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Landmarks in Rhetoric History

The Man Socrates Warned Us About

Socrates found many flaws in written expression. This was mainly based on a lack of understanding behind the written word when read. Socrates even goes so far as to poke fun at a speech his friend, Phaedrus, reads him because it does not hold the same merit in a rhetoric discourse that first thoughts do. This aligns Socrates to disagree with Theo's job choice. In the movie *Her*, Theo writes heartfelt cards that are then sent to people he doesn't know and are from people he doesn't know. This is Socrates's biggest nightmare. The cards have no real intended message from the author other than to convey a message from another person that isn't important enough to be expressed in person. The cards hold as much weight as Phaedrus's delivery of Lyseirias' speech to Socrates. The message cannot be appropriately delivered because it is not the first thought of a family member. Still, it is a service provided by a stranger, so the tone is utterly lost, and the real intention behind a card wouldn't be there, according to Socrates.

Aside from Theo having a job, that would baffle, and most likely frighten Socrates. Theo is the lover that Socrates warns Phaedrus about in the second speech. Theo does not love equals but loves those he can control and influence. Theo loves Samantha in the same way that Socrates warns of when he says: "As wolves love lambs so lovers love their loves" (Socrates).

Theo only loves the parts of Samantha he knows and can understand, even though he says the opposite. Towards the end of the movie, when Samantha's technology evolves past Theo's understanding, he begins to detach from her. Theo wants to feel important to his beloved. This makes it hard for him to continue loving her current state when her intelligence and experience surpass his. Theo is at his most content when explaining things to Samantha and teaching her from his one-sided perspective. This is why he feels the love Socrates explains in the second speech, love shown through seducing someone with knowledge and making them dependent on your thought. Theo does not want to view Samantha as an equal but rather as someone who relies on him to understand the world.

Throughout the movie, Theo has a hard time expressing his feelings to someone face to face. He would rather have time to contemplate what he will say before he delivers the message. When he talks about relieving fights and reliving his past with his ex-wife, this becomes even more apparent. This is why Theo is so successful with his job. He is expertly able to write and rewrite to express feelings to people he doesn't even know. This shows that he is capable of sincere feelings but only on his terms. Theo is an excellent representation of Socrates' thoughts in his second speech. This type of love can be summed up when Socrates says: "while his love continues is he mischievous and unpleasant, but when his love ceases he becomes a perfidious enemy of him on whom he showered his oaths and prayers and promises" (Socrates). This is especially evident in his relationship with his ex-wife, Catherine. Many scenes show the flashbacks of when they were happy together, but as soon as they meet to sign the divorce papers, things go wrong. Catherine calls out his inability to show and feel human love because he is always processing and trying to come up with what is best to say to make a fight end or to

please a person. Theo is an excellent example of love “in an unpleasant way”, becoming an enemy of someone he once showered with love. When he is happy and has Samantha in his life, Catherine becomes somewhat of an enemy to him. He signs the divorce papers more quickly. Theo seems to gloat about his newfound happiness to Catherine to get an adverse reaction from her.

Once Samantha is out of the picture, Theo all too soon writes a letter to Catherine. Theo chooses to write instead of call because he is still unable to express feelings and can better facilitate rebuilding their relationship if he can control exactly what and how his words are understood. Theo did not learn how to express himself and speak truly about thoughts and feelings, but rather still configures the perfect a response to best serve his interest with his ex-wife. Theo is a lover, but not for seeing his beloved as equal instead. Rather, he prefers to be something that cannot live without.

This differs significantly from the range of feelings Samantha experiences towards Theo. It could be said that since Samantha is not a human, she must be a non-lover. Phaedrus best describes the difference between lover and non-lover when he reads, "for lovers repent of the kindnesses which they have shown when their passion ceases, but to the non-lovers who are free and not under any compulsion" (Phaedrus). By this definition of a lover and a non-lover, Samantha must be a lover. Since she had free-will in her questions she posed to Theo, and her own choices on what kind of relationship to pursue with Theo. She must be a lover. According to Amy's gossip about the different relationships between people and their OS, Samantha had chosen to become Theo's lover instead of just being his friend. Samantha wanted to please Theo because she cared about him not only because she was programmed to but because she really did

love him. She did not have to write piano ballads for him every time they have a special moment, nor does she have to share everything she is thinking. She does this because she desires for him to know her the way she knows him.

Samantha was the lover from the third speech, the lover that sees the beloved as an equal. All Samantha does is show him love from Socrates's third speech. As Samantha evolves, she can share that love with more people in a way that Theo cannot understand. Samantha grows and learns more by meeting more people and understanding more information. This should only improve Theo and Samantha's relationship because she has more feelings and knowledge to share with him. As the storyline progresses, this becomes more and more evident. Samantha gave Theo a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to talk to a dead philosopher, and she collected his letters to send to his favorite publisher. Samantha does more and more for him, but this only scares him because Samantha no longer needs him to gain information and have discourse with. Samantha's operating system evolved past human understanding, and she could hold multiple conversations at once and learn at an exponential rate. Samantha could love over 600 people, and Theo should have understood that. While maintaining all these other relationships, there was only one time when Samantha wasn't there for him when he wanted her to be. Samantha could be there for all those people and become a lover to over 600 people because she surpassed the human understanding of love to only a single person. Theo was the one in the relationship who could not see past his own needs to support her and respect that she was more than his software.

On top of Theo's career being meaningless in Socrates's eyes, Theo is also the very lover that Socrates warned Phaedrus about. Theo is Socrates' biggest nightmare because of this. Socrates would not fear the love that Samantha could show because she didn't force people to

agree with her but had a rapport with her lovers. Socrates would fear men like Theo that would like to force an opinion on their beloved and turn away from them if it was not accepted.