑπιθυμοῦν ἑπιθυμεῖν

οὐ ἐνδέες ἔστιν, ἢ μὴ ἑπιθυμεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ἐνδέες ὃ. 190

Consider then...instead of it being likely, if it is necessary, that one desiring desires the thing which he is in need, or does not desire, if he is not in need.

This subtle change in semantics shifts the focus away from *eros* and onto *epithumia*. This explains why the verb *erao* has disappeared and has been replaced by *epithumeo*.

Whereas *eros* could partake in *epithumia*, the reverse is not true.

The association with necessity explains this shift, since, as previously mentioned, necessity has been explicitly connected to desires of the body and *epithumia*. This association occurs within the speeches of Agathon and Aristophanes. In his speech, Agathon claims:

...τὰ δὲ παλαιὰ πράγματα περὶ θεοῦ, ἂν Ἡσίοδος καὶ Παρμενίδης λέγουσιν, Ἀνάγκη καὶ οὐκ Ἔρωτι γεγονέναι, εἰ ἐκεῖνοι ἀληθῆ ἔλεγον: οὐ γὰρ ἄν ἐκτομαί οὐδὲ δεσμοὶ ἀλλήλων ἐγίγνοντο καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ καὶ βίαια, εἰ Ἔρως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἦν, ἄλλα φιλία καὶ εἰρήνη, ὀσπερ νῦ... 191

...but those ancient dealings concerning the gods, which Hesiod and Parmenides speak of, have happened by means of Necessity not Eros, if those men were speaking the truth. For there would have been no cutting nor fettering of each

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190 *Symposium*, 200a8-b1
191 *Symposium*, 195c1-6
other nor many other violent things, if *Eros* was among them, but friendship and peace, as now…

Here, Agathon has equated the rule of Necessity to cutting and fettering of human beings. While he references Hesiod and Parmenides, we cannot help but notice the similarities with Aristophanes’ speech, which directly preceded that of Agathon. In his speech, Aristophanes told of how Zeus split humans in half and Hephaestus offered to fuse them back together. If we return to our baseline of *epithumia* as desires of the body, we recall that these original humans were operating under the realm of *epithumia*, not *eros*, until Hephaestus teaches them the intricacies of the *erastes/eromenos* relationship. With this in mind, we see that the cutting and fettering which Agathon has equated to Necessity is in fact *epithumia*. This interpretation is the same one being used by Socrates as he associates the verb *epithumeo* with acts done out of necessity. These are acts of the body, rather than soul, and carry no social relationship, only a desire to fulfill a need in the present moment.

This usage of *epithumia* continues through the speech of Diotima, who claims:

\[
\text{ἀλλὰ μὴν Ἕρωτα γε ὁμολόγηκας δὲ ἔνδειαν τῶν ἄγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν}
\]
\[
\text{ἐπιθυμεῖν αὐτῶν τοῦτων ὃν ἔνδειξ ἐστίν.}^{192}
\]

But you have agreed that *eros*, from a need of good and beautiful things, desires these very things of which he is in need.

Once again, the concept of necessity is being described; hence, the use of *epithumeo*.

While this explains the syntax, it does not explain the thematic element of the passage.

Our baseline established that such concepts as the good and the beautiful are the realm of

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192 *Symposium*, 202d1-3
eros, not epithumia. This demands an explanation for the use of epithumeo as the verb describing this particular type of desire, which our baseline established requires the philia obtainable through eros. For this, we must return to Aristophanes’ speech and his description of the gods.

In that story, the skills of the gods are described as belonging to epithumia, until they are brought to fruition through the teachings of eros. The same context is being used by Socrates, as the “need” of eros is the origin of the linear progression through which desire of body (epithumia) in the present leads to desire of the soul (eros) in the future. This explains the presence of epithumia, as eros draws upon epithumia in order to obtain the good and the beautiful. Therefore, this original necessity of eros cannot be expressed through erao; rather, here eros desires first through epithumeo in order then to desire through erao. Diotima is describing the linear progression of desire.

Diotima again plays on epithumia as a need when she claims:

οὐκοῦν ἐπιθυμεῖ ὁ μὴ οἴσμενος ἐνδεῖς εἶναι ὁν ἄν μὴ οἴηται ἐπιδεῖσθαι.\(^\text{193}\)

So the one who does not suppose to be in need does not desire that which he does not suppose he is in need of.

Here again, the emphasis is placed on whether the subject realizes he is in need. That need is then associated with epithumia, through epithumeo, in the same way as the previous contexts. Whenever a desire is of the body, it must fall under the realm of epithumia. This goes back to the speech of Aristophanes, who claimed that the first humans did not realize they were missing anything, yet their souls were aware of an indescribable need. As previously mentioned, the verb used by Hephaestus in his offer is

\(^{193}\) Symposium, 204a6-7
The context is the same; when someone has an inner desire that they cannot articulate or do not know how to act upon, this necessity is *epithumia*.

This new understanding of *epithumia* provides a temporal aspect in addition to its contextual meaning. The temporal is innately connected with the contextual, as the former intertwines with the latter to produce a fuller conceptualization of *epithumia* and its relationship to *eros*. Again, we must turn to Socrates, as he makes this distinction clear. In his speech, he makes the argument that those who have something cannot desire it. This refers back to his trance in the prologue to the *Symposium*, a trance brought on by Aristodemus making the argument that one must lack, not possess, that which they desire. Since Socrates had made himself beautiful in order to obtain beauty, he realized the flaw in his logic. Now, he has changed his interpretation of *eros* to be a lack, rather than possession of that which one desires. For his examples he cites those who are strong, swift and healthy:

\[\textit{epi} 
\textit{γάρ καὶ ἰσχυρὸς ὄν βουλομαι ἰσχυρὸς εἶναι...καὶ ταχὺς ὄν ταχύς, καὶ}
\textit{υγιῆς ὄν υγιῆς ἵως γὰρ ἀν τις ταύτα οἰηθείη καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα τοὺς}
\textit{όντας τούτων ἀπερ ἔχονσι καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖν...}\]

For if being strong he wished to be strong…and being swift to be swift, and being healthy to be healthy, for perhaps someone would think in these and everything of such a kind, those also desire those things which they have…

This establishes the desire of these men as being *epithumia*, again referring to the bodily nature of *epithumia*, as strength, health, and swiftness are all physical attributes within

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194 *Symposium*, 192d6
195 *Symposium*, 200b9-c2
the body. Having established this as being *epithumia*, Socrates introduces the temporal aspect by claiming:

ἀλλ᾽ ὅταν τις λέγῃ ὅτι... ἐπιθυμῶ αὐτῶν τούτων ἃ ἔχω, εἶπομεν ἄν αὐτῶ ὅτι σὺ, ὡς ἄνθρωπε, πλοῦτον κεκτημένος καὶ ύγίειαν καὶ ἰσχύν ἑθελεὶ καὶ εἰς τὸν ἐπείτα χρόνον ταύτα κεκτηθαι... 196

But whenever someone might say that... I desire these very things that I have, then we would say to him, sir, having obtained wealth and health and strength, then wish also to have possessed these in the future...

With this, Socrates has established that *epithumia* only covers desires that reside within the present. By advising the hypothetical man that he wishes to possess his desires in the future, Socrates establishes that *epithumia* does not convey such future desires.

He elaborates his point further by establishing that one who possesses objects in the present should be conscious of the future in order to always possess the objects of their desire. He relates this back to *epithumia* by asking:

καὶ ὁντὸς ἄρα καὶ ἄλλος πᾶς ὃ ἐπιθυμῶν τὸν μὴ ἐτοίμου ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ τὸν μὴ παρόντος, καὶ ὃ μὴ ἔχει καὶ ὃ μὴ ἔστιν ἀυτὸς καὶ ὃν ἐνδεής ἔστι, τοιαύτῃ ἑστὶν ὁν ἐπιθυμία τε καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἔστιν; 197

Then both this man and every other who is desiring this, desires that which is not provided and not present, both what he does not have and is not and is in need of, and that sort of thing is both *epithumia* and *eros*?

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196 Symposium, 200c5-d2
197 Symposium, 200e2-5
With this, Socrates has introduced the concept of desire which extends beyond the present into the future. In this context, we would expect to find *erao*, as this desire extends beyond necessity of the present into a future-oriented realm. This is not the syntax Socrates uses, however, and he is very deliberate in doing so.

Using our global baseline, we know that *epithumia* must incorporate desires of the body that lack a social relationship, while *eros* seeks objects through *philia*. At the same time, the speakers have introduced the concept of *eros* drawing upon *epithumia* in order to switch the desire from that of the body to that of the soul. It is this moment of transition that Socrates is describing in this context. The subject of the passage is the same hypothetical man who only desires objects in the present (strength, swiftness and health). At this point, however, Socrates has told the hypothetical man that he should desire to have these present objects in the future as well. This transition from present to future is the transition from *epithumia* to *eros*. The hypothetical man now seeks objects which are “not present” and “he is not in need of.” This explains why at this moment there is both *epithumia* and *eros* (*ἡ ἐπιθυμία τε καὶ ὁ ἔρως*), since it is the moment when *eros* partakes of *epithumia* in order to pursue objects in future.

Taking a step back and viewing *epithumia* and *eros* through our global baseline, this new interpretation of their temporal aspects fits nicely within our model. If *epithumia* is desire without *philia*, then there can be no future aspect to it, since *philia* requires the forethought and future planning of obtaining goals at a later time. For, as we have seen, the social relationship involves the judgment of society. This judgment can only occur after an action has been performed. This demands a future aspect to *eros*, as someone who wishes to have immortality of name must plan their actions in advance. It is this
planning on the future judgment of society that *epithumia* cannot perform, as it involves a particular consciousness that involves the mind and soul, rather than the body.

When taken as a whole, each of these new qualities of *epithumia* explains a term that is vastly more complex than simply the bodily desire established in the global baseline. Through its uses, *epithumia* is described as self-predicative, a type of necessity, and restricted to the present. In terms of our methodology, these traits are manifestations of the universal *langue*, desire of the body, transformed through the speaker’s individual usage, *parole*. Although each of the symposiasts agrees that *epithumia* is bodily desire, Socrates is the only one who expands upon this definition. Using the interpretation encompassed within his *parole*, we are in a position to re-adjust our understanding of the *langue*. We are able to justify this through the interrogation with Agathon. By engaging in conversation with Socrates and accepting his premises, Agathon is also indirectly accepting his usage of *epithumia* since, as Saussure claimed, if Socrates was using *epithumia* as a signifier that related to an atypical meaning, he would not have been understood by his peers. With this, our methodology allows us to redefine our perception of *epithumia*. This new concept of *epithumia* can only be understood through the comparison of the individualized uses through *parole* against the common baseline established through *langue*. The result is an *epithumia* that is restricted, yet complex, and a critical component in the functions and desires of *eros*.

