

PLATO ON LOVE

LYSIS
SYMPOSIUM
PHAEDRUS
ALCIBIADES
with selections from
REPUBLIC
LAWS

Edited by
C. D. C. Reeve

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PHAEDRUS: He certainly does.

SOCRATES: Clearly, then, they don't feel contempt for speechwriting; on the contrary, they are in awe of it.

PHAEDRUS: Quite so.

10 SOCRATES: There's this too. What of an orator or a king who ac-
258c quires enough power to match Lycurgus,⁶⁹ Solon,⁷⁰ or Darius⁷¹ as a law-
giver and acquires immortal fame as a speech writer in his city?
Doesn't he think that he is equal to the gods while he is still alive? And
5 don't those who live in later times believe just the same about him
when they behold his writings?

PHAEDRUS: Very much so.

SOCRATES: Do you really believe then that any one of these
people, whoever he is and however much he hates Lysias, would re-
proach him for being a writer?

10 PHAEDRUS: It certainly isn't likely in view of what you said, for he
would probably be reproaching his own ambition as well.

258d SOCRATES: This, then, is quite clear: Writing speeches is not in it-
self a shameful thing.

PHAEDRUS: How could it be?

5 SOCRATES: It's not speaking or writing well that's shameful; what's
really shameful is to engage in either of them shamefully or badly.

PHAEDRUS: That is clear.

(QUESTION CONTINUED @ 259e)

10 SOCRATES: So what distinguishes good from bad writing? Do we
need to ask this question of Lysias or anyone else who ever did or will
write anything—whether a public or a private document, poetic verse
or plain prose?

258e PHAEDRUS: You ask if we need to? Why else should one live, I say,
if not for pleasures of this sort? Certainly not for those you cannot
feel unless you are first in pain, like most of the pleasures of the body,
5 and which for this reason we call the pleasures of slaves.

⁶⁹ The legendary lawgiver of Sparta.

⁷⁰ See *Symposium* 209d7 note.

⁷¹ See *Lysis* 209d6 note.

YOU MUST ASK YOUR QUESTION TO ASSISTANT
YOURSELF FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE PLATO
GIVES US THREE DIFFERENT IMAGES OF THE ANSWER.
Discussion of Rhetoric 125
① THE MYTH OF THE CICADAS

SOCRATES: It seems we clearly have the time. Besides, I think that
the cicadas, who are singing and carrying on conversations with one
another in the heat of the day above our heads, are also watching us.
And if they saw the two of us avoiding conversation at midday like
most people, diverted by their song and, sluggish of mind, nodding
off, they would have every right to laugh at us, convinced that a pair
of slaves had come to their resting place to sleep like sheep gathering
around the spring in the afternoon. But if they see us in conversation,
steadfastly navigating around them as if they were the Sirens,⁷² they
will be very pleased and immediately give us the gift from the gods
they are able to give to mortals.

PHAEDRUS: What is this gift? I don't think I have heard of it.

SOCRATES: Everyone who loves the Muses⁷³ should have heard of
this. The story goes that the cicadas used to be human beings who
lived before the birth of the Muses. When the Muses were born and
song was created for the first time, some of the people of that time
were so overwhelmed with the pleasure of singing that they forgot to
eat or drink; so they died without even realizing it. It is from them
that the race of the cicadas came into being; and, as a gift from the
Muses, they have no need of nourishment once they are born. In-
stead, they immediately burst into song, without food or drink, until
it is time for them to die. After they die, they go to the Muses and tell
each one of them which mortals have honored her. To Terpsichore
they report those who have honored her by their devotion to the
dance and thus make them dearer to her. To Erato, they report those
who honored her by dedicating themselves to the affairs of love, and
so too with the other Muses, according to the activity that honors
each. And to Calliope, the oldest among them, and Urania, the next
after her, who preside over the heavens and all discourse, human and
divine, and sing with the sweetest voice, they report those who honor
their special kind of music by leading a philosophical life.

There are many reasons, then, why we should talk and not waste
our afternoon in sleep.

⁷² See *Symposium* 216a7 note.

⁷³ Although they were usually referred to collectively in this period, each of the
Muses was assigned as a sort of patron saint to one of the arts—Terpsichore to
dance, Erato to lyric poetry, Urania to astronomy, Calliope (eventually) to epic
poetry.

PHAEDRUS: By all means, let's talk.

259e SOCRATES: Well, then, we ought to examine the topic we proposed just now: When is a speech well written and delivered, and when is it not?

PHAEDRUS: Plainly.

5 SOCRATES: Won't someone who is to speak well and nobly have to have in mind the truth about the subject he is going to discuss?

260a PHAEDRUS: What I have actually heard about this, Socrates, my friend, is that it is not necessary for the intending orator to learn what is really just, but only what will seem just to the crowd who will act as judges. Nor again what is really good or noble, but only what will seem so. For that is what persuasion proceeds from, not truth.

5 SOCRATES: Anything that wise men say, Phaedrus, "is not lightly to be cast aside";⁷⁴ we must consider whether it might be right. And what you just said, in particular, must not be dismissed.

PHAEDRUS: You're right.

SOCRATES: Let's look at it this way, then.

10 PHAEDRUS: How?

260b SOCRATES: Suppose I were trying to convince you that you should fight your enemies on horseback, and neither one of us knew what a horse is, but I happened to know this much about you, that Phaedrus believes a horse is the tame animal with the longest ears—

5 PHAEDRUS: But that would be ridiculous, Socrates.

260c SOCRATES: Not quite yet, actually. But if I were seriously trying to convince you, having composed a speech in praise of the donkey in which I called it a horse and claimed that having such an animal is of immense value both at home and in military service, that it is good for fighting and for carrying your baggage and that it is useful for much else besides—

PHAEDRUS: Well, that would be totally ridiculous.

SOCRATES: Well, which is better? To be ridiculous and a friend? Or clever and an enemy?

5 PHAEDRUS: The former.

⁷⁴ Homer, *Iliad* 2.361.

SOCRATES: And so, when a rhetorician who does not know good from bad addresses a city which knows no better and attempts to sway it, not praising a miserable donkey as if it were a horse, but bad as if it were good, and, having studied what the people believe, persuades them to do something bad instead of good—with that as its seed, what sort of crop do you think rhetoric can harvest? 10 260d

PHAEDRUS: A crop of really poor quality.

