

Interpretation

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Book Reviews

Charles L. Griswold, Jr., *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), xii + 315 pp., \$29.50.

WILL MORRISEY

"The *Phaedrus* presents the appearance of a tapestry that has come partially unravelled into a tangled skein of themes and images" (p. 1). In working through this appearance Professor Griswold helps the reader to see Plato's statesmanlike weaving, to glimpse the intention and judgment governing the artistry.

In keeping with this attentiveness to Plato's art, Griswold argues that "the form of the dialogue is as intrinsic to its meaning as the content" (p. 2). The genre Plato selects, the written dialogue, contrasts noticeably with Socrates' strictures against writing contained therein. This establishes a certain distance between Plato and his characters, including his protagonist. The distance leaves room for irony, as may be seen in the fact that Socrates' favorite maxim, "Know thyself," is a written command at the temple of Delphi (p. 7). In content the dialogue's unifying theme is self-knowledge, associated with the issue of the "morally right life" (p. 3). There are at least two ways to attempt to understand the soul which must be understood in order to establish the nature of the morally right life: metaphysically, that is, in relation to the soul's striving for the divine; and technically or methodologically, entailing a teachable psychology that analyzes the soul's natural divisions.

How does the form, the written dialogue, contribute to the dialogue's content, the quest for self-knowledge (and vice versa)? "The *Phaedrus* presents us with an extremely odd, but very rich, description of how eros and logos are connected to each other in the desire to give a discursive description of oneself, that is, to self-knowledge" (p. 5). What we desire relates to how we talk about ourselves. We talk about ourselves not always out of self-knowledge but through opinions. Our opinions point to the truth about ourselves. Opinions are never entirely separate from the truth. Plato's account of this incident in Socrates' quest for self-knowledge follows his mentor to a place outside the walls of Athens. The *Phaedrus* is the only Platonic dialogue set 'in nature,' a nature "rife with reminders of the gods," a divinized nature (p. 9). Central to Griswold's introduction is his observation of Socrates' "return to nature" (p. 8), Socrates' walking away from the city, from convention. But the walking is not solitary; it is accompanied by a companion, by dialogue:

Is self-knowledge in some sense suprapolitical? Socrates' subsequent joining of self-knowledge with divine erotic madness points to an affirmative answer, whereas his commitment to dialogue inevitably involves him with the political. (P. 9)

Socrates, then, sometimes presents himself as a political philosopher, sometimes not. How are these apparently contradictory aspects of Socrates related? Why should a philosopher be political at all, in any sense?

Griswold's first chapter takes up these questions, first by considering Socrates' relationship to his interlocutor, Phaedrus. Why should a man of Socrates' intelligence pay any more than the most cursory attention to such a mediocrity? Phaedrus is an unusually tedious specimen of the all-too-familiar type, the literary intellectual. No rhetorician himself, only an "eternal student and disciple" (p. 21), Phaedrus enjoys speeches more for their form than for any truth they might convey. He is neither political, nor businesslike, nor especially erotic; he 'appreciates,' he is a 'connoisseur.' He has no strong or serious passions. He loves others only "out of a sense of utility" (p. 23) and inclines to a fashionable materialism and antitraditionalism. He is "a cultured dabbler in rhetoric, materialistic physics, and medicine" (p. 25). Former United States Vice President Spiro T. Agnew would have classed him among the effete snobs of Greek antiquity.

Socrates bothers with him because "Phaedrus' very shortcomings make him an ideal character for the development of . . . the central theme of the dialogue" (p. 18), self-knowledge. No one lacks it more conspicuously.

By showing what it means to lack self-knowledge, Plato is able to show us both why the philosophic life is superior to the Phaedran and what would be required to achieve it. . . . Plato chose to say something about self-knowledge by constructing dialogue between someone who possesses a knowledge of his own ignorance and someone who is ignorant of even his own ignorance. (P. 18)

Moreover, nature serves as an appropriate setting for a discussion of writing with Phaedrus because nature's silence "is dangerously conducive to Phaedran thoughtlessness" (p. 24). Phaedrus' lack of self-knowledge corresponds to his lack of eros, his lack of any political or business interest, and his tendency to drift into 'country' surroundings. He does not know himself in part because he does not understand others, his need for others. Socrates, no frivolous antitraditionalist 'intellectual,' "understands that he . . . needs the polis and what it can teach him about himself" (p. 25). Phaedrus wants to get Socrates into the country as a captive audience for speech-reading. Socrates wants to learn about himself by conversing with his inferior.