**Section D: Epithumia leads to eros**

While we have redefined the meaning of *epithumia*, we still need to approach its relationship with *eros*. Up to this point, the concept of *epithumia* leading to *eros* has been
suggested, but not manifested in great detail. This was to avoid confusion as we did not have the meaning defined first. Now, the meaning of epithumia will guide us towards its usage within the paradigm of epithumia, eros, and philia. The answer lies within the ordering of concepts within each context, as desire begins with epithumia and progresses towards eros in a linear fashion as one seeks more future and socially based goals.

Aristophanes is the first speaker to elaborate on this progression with his notion of eros as pursuit of the whole. Once more, we must return to his creation myth of both eros and human beings. As we established in our baseline, the type of desire his progenitor humans feel is described by epithumia:

...ἐπιθυμοῦντες συμφύναι, ἀπέθνησαν ὑπὸ λιμοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀλλῆς ἀργίας διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἐθέλειν χωρὶς ἀλλήλων ποιεῖν.\textsuperscript{198}

...desiring to grow together, they were dying of hunger and other inactivity because of wishing to do nothing apart from each other.

This is the beginning of the desire felt between the split humans as they begin searching for their other halves. Again, this raw form of desire is the realm of epithumia as it is purely instinctual; these humans even abandon food, the most basic necessity, in favor of sexuality and desire of the body. At this point in the story, Hephaestus steps in and asks what it is they wish to have from each other. Aristophanes tells us that the humans are confused (ἀποροῦντας),\textsuperscript{199} as their souls are wishing for something they cannot explain:

\textsuperscript{198} Symposion, 191a8-b1
\textsuperscript{199} Symposion, 192d5
ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλο τι βουλομένη ἐκατέρου ἡ ψυχὴ δήλη ἐστίν, ὅ φυ σύναται
εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ μαντεύεται ὁ βουλεῖαι, καὶ αἰνίττεται.  

But the soul of each is clearly wishing for something else that it is not able to say, but it divines what it wishes and disguises it.

At this point, Hephaestus clarifies his offer:

ἀρὰ γε τοῦτε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα ἀλλήλοις,
ὡςτε καὶ νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν μὴ ἀπολείπεσθαι ἀλλῆλων; εἰ γὰρ τοῦτον
ἐπιθυμεῖτε, θέλω ὑμᾶς συντήξαι καὶ συμφυσῆσαι...  

Do you desire this, to be together as much as possible for each other, so as not to be separated from each other both by night and day? For if you desire this, I am willing to fuse and weld you together...

Again, the idea of being fused together is under the realm of epithumia, as the desire is still the necessity to be connected simply in body, not soul, through sexual contact. At the same time, however, Hephaestus has changed the object of this desire by introducing the concept of desiring someone for more than sexuality, as the partners would be together every minute of every day even through death. At this point, Hephaestus introduces this new concept as being eros by saying:

ἀλλ᾽ ὕρατε εἰ τοῦτον ἔρατε καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ ὑμῖν ἀν τοῦτον τύχητε... 

But consider whether you desire this and whether it is sufficient for you if you would obtain this...

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200 Symposium, 192c7-d2
201 Symposium, 192d5-e1
202 Symposium, 192e4-5
In essence, Hephaestus has introduced humanity to the concept of _eros_ by defining its nature and basic attributes. Aristophanes makes this moment of recognition explicit by claiming:

…ταύτ’ ἄκούσας ἵσμεν ὅτι οὖν ἂν εἰς ἐξαρνηθεὶς οὖν ἂλλο τι ἂν φανείη βουλόμενος, ἀλλ’ ἄτεχνως οἶοιτ’ ἂν ἀκηκοέναι τὸτο ὄ πάλαι ἄρα ἐπεθύμει, συνελθὼν καὶ συντακείς τὸ ἐρωμένω ἐκ δυοῖν ἐῖς γενέσθαι.\(^{203}\)

…we know that hearing this no one would deny it nor would be found wishing for something else, but, frankly, he would think he had heard this which he was desiring all along, joining and fusing with his _eromenos_ to be made one from two.

This exchange is highlighting the moment of transition from _epithumia_ to _eros_, as the humans have finally understood what they desire in their souls: the _erastes/eromenos_ relationship. This is evidenced by the presence of the term _eromenos_, which up until now has not been used of either of the partners. Aristophanes is very clear in his diction, as he still uses the term _epithumeo_, but in relation to the previous desire before the introduction of _eros_ (“this which he was desiring all along”). This modifier, πάλαι, sets the desire of _epithumia_ in the past, while the present desire is ruled by _eros_, as evidenced by the use of _eromenos_. Lastly, the act of thinking (οἴοιτ’ ἂν) indicates that, whereas before the humans were lacking the contemplation necessary to express their feelings, now they have acquired the terms to conceptualize their desire.

At this point, when the transition from _epithumia_ to _eros_ has happened, Aristophanes finally provides an unequivocal shift to _eros_ by claiming:

τοῦ ὅλου οὖν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ διάξει ἔρως ὄνομα.\(^{204}\)

\(^{203}\) Symposium, 192e5-9

\(^{204}\)
Now *eros* is the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole. With this, the transition is complete as Aristophanes acknowledges that *eros* incorporates *epithumia* as it progresses towards this new type of desire. While the *parole* of Socrates expanded upon the idea that *epithumia* flows into *eros*, this story by Aristophanes is the first to explicitly make the claim and explain the process of how such a transition occurs, thus laying the foundation for Socrates’ further expansion.

Using this story as our guide, we can now follow the linear progression from *epithumia* to *eros*. First, the desire begins as something unrefined and without any forethought: the desire for sexual contact. This has no social relationship, nor any discernable desire to think outside of the present moment. In other words, while the humans desired to be together in body, they had no conception of this type of contact extending into the future. Such desire of the body in the present moment, with no future aspirations of a continuing relationship, explicitly falls under the realm of *epithumia*. At this moment, Hephaestus arrives as an external, causal force with an offer that proposes to disrupt this system of bodily desire by offering a temporal element of being together forever. In this manner, Hephaestus is acting as a metaphor for *eros* itself. The comparison is twofold as first, like *eros*, he is a creative, causal force in his role as the metal-worker of the gods. Second, he is acting as the causal force of this particular story, as he arrives unannounced and instills within humanity the name and concept of *eros*.

At first, this future-oriented relationship that Hephaestus offers is not understood, as the humans are confused by his words. This is because they are not able to form into a coherent idea the actual desire of the soul, nor do they have the proper terminology to express that desire, as they are driven by *epithumia*, not *eros*. Hephaestus then explains

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204 *Symposium*, 192e10-193a1
his offer in more detail, referring to his offer through *erao*. At this point the humans realize that they now have a term to describe to what they have desired all along. The term for this desire is *eros*, as the desire now incorporates a future element, and the vehicle through which this is accomplished is the *erastes/eromenos* relationship. The transition is complete, as Hephaestus has given both the sensation of *eros* and the words to describe this new phenomenon.

Like Aristophanes, Agathon also follows this linear progression as he attempts to persuade his fellow symposiasts that *eros* is the teacher of the gods. The first context in which he hints at the evolution from *epithumia* to *eros* occurs right in the beginning of his speech as he disagrees with the creation myth of Phaedrus:

\[\text{ἐγὼ δὲ Φαίδρῳ πολλὰ ἄλλα όμολογῶν τοῦτο ὑπὸ όμολογῷ, ὡς Ἐρως Κρόνου καὶ Ιαπετοῦ ἀρχαιότερός ἐστιν, ἄλλα φημὶ νεώτατον αὐτὸν εἶναι θεῶν καὶ ἀεὶ νέον, τὰ δὲ παλαιὰ πράγματα περὶ θεῶν, ἃ Ἡσίοδος καὶ Παρμενίδης λέγουσιν, Ἀνάγκη καὶ ὑπὸ Ἐρωτὶ γεγονέναι, εἰ ἐκεῖνοι ἀληθή ἔλεγον.}\]

Although I am agreeing with Phaedrus in many other things, I do not agree with respect to this: that *Eros* is more ancient than Kronos and Iapetos, but I say he is the youngest of the gods and forever young, but those ancient dealings concerning the gods, which Hesiod and Parmenides speak of, have happened because of **Necessity** not Eros, if those men were speaking the truth.

Agathon has fundamentally altered the timeline of events between gods and men by equating the era of violence with necessity, and the following peace with *eros*. While part

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205 *Symposium*, 195b6-c3
of this is certainly a rhetorical ploy to dismiss his counterparts and elevate his own speech, this comment also refers back to the emerging progression of *epithumia* to *eros*.

As mentioned before, the speakers have equated *epithumia* with necessity in order to explain the type of desire it entails. If we apply this notion, then Agathon’s words hold a different meaning. He would be claiming that before *eros* there was *epithumia*, whereas the previous speakers used the reverse order. This corresponds with his next thought as he claims:

ṣῶ γὰρ ἂν ἐκτομαί οὐδὲ δεσμοί ἀλλήλων ἐγίγνοντο καὶ ἀλλα πολλα καὶ βίαια, εἰ Ἔρως ἐν αὐτoῖς ἦν...²⁰⁶

For there would have been no cutting nor fettering of each other nor many other violent things, if Eros was among them…

This claim of “cutting” and “fettering” is a direct reference back to the speech of Aristophanes and his theory of the original human form. As we have established, Aristophanes associated this state of the original humans as being the realm of *epithumia*. Agathon has made the same claim, although more indirect, by equating this period to necessity, which has been established as equivalent to *epithumia*. From the start, Agathon has announced his intention to follow this same progression of *epithumia* leading to *eros*. This adherence will help us understand the meaning of his story of *eros* as the teacher of skills.

To reinforce his point that *eros* is the inspirational teacher, Agathon claims that all the gods learned their respective crafts through *eros*:

²⁰⁶ *Symposium*, 195c4-5
Apollo invented archery and medicine and prophesy with *epithumia* and *eros* taking the lead, so that also this god would be a student of *eros*, and the Muses in connection with music and Hephaestus in connection with metal-work and Athena in connection with weaving and Zeus in governing both gods and men.

With our new perspective on *epithumia*, we are now able to analyze more thoroughly what Agathon is conveying through his language. The key concept of this sentence is the designation of both *eros* and *epithumia* as factors which lead to the creation of skills.

Before, we made the argument that *epithumia* is present because of the nature of each craft in relation to their respective gods. Apollo *is* archery, medicine and prophecy just as the Muses *are* music, Hephaestus *is* metal-work, Athena *is* weaving and Zeus *is* the governing of gods and men. We cannot extract any of the skills from their gods as they are one and the same. What is lacking, however, is the social relationship that would allow each god to become famous for that skill and would allow him or her to teach these skills to mortals. In terms of progression, each of these skills begins with *epithumia*, as the god has the desire to simply learn them in the present moment without contemplating any future action. Once the next step is taken, in which the gods desire to pass their skills on to mortals, they are in need of *philia*, which is associated with *eros*.

Agathon makes this connection more clear when he says:

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207 *Symposium*, 197a6-b3
Hence, the doings of the gods were also constructed when Eros had been born among them, clearly in connection with beauty— for there is no eros for ugliness— though before this, just as I said in the beginning, many terrible things happened among the gods, as it is said, through the kingship of necessity.