SOCRATES: But could it be, my friend, that we have mocked the art of speaking more rudely than it deserves? For it might perhaps reply, "What bizarre nonsense! Look, I am not forcing anyone to learn how to make speeches without knowing the truth; on the contrary, my advice, for what it is worth, is to take me up only after mastering the truth. But I do make this boast: even someone who knows the truth couldn't produce conviction on the basis of a systematic art without me." 5

PHAEDRUS: Well, is that a fair reply? 260e

SOCRATES: Yes, it is—if, that is, the arguments now advancing upon rhetoric testify that it is an art. For it seems to me as if I hear certain arguments approaching and protesting that that is a lie and that rhetoric is not an art but an artless practice.⁷⁵ As the Spartan said, there is no genuine art of speaking without a grasp of truth, and there never will be. 5

PHAEDRUS: We need to hear these arguments, Socrates. Come, produce them, and examine them: What is their point? How do they make it? 261a

SOCRATES: Come to us, then, noble creatures; convince Phaedrus, him of the beautiful offspring,⁷⁶ that unless he pursues philosophy properly he will never be able to make a proper speech on any subject either. And let Phaedrus be the one to answer. 5

PHAEDRUS: Let them put their questions.

SOCRATES: Well, then, isn't the rhetorical art, taken as a whole, a way of directing the soul by means of speech, not only in the law-courts and on other public occasions but also in private? Isn't it one

⁷⁵ *Arechinos tribé*. Cf. *Gorgias* 462b–c.

⁷⁶ Phaedrus' offspring are philosophical speeches or discussions. Cf. 242a–b and *Symposium* 209b–c.

261b and the same art whether its subject is great or small, and no more to be held in esteem—if it is followed correctly—when its questions are serious than when they are trivial? Or what have you heard about all this?

5 PHAEDRUS: Well, certainly not what *you* have! Artful speaking and writing is found mainly in the lawcourts; also perhaps in the Assembly.⁷⁷ That's all I've heard.

SOCRATES: Well, have you only heard of the rhetorical treatises of Nestor and Odysseus—those they wrote in their spare time in Troy? Haven't you also heard of the works of Palamedes?⁷⁸

261c PHAEDRUS: No, by Zeus, I haven't even heard of Nestor's—unless by Nestor you mean Gorgias,⁷⁹ and by Odysseus, Thrasymachus⁸⁰ or Theodorus.⁸¹

5 SOCRATES: Perhaps. But let's leave these people aside. Answer this question yourself: What do adversaries do in the lawcourts? Don't they speak on opposite sides? What else can we call what they do?

PHAEDRUS: That's it, exactly.

SOCRATES: About what is just and what is unjust?

PHAEDRUS: Yes.

⁷⁷ Public speaking was at the center of all Greek political life (see Homer, *Iliad* 2.118–277), but it was especially prominent in Athens. Athenians prided themselves on their democratic Assembly, which could be influenced by any citizen who could speak well, regardless of his social rank. Athenian courts consisted of large juries of ordinary people—too many to bribe, but also too many to persuade without expert techniques of speaking. For an accused person, the ability to speak could make the difference between life and death, a point that sophists used to their advantage (*Gorgias* 485e–6b).

⁷⁸ Nestor and Odysseus were Homeric heroes known for their speaking ability (*Iliad* 1.249, 3.223). Palamedes, who does not figure in Homer, was proverbial for his cunning.

⁷⁹ See *Symposium* 198c1 note.

⁸⁰ About Thrasymachus of Chalcedon (who flourished c. 430–400 BCE), a sophist and rhetorician of note, we know little beyond what we can infer from his appearance in Book 1 of the *Republic*. Some fragments of his writing are translated in Michael Gagarin and Paul Woodruff, *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 254–6.

⁸¹ Theodorus of Byzantium, otherwise largely unknown (not to be confused with the mathematician who appears in the *Theaetetus*). But see 266e and Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.13.5.

SOCRATES: And won't whoever does this artfully make the same thing appear to the same people sometimes just and sometimes, when he prefers, unjust? ← ↔ 10 261d

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And when he addresses the Assembly, he will make the city approve a policy at one time as a good one, and reject it—the very same policy—as just the opposite at another.

PHAEDRUS: Right. 5

SOCRATES: Now, don't we know that the Eleatic Palamedes is such an artful speaker that his listeners will perceive the same things to be both similar and dissimilar, both one and many, both at rest and also in motion?⁸²

PHAEDRUS: Most certainly.

SOCRATES: We can therefore find the practice of speaking on opposite sides not only in the lawcourts and in the Assembly. Rather, it seems that one single art—if, of course, it is an art in the first place—governs all speaking. By means of it one can make out as similar anything that can be so assimilated, to everything to which it can be made similar, and expose anyone who tries to hide the fact that that is what he is doing. 10 261e

PHAEDRUS: What do you mean by that? 5

SOCRATES: I think it will become clear if we look at it this way. Where is deception most likely to occur—regarding things that differ much or things that differ little from one another?

PHAEDRUS: Regarding those that differ little. 262a

1 SOCRATES: [At any rate, you are more likely to escape detection, as you shift from one thing to its opposite, if you proceed in small steps rather than in large ones.]

PHAEDRUS: Without a doubt.

SOCRATES: Therefore, if you are to deceive someone else and to avoid deception yourself, you must know precisely the respects in which things are similar and dissimilar to one another. 5

⁸² The Eleatic Palamedes is Zeno of Elea, the author of the famous paradoxes about motion (see *Parmenides* 127d–8a).

PHAEDRUS: Yes, you must.

SOCRATES: And is it really possible for someone who doesn't know what each thing truly is to detect a similarity—whether large or small—between something he doesn't know and anything else?

PHAEDRUS: That is impossible.

SOCRATES: Clearly, therefore, the state of being deceived and holding beliefs contrary to what is the case comes upon people by reason of certain similarities.

PHAEDRUS: That is how it happens.

SOCRATES: Could someone, then, who doesn't know what each thing is ever have the art to lead others little by little through similarities away from what is the case on each occasion to its opposite? Or could he escape this being done to himself?

PHAEDRUS: Never.

SOCRATES: Therefore, my friend, the art of a speaker who doesn't know the truth and chases opinions instead is likely to be a ridiculous thing—not an art at all!

PHAEDRUS: So it seems.

SOCRATES: So, shall we look for instances of what we called the artful and the artless in the speech of Lysias you carried here and in our own speeches?

PHAEDRUS: That's the best thing to do—because, as it is, we are talking quite abstractly, without enough examples.

SOCRATES: In fact, by some chance the two speeches do, as it seems, contain an example of the way in which someone who knows the truth can toy with his audience and mislead them. For my part, Phaedrus, I hold the local gods responsible for this—also, perhaps, the messengers of the Muses who are singing over our heads may have inspired me with this gift: certainly *I* don't possess any art of speaking.

