### The Quote Critique

In the work titled Phaedrus written by Plato, there is a quote assigned to Socrates, “And now they are carried to the spot and behold the flashing beauty of the beloved; which when the charioteer sees, his memory is carried to the true beauty, whom he beholds in company with Modesty like an image placed upon a holy pedestal” (Nguyen, 2015).

This quote refers to a complex and debatable matter that Socrates devotes a significant piece of thinking to, love. In general, the idea is that by witnessing the true beauty, though earthly, it is still possible to find a path to more virtues such as goodness, modesty, and so on. To understand the exact meaning behind this particular quote, it is necessary to look into the context and, especially, the categories introduced in this excerpt. The charioteer here does not implement the literal image of a person of such profession but, instead, a part of the human soul. Earlier in the text, there is the following piece, “I divided each soul into three-two horses and a charioteer; and one of the horses was good and the other bad” (Smith). Thus, the charioteer, in this case, is in charge of the horses or, in other words, impulses and desires of completely contrasting nature. Constantly in need of controlling the horses, subduing, and ruling them, the charioteer reaches the state in which the horses ‘yield’ and the beauty of the beloved is finally viewed with Modesty.

What is interesting here is the implications of two horses or steeds, who the charioteer ought to control. One is nasty and aggressive, it represents vices and the shallow reading of the beauty and its purpose. If led by this steed, the charioteer may fall into the trap of superficial love, the one that withers once the beauty is no longer there. Another horse, instead, is good and willing to comply. It is not overcome with dark impulses when the beauty of the beloved is witnessed. This steed helps the charioteer to link this beauty to some other, more profound concepts of being, such as “Modesty”, goodness, the general virtue.

What I think of this quote is similar to a complex understanding of love as the power to change the world. Such love, if really pure and profound, unbothered by the limitations of earthly beauty, can not only last longer but also help to find a better way of leading one’s life. In terms of interpersonal relationships, the diverse implications of romantic love appear frequently in popular culture. For example, Lana Del Ray’s lyrics “Will you still love me when I’m no longer young and beautiful?” (Brown & Garcia, 2018) are surprisingly relative to this quote from Phaedrus as it questions the quality of love that is bound to depend on external beauty. For example, couples that invite cheating and unfaithfulness to their relationships once the external touch of youth and beauty withers demonstrate this kind of dark, undeveloped love.

The love discussed in this excerpt of Phaedrus, instead, opens ways for this feeling to bring more meaning to existence. The appearance of the charioteer, the controller, makes this complex implication closer to something Erich Fromm writes about, “Love isn't something natural. Rather it requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism. It isn't a feeling, it is a practice” (Ref-s066026). This approach towards love is hugely similar to what Plato describes in this part of the Phaedrus because it refers to all kinds of facets there are to reaching pure and unadulterated love. For example, the most common wedding oath includes the promise to be together in the good and the bad, to withstand poorness and enjoy richness together; the fact that these words are voiced in itself is the proof that this image of love is ultimate.

However, I may introduce an objection towards the general reading of this quote, as here the beloved may lead some people to believe this is the romantic love exclusively the author is talking about. From my perspective, it is love as a general state of mind that makes love more bearable as it broadens the horizons of ordinary lives. When I love the world I live in, I look at it with eyes full of appreciation so that the surroundings are all placed on “the holy pedestal”. Once I see beauty in everyday things, as simple as the fall of a single yellow leaf or as insignificant as the sound of raindrop, I am enlightened by universal love that is untangled inside of me and illuminating all the goodness, virtues, and modesty.

All the things considered, this quote appears more profound when approached from the perspective of the context. Plato, as is widely known, devoted a considerable amount of his thought to the concept of love. Thus, the idea behind this very quote can be analyzed and understood in a number of ways, which only proves the importance of the excerpt.