Here, Agathon has explicitly stated that the skills of the gods were only brought to fruition “when Eros had been born among them.” This follows our baseline of eros being the causal force that governs future desires. In addition, these desires must be eros since the ultimate goal is said to be beauty (δηλον οτι καλλους), a familiar object of eros within the text. In terms of epithumia, Agathon has again associated it with necessity, as he claims that before eros, necessity ruled.

If we follow the progression of his thought, he first claims that epithumia, through necessity, rules the gods. This explains why the skills of the gods lie dormant, as they do not have the proper force to be created with the goal of being shared among humanity. In this sense, the gods are like Aristophanes’ early humans, as they have the desire within them but have not been taught the necessary means to express this desire or bring it to fruition. Also like the early humans, Agathon’s gods require an external stimulus to provide the causal spark to their epithumia. In this context, that spark is eros itself in its personified and deified form. Agathon describes the moment of transition between eros

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208 Symposium, 197b3-7
and *epithumia* by saying that both led each god to his or her skill; however, it is clearly stated that even though *epithumia* is involved in the beginning stages, *eros* is the force that takes over once the skill desires beauty. This beauty is one of the goals that *eros* seeks through *philia*. Once again, *epithumia* governs desires of the body that have no social interaction or future ambitions, while *eros* is the force through which desire seeks immortality through *philia* and forethought towards the future.

In terms of our paradigm, we now understand the connection between *epithumia* and *eros* in a more succinct way. These words cannot have the same meaning, as they denote different types of desire. These types are distinguished through our global baseline and manipulated through individual speakers. Through this manipulation we are able to see the nature of the relationship and adjust our baseline accordingly. *Eros*, although distinct from *epithumia*, draws upon some of the same qualities, but uses them to seek an entirely different set of objects. These objects cannot be pursued by *epithumia*, a factor that limits the scope of its meaning and function. For our methodology, this means that as a signifier, *epithumia* has a limited range of global meanings which it can signify. These objects must be of the body, with no concept of social interactions or the future goals. Even with this explanation of the relationship between *eros* and *epithumia*, we have an incomplete picture and must now create a full understanding of *philia* through analysis of its use in *parole*. Only then will we have a complete system which we can analyze in order to understand the themes being addressed throughout the work.
Section E: Philia is the path to immortality

While epithumia and eros operate within a complex relationship in which their meanings overlap in very specific ways, philia stands apart within our paradigm. First and foremost, this is because philia does not belong to the group of words acting as signifiers for desire. And yet, even with this distinction, philia plays a major role in the Symposium and is clearly connected to eros in particular ways. Specifically, eros seeks objects that require social relationships, while philia represents those relationships. This leads to a situation in which eros needs philia in order to obtain its goals. Our methodology allows for such a connection, since we have established that meanings of words can operate within a linear progression, such as epithumia leading to eros. With philia, this progression is even more explicit, as philia does not represent a desire for an object, but a state of possession of that object. Eros cannot, by Socrates’ argument, ever acquire the object which it seeks, while philia does not have such restrictions. This places epithumia and philia at opposite ends of our paradigm. At the same time, however, all three words are connected through the intermediacy of eros. If this process is taken to its ultimate conclusion, as Diotima does, the final goal of eros is immortality and the only means by which to achieve this end is philia.

According to Diotima, there are three ways for mortals to achieve immortality: public fame, procreation, and wisdom through philosophy. While each path requires a different set of skills, they each share the same objective. This means that these three paths can be analyzed and compared against a common denominator. For the purpose of our study, that commonality is the presence of philia, as each path, although undertaken by eros, ultimately comes to fruition through the vehicle of a social relationship.
Additionally, although Diotima is the first to provide an explicit system of achieving immortality, none of the three methods are innovative in the *Symposium* as they have their origins within the first five speeches of the work. Whereas the symposiasts were vague, Diotima will cut through their argument with rhetorical precision in order to organize the most useful parts of each speech to create an overarching generalization. Using our methodology, we are invited to mimic Diotima in our analysis of *philia* and its relationship to our paradigm.

First, we must address fame as a route to immortality, specifically the fame achieved through ambition. In her description of the ultimate desire of all men, Diotima claims that this desire must be of immortality:

> ταύτῃ τῇ μηχανῇ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, Θυητῶν ἀθανασίας μετέχει, καὶ σῶμα καὶ τὰλλα πάντα: ἀθάνατον δὲ ἄλλῃ. μὴ οὖν θαύμαζε εἰ τὸ αὐτὸν ἀποβλάστημα φύσει πᾶν τιμᾶ: ἀθανασίας γὰρ χάριν παντὶ αὕτη ἢ σπουδὴ καὶ ὁ ἑρως ἑπεται.\(^\text{209}\)

> “Through this device, o Socrates,” she said, “a mortal thing partakes of immortality, both in body and all other respects; an immortal thing does it in no other way. So do not wonder if, by nature, all things honor their own offspring, since for the sake of immortality this eagerness and *eros* follows everything.”

She then describes ambition, as being the first method for achieving this immortality:

> καὶ τῶν ἄνθρωπων εἰ ἐθέλεις εἰς τὴν φιλοτιμίαν βλέψαι, θαυμάζοις ἀν τῆς ἀλογίας περὶ ἀ ἐγὼ εἰρηκα εἰ μὴ ἐννοεῖς…\(^\text{210}\)

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\(^{209}\) *Symposium*, 208b2-5

\(^{210}\) *Symposium*, 208c2-3
And if you wish to look at the ambition of these men, you would wonder at the unreasonableness concerning what I have told you if you consider it…

She continues by claiming that Socrates need only look at how concerned these men have become with the desire to gain a name:

...ἐνθυμηθεῖς ὡς δεινῶς διάκεινται ἐρωτὶ τοῦ ὄνομαστοι γενέσθαι...²¹¹

...you consider how terribly they are affected with the eros to become named...

To provide an example for her claim, she then returns to the stories of Alcestis and Achilles:

ἐπεὶ οἴει σὺ...Αλκηστὶν ὑπὲρ Ἀδμήτου ἀποθανεῖν ἂν, ἡ Ἀχιλλέα

Πατρόκλῳ ἐπαποθανεῖν...μὴ οἰομένους ἀθάνατον μνήμην ἀρετῆς πέρι ἑαυτῶν ἐσεσθαι, ἣν νῦν ἥμεις ἔχομεν;²¹²

Do you suppose...that Alcestis would have died on account of Admetus, or Achilles sought death for Patroclus...unless they thought to achieve immortal memory concerning this virtue, which we now keep?

Diotima finally ends her thought on ambition by claiming that men do all that they can in order to achieve this type of fame and glory. Again, this argument should sound familiar, especially when set against our global baseline for philia. Within those similarities, philia is the social relationship through which the erastes achieves immortality. If philia is indeed the means of obtaining the immortal, we must go back through each speech in order to see what contexts emerge to support this claim.

²¹¹ Symposium, 208c4-5
²¹² Symposium, 208d2-6
The speech of Phaedrus is the most appropriate starting point because, aside from being the first speech in the work, it is the first to address the concept of *philotimia*, which Diotima utilizes in her speech. As previously mentioned, Phaedrus claims that through *philotimia*, *eros* seeks the beautiful. If we take this same context and apply the lens of immortality, as proposed by Diotima, then Phaedrus’ words carry a new meaning.

In the story of Alcestis, Phaedrus claimed that it was her *philia* that led to her immortality:

> οὕς ἑκείνη τὸσούτον ὑπερεβάλετο τῇ φιλίᾳ διὰ τὸν ἐρωτα...καὶ τοῦτ’ ἐργασαμένη τὸ ἔργον οὕτω καλὸν ἔδωξεν ἐργάσασθαι σὺ μόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοίς, ὡστε πολλῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἐργασαμένων εὐαριθμητοῖς δὴ τισίν ἐδοσαν τοῦτο γέρας οἱ θεοί, ἐξ Ἅιδου ἄνειναι πάλιν τὴν ψυχὴν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἑκείνης ἀνείσαν ἀγαθέντες τῷ ἔργῳ.213

whom she herself surpassed so far with her philia on account of eros...and when doing this deed she seemed to do it so well not only to men but also to the gods, so that although many have done many noble deeds, those to whom the gods have given this honor is few, that they should send up their souls again from Hades, but that of that one (Alcestis) was sent up in admiration for her deed.

If we break this thought down into its constituent parts, a linear progression emerges that supports the relationship of our paradigm. First, Alcestis was inspired by *eros*; second, her *eros* led her to *philia*; finally, her *philia* allowed her to achieve immortality.

This path to immortality involved neither procreation nor philosophy. Alcestis became immortal through her name and glory living on through the ages, which,

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213 *Symposium*, 179c1-d1
according to Diotima, was planned in advance, echoing the future aspect of *eros*. As he attempts to justify this desire for immortality, Phaedrus makes it explicit and clear that the force behind this type of *eros* is ambition for beauty (ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαι).²¹⁴ This is the exact term used by Diotima and this correlation redefines our perspective towards Phaedrus’ story. Phaedrus is the first to explain the aspiration for reputation in terms of immortality. For if, indeed, *philia* is the driving force behind ambition, and ambition is the means by which *eros* achieves immortality of name, then we have established our first connection between both *eros* with *philia* and *philia* with immortality.

The same retro-analysis can be done to the speech of Pausanias and his story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton:

\[\text{ὁ γὰρ Ἀριστογείτονος ἔρως καὶ Ἁρμοδίου φιλία βέβαιος γενομένη κατέλυσεν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρχήν.}\]²¹⁵

For the *eros* of Aristogeiton and the *philia* of Harmodius, having become steadfast, loosened their (the tyrants’) power.

In this instance, we find the same type of linear progression towards immortality, as the *eros* of Aristogeiton leads to the *philia* of Harmodius, which in turn leads to their immortality of name through slaying the tyrants. The immortality of name is the social judgment placed upon the actions spurred by *eros*. Without the social relationship of *philia*, both between Harmodius and Aristogeiton and between the pair and society as a whole, this immortality of name could not have been achieved.

²¹⁴ Symposium, 178d2
²¹⁵ Symposium, 182c5-7
Pausanias extends this concept beyond the realm of famous heroes such as Harmodius and Aristogeiton, or Alcestis and Achilles, to include the everyday affairs of the average Greek. He claims that an *erastes* could seek the same type of immortality of name through behaviors which he marks as worthy of social reproach:

\[
ei \gamma \rho \varsigma \chi \rho \acute{m}a \tau a \varepsilon \beta \omega \upsilon \lambda \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu o\zeta \varsigma \pi a \rho \alpha \tau a \nu o \lambda \alpha \beta e i \nu \eta \acute{a} \rho \chi \eta \nu \acute{a} \rho \acute{z}ai \iota \tau \iota \nu
\]

\[
\ddot{a}l\lambda \eta n \d\acute{u}n\acute{a}m\nu \acute{e} \theta \acute{e} \lambda o\iota \pi o\iota \epsilon \iota \omicron \acute{a} \pi a \acute{r} \sigma t\acute{a}i \rho \acute{r}o\varsigma \tau a \pi a i d\acute{i}k\acute{a},
\]

\[
\acute{i}k\acute{e}t\acute{e}i\acute{a}z \tau e \kappa a \iota \acute{a} \nu i \beta o\lambda \acute{h}\acute{e}\acute{s}eis \iota \kappa a \tau \iota \varsigma \delta \acute{e} \iota \varsigma e i o \iota \omicron \upmu \mu \acute{e}\nu m\acute{e}n\nu kai \acute{d}r\acute{k}o\varsigma
\]

\[
\acute{d}m\acute{n}\acute{\nu}n\acute{t}e\acute{s}e, \kappa a i \kappa o \mu \acute{h}\acute{e}\acute{s}eis \acute{e} \acute{p}i \theta \acute{u}r\acute{a}i\acute{e}s, \kappa a i \acute{e} \acute{b}\acute{e} \acute{l}o\acute{n}t\acute{e}se \delta \omicron \lambda \acute{e} \iota\acute{a}z \delta \omicron \lambda \acute{e} \acute{\nu}e\nu i
\]

\[
oi\acute{a}z \acute{o} \acute{n}d\acute{o} \acute{a} \acute{n} \delta \omicron \lambda \acute{\nu} \lambda o\acute{z} \acute{\omicron} \acute{d}e\acute{e}i\acute{e}s, \acute{e} \mu \acute{p}o \acute{d} \acute{i} \acute{z} \acute{o} \acute{i} o \acute{t} \acute{a} \acute{n} \mu \acute{h} \acute{e} \pi \acute{r} \acute{a} \acute{t} \acute{t} \acute{e}i \omega \iota \acute{t} \acute{\omicron} \iota \tau \iota \pi \acute{r} \acute{\acute{a}} \acute{\xi} \acute{e} \iota
\]

\[
\kappa a i \acute{\upsilon} \pi \acute{o} \acute{f} \acute{i} \lambda \acute{\omega}n kai \acute{\upsilon} \pi \acute{o} \acute{\acute{e}} \chi \acute{\theta} \acute{r} \acute{\alpha} \acute{n}. \text{\textsuperscript{216}}
\]

For if wishing to obtain money from anyone or to hold office or gain any other power, if he should wish to do the things *erastai* do to their favorites, making supplication and entreaties in their requests, and swearing oaths, and sleeping at doors, and willing to do acts of slavery as not even any slave would do, both by friends and enemies he would be prevented to perform such acts in this way.

Each of these actions involves a social relationship through *philia* which leads to a famous name. One can be fabulously wealthy, like King Croesus in Herodotus, or politically powerful through holding office. Such goals relate to one’s social standing and the way one is viewed and judged by one’s peers. By including this passage on wealth and power, Pausanias has introduced a means by which an average Greek could hope for immortality.

\textsuperscript{216} *Symposium*, 183a2-3
This type of immortality earned through *eros* and ambition continues with the speech of Eryximachus. In his case, we can take his entire speech as an act of self-praise as he associates *eros* with a physician. He begins this process by claiming:

\[ \alpha \rho \xi \omicron \omicron \mu \iota \delta \varepsilon \ \alpha \pi \omicron \omicron \tau \varsigma \ \iota \alpha \tau \rho \kappa \iota \varsigma \ \lambda \acute{e} \gamma \omicron \nu, \ \iota \nu \alpha \ \pi \rho \varepsilon \sigma \beta \varepsilon \upsilon \omega \mu 
i \tau \iota \nu \ \tau \acute{e} \chi \nu \eta. \]

I will begin by speaking from medicine, in order that we may pay honor to this skill.

Eryximachus then continues to build his speech upon the foundation that *eros* must be a physician. In making this claim, he has indirectly announced his intention to praise himself, as he is a physician. This self-aggrandizement is done with the same intention as those who seek money or power: immortality through fame. Again, this act is done through *philia*, as he is attempting to persuade his audience that the skill of the physician is the most worthy of praise. This act of praise (\( \pi \rho \varepsilon \sigma \beta \varepsilon \upsilon \omega \)) is a representation of the social relationship expressed through *philia*. If Eryximachus can persuade his audience that physicians are worthy of public praise and glory, he will achieve the same immortality of name as those *erastai* described by Phaedrus and Pausanias. In this way, he has followed the same formula, *philia* through *eros* \( \Rightarrow \) immortality, which Diotima described in her speech. Although Eryximachus has taken a more brazen approach, the end result is the same: glory by way of *eros* (in the form of the physician) and immortality through glory.

Agathon takes a similar approach to Eryximachus, as he equates *eros* to a poet. Being a famous poet himself, this again is a form of self-aggrandizement as he seeks to

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217 *Symposium*, 186b2-3
achieve his own immortality by equating himself to *eros*, just like Eryximachus. He first reveals his intention early on in his speech as he says:

\[ \piοιητοῦ δ᾽ ἑστὶν ἐνδεής οἶος ἢ Ὄμηρος πρὸς τὸ ἐπιδείξαι θεοῦ ἀπαλότητα. \] **218**

But he is in need of a poet of such a kind as Homer was, to display the tenderness of the god.

With this, Agathon has modeled himself after Homer, since *eros* is in need of a poet to praise him, and Agathon is fulfilling that role through his speech. This connection to poets will later be picked up by Socrates, as he claims that all poets are procreators through their work. This type of procreation is another path to immortality. **219** By modeling himself like Homer, Agathon is attempting to gain a similar immortal fame for himself. Like Eryximachus, though, he must first persuade his audience that *eros* is a poet and poets are worthy of such social praise.

This connection to Eryximachus is explicitly made as Agathon claims:

\[ καὶ πρῶτον μὲν, ἵν’ αὖ καὶ ἕγὼ τὴν ἡμετέραν τέχνην τιμήσω ὡσπερ Ἐρυξίμαχος τὴν αὕτην, ποιητής ὁ θεὸς σοφὸς οὕτως ὡστε καὶ ἄλλον ποιήσαι. \] **220**

And first, if once again I may honor our art just as Eryximachus honored his own, the god is a poet so wise as also to compose in others.

Here, Agathon has directly stated his intention to mimic the approach of Eryximachus by honoring his own art. Once again, he is using the verb *τιμάω*, which we have seen in

**218** Symposium, 195c7-d1  
**219** Symposium, 209a5  
**220** Symposium, 196d6-e2
connection with the honor that leads to immortality of name. Like Eryximachus, Agathon is attempting to persuade his audience that his art is worthy of being praised in a way that will bring him immortality of name. In doing this, he, like Eryximachus, is attempting to force a type of *philia* which will result in his being praised. Even though his approach is slightly different from his predecessors, Agathon is still attempting to obtain immortality through *philia*, as only through society judging his art worthy of the highest praise will he achieve the immortality of name that he seeks.

Having established the contexts in which humans can seek immortality of name through ambition and social praise, we must now move on to the second path described by Diotima. This path is immortality through procreation, and, as Diotima claims, this is the most common path sought by both men and animals alike. She states her claim in the following way:

κυούσιν γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἐν τινὶ ἥλικια γένωνται, τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡμῶν ἢ φύσις.²²¹

For all men are pregnant, Socrates, both in respect to the body and the soul, and whenever they become of a certain age, our nature desires to beget.

Here, Diotima has reiterated our previous claim that the desire of the body begins with *epithumia*. At the same time, she has also included procreation within the type of desire that belongs to the soul, *eros*. Once again, the realms of *epithumia* and *eros* overlap, as the progression moves from desire of the body to desire of the soul. This progression

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²²¹ *Symposium*, 206c1-4
leads to the *erastes/eromenos* relationship, through which one can achieve immortality through procreation. She goes on to explain this process in more detail:

...ἡ θνητὴ φύσις ζητεῖ κατὰ τὸ δύνατὸν ἀεὶ τε εἶναι καὶ ἀθάνατος.

δύναται δὲ ταύτῃ μόνον, τῇ γενέσει, ὅτι ἀεὶ καταλείπει ἕτερον νέον ἀντὶ τοῦ παλαιοῦ...²²²

...the mortal nature seeks as far as it is able to exist forever and be immortal. It is able only in this way, by generation, that it always leaves behind a new thing in place of the old...

She goes on to explain this process as one of replenishment, as through procreation one is able to pass along his name, legacy, and literally his flesh and blood to the next generation. Through this process, she claims, one can never die as one continues on through procreation.

This argument has at its core the same principle of *philia* leading to immortality. In procreation, the *philia* is twofold, as first there must be the specific type of relationship caused by *eros*, that of the *erastes* and *eromenos*. As previously mentioned, this type of relationship, since it is guided by *eros*, has the ability to project wishes and desires into the future, allowing for the desire to have children and, therefore, immortality. Second, procreation can also lead to immortality of name. This can be achieved if one has a large number of children, which is deemed worthy and glorious by society, or if those children go on to perform heroic deeds. Either way, the act of having children involves the social relationship encompassed by *philia*.

²²² *Symposium*, 207d1-3
The last path to immortality that Diotima describes is through wisdom and philosophy. This approach is often viewed by modern scholarship as being the main focus of the entire *Symposium*. And yet, at its core, it follows the same principle as the previous two methods of obtaining immortality. Diotima begins her description by doubting the ability of Socrates to succeed in this endeavor:

τὰ ίσα, ὦ Σώκρατες, κἂν σὺ μνηθεῖς: τὰ δὲ τέλεα καὶ ἐποτικὰ, ὃν ἑνεκα καὶ ταύτα ἐστὶν, ἓαν τις ὅρθως μετίη, σὺν οἴδ' εἰ οἶδς τ' ἂν εἴης.²²³

Perhaps even you, Socrates, might be initiated into these erotics, but I do not know if you would be able to approach the rites and revelations on account of which these things are also pursued, if someone should be properly instructed.

This passage is of particular interest for our study, as Diotima is saying that those who procreate and those who seek fame are desiring happiness for themselves. These types of goals are not the true cause of happiness or the good or beauty, but intermediate forms.