PHAEDRUS: Fine, fine. But explain what you mean.

SOCRATES: Come, then—read me the beginning of Lysias' speech.

PHAEDRUS: "You understand my situation: I've told you how good it would be for us, in my opinion, if we could work this out. In any case, I don't think I should lose the chance to get what I am asking for, merely because I don't happen to be in love with you. A man in love will wish he had not done you any favors—"

SOCRATES: Stop. Our task is to say how he fails and writes artlessly. Right?

PHAEDRUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now isn't this much absolutely clear: We are in accord with one another about some of the things we discourse about and in discord about others?

PHAEDRUS: I think I understand what you are saying; but, please, can you make it a little clearer?

SOCRATES: When someone utters the word "iron" or "silver," don't we all think of the same thing?

PHAEDRUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But what happens when we say "just" or "good"? Doesn't each one of us go in a different direction? Don't we differ with one another and even with ourselves?

PHAEDRUS: We certainly do.

SOCRATES: Therefore, we agree about the former and disagree about the latter.

PHAEDRUS: Right.

SOCRATES: Now in which of these two cases are we more easily deceived? And when does rhetoric have greater power?

PHAEDRUS: Clearly, when we wander in different directions.

#2 SOCRATES: It follows that whoever wants to acquire the art of rhetoric must first make a systematic division and grasp the particular character of each of these two kinds of thing, both the kind where most people wander in different directions and the kind where they do not.

PHAEDRUS: What a splendid thing, Socrates, he will have understood if he grasps *that!*

SOCRATES: Second, I think, he must not be mistaken about his subject; he must have a sharp eye for the class to which whatever he is about to discuss belongs.

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Well, now, what shall we say about love? Does it belong to the class where people differ or to that where they don't?

PHAEDRUS: Oh, surely the class where they differ. Otherwise, do you think you could have spoken of it as you did a few minutes ago,

5

263a

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263c

10 first saying that it is harmful both to lover and beloved and then immediately afterward that it is the greatest good?

263d SOCRATES: Very well put. But now tell me this—I can't remember at all because I was completely possessed by the gods: Did I define love at the beginning of my speech?

PHAEDRUS: Oh, absolutely, by Zeus, you most certainly did.

5 SOCRATES: Alas, how much more artful with speeches the Nymphs, daughters of Achelous,⁸³ and Pan, son of Hermes,⁸⁴ are, according to what you say, than Lysias, son of Cephalus!⁸⁵ Or am I wrong? Did Lysias too, at the start of his love-speech, compel us to assume that love is the single thing that he himself wanted it to be? Did he then complete his speech by arranging everything in relation to that? Will you read its opening once again?

263e PHAEDRUS: If you like. But what you are looking for is not there.

5 SOCRATES: Read it, so that I can hear it in his own words.

264a PHAEDRUS: “You understand my situation: I've told you how good it would be for us, in my opinion, if we could work this out. In any case, I don't think I should lose the chance to get what I am asking for, merely because I don't happen to be in love with you. A man in love will wish he had not done you any favors, once his desire dies down—”

13-7 5 SOCRATES: He certainly seems a long way from doing what we wanted. He doesn't even start from the beginning but from the end, making his speech swim upstream on its back. His first words are what a lover would say to his boy as he was concluding his speech. Am I wrong, Phaedrus, dear heart?

264b PHAEDRUS: Well, Socrates, that was the end for which he gave the speech!

SOCRATES: And what about the rest? Don't the parts of the speech appear to have been thrown together at random? Is it evident that the

⁸³ See 230b7 note.

⁸⁴ Pan was a god, half man and half goat, associated with the pastoral world, and with the Nymphs. Hermes, the son of Zeus and the nymph Maia, is, above all, the messenger god, who carries out the orders of Zeus.

⁸⁵ See 227a2 note.

second point had to be made second for some compelling reason? Is that so for any of the parts? I at least—of course I know nothing about such matters—thought the author said just whatever came to mind next, though not without a certain noble willfulness. But you, do you know any principle of speech-composition compelling him to place these things one after another in this order?

264c PHAEDRUS: It's very generous of you to think that I can understand his reasons so clearly.

5 SOCRATES: But surely you will admit at least this much: Every speech must be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own; it must be neither without head nor without legs; and it must have a middle and extremities that are fitting both to one another and to the whole work.

PHAEDRUS: How could it be otherwise? Act: 134-137

SOCRATES: But look at your friend's speech: Is it like that or is it otherwise? Actually, you'll find that it's just like the epigram people say is inscribed on the tomb of Midas the Phrygian.⁸⁶

264d PHAEDRUS: What epigram is that? And what's the matter with it?

SOCRATES: It goes like this:

2
A maid of bronze am I, on Midas' tomb I lie
As long as water flows, and trees grow tall
Shielding the grave where many come to cry
That Midas rests here I say to one and all.

I'm sure you notice that it makes no difference at all which of its verses comes first, and which last.

264e PHAEDRUS: You are making fun of our speech, Socrates.

5 SOCRATES: Well, then, if that upsets you, let's leave that speech aside—even though I think it has plenty of very useful examples, provided one tries to emulate them as little as possible—and turn to the others. I think it is important for students of speechmaking to pay attention to one of their features.

265a PHAEDRUS: What do you mean?

⁸⁶ Legendary eighth-century BCE king of Phrygia, famous for his golden touch.

SOCRATES: They were in a way opposite to one another. One claimed that one should give one's favors to the lover; the other, to the non-lover.

PHAEDRUS: Most manfully, too.

SOCRATES: I thought you were going to say "madly," which would have been the truth, and is also just what I was looking for: We did say, didn't we, that love is a kind of madness?

PHAEDRUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And that there are two kinds of madness, one produced by human illness, the other by a divinely inspired release from normally accepted behavior?

PHAEDRUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: We also distinguished four parts within the divine kind and connected them to four gods. Having attributed the inspiration of the prophet to Apollo, of the mystic to Dionysus, of the poet to the Muses, and the fourth part of madness to Aphrodite and to Love, we said that the madness of love is the best. We used a certain sort of image to describe love's passion; perhaps it had a measure of truth in it, though it may also have led us astray. And having whipped up a not altogether implausible speech, we sang playfully, but also appropriately and respectfully, a storylike hymn to my master and yours, Phaedrus—to Love, who watches over beautiful boys.

PHAEDRUS: And I listened to it with the greatest pleasure.

SOCRATES: Let's take up this point about it right away: How was the speech able to proceed from censure to praise?

PHAEDRUS: What exactly do you mean by that?

SOCRATES: Well, everything else in it really does appear to me to have been spoken in play. But part of it was given with Fortune's guidance, and there were in it two kinds of things the nature of which it would be quite wonderful to grasp by means of a systematic art.

PHAEDRUS: Which things?

SOCRATES: The first consists in seeing together things that are scattered about everywhere and collecting them into one kind, so that by defining each thing we can make clear the subject of any instruction we wish to give. Just so with our discussion of love: Whether its definition was or was not correct, at least it allowed the speech to proceed clearly and consistently with itself.

PHAEDRUS: And what is the other thing you are talking about, Socrates?

SOCRATES: This, in turn, is to be able to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints, and to try not to splinter any part, as a bad butcher might do. In just this way, our two speeches placed all mental derangements into one common kind. Then, just as each single body has parts that naturally come in pairs of the same name (one of them being called the right-hand and the other the left-hand one), so the speeches, having considered unsoundness of mind to be by nature one single kind within us, proceeded to cut it up—the first speech cut its left-hand part, and continued to cut until it discovered among these parts a sort of love that can be called "left-handed," which it correctly denounced; the second speech, in turn, led us to the right-hand part of madness; discovered a love that shares its name with the other but is actually divine; set it out before us, and praised it as the cause of our greatest goods.

PHAEDRUS: You are absolutely right.

SOCRATES: Well, Phaedrus, I am myself a lover of these divisions and collections, so that I may be able to think and to speak; and if I believe that someone else is capable of discerning a single thing that is also by nature capable of encompassing many,⁸⁷ I follow "straight behind, in his tracks, as if he were a god."⁸⁸ God knows whether this is the right name for those who can do this correctly or not, but so far I have always called them "dialecticians."⁸⁹ But tell me what I must call them now that we have learned all this from Lysias and you. Or is it just that art of speaking that Thrasymachus and the rest of them use, which has made them masters of speechmaking and capable of producing others like them—anyhow those who are willing to bring them gifts and to treat them as if they were kings?

PHAEDRUS: They may behave like kings, but they certainly lack the knowledge you're talking about. No, it seems to me that you are right in calling the sort of thing you mentioned dialectic; but, it seems to me, rhetoric still eludes us.

SOCRATES: What are you saying? Could there be anything valuable which is independent of the methods I mentioned and is still grasped

⁸⁷ Reading *pephukos* with some manuscripts.

⁸⁸ Adapted from Homer, *Odyssey* 2.406.

⁸⁹ See Introduction, pp. xv–xvi.

by art? If there is, you and I must certainly honor it, and we must say what part of rhetoric it is that has been left out.

5 PHAEDRUS: Well, there's quite a lot, Socrates: everything, at any rate, written up in the books on the art of speaking.

SOCRATES: You were quite right to remind me. First, I believe, there is the Preamble with which a speech must begin. This is what you mean, isn't it—the fine points of the art?

266e PHAEDRUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Second come the Statement of Facts and the Evidence of Witnesses concerning it; third, Indirect Evidence; fourth, Claims to Plausibility. And I believe at least that excellent Byzantine word-wizard adds Confirmation and Supplementary Confirmation.

5 PHAEDRUS: You mean the worthy Theodorus?⁹⁰

267a SOCRATES: Quite. And he also adds Refutation and Supplementary Refutation, to be used both in prosecution and in defense. Nor must we forget the most excellent Evenus of Paros,⁹¹ who was the first to discover Covert Implication and Indirect Praise and who—some say—has even arranged Indirect Censures in verse as an aid to memory:
5 a wise man indeed! And Tisias⁹² and Gorgias?⁹³ How can we leave them out when it is they who realized that what is likely must be held in higher honor than what is true; they who, by the power of their language, make small things appear great and great things small; they who express modern ideas in ancient garb, and ancient ones in modern dress; they who have discovered how to argue both concisely and
267b at infinite length about any subject? Actually, when I told Prodicus⁹⁴ this last, he laughed and said that only he had discovered the art of proper speeches: What we need are speeches that are neither long nor
5 short but of the right length.

⁹⁰ See 261c3 note.

⁹¹ Active as a sophist toward the end of the fifth century BCE. He is mentioned elsewhere in Plato (*Apology* 20b; *Phaedo* 60c–61c), but only a few tiny fragments of his works survive.

⁹² A fifth-century teacher of rhetoric from Syracuse.

⁹³ See 261c2 note.

⁹⁴ A fifth-century teacher of rhetoric from Ceos, with an interest in fine distinctions of meaning (*Protagoras* 337a–c) and the correctness of names (*Cratylus* 384a8–c2).

PHAEDRUS: Brilliantly done, Prodicus!

SOCRATES: And what about Hippias⁹⁵ How can we omit him? I am sure our friend from Elis would cast his vote with Prodicus.

PHAEDRUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And what shall we say of the whole gallery of terms Polus⁹⁶ set up—speaking with Reduplication, Speaking in Maxims, Speaking in Images—and of the terms Licymnius⁹⁷ gave him as a present to help him explain Good Diction? 10 267c

PHAEDRUS: But didn't Protagoras⁹⁸ actually use similar terms? 5

SOCRATES: Yes, Correct Diction, my boy, and other wonderful things. As to the art of making speeches bemoaning the evils of poverty and old age, the prize, in my judgment, goes to the mighty Chalcidonian.⁹⁹ He it is also who knows best how to inflame a crowd and, once they are inflamed, how to hush them again with his words' magic spell, as he says himself. And let's not forget that he is as good at producing slander as he is at refuting it, whatever its source may be. 267d

As to the way of ending a speech, everyone seems to be in agreement, though some call it Recapitulation and others by some other name.

PHAEDRUS: You mean, summarizing everything at the end and reminding the audience of what they've heard? 5

SOCRATES: That's what I mean. And if you have anything else to add about the art of speaking—

PHAEDRUS: Only minor points, not worth making.

SOCRATES: Well, let's leave minor points aside. Let's hold what we do have closer to the light so that we can see precisely the power of the art these things produce. 268a

⁹⁵ A contemporary of Socrates from Elis, who claimed expertise in astronomy, physics, grammar, poetry, and other subjects. Two Platonic dialogues are named after him: he also appears in the *Protagoras* (315b, 337c–8b).

⁹⁶ A pupil of Gorgias, who appears in the dialogue named for his master.

⁹⁷ A dithyrambic poet and teacher of rhetoric from Chios.

⁹⁸ A famous, early sophist (c. 490–420 BCE) from Abdera. See Introduction, p. xiv.

⁹⁹ Thrasy machus: see 261c2 note.

PHAEDRUS: A very great power, Socrates, especially in front of a crowd.

SOCRATES: Quite right. But now, my friend, look closely: Do you think, as I do, that its fabric is a little threadbare?

PHAEDRUS: Can you show me?

SOCRATES: All right, tell me this. Suppose someone came to your friend Eryximachus or his father Acumenus¹⁰⁰ and said: "I know treatments to raise or lower (whichever I prefer) the temperature of people's bodies; if I decide to, I can make them vomit or make their bowels move, and all sorts of things. On the basis of this knowledge, I claim to be a physician; and I claim to be able to make others physicians as well by imparting it to them." What do you think they would say when they heard that?

PHAEDRUS: What could they say? They would ask him if he also knew to whom he should apply such treatments, when, and to what extent.

SOCRATES: What if he replied, "I have no idea. My claim is that whoever learns from me will manage to do what you ask on his own"?

PHAEDRUS: I think they'd say the man's mad if he thinks he's a doctor just because he read a book or happened to come across a few portions; he knows nothing of the art.

SOCRATES: And suppose someone approached Sophocles¹⁰¹ and Euripides¹⁰² and claimed to know how to compose the longest passages on trivial topics and the briefest ones on topics of great importance, that he could make them pitiful if he wanted, or again, by contrast, terrifying and menacing, and so on. Suppose further that he believed that by teaching this he was imparting the knowledge of composing tragedies—

PHAEDRUS: Oh, I am sure they too would laugh at anyone who thought a tragedy was anything other than the proper arrangement of

¹⁰⁰ See *Symposium* 175a4 note.

¹⁰¹ Playwright from Colonus (c. 496–408 BCE). Author of *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and other plays.

¹⁰² Playwright from Athens (c. 480–406 BCE). Author of the *Bacchae*, *Medea*, and many other plays.

these things: They have to fit with one another and with the whole work.

SOCRATES: But I am sure they wouldn't reproach him rudely. They would react more like a musician confronted by a man who thought he had mastered harmony because he was able to produce the highest and lowest notes on his strings. The musician would not say fiercely, "You stupid man, you are out of your mind!" As befits his calling, he would speak more gently: "My friend, though that too is necessary for understanding harmony, someone who has gotten as far as you have may still know absolutely nothing about the subject. What you know is what it's necessary to learn before you study harmony, but not harmony itself."

PHAEDRUS: That's certainly right.

SOCRATES: So Sophocles would also tell the man who was showing off to them that he knew the preliminaries of tragedy, but not the art of tragedy itself. And Acumenus would say his man knew the preliminaries of medicine, but not medicine itself.

PHAEDRUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: And what if the "honey-tongued Adrastus"¹⁰³ (or perhaps Pericles)¹⁰⁴ were to hear of all the marvelous techniques we just discussed—Speaking Concisely and Speaking in Images and all the rest we listed and proposed to examine under the light? Would he be angry or rude, as you and I were, with those who write of those techniques and teach them as if they are rhetoric itself, and say something coarse to them? Wouldn't he—being wiser than we are—reproach us as well and say, "Phaedrus and Socrates, you should not be angry with these people—you should be sorry for them. The reason they cannot define rhetoric is that they are ignorant of dialectic. It is their ignorance that makes them think they have discovered what rhetoric is when they have mastered only what it is necessary to learn as preliminaries. So they teach these preliminaries and imagine their pupils have received a full course in rhetoric, thinking the task of using each of them persuasively and putting them together into a whole

¹⁰³ Described in the *Iliad* as a former king of Sicyon (2.572), leader of the first Argive expedition against Thebes. His name became a byword for eloquence. The quotation is from the early Spartan poet, Tyrtaeus, fragment 9.8.

¹⁰⁴ See *Symposium* 215e4 note.

speech is a minor matter, to be worked out by the pupils from their own resources”?

PHAEDRUS: Really, Socrates, the art these men present as rhetoric in their courses and handbooks is no more than what you say. In my judgment, at least, your point is well taken. But how, from what source, could one acquire the art of the true rhetorician, the really persuasive speaker?

SOCRATES: Well, Phaedrus, becoming good enough to be an accomplished competitor is probably—perhaps necessarily—like everything else. If you have a natural ability for rhetoric, you will become a famous rhetorician, provided you supplement your ability with knowledge and practice. To the extent that you lack any one of them, to that extent you will be less than perfect. But, insofar as there is an art of rhetoric, I don't believe the right method for acquiring it is to be found in the direction Lysias and Thrasymachus have followed.

PHAEDRUS: Where can we find it then?

SOCRATES: My dear friend, maybe we can see now why Pericles was in all likelihood the greatest rhetorician of all.

PHAEDRUS: How is that?

SOCRATES: All the great arts require endless talk and ethereal speculation about nature: This seems to be what gives them their lofty point of view and universal applicability. That's just what Pericles mastered—besides having natural ability. He came across Anaxagoras, who was just that sort of man, got his full dose of ethereal speculation, and understood the nature of mind and mindlessness—just the subject on which Anaxagoras had the most to say.¹⁰⁵ From this, I think, he drew for the art of rhetoric what was useful to it.

PHAEDRUS: What do you mean by that?

SOCRATES: Well, isn't the method of medicine in a way the same as the method of rhetoric?

PHAEDRUS: How so?

SOCRATES: In both cases we need to determine the nature of something—of the body in medicine, of the soul in rhetoric. Otherwise, all we'll have will be an empirical and artless practice. We won't be able to supply, on the basis of an art, a body with the medicines and diet that will make it healthy and strong, or a soul with the reasons and customary rules for conduct that will impart to it the convictions and virtues we want.

PHAEDRUS: That is most likely, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Do you think, then, that it is possible to reach a serious understanding of the nature of the soul without understanding the nature of the world as a whole?

PHAEDRUS: Well, if we're to listen to Hippocrates, Asclepius' descendant,¹⁰⁶ we won't even understand the body if we don't follow that method.

SOCRATES: He speaks well, my friend. Still, Hippocrates aside, we must consider whether argument supports that view.

PHAEDRUS: I agree.

SOCRATES: Consider, then, what both Hippocrates and true argument say about nature. Isn't this the way to think systematically about the nature of anything? First, we must consider whether the object regarding which we intend to become experts and capable of transmitting our expertise is simple or complex. Then, if it is simple, we must investigate its power: What things does it have what natural power of acting upon? By what things does it have what natural disposition to be acted upon? If, on the other hand, it takes many forms, we must enumerate them all and, as we did in the simple case, investigate how each is naturally able to act upon what and how it has a natural disposition to be acted upon by what.