Not incidentally, Socrates will also use the 'utilitarian' Phaedrus for a political purpose. Properly educated, Phaedrus can serve "as an intermediary between Socrates and the 'opinion makers' of the city" (p. 27), specifically, between Socrates and Phaedrus' rhetorician friend Lysias. *Philosophic* rhetoric faces a difficult problem in a democracy. Such rhetoric "is effective only when

the speaker can know the soul of his interlocutor(s), an impossibility when a large group is being addressed (at least if the truth is to be conveyed)" (p. 27). To defend philosophy before the bar of democratic opinion, therefore, the philosopher must persuade the persuaders. Phaedrus may be able to put in a good word for Socrates with the persuader, Lysias. To do so Phaedrus must be educated, brought to some sort of self-knowledge, however partial. For this purpose Socrates "enters into a comedy of imitation and deception" (p. 29) with him, a complex sequence of role-playing and role reversals that imitates dramatically the intellectual process of dialectic. Dialectic and rhetoric "are inseparable in the context of self-knowledge" (p. 32)—both Phaedrus' and Socrates'. Self-knowledge has "an irremediably 'social' or (in the broadest sense) 'political' character" (p. 32) for nonphilosophers and for philosophers. This is not merely a matter of utility for philosophers. "[T]he soul cannot know itself without the mirrorlike presence of another soul" (p. 32). "[B]y looking at a degraded image of eros Socrates can challenge himself to think through again the nature of eros" (p. 33) as well as contribute to his own self-protection by letting Phaedrus get to know him, and himself, a little better.

The excursion to the country is just that—only a day trip. Transcendence of the city is possible but temporary. The conspicuously urbane Socrates evidently has been here before and "is remarkably sensitive to the beauty of the spot" (p. 34). Phaedrus is not. He "walks outside the city, but his soul is owned by it," whereas Socrates is "in, not of, the polis" (p. 35). Neither nature in its silence nor the city in its chatter alone suffices for self-knowledge. Dialogue requires both "the soul's recollection of a natural order and other human beings" (p. 35); self-knowledge requires dialogue in order to unify theory and eros, "love measured by nature, not just other speeches, books, or the applause of one's admirers" (p. 36). The direct experience of nature will not suffice because opinion, "the prescientific sense of what we are," does "contain something of the truth" (p. 38). This prescientific or "everyday" version of self-knowledge includes the feeling that we are "beings who live in a world in some sense animated by incorporeal beings" or souls (p. 38). When Socrates goes to the country he speaks of (and to) the gods, refusing to reduce myths *or nature* to 'naturalistic' or materialist terms but instead translating myths and nature into psychic terms. In doing so he finds in his soul at least two beings: the mythic monster Typhon, who "represents the absolute tyranny of eros deprived of intelligence"; and a *zoion* or natural animal, a moderate creature that can "live in harmony with the divine" (p. 41). "Neither of these alternatives alone describes Socrates," the philosopher, with his erotic madness and law-abiding reasonableness. The tensions between the wild monster and the mild animal are manifold, so "self-knowledge is not terminable as long as one lives" (p. 43). Socrates desires to know himself "in order that he may lead the life that is best" (p. 43). To do so he must continue to deepen his understanding of eros and moderation, discourse and nondiscursive vision, rhetoric and truth.