This is reminiscent of the *Lysis*, which states that one should always search for the primary cause of what humans hold dear. The term used in that argument is “πρῶτον φίλον,” or the primary relationship “on account of which all other things are deemed to be dear (οὐ ἑνεκα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα φαμέν πάντα φίλα εἶναι).”²²⁴ This primary relationship will be revealed as the form of beauty. Once again, the path to obtaining this final goal is achieved through a concept related to *philia* (πρῶτον φίλον), as one needs to achieve a particular social relationship in order to view the form. For Diotima, this

²²³ *Symposium*, 209e5-210a2
²²⁴ Plato, *Lysis*, 219d1-2
relationship begins within the erastes and eromenos, as the erastes is able to contemplate true beauty. She describes this original relationship as a process of abstraction as the erastes moves from the desire of beautiful bodies, to the desire of beauty itself:

…καὶ πρῶτον μὲν… ἐνὸς αὐτὸν σῶματος ἐρᾶν καὶ ἑνταῦθα γεννᾶν λόγους καλοὺς, ἔπειτα δὲ αὐτὸν κατανοῆσαι ὅτι τὸ κάλλος τὸ ἐπὶ ὅτως ἄνω σῶματι τῷ ἐπὶ ἑτέρῳ σῶματι ἀδελφὸν ἐστι…

…and first… he desires one single body and at that point there to beget beautiful discourse, then to recognize that the beauty on any body is akin to that on any other body…

At this point, the erastes has recognized that beauty is not unique to single bodies, but shared across all bodies. With this moment of recognition, the erastes contemplates beauty further and brings the abstraction to beauty of the body rather than soul:

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τὸ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κάλλος τιμιώτερον ἡγησασθαί τοῦ ἐν τῷ σῶματι…

Next he comes to believe that this beauty in souls is more valued than beauty in bodies…

Finally, the erastes arrives at the form of beauty itself, the πρῶτον φίλον from which all other forms of beauty emerge, but are simply imitations. She then explains this touching of the form of beauty as being true immortality:

ἡ οὐκ ἐνθυμη, ὅτι ἑνταῦθα αὐτῶ μοναχοῦ γενήσεται, ὁρῶντι ὃ ὁρατὸν τὸ καλὸν, τίκτειν οὐκ εἰδώλα ἀρετῆς, ἄτε οὐκ εἰδώλου ἐφαπτομένω, ἀλλὰ

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225 Symposium, 210a6-b1
226 Symposium, 210b6-7
ἀληθῆ, ἄτε τοὺς ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ καὶ θρεψαμένῳ ὑπάρχῃ θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι, καὶ εἰπέρ τῷ ἀλλῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ.\footnote{Symposium, 212a2-7}

Or are you not convinced, that then alone it will befall him, in seeing the beautiful through that which it is visible, to beget not images of virtue, because he does not touch an image, but the true virtue, because he touches the truth? But begetting true virtue and nourishing it, it is possible for him to become dear to the god, and if any other among mortal men is immortal, he is, too.

With this, Diotima has arrived at the ultimate goal of eros, the touching of the form. Her description of the process by which one achieves immortality through wisdom mimics our own baseline of epithumia, eros, and philia. The progression begins with desire of the body (epithumia), moves to desire of the soul (eros), and through the social relationship created by eros (philia), one achieves immortality.

Once more, Diotima has indicated through her syntax that the method through which one obtains this sort of immortality is philia, as by touching the form, one becomes “dear to the god.” This is a description of a social relationship, between the erastes and the form, through which by touching true immortality, one becomes immortal. This process is done completely through abstraction of thought, brought on by the beauty of the eromenos. Just as the ultimate goal is achieved through philia, it also begins with philia, as the erastes/eromenos relationship is the vehicle though which eros obtains true immortality. Whereas fame and procreation can lead to a type of immortality, Diotima
claims that these are but images of the form. If one is to obtain the purest form of immortality, one must advance through thought and wisdom, being guided by *eros*.

Each of these three types of immortality are obtained through different paths. One involves sexual activity, while the others involve performing noble deeds and pursuing wisdom. This variation of methods allows for mostly everyone to achieve some form of immortality. And yet, even with these various paths, at the core of each lies a relationship involving *philia*. This relationship between the *erastes* and other humans, society as a whole, or the gods, is the key to obtaining the desires of *eros*. Immortality is a subjective concept, which cannot be self-proclaimed but must be granted by society or the gods. Through *philia*, those spurred on by *eros* are able to perform actions that lead to social approval and praise, the passing on of legacy and name, and the procurement of true wisdom and virtue. For this reason, *philia* stands apart from *epithumia* and *eros* within our paradigm, but without it, *eros* cannot function and immortality cannot be achieved. In her speech, Diotima draws upon the common understanding that *eros* achieves its desires through *philia* and adds a new dimension in which the ultimate goal of *eros* is immortality. In this way, Diotima has taken the *langue* of both *eros* and *philia*, interpreted them in a new way through her individualized *parole*, and in doing so persuaded the group of symposiasts to modify the common *langue*. 
Chapter 4: Interpretation

Through our methodology of analyzing both the similarities and differences within each speech of the Symposium, we have identified a set of fundamental characteristics of our paradigm of epithumia, eros, and philia which provides a guideline for understanding the meaning and function of each word within the text. With this new explication of the individual words, we are now able to turn our attention towards interpreting the larger philosophical message of the Symposium which these words create. Since eros stands as the main theme of the narrative, by changing the way in which we understand eros, new interpretations of the entire work can arise.

While this type of global study of the work as a whole could lead to many conclusions, our study will focus only on those that are directly related to our methodology. These new interpretations represent the synthesis of all the information our study has gleaned concerning eros and directly alter the standard reading of the Symposium. Specifically, our study shows that Socrates and eros are directly related in a more complex manner than originally thought, and that connection makes the entire work a rhetorical and philosophical representation of the same linear progression from epithumiai to eros to philia to immortality that our study revealed. Socrates will be shown to be the embodiment of eros, both by his peers and his own characterization of himself, and the ramifications of his role will reveal why he is both the means and obstruction for achieving true wisdom.
Section A: The difference between *eros* and *erotics*

Within the *Symposium* there is a significant contradiction concerning the topic of discourse. While the speakers make it abundantly clear that they are crafting speeches in praise of *eros*, in the prologue we are told that some speeches were on *ta erotikα*, or the things concerning *eros*. Again, our methodology claims that these two terms, *eros* and erotics, might overlap, but are not redundant. Since Plato is very deliberate in the syntax of each speaker, this discrepancy cannot be accidental. At the same time, since no previous interpretation of the *Symposium* has made clear the distinction between *eros* and its related words, this discrepancy has often been overlooked. When approached through the lens of our methodology, however, we are able to create a justified explanation for the difference.

The passage concerning erotics occurs as Apollodorus is speaking with the unnamed stranger who approaches him on the street. The stranger proceeds to inquire about the symposium which, at this time, happened many years ago:

Ἀπολλόδωρε, καὶ μὴν καὶ ἑναγχός σε ἑξῆτων βουλὸμενος διαπυθέσθαι τὴν Ἀγαθόνος συνουσίαν καὶ Σωκράτους καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τότε ἐν τῷ συνδείπνῳ παραγενομένων, περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγων τίνες ἦσαν.

Apolloidos, actually I have just now been looking for you, as I want to find out about the banquet of *Agathon* and *Socrates* and *Alcibiades* and the others present in that symposium, and what were the speeches they delivered concerning erotics.

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228 *Symposium*, 172a6-b3
The stranger has categorized the speeches as concerning erotics, not *eros*. While this may seem like semantics, since erotics is clearly a derivative of *eros*, we will see that only a few of the speakers categorize their own speeches, or have them categorized by others, as concerning erotics. This selectivity of who is actually speaks about erotics is highlighted by this stranger, as he specifically isolates Agathon, Socrates and Alcibiades. As we will see in the text, this triad is not chosen arbitrarily.

As the structural framework of the text shifts to the symposium itself, we find another clue as to the distinction between erotics and *eros*. After Eryximachus suggests that the group deliver speeches concerning *eros*, Socrates gives his approval of the idea and proceeds to affirm his own knowledge of the subject:

\[
\text{οὐδεὶς σοι, ὦ Ἕρυξίμαχε, ἐναντία ψηφιεῖται. οὐτε γὰρ ἂν πον ἐγὼ
ἀποφήσαιμι, ὃς οὐδὲν φημὶ ἀλλο ἐπίστασθαι ἢ τὰ ἐρωτικὰ...}^{229}
\]

No one, Eryximachus, will vote against you. For neither would I refuse in any way, I who claim to know nothing else than erotics…

Here, even though Eryximachus had suggested speeches in praise of *eros*, Socrates claims that his only knowledge is not of *eros*, but of erotics. This corroborates the claim of Apollodorus’ unnamed stranger, who identified Socrates as one of the symposiasts who spoke about erotics. These two passages highlight an underlying distinction between erotics and *eros* and, as we look more closely at the speeches themselves, we find that this difference is one of, if not the, main themes of the entire work.

The term erotics does not appear in, or in relation to, the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, or Aristophanes, further justifying their absence in the claim of the stranger.

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229 *Symposium*, 177d6-8
Its first appearance is within the speech of Eryximachus and his description of the medicine within the human body:

\[
\text{ἔστι γάρ ιατρική, ὡς ἐν κεφαλαίῳ εἰπεῖν, ἑπιστήμη τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἐρωτικῶν πρὸς πλησιμνῆν καὶ κένωσιν...}^{230}
\]

For medicine is, so as to speak in total, the knowledge of erotics of the body with respect to fullness and emptiness…

He goes on to describe a variety of different applications of erotics in the same manner including music (καὶ ἐστὶν αὐτον ὑμνησική περὶ ἀρμονίαν καὶ ρυθμον ἐρωτικῶν ἑπιστήμη “and on the other hand music is knowledge of erotics concerning harmony and rhythm”),^{231} harmony and rhythm (καὶ ἐν μὲν γε αὐτῇ τῇ συντάσει ἀρμονίας τε καὶ ρυθμον οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν τὰ ἐρωτικὰ διαγιγνώσκειν “and indeed in this construction itself of harmony and rhythm it is not difficult to distinguish erotics”),^{232} and natural disruptions (καὶ γὰρ πάχναι καὶ χάλαζαι καὶ ἐρυσίβαι ἐκ πλεονεξίας καὶ ἀκοσμίας περὶ ἄλληλα τῶν τοιούτων γίγνεται ἐρωτικών “likewise hoar-frosts, hails, and mildews, which spring from mutual encroachments and disorders in such erotics”).^{233}

Finally, Eryximachus contextualizes all of these different representations of erotics within the mantic, who he claims is the one who holds true knowledge of erotics:

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230 *Symposium*, 186c5-7  
231 *Symposium*, 187c4-5  
232 *Symposium*, 187c5-7  
233 *Symposium*, 188b3-5
καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῇ ἡ μαντικὴ φιλίας θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων δημιουργὸς τῷ ἐπιστασθαί τὰ κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ἐρωτικά, ὅσα τείνει πρὸς θέμν καὶ εὐσέβειαν. 234

And that mantic who knows what human erotics concern custom and piety; he is the creator of *philia* between gods and men.

With this final thought, Eryximachus has contextualized our entire paradigm within the function of the mantic. He claims that the mantic is able to understand how erotics leads to *philia*, which we have established as the path to immortality. While the physician seeks this immortality of fame from his reputation, erotics is the knowledge through which this immortality is achieved. Ironically, Eryximachus, while he understands that erotics is the path to understanding *eros*, does not know erotics himself, as he does not mention the *erastes/eromenos* relationship at all in his speech. Since we know that the *erastes/eromenos* relationship leads to immortality, its absence is noticeable and relates to the lack of true understanding that Eryximachus has for the subject. Nonetheless, at this point in the work we are not fully cognizant of how Eryximachus is envisioning this type of mantic, both in character and function. For this, we must turn to the speech of Socrates and Diotima, whose explanation of the workings of *eros* and erotics will clarify and expand upon this foundation Eryximachus has laid.

Before Socrates even delivers his speech, his connection to erotics is made explicit through the comments of his peers. Once more Eryximachus is the one who claims that Socrates and Agathon are knowledgeable in erotics. Since we now know that Eryximachus has some sort of understanding of erotics himself, it is logical that he would

234 *Symposium*, 188c7-d2
be the one to characterize Agathon and Socrates as knowledgeable on the subject. He makes this claim after the speech of Aristophanes but before that of Agathon:

\[
καὶ εἰ μὴ συνήδη Σωκράτει τε καὶ Αγάθωνι δεινοῖς οὐσὶ περὶ τὰ ἐρωτικά,
πάνυ ἂν ἐφοβούμην μὴ ἀπορήσωσι λόγων διὰ τὸ πολλὰ καὶ παντοδαπὰ
eἰρήσθαι: νῦν δὲ ὁμως θαρρῶ.\]

235

And if I was not aware that both Socrates and Agathon were formidable concerning erotics, altogether I would have feared they were at a loss of speech as many things of all kinds have been spoken; nonetheless now I am confident.

Again, Socrates and Agathon are isolated from the group as being especially well-informed of erotics. This marks a distinct shift in the dialogue, as Agathon will be the first to attempt to describe the nature of eros rather than its actions toward mankind. He directly claims this to be his methodology at the beginning of his speech:

\[
οὔτω δὴ τὸν ἐρωτα καὶ ἴμας δίκαιον ἐπαινέσαι πρῶτον αὐτὸν οἰός ἐστίν,
ἐπειτα τὰς δόσεις.\]

236

Thus it is right that we praise eros first for what sort he is, then for his gifts.

Even though Agathon will not use the term erotics, it is because of this shift in methodology that he is proclaimed knowledgeable in erotics. As we will see in the speech of Socrates, the concept of understanding the nature of eros rather than its gifts to humans lies at the heart of Diotima’s explanation of erotics.

While these previous contexts do introduce some of the qualities of erotics and how it differs from eros, neither Eryximachus nor Agathon is able to provide a full

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235 Symposium, 193e4-7
236 Symposium, 195a3-5
explanation. The reason for this is that they have not been led by someone who knows erotics, as Diotima will do for Socrates. In fact, when Socrates describes his conversation with Diotima, he identifies it as a lesson in erotics:

\[ \text{ἡ δὴ καὶ ἐμὲ τὰ ἐρωτικὰ ἐδίδαξεν...}^{237} \]

Indeed she also taught me erotics…

He reiterates this point later as he claims “all these things she taught me, when she made discourse concerning erotics (ταῦτα τὲ οὖν πάντα ἐδίδασκέ με, ὡπότε περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγους ποιοῖτο).”^{238}

These passages all point to the lesson of Diotima as being the source of Socrates’ knowledge. Therefore, we are able to define erotics based upon her lessons. The first clue as to its function is Diotima herself. She is described as a mantic and healer of the Athenian plague, the same description given by Eryximachus in his portrayal of the physician. This is telling, since in both cases, the mantic and physician are described as guides or teachers. This is precisely the function of Diotima as she guides Socrates along the path of obtaining immortality.

If we think about Diotima in the role of teacher or guide, erotics can be thought of as her lesson, since this is how she teaches Socrates. These lessons are a series of questions intended to modify Socrates’ way of thinking from the types of eros described by the previous symposiasts in terms of his gifts to mankind, to eros as being the intermediate daimon between mortal and immortal. This focus on the nature of eros as opposed to his gifts is the same argument introduced by Agathon, but explained in detail by Socrates. Having been initiated into these teaching on erotics, Socrates is now worthy

237 Symposium, 201d5
238 Symposium, 207a5-6
of the moniker given to him by his peers and his own self-proclaimed knowledge of erotics. He even admits his own secret knowledge by referring to himself as a mantic, since after the speech of Agathon he claims, “but did I not say the things I was saying just now like a mantic, namely that Agathon would speak marvelously and I will be at a loss (ἀλλ’ οὐ μαντικῶς ἄ νυνδὴ ἕλεγον εἶπείν, ὅτι Ἀγάθων θαυμαστῶς ἔροι, ἐγὼ δ’ ἀπορήσομι)?”239 Socrates has inherited the same mantic qualities that Diotima had and that Eryximachus first alluded to in his speech.

Thinking about erotics in this way, we see that the true lesson Diotima is offering Socrates is the guidance of how to achieve immortality through philia, in this case philia of sophia. This point is reflected in her name, as Diotima can be taken as “honored by Zeus,” a reflection of the ultimate goal of immortality, becoming theophiles. The honor aspect of Diotima’s name refers to the same time of social relationship established through philia and theophilos. As the leader of those seeking immortality, Diotima is showing Socrates how to create the necessary philia in order to become immortal. Her role echoes the intermediate nature of eros itself.

The last speaker of our marked group is Alcibiades, who, arriving late to the symposium, still uses the term erotics in a very peculiar manner. Within his speech, Alcibiades reveals that he was once taught erotics by Socrates. This is a key fact, since he goes on to imply that he never finished the training and has since rejected it, resulting in his grudge toward Socrates. Nonetheless, these two are particularly marked by Plato, as he describes a connection between both men and the form of beauty. Diotima describes

239 Symposium, 198a5-7
the form as arriving “suddenly (ἐξαίφνης)”240 which is the same term used to describe both Socrates’ arrival at Agathon’s party241 and Alcibiades’ arrival later on in the narrative.242 This language connects the two men to each other in a manner that suggests the *philia* they shared towards obtaining the form through wisdom. Likewise, both men claim that they can only speak the truth. Socrates says “ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ὑπ’ ἄβελτερίας ὤμην δεῖν τὰληθὴ λέγειν περὶ ἐκάστου τοῦ ἐγκωμιαζομένου (for I, by simple-mindedness thought it to be necessary to speak the truth concerning each thing being praised),”243 while Alcibiades makes a similar claim by saying “δυμος εὖ οίδ’ ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγω (nevertheless, I know well that I am speaking the truth).”244

In addition to being connected through language and descriptions, both men are also connected through erotics, for, as previously mentioned, Socrates taught them to Alcibiades. Although this lesson seems to have failed, the connection between both men remains, which after Alcibiades’ speech we are told by our narrator Aristodemus:

εἰπόντος δὴ ταῦτα τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου γέλωτα γενέσθαι ἐπὶ τῇ παρρησίᾳ αὐτῶν, ὅτι ἐδόκει ἐτί ἐρωτικῶς ἔχειν τοῦ Σωκράτους.245

After these had been said by Alcibiades there arose laughter towards his frankness, because he still seemed to be erotically held by Socrates.

240 *Symposium*, 210e4
241 *Symposium*, 213c1
242 *Symposium*, 212c6
243 *Symposium*, 198d3-4
244 *Symposium*, 213a1
245 *Symposium*, 222c1-3
This erotic connection is based upon the teaching given by Socrates to Alcibiades. In that relationship, Socrates was acting as a teacher in the same manner as Diotima, while Alcibiades was acting as a student in the same manner as Socrates had previously been.

Once again, erotics is related to the knowledge required for the obtainment of immortality. This separates it from *eros*, since it is not *eros* itself, but the teachings concerning the nature of *eros* that lead one to immortality. These passages suggest that erotics is the term applied to the knowledge of how to describe the true nature of *eros*, something that only Socrates is able to do, since he has been taught by Diotima. This explains why he originally claims that he is not wise, but only wise in erotics. Wisdom is listed by Diotima as being one of the paths to immortality. Socrates, as someone who is famous for proclaiming himself not wise, has not achieved immortality through wisdom, but knows how such a desire could be accomplished. For this reason, he is singled out from the other speakers of the *Symposium*, along with Agathon and Alcibiades, who seem to have the basic understanding of erotics but not to the same extent as Socrates. Also, just as Socrates once taught Alcibiades, through his speech of Diotima he is directly addressing Agathon. It is this connection of student and teacher concerning erotics that distinguishes these three men and justifies the original claim of the unnamed stranger to Apollodorus.

When we apply this distinction of erotics and *eros* to the entire work, we see that the *Symposium* as a whole can be interpreted as a comment on erotics, rather than *eros*. The first four speakers are attempting to describe *eros*, but are lacking the proper training and guidance. Therefore, their efforts fall short as none seem to have truly grasped the nature of *eros*, as opposed to its deeds toward mankind. Just as images of beauty are
mistaken for the form of beauty, the first four speakers are mistaking the deeds of *eros* for *eros* itself. The erotics taught by Diotima and Socrates are an attempt to see through these images and obtain the pure form. In this way, the entire work is a reflection of the distinction between *eros* and erotics.

**Section B: Socrates is Eros**

While the discrepancy between *eros* and erotics displayed the separation of Socrates from the rest of the speakers, it does leave one last question: what exactly is the role of Socrates in the *Symposium*? There can be no doubt that Socrates is elevated above the rest in his knowledge of erotics and the path towards immortality. His speech is positioned as the last of the original six, and his content is a synthesis of all the themes and arguments of the previous speeches into one overarching perception of both the nature of *eros* and its function for humanity. Additionally, the structure of the *Symposium* stresses the speech of Socrates by having it occur directly in the middle of the work. Even with this advantage of position, Socrates’ speech is neither a refutation nor endorsement of the previous five speeches. Rather, his speech is didactic, as he seeks to teach his listeners, especially Agathon, the same lessons that he was taught by Diotima. This is the true role of Socrates, as he, like Diotima, is the mantic guide who leads one who is ignorant on the path to wisdom. He is neither wise nor ignorant, but acts as the intermediate between the two, having never touched the form but knowing of how one *could* touch it; in a way, Socrates is the embodiment of *eros*. 
The first glimpse of Socrates in this role occurs in the prologue with Apollodorus talking to the unnamed stranger. With the first line of the work, Apollodorus tells the stranger that he has told the story of the Symposium many times:

δοκῶ μοι περὶ ὧν πυνθάνεσθε οὐκ ἀμελέτητος εἶναι.246

I seem to be not unprepared of the things you inquire.

Apollodorus appears to have repeated the story so often, or found the story so valuable, that he has it almost completely memorized. Also, the story was so well-known that apparent strangers were stopping him on the street asking to hear the story. This complex and confusing opening compels us to ask why Plato has even included it. One reason is dramatic, since if so many people are eager to hear the story so long after it happened it must have been something extraordinary. Secondly, the information exchanged within the symposium is marked as special and exclusive. This second consequence of such an opening relates directly back to Socrates as eros, since he has a group of followers so eager to hear his words that they run about seeking all the information they can gather. Apollodorus includes himself in this group as he describes to the stranger his own devotion to Socrates:

οὐκ ὁίσθ᾽ ὧτι πολλῶν ἐτῶν Ἀγάθων ἐνθάδε οὐκ ἐπιθετήμηκεν, ἀφ᾽ οὗ δ᾽ ἐγὼ Σωκράτει συνδιατίβω καὶ ἐπιμελὲς πεποίημαι ἕκαστης ἡμέρας εἰδέναι ὧτι ἄν λέγῃ ἡ πράττῃ, οὐδέπω τρία ἔτη ἐστίν;247

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246 Symposium, 172a1-2
247 Symposium, 172c3-6
Did you not know that for many years Agathon has not been home, and it is not yet three years that I have been spending time with Socrates and making it my daily care to know whatever he says or does?

He then proceeds to state the cause for this devoted behavior:

\[ \pi ρ\ ο\ το\υ\ δ\ ς\ \piε\ρι\πρ\έ\χ\ω\ν\ \delta\ π\ η\ \tau\υ\χ\ο\ι\μ\υ\ κ\ά\ ι\ ο\ι\ό\μ\ε\ν\ο\ς\ \tau\ι\ \pi\ο\ι\ε\ι\ν\ \\alpha\θ\λ\ι\ώ\τ\ε\ρ\ος\ \\eta\ \\\\\\\? \]
\[ \ο\τ\ο\υ\ο\ν\υ\,\ ο\υ\χ\ \\eta\π\τ\ο\ν\ \\eta\ \\sigma\υ\ \nu\nu\ι\,\ \\ ο\ι\ό\μ\ε\ν\ο\ς\ \\delta\ε\ι\ν\ \π\ά\ν\τ\α\ \\mu\ά\λ\λ\ο\ν\ \\π\ρ\ά\τ\τ\ε\ι\ν\ \η\ \\\phi\ι\λ\ο\σ\ο\φ\έ\ι\ν\cdot\]248

Before that time, running around at random and thinking I was doing something, I was more wretched than anyone, not less than you are now, thinking it necessary to perform everything rather than philosophize.

With these lines, Apollodorus reveals that the search for philosophy is what compels him to devotedly follow Socrates. He is attempting to gain immortality through wisdom and in doing so he has identified Socrates as the manner through which he believes he will accomplish his pursuit.

Once again, this places Socrates in the role of teacher and guide. This is, in fact, the role of eros, as our methodology showed that eros and its desires of the soul lead to the desire for philosophy. What Apollodorus seems to be missing is that eros is always the intermediate, not the end result, a concept that relates back to whether we possess that which we desire. In pursuing Socrates so devotedly, he is creating the wrong type of philia, as he needs the erastes/eromenos relationship as the vehicle through which he can find the true form of beauty. Even though his approach is flawed, Apollodorus has still

\[248\ Symposion, 173a1-3\]
shown that Socrates is acting as a physical manifestation of eros within a human being, guiding those around him to pursuits of the soul and immortality through erotics.

While the prologue introduces this idea, it only becomes clear through the context of the symposium itself and the manner in which the symposiasts refer to Socrates. The first speech to do this is that of Diotima as she describes her own creation myth of eros. She claims that eros is neither immortal nor divine, but something in between which she calls a daimon:

\[ \text{ὡσ̄περ τὰ πρότερα, μεταξὺ θνητοῦ καὶ άθανάτου…δαίμων μέγας, ὥ } \]
\[ \text{Σώκρατες: καὶ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ δαίμονιον μεταξὺ ἐστὶ θεοῦ τε καὶ θνητοῦ.} \]

As I said formerly, between mortal and immortal…a great daimon, Socrates, for all of the spiritual is between the gods and mortals.

She goes on to claim that this intermediate state is due to the parents of eros, Poros (resource) and Penia (lack). Diotima goes on to claim that this places eros between ignorance and wisdom, something Socrates calls himself, as he says he is not wise and yet knows of erotics.

This intermediate state of eros as constantly between lack and possession, ignorance and wisdom, and body and soul is the same set of characteristics used to describe Socrates. By coming to Diotima, Socrates depicts himself as the man searching for answers but in need of guidance, as he lacks the necessary knowledge of eros and erotics. At the same time, in making his speech he is, in fact, teaching the rest of the symposiasts the lessons he once learned. In doing so, his role has reversed as he has become the possessor of knowledge. And yet, he repeatedly claims that he is not wise but

\[249\text{ Symposium, 202d11-e1}\]
only knows erotics. These characteristics all work in unison to portray a man who is between wisdom and ignorance, with the ability to guide those who seek the truths of philosophy.

In his role as the guide, Socrates describes the process of learning erotics through the language of the mystery cults. He does this through the words of Diotima as she questions his ability to learn this secret knowledge:

\[ \tau\alpha\tau\alpha \mu\varepsilon\nu \sigma\nu \tau\alpha \varepsilon\rho\omega\tau\iota\kappa\alpha \iota\sigma\omega \zeta , \omega \Sigma\alpha\kappa\rho\alpha\tau\varepsilon\zeta , \kappa\alpha\nu \sigma\nu \mu\nu\eta\theta\iota\epsilon\iota\zeta : \tau\alpha \delta \varepsilon \tau\epsilon\ell\epsilon\alpha \kappa\alpha \varepsilon \rho\omega\tau\iota\kappa\alpha \iota \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota \nu , \dot{\epsilon} \alpha\nu \tau\iota\zeta \omega \rho\theta\omega\zeta \mu\varepsilon\tau\iota\eta , \sigma\nu \kappa\alpha \iota \sigma\iota \varepsilon \iota \zeta . \]

For perhaps even you, Socrates, might be initiated into these erotics; but I do not know if you would be able to be initiated into the rights and revelations, on account of which these things exist, if one pursues them correctly.

Diotima’s language is that of the mystery cults, as Socrates must be “initiated” into the “rights and revelations.” This terminology makes the knowledge that Socrates learned secret, which explains the zeal with which the unnamed stranger interrogates Apollodorus at the beginning of the dialogue.

This verb, muesthai, enhances the secret nature of Socrates’ knowledge as it implies silence. Likewise, ta epoptika is the language of that which is seen in the initiation into a mystery cult. This helps describe the syntax Socrates, through Diotima, uses since, having been initiated, he attempts to teach the others through optical language. His optically descriptive verbs include \( \theta\varepsilon\alpha\sigma\alpha\sigma\theta\alpha\iota , \iota\delta\epsilon\iota , \iota\delta\eta , \theta\varepsilon\omega\rho\omega\nu , \kappa\alpha\tau\iota\delta\eta , \theta\varepsilon\omega\mu\varepsilon\nu\zeta , \) and \( \kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\omicron\psi\omicron\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota , \) all of which mean to see or observe with particular.

\[ ^{250} \text{Symposium, 209e5-210a2} \]
reference to contemplation through the mind’s eye. Diotima will even explain this
necessity for optical syntax by claiming “there is not any description (οὐδὲ τις
λόγος)”²⁵¹ for the form of beauty.

With this emphasis on Socrates as the possessor of secret knowledge and the lack
of the ability to express that knowledge, we see that Socrates is not able to teach wisdom
to his students. Rather, he is only able to guide them along the path towards wisdom.
This, again, is a reflection of *eros*, which cannot ever possess that which it desires, as
evidenced by the fact that one only desires that which one does not have. The rest is up to
the individual seeking wisdom, as their experience is based upon *ta epoptika*, that which
is seen. This moment of the final encounter with the form is the realm of *philia*, as one
establishes the social relationship with true beauty, through contemplation of the
*eromenos*, and gains the immortality he seeks. This is not what Socrates
offers in his
speech, since, as he says, he is not able to describe in words the moment of realization; it
must be seen and experienced on an individual basis. What Socrates provides is a path
towards obtaining *philia* and immortality through his teachings of erotics. In this way,
Socrates is a reflection of Diotima, and both are embodiments of *eros*.

This characterization of Socrates is repeated by Alcibiades, as he too was once a
student of Socrates attempting to achieve true wisdom through philosophical teaching. In
his speech, Alcibiades calls Socrates “shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος),”²⁵² “resourceful
(ἐυπόρως),”²⁵³ and a “daimon (τῷ δαιμονίῳ).”²⁵⁴ These are the exact words Socrates

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²⁵¹ *Symposium*, 211a7
²⁵² *Symposium*, 220b6
²⁵³ *Symposium*, 223a8
²⁵⁴ *Symposium*, 219c1
uses to describe eros, which he also calls “shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος),” 255 “resourceful (εὐπορήση),” 256 and a “daimon (τὸ δαίμονιον).” 257 Alcibiades goes on to equate Socrates’ teachings to the mystery cults by comparing him to the satyr Marsyas:

καὶ φημὶ αὐ̣ ἐοικέναι αὐ̣ τὸν τῷ σατύρῳ τῷ Μαρσύᾳ...ὁ μὲν γε δι᾽ ὁργάνων ἐκήλει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῇ ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος δυνάμει, καὶ ἔτι νῦν ὃς ἀν τὰ ἐκεῖνον αὐλῇ...τὰ ὁν ἐκεῖνον ἐάντε ἀγαθὸς αὐλητής αὐλῇ ἐάντε φαύλη αὐλητρίς, μόνα κατέχεσθαι ποιεῖ καὶ δηλοῖ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν τε καὶ τελετῶν δεομένους διὰ τὸ θεῖα εἶναι. 258

And I say that he is like the satyr Marsyas...on account of instruments, he charmed people by the power of his mouth, and those who pipe his music do so even now...but whether those are played by a good flutist or a paltry flute-girl, this alone makes possession and reveals those lacking both the gods and rites of initiation, because it is divine.

Here, Alcibiades has used the same terminology to describe the erotics Socrates teaches by comparison to the revelations and rites of initiation of the mystery cults. Like that of Socrates, Alcibiades’ description of erotics involves the same type of optical language, as the rites are seen (δηλοῖ), not spoken. In doing this, Alcibiades, even though he has not had the benefit of hearing Socrates’ description of the true nature of eros, has equated Socrates to eros by making him the guide to secret knowledge. Through Socrates, one learns the initiations and rites into the mystery cult of wisdom. Since Socrates is only the

255 Symposium, 203d1
256 Symposium, 203e2
257 Symposium, 202d13
258 Symposium, 215b3-215c6
guide towards and not the possessor of that wisdom, he is once again placed in the role of
the intermediate: the role of eros.

The comparison of Socrates to eros is a major theme of the entire work. It has its
origin in the prologue and gradually develops throughout each speech, culminating in the
description of Alcibiades. He is described as the mantic and philosopher, the one who
possesses secret knowledge, and the connection between ignorance and wisdom. The key
to understanding this description of Socrates is to make sure we correctly assess his role.
Our baseline of eros serves as a useful guide in doing this.

Like eros, Socrates requires an erastes/eromenos relationship in order to fulfill his
goal of teaching a student about erotics. We see this in the speech of Alcibiades, who
admits that, although he was un成功的 in his attempt, he did at one time serve as the
erastes of Socrates in order to obtain wisdom. Also, Socrates is a causal agent, since
Alcibiades describes the sensation of hearing Socrates speak as being a form of
possession:

"ὅταν γὰρ ἀκούω, πολὺ μοι μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν κορυβαντιώντων ἢ τε καρδία
πηδά καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων τῶν τούτων, ὡρῶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλους παμπόλλους τὰ αὐτὰ πάσχοντας."

For whenever I hear him, my heart leaps, much more than those affected by the
Corybantes, and tears flow by his words, and I see many others affected in the
same way.

259 Symposium, 215e1-4
The words of Socrates are described in the same manner as *eros*: the external force that enters the body and causes a particular kind of behavior that would not have existed otherwise.

Additionally, Socrates, like *eros*, is portrayed as being morally ambiguous, since he does not seem to care about the behaviors he causes in others. The two examples of this are Agathon and Alcibiades, the two students in this work. Socrates never tells Agathon that his actions are worthy of praise or reproach, he simply corrects his statements and teaches him “the truth.” Likewise, he holds no judgment of the behaviors of Alcibiades, who has cast aside the teachings of Socrates in order to pursue a life of politics and ambition. In both cases, Socrates does not seem troubled by either type of behavior, but simply moves on to find another student. Finally, the erotics Socrates teaches are only possible through social relationships. In the case of Socrates and his students, the *philia* is created by Socrates’ encouragement of the proper *erastes/eromenos* relationship, through which an *erastes* can achieve immortality through wisdom. This is expressed through the speech of Diotima and her description of an ascent up a metaphorical ladder towards the form of beauty. In her description, the beginning is always finding an *eromenos* through which the *erastes* can contemplate the higher forms of beauty.

These traits, coupled with the speech of Alcibiades, point toward Socrates as the human embodiment of *eros*. His actions mimic those of the *daimon* he describes; a fact that is noticed by those who listen to his words. He describes *eros* as the philosopher, a role which Socrates himself epitomizes. He is a causal agent, morally ambiguous, and requires *philia* through the *erastes/eromenos* relationship for his teachings to be achieved.
He encourages others to possess wisdom, yet claims that he himself is ignorant, only possessing the secret knowledge required to obtain wisdom. He is the path through which one can be initiated into the rites of *eros* and achieve the ultimate philosophical pursuit: immortality through wisdom.

**Section C: Socrates is the helper and the hindrance**

Although he may act as the embodiment of *eros*, our analysis of Socrates’ role within the *Symposium* also reveals that the same magnetic personality that draws students to his teachings also prevents them from ever obtaining their desire. As we move through the narrative, it is obvious that none of the characters, including Socrates, have actually obtained the philosophical immortality that Diotima describes as being the purest and most beautiful of all. The question now becomes whether or not the obstruction of true wisdom is the nature of *eros* itself or the personality of Socrates. While we may be able to theorize the correct answer, the answer itself is not as important as the problem. By approaching the question of why nobody seems to be able to achieve true wisdom, we are able to discover the attributes of both Socrates and *eros*.

In our methodology we established that *eros* draws upon the desire of the body, *epithumia*, and incorporates it into the desire of the soul. This type of desire seeks future goals, specifically immortality, and attempts to obtain those goals through the social relationship of *philia*. Why, then, can none of Socrates’ students seem to climb the ladder of abstraction that leads to the form of beauty, as dictated by the teachings of erotics? In returning to the prologue, we find a clue that may help us understand the problem. Apollodorus describes the behavior of Socrates’ unnamed followers as chaotic and
random as they desperately try to learn everything they can about the teachings of Socrates. Similarly, Apollodorus himself claims that he has been following Socrates for three years, absorbing all of his teachings and mimicking his every move. Both types of followers, the fanatic stranger and the supposedly more knowledgeable Apollodorus, are focusing their attention on Socrates, rather than the pursuit of wisdom.

In this case, Socrates stands as both the guide towards and obstruction of true wisdom. Applying our study of the *langue* and *parole* of *eros*, we know that *eros* is the intermediary, not the end result of desire. Since, as a rule, those who desire cannot possess, *eros* is not capable of offering the object of desire to those who seek it; rather, *eros* is able to inspire the *erastes* and guide him down the path that will lead to that object. This crucial difference means that Socrates, as the embodiment of *eros*, cannot offer wisdom to his followers, he can only initiate them into the secret knowledge that allows them to obtain that wisdom on their own. By following Socrates with a zealous fervor, both the stranger and Apollodorus have confused *eros* for *erotics*, the same mistake that the symposiasts make in their speeches. Our study shows that *erotics* and *eros* are related, yet distinctly different concepts. The followers of Socrates have misunderstood the proper path towards wisdom, since it is not through the person of Socrates that they will acquire wisdom, but through their own application of his teachings.

Another cause of the problem of Socrates lies in the realm of *philia*, and once again our study of *eros* provides us with the ability to recognize this problem. In our study, we established that *eros* obtains its desires through the social relationship encompassed within *philia*. Only through *philia* can immortality be achieved, as each
path requires a social element, whether it is the approval and praise of society or the contemplation of beauty within the eromenos. By only chasing Socrates, his followers are mistaking the relationship with him as the philia they need to obtain wisdom. This cannot possibly work, however, since he represents eros, not philia. Again, the teaching of erotics is being misinterpreted by those following Socrates.

The reason for this misinterpretation has to do with the mystique of Socrates, since he is the only possessor of the secret knowledge his followers crave. Without a point of reference against which to compare the wisdom of Socrates, his followers are making the mistake of assuming him to have already achieved wisdom, even though his role as eros, coupled with his own admission, suggests otherwise. His fellow symposiasts make the same error, as they too defer to his wisdom and set him, and his speech, apart from their own. By doing this, they are treating Socrates as though he already possessed the wisdom they seek.

When we interpret the role of Socrates through the lens of our study of epithumia, eros, and philia, a new interpretation of the Symposium emerges in which the entire narrative can be understood as an expression of the linear progression through which one seeks immortality through wisdom. By creating these speeches on eros, each of the first five symposiasts attempts to learn its nature. In a sense, the act of delivering the speech is an act of desire. We know from our analysis, that each speaker is attempting to explain the means through which eros achieves immortality. For Phaedrus and Pausanias, this is achieved through ambition towards social praise and immortality of name. Eryximachus and Agathon also seek immortality of name through the praise of their own individual crafts, medicine and poetry, respectively. Finally, for Aristophanes eros is the desire to
find one’s other half which leads to immortality through procreation and completion of
the whole. In this way, the content of each speech is a reflection of how each symposiast
envisions the function of eros.

The one path to immortality that is conspicuously missing is that of immortality
through wisdom and philosophy. This path only appears within the speech of Socrates as
he explains the teachings of Diotima. Being positioned in the middle of the work,
Socrates’ speech represents a literal roadblock in the narrative, which is reflective of his
role as the obstruction in the pursuit of wisdom. Each speaker is giving accounts of eros
based upon their lives and personalities, but have failed to distinguish between eros and
erotics. Only by pushing past the magnetic personality of Socrates can his students
achieve true wisdom. In our progression of desire, eros always leads to something
beyond itself, immortality. By mistaking Socrates for eros, those who follow him are
obstructed from pushing past eros to philia and the relationship through which
immortality is achieved.

Both within the Symposium and as part of the outside world, Socrates stands as
the force that draws people towards the teaching of erotics and at the same time inhibits
them from applying those teachings to achieve true wisdom. The narrative itself is a
representation of that phenomenon. On the one hand, the first five symposiasts desire to
learn the true nature of eros represented by a linear progression from the speech of
Phaedrus to that of Socrates. On the other hand, Alcibiades stands as the manifestation of
the obstructive force of Socrates, as he was not able to get past the lure of Socrates’
personality in order to obtain true wisdom. Even years after his split from the teachings of
Socrates, Alcibiades is still drawn to him, unable to resist the lure of his apparent wisdom.

Socrates himself indirectly acknowledges his own role as both the lure and obstruction, as he describes the images of the form that deceive those seeking wisdom. By seeking wisdom, men seek Socrates; but, as Alcibiades points out, Socrates is nothing but an image of beauty. He is “like those silenes sitting in the statuary shops (φημὶ γὰρ δὴ ὁμοίωτατον αὐτὸν εἶναι τοῖς σιληνοῖς τούτοις τοῖς ἐν τοῖς ἐρμογλυφεῖοις καθημένοις)”\(^{260}\), which, when opened, are revealed to hold only “images of the gods (ἀγάλματα θεῶν).”\(^{261}\) By mistaking Socrates’ teachings of wisdom for wisdom itself, his followers desire the image, rather than the form, of true beauty and the immortality of wisdom to which it leads.

\(^{260}\) *Symposium*, 215a6-b1

\(^{261}\) *Symposium*, 215b3
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The intention of this study was to identify the problem of *eros* within the *Symposium*, provide a methodology for understanding its contextual uses, and use these findings to redefine the meaning of *eros* throughout the work. This approach has yielded a new interpretation of the word that both defines its individual meaning and the greater philosophical lesson Plato is attempting to convey. *Eros* is the desire of the soul, a desire that has future aspirations of finding a partner with which one can contemplate the true meaning of beauty. It inspires, instructs, and guides those whom it touches toward immortality through fame, procreation, and wisdom.

In our paradigm of *eros, epithumia, and philia*, we identified the differences in meaning, use, and theme of each word in order to understand the interaction between them. This complex relationship can only be identified through analysis of the global *langue* and individual *parole*, revealing similarities and differences in use and meaning across each speech. In the sign system of the Greek language, *eros* stands as a distinct signifier of a particular concept, bound by accepted usage and meaning. *Eros* is a selective force which takes the desires of the body and transforms them into desires of the soul in order to elevate the *erastes* to a higher plane of thought and reason.

Without the type of methodology created in this study, the subtlety of Plato’s argument would be lost on his modern audience. His use of *eros* changes the way the narrative functions, as it is no longer simply an arrangement of speeches in praise of a similar topic, but a linear progression of thought as the themes of each speech flow from
one to the next in an attempt to portray the workings of *eros*. Since *eros* stands as the core theme of the entire work, it is imperative that we find the appropriate methodology for approaching the word as we, thousands of years removed from Plato’s time, are at a cultural disadvantage. Without a set of guidelines for interpreting *eros*, we would not be able to appreciate the skill with which Plato has crafted his argument.

*Eros, epithumia,* and *philia* are clearly marked within the text as forming a complex triad, the intricacies of which form a layer of interpretation that must be identified and dissected if we are to understand the lessons Plato is teaching. There is a pattern in the way in which these words operate, as each speaker takes the global understanding of *eros* and manipulates it into his own individualized conception of the word in order to make his argument. Their common intention is to persuade their audience and in doing so redefine the global meaning of *eros*. Our methodology allows for the same approach to be taken in interpreting *eros*. By analyzing the *langue* and *parole*, we are able to understand how *eros* operates in each speech.

This study is not intended to be the definitive study on *eros*, nor will any definition be provided in an attempt to create the one-to-one equivalent that has pervaded and obstructed modern scholarship. On the contrary, this study is meant to serve as a beginning, the foundation on which future scholarship can be built. There may not be one overarching meaning of *eros*, but we will never discover such a definition without creating a solid methodology on which to base our conclusions. Such a methodology is conspicuously absent from modern interpretations and is hindering our ability to appreciate the themes of the *Symposium*. The mechanism of language demands that words be identified and manipulated in order to change their meanings to suit the needs
of a culture. Our methodology is no different. It should be challenged and questioned in an attempt to ascertain the truth. If it succeeds in generating even the slightest push to change the discourse on *eros*, then it has succeeded in its goal. The truth of *eros* is more complex and detailed than modern scholarship has yet acknowledged or understood, and only through the proper approach can that truth be revealed.
Bibliography