PHAEDRUS: It seems so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Proceeding by any other method would be like walking with the blind. Conversely, whoever studies anything on the basis of an art must never be compared to the blind or the deaf. On the

¹⁰⁵ Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (c. 500–428 BCE) settled in Athens (c. 456), where he remained until he fled to Lampsacus to escape indictment for impiety (c. 436). The indictment may have been motivated, at least in part, by political hostility to Pericles, whose patronage he enjoyed. In his philosophical speculations, Anaxagoras accorded a fundamental cosmological role to (divine) Mind. His views are criticized at *Phaedo* 97b8–99d2.

¹⁰⁶ Hippocrates, a contemporary of Socrates, was the famous doctor whose name is given to the Hippocratic Oath. Asclepius is the god of healing.

contrary, it is clear that someone who teaches another to make speeches as an art will demonstrate precisely the essential nature of that to which speeches are to be applied. And that, surely, is the soul.

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: This is therefore the object toward which the speaker's whole effort is directed, since it is in the soul that he attempts to produce conviction. Isn't that so?

PHAEDRUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Clearly, therefore, Thrasymachus and anyone else who teaches the art of rhetoric seriously will, first, describe the soul with absolute precision and enable us to understand what it is: whether it is one and homogeneous by nature or takes many forms, like the shape of bodies, since, as we said, that's what it is to demonstrate the nature of something.

PHAEDRUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Second, he will explain how, in virtue of its nature, it acts and is acted upon by certain things.

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Third, he will classify the kinds of speech and of soul there are, as well as the various ways in which they are affected, and explain what causes each. He will then coordinate each kind of soul with the kind of speech appropriate to it. And he will give instructions concerning the reasons why one kind of soul is necessarily convinced by one kind of speech while another necessarily remains unconvinced.

PHAEDRUS: This, I think, would certainly be the best way.

SOCRATES: In fact, my friend, no speech will ever be a product of art, whether it is a model or one actually given, if it is delivered or written in any other way—on this or on any other subject. But those who now write *Arts of Rhetoric*—we were just discussing them¹⁰⁷—are cunning people: they hide the fact that they know very well everything about the soul. Well, then, until they begin to speak and write in this way, we mustn't allow ourselves to be convinced that they write on the basis of the art.

¹⁰⁷ See 266c ff.

PHAEDRUS: What way is that?

SOCRATES: It's very difficult to speak the actual words, but as to how one should write in order to be as artful as possible—that I am willing to tell you.

PHAEDRUS: Please do.

SOCRATES: Since the nature of speech is in fact to direct the soul, whoever intends to be a rhetorician must know how many kinds of soul there are. Their number is so-and-so many; each is of such-and-such a sort; hence some people have such-and-such a character and others have such-and-such. Those distinctions established, there are, in turn, so-and-so many kinds of speech, each of such-and-such a sort. People of such-and-such a character are easy to persuade by speeches of such-and-such a sort in connection with such-and-such an issue for this particular reason, while people of such-and-such another sort are difficult to persuade for those particular reasons.

The orator must learn all this well, then put his theory into practice and develop the ability to discern each kind clearly as it occurs in the actions of real life. Otherwise he won't be any better off than he was when he was still listening to those discussions in school. He will now not only be able to say what kind of person is convinced by what kind of speech; on meeting someone he will be able to discern what he is like and make clear to himself that the person actually standing in front of him is of just this particular sort of character he had learned about in school—to that he must now apply speeches of such-and-such a kind in this particular way in order to secure conviction about such-and-such an issue. When he has learned all this—when, in addition, he has grasped the right occasions for speaking and for holding back; and when he has also understood when the time is right for Speaking Concisely or Appealing to Pity or Exaggeration or for any other of the kinds of speech he has learned and when it is not—then, and only then, will he have finally mastered the art well and completely. But if his speaking, his teaching, or his writing lacks any one of these elements and he still claims to be speaking with art, you'll be better off if you don't believe him.

"Well, Socrates and Phaedrus," the author of this discourse might say, "do you agree? Could we accept an art of speaking presented in any other terms?"

PHAEDRUS: That would be impossible, Socrates. Still, it's evidently rather a major undertaking.

272c SOCRATES: You're right. And that's why we must turn all our arguments every which way and try to find some easier and shorter route to the art: we don't want to follow a long rough path for no good reason when we can choose a short smooth one instead.

Now, try to remember if you've heard anything helpful from Lysias or anybody else. Speak up.

5 PHAEDRUS: It's not for lack of trying, but nothing comes to mind right now.

SOCRATES: Well, then, shall I tell you something I've heard people say who care about this topic?

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

10 SOCRATES: We do claim, after all, Phaedrus, that it is fair to give the wolf's side of the story as well.

272d PHAEDRUS: That's just what you should do.

SOCRATES: Well, these people say that there is no need to be so solemn about all this and stretch it out to such lengths. For the fact is, as we said ourselves at the beginning of this discussion, that one who intends to be an able rhetorician has no need to know the truth about the things that are just or good or yet about the people who are such either by nature or upbringing. No one in a lawcourt, you see, cares at all about the truth of such matters. They only care about what is convincing. This is called "the likely," and that is what a man who intends to speak according to art should concentrate on. Sometimes, in fact, whether you are prosecuting or defending a case, you must not even say what actually happened, if it was not likely to have happened—you must say something that is likely instead. Whatever you say, you should pursue what is likely and leave the truth aside: the whole art consists in cleaving to that throughout your speech.

5 PHAEDRUS: That's an excellent presentation of what people say who profess to be expert in speeches, Socrates. I recall that we raised this issue briefly earlier on, but it seems to be their single most important point.

273b SOCRATES: No doubt you've churned through Tisias' book¹⁰⁸ quite carefully. Then let Tisias tell us this also: By "the likely" does he mean anything but what is accepted by the crowd?

¹⁰⁸ See 267a6 note.

PHAEDRUS: What else?

SOCRATES: And it's likely it was when he discovered this clever and artful technique that Tisias wrote that if a weak but spunky man is taken to court because he beat up a strong but cowardly one and stole his cloak or something else, neither one should tell the truth. The coward must say that the spunky man didn't beat him up all by himself, while the latter must rebut this by saying that only the two of them were there, and fall back on that well-worn plea, "How could a man like me attack a man like him?" The strong man, naturally, will not admit his cowardice, but will try to invent some other lie, and may thus give his opponent the chance to refute him. And in other cases, speaking as the art dictates will take similar forms. Isn't that so, Phaedrus?

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Phew! Tisias—or whoever else it was and whatever name he pleases to use for himself—seems to have discovered an art which he has disguised very well! But now, my friend, shall we or shall we not say to him—

PHAEDRUS: What?

SOCRATES: This: "Tisias, some time ago, before you came into the picture, we were saying that people get the idea of what is likely through its similarity to the truth. And we just explained that in every case the person who knows the truth knows best how to determine similarities. So, if you have something new to say about the art of speaking, we shall listen. But if you don't, we shall remain convinced by the explanations we gave just before: No one will ever possess the art of speaking, to the extent that any human being can, unless he acquires the ability to enumerate the sorts of characters to be found in any audience, to divide everything according to its kinds, and to grasp each single thing firmly by means of one form. And no one can acquire these abilities without great effort—a laborious effort a sensible man will make not in order to speak and act among human beings, but so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible. Wiser people than ourselves, Tisias, say that a reasonable man must put his mind to being pleasant not to his fellow slaves (though this may happen as a side effect) but to his masters, who are wholly good. So, if the way round is long, don't be astonished: we must make this detour for the sake of things that are very important,

5 not for what you have in mind. Still, as our argument asserts, if that is what you want, you'll get it best as a result of pursuing our own goal.

PHAEDRUS: What you've said is wonderful, Socrates—if only it could be done!

274b SOCRATES: Yet surely whatever one must go through on the way to an honorable goal is itself honorable.

PHAEDRUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Well, then, that's enough about artfulness and artlessness in connection with speaking.

5 PHAEDRUS: Quite.

SOCRATES: What's left, then, is aptness and ineptness in connection with writing: What feature makes writing good, and what inept? Right?

PHAEDRUS: Yes.

10 SOCRATES: Well, do you know how best to please god when you either use words or discuss them in general?

PHAEDRUS: Not at all. Do you?

274c SOCRATES: I can tell you what I've heard the ancients said, though they alone know the truth. However, if we could discover that ourselves, would we still care about the speculations of other people?

PHAEDRUS: That's a silly question. Still, tell me what you say you've heard.

5 274d SOCRATES: Well, this is what I've heard. Among the ancient gods of Naucratis¹⁰⁹ in Egypt there was one to whom the bird called the ibis is sacred. The name of that divinity was Theuth,¹¹⁰ and it was he who first discovered number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing.

Now the king of all Egypt at that time was Thamus, who lived in the great city in the upper region that the Greeks call Egyptian

¹⁰⁹ A Greek trading colony.

¹¹⁰ Theuth (or Thoth) was the Egyptian god of writing, measuring, and calculation, represented on early monuments as an ibis. The Greeks identified him with Hermes (see 263d6 note).

Thebes; Thamus is what they call Ammon.¹¹¹ Theuth came to exhibit his arts to him and urged him to disseminate them to all the Egyptians. Thamus asked him about the usefulness of each art, and while Theuth was explaining it, Thamus praised him for whatever he thought was right in his explanations and criticized him for whatever he thought was wrong.

274e The story goes that Thamus said much to Theuth, both for and against each art, which it would take too long to repeat. But when they came to writing, Theuth said: "O King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion¹¹² for memory and for wisdom." Thamus, however, replied: "O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them.¹¹³ And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so."

PHAEDRUS: Socrates, you're very good at making up stories from Egypt or wherever else you want!

5 SOCRATES: But, my friend, the priests of the temple of Zeus at Dodona say that the first prophecies were the words of an oak. Everyone who lived at that time, not being as wise as you young ones are

¹¹¹ Reading *Thamoun* (for *theon*) with Postgate. Ammon, king of the Egyptian gods, is identified by the Egyptians with the sun god Ra, and by the Greeks (who call him Thamus) with Zeus.

¹¹² See 230d6 note.

¹¹³ See *Republic* 601c–602a.

today, found it rewarding enough in their simplicity to listen to an oak or even a stone, so long as it was telling the truth, while it seems to make a difference to you, Phaedrus, who is speaking and where he comes from. Why, though, don't you just consider whether what he says is right or wrong?

PHAEDRUS: I deserved that, Socrates. And I agree that the Theban king was correct about writing.

SOCRATES: Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accept them, thinking that writing can yield results that are clear or certain, must be quite naive and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophetic judgment: otherwise, how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about?

PHAEDRUS: Quite right.

SOCRATES: You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offspring of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support.

PHAEDRUS: You are absolutely right about that, too.

SOCRATES: Now tell me, can we discern another kind of discourse, a legitimate brother of this one? Can we say how it comes about, and how it is by nature better and more capable?

PHAEDRUS: Which one is that? How do you think it comes about?

SOCRATES: It is a discourse that is written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent.

PHAEDRUS: You mean the living, breathing discourse of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image.

SOCRATES: Absolutely right. And tell me this. Would a sensible farmer, who cared about his seeds and wanted them to yield fruit, plant them in all seriousness in the gardens of Adonis in the middle of the summer and enjoy watching them bear fruit within seven days?¹¹⁴ Or would he do this as an amusement and in honor of the holiday, if he did it at all? Wouldn't he use his knowledge of farming to plant the seeds he cared for when it was appropriate and be content if they bore fruit seven months later?

PHAEDRUS: That's how he would handle those he was serious about, Socrates, quite differently from the others, as you say.

SOCRATES: Now what about the man who knows what is just, noble, and good? Shall we say that he is less sensible with his seeds than the farmer is with his?

PHAEDRUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Therefore, he won't be serious about writing them in ink, sowing them, through a pen, with words that are as incapable of speaking in their own defense as they are of teaching the truth adequately.

PHAEDRUS: That wouldn't be likely.

SOCRATES: Certainly not. When he writes, it's likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself "when he reaches forgetful old age"¹¹⁵ and for everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps, and will enjoy seeing them sweetly blooming. And when others turn to different amusements, watering themselves with drinking parties and everything else that goes along with them, he will rather spend his time amusing himself with the things I have just described.

PHAEDRUS: Socrates, you are contrasting a vulgar amusement with the very noblest—with the amusement of a man who can while away his time telling stories of justice and the other matters you mentioned.

¹¹⁴ A divine personage apparently associated with the seasons and with agriculture. Adonis spent eight months of the year with Aphrodite, goddess of sexual love, and the four winter months with Persephone, goddess of the Underworld. Gardens of Adonis were pots or window-boxes used for forcing seeds during the Athenian midsummer festival of Adonis. The seeds quickly germinated in the hot sun, but the young plants withered there just as quickly.

¹¹⁵ Apparent quotation. Source unknown.

5 SOCRAATES: That's just how it is, Phaedrus. But it is much nobler to
be serious about these matters, and use the art of dialectic. The dia-
lectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse
277a accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as
well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a
seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others.
Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man
who has it as happy as any human being can be.

5 PHAEDRUS: What you describe is really much nobler still.

SOCRAATES: And now that we have agreed about this, Phaedrus, we
are finally able to decide the issue.

PHAEDRUS: What issue is that?

10 SOCRAATES: The issue which brought us to this point in the first
place: We wanted to examine the attack made on Lysias on account of
277b his writing speeches, and to ask which speeches are written artfully
and which not. Now, I think that we have answered that question
clearly enough.

PHAEDRUS: So it seemed; but remind me again how we did it.

5 SOCRAATES: First, you must know the truth concerning everything
you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each
thing in itself; and, having defined it, you must know how to divide it
into kinds until you reach something indivisible. Second, you must
277c understand the nature of the soul, along the same lines; you must de-
termine which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul,
prepare and arrange your speech accordingly, and offer a complex
and elaborate speech to a complex soul and a simple speech to a sim-
ple one. Then, and only then, will you be able to use speech artfully,
to the extent that its nature allows it to be used that way, either in
5 order to teach or in order to persuade. This is the whole point of the
argument we have been making.

PHAEDRUS: Absolutely. That is exactly how it seemed to us.

277d SOCRAATES: Now how about whether it's noble or shameful to give
or write a speech—when it could be fairly said to be grounds for re-
proach, and when not? Didn't what we said just a little while ago
make it clear—

5 PHAEDRUS: What was that?

SOCRAATES: That if Lysias or anybody else ever did or ever does
write—privately or for the public, in the course of proposing some
law—a political document which he believes to embody clear
knowledge of lasting importance, then this writer deserves re-
proach, whether anyone says so or not. For to be unaware of the
difference between a dream-image and the reality of what is just and
unjust, good and bad, must truly be grounds for reproach even if the
277e crowd praises it with one voice.

PHAEDRUS: It certainly must be.

SOCRAATES: On the other hand, take a man who thinks that a writ-
ten discourse on any subject can only be a great amusement, that no
discourse worth serious attention has ever been written in verse or
5 prose, and that those that are recited in public without questioning
and explanation, in the manner of the rhapsodes, are given only in
order to produce conviction. He believes that at their very best these
278a can only serve as reminders to those who already know. And he also
thinks that only what is said for the sake of understanding and learn-
ing, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble,
and good can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention: Such
discourses should be called his own legitimate children, first the dis-
course he may have discovered already within himself and then its
5 sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls inso-
far as these are worthy; to the rest, he turns his back. Such a man,
278b Phaedrus, would be just what you and I both would pray to become.

PHAEDRUS: I wish and pray for things to be just as you say. 5

SOCRAATES: Well, then: our playful amusement regarding discourse
is complete. Now you go and tell Lysias that we came to the spring
which is sacred to the Nymphs and heard words charging us to deliver
a message to Lysias and anyone else who composes speeches, as well as
278c to Homer and anyone else who has composed poetry either spoken or
sung, and third, to Solon¹¹⁶ and anyone else who writes political doc-
uments that he calls laws: If any one of you has composed these things
with a knowledge of the truth, if you can defend your writing when
5 you are challenged, and if you can yourself make the argument that

¹¹⁶ See 258c1 note.

your writing is of little worth, then you must be called by a name derived not from these writings but rather from those things that you are seriously pursuing.

278d

PHAEDRUS: What name, then, would you give such a man?

SOCRATES: To call him wise, Phaedrus, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god. To call him wisdom's lover—a philosopher—

5

or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly.

PHAEDRUS: That would be quite appropriate.

SOCRATES: On the other hand, if a man has nothing more valuable than what he has composed or written, spending long hours twisting it around, pasting parts together and taking them apart—wouldn't you

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be right to call him a poet or a speech writer or an author of laws?

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Tell that, then, to your friend.

PHAEDRUS: And what about you? What shall you do? We must surely not forget your own friend.

5

SOCRATES: Whom do you mean?

PHAEDRUS: The beautiful Isocrates.¹¹⁷ What are you going to tell him, Socrates? What shall we say he is?

10

SOCRATES: Isocrates is still young, Phaedrus. But I want to tell you what I foresee for him.

279a

PHAEDRUS: What is that?

SOCRATES: It seems to me that by his nature he can outdo anything that Lysias has accomplished in his speeches; and he also has a nobler character. So I wouldn't be at all surprised if, as he gets older and continues writing speeches of the sort he is composing now, he makes everyone who has ever attempted to compose a speech seem like a child in comparison. Even more so if such work no longer satisfies him and a higher, divine impulse leads him to more important things. For nature, my friend, has placed the love of wisdom in his mind.

279b

¹¹⁷ An Athenian teacher and orator (436–338 BCE) whose school was more famous in its day than Plato's Academy. Most scholars take the praise that follows to be ironic.

That is the message I will carry to my beloved, Isocrates, from the gods of this place; and you have your own message for your Lysias.

5

PHAEDRUS: So it shall be. But let's be off, since the heat has died down a bit.

SOCRATES: Shouldn't we offer a prayer to the gods here before we leave?

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: O dear Pan¹¹⁸ and all the other gods of this place, grant that I may be beautiful inside. Let all my external possessions be in friendly harmony with what is within. May I consider the wise man rich. As for gold, let me have as much as a moderate man could bear and carry with him.

279c

Do we need anything else. Phaedrus? I believe my prayer is enough for me.

PHAEDRUS: Make it a prayer for me as well. Friends have everything in common.

SOCRATES: Let's be off.

PASTORAL IS A MIRROR OF WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE THE CITY, OUTSIDE THE CITY.

OTIUM (LATIN FOR PASTORAL, LEISURE TIME)
NEGOTIUM (NEGOTIATION, TRADE, INSIDE THE CITY)

"STONE AGE ECONOMICS" - READ IT

THE PASTORAL MODE, IN LIT, ART, DRAMA, MUSIC, ETC., RECREATES THE PARTICULARS OF THE PULSES WITHOUT CARE FOR RETRIBUTION.

OPPOSED TO THE NEGOTIATION OF VALUE, PASTORAL IS VALUELESS PLAY, AND IT FUNCTIONS AS THAT WHICH IS BEYOND VALUE - PRICELESS

¹¹⁸ See 263d6 note.

AMENOUS → A FITTING PLACE