Phaedrus has a written speech on love by the rhetorician Lysias. In the

speech Lysias poses as a nonlover who nonetheless would seduce a young boy. The speech is “singularly odd” because “the nonlover argues that the boy should gratify him sexually *because* he does *not* love the boy” (p. 45). The speech “reads like a very sober legal brief” (p. 45) and features “no rhetoric of love” (p. 46); it is impersonal, not individualized. Emotionally absurd and morally debased, its appeal nonetheless should not be underestimated, “As the point might be put today, liberation from moral constraints is justified in the name of controlled satisfaction of subjective preferences” (p. 46)—an ideology (so to speak) of hedonism, utilitarianism, and technicism governed by the principles (so to speak) of calculation, frankness, privacy, selfishness, and freedom of choice or ‘lifestyle.’ The speech’s “debasement dialectic” pushes toward a ‘morality’ of “enlightened self-interest” (p. 47), i.e., satisfaction of physical needs, pleasure, minimalization of pain, preservation of reputation. Lysias “negates eros only in the specific sense: he wants the identical goals the lover does, but has acquired different means for attaining them” (p. 47). Imagining that he has mastered eros, in fact he remains its slave, as his reason is only “an instrument for the satisfaction of desire” (p. 47). His reason is a *techne*, only. The ‘nonlover’ Lysias is really a “concealed lover” (p. 48), a none-too-convincing liar.

The Lysian ‘nonlover’ does not know himself, but believes he does. He “assumes that his self-knowledge does not require the discursive mediation of another person” (p. 50). Self-satisfied rather than self-knowing, he assumes he has nothing to learn from the boy, whom he would reduce to an instrument of physical pleasure. Despite his baseness and folly the ‘nonlover’ is better than he knows. “However base his intentions, the nonlover must conceal himself as a lover and so transcend in his own rhetoric the level of his intentions” (pp. 50–51). Eros edified in spite of, even by means of, the hypocrisy of the speaker. A “glimmer of anamnesis,” of nonforgetting the beautiful, remains (p. 51). “[T]alk about what it means to be human” is “implicit in the language of love” *and* in its apparent opposite, the studied language of nonlove spoken by a concealed lover (p. 51). Lysias’ ‘self-interest’ is not self-knowledge and therefore not truly self-interested. But it does tell the skeptical listener something about truth. Lysias’ assumptions are not “simply false”: “there is a level at which reason and desire collide”: “reason and desire must collaborate if a person is to be satisfied”; a philosopher does need to be detached from sexual desire, if not from eros as such (p. 48).

Socrates begins his response by appealing to Phaedrus’ admiration of technical competence, criticizing Lysias’ speech *as* a work of rhetoric. Socrates then delivers his own speech as a replacement of Lysias’ speech. Before doing so he pulls his cloak over his head in an ironic gesture of shame. This is appropriate, Griswold argues, because “shame is a kind of self-consciousness, mediated by one’s consciousness of how someone else would evaluate one’s deeds”—a “paradigm” of “the complex reflexive nature of self-knowledge” (p. 56). In this speech Socrates shows that Lysias should be ashamed of himself, that Lysias is

a lying lover not a frank, 'enlightened' nonlover. However, Socrates' speech is itself somewhat shameless, mimicking the impersonal or abstract character of Lysias' speech. This shamelessness is needed to advance the argument, as "we need a theoretical account of how to proceed in understanding ourselves and (in the present case) of what eros is if we are to find constancy in our actions" (pp. 58–59). Yet a good theory is hard to find, as it is all too easy to confuse (as rhetoricians do) knowledge with opinion, truth with convention. How to distinguish "between intelligent and unfounded argument" (p. 60)?

In Socrates' speech "eros is the tyrannical desire for power" (p. 62), "the narcissistic effort to annihilate its object by working it to death in the service of the master/lover" (p. 63). Such eros contradicts itself, destroying its own beloved. "Nature left to its own devices cancels itself out" (p. 63). Reason is here required for self-preservation if not self-gratification, for technical "efficiency in the pursuit of pleasure" (p. 63). We are left with a circle. Lysias the 'nonlover' is a concealed lover; Socrates the 'lover' is a concealed nonlover who detaches himself somewhat from eros in order to satisfy eros. Socrates must "formulate a better conception of human nature" (p. 64) than this if he is not to fall into Lysianism. Still, just as Lysias' speech edified in spite of itself, Socrates' shameful shamelessness also points to a truth. Erotic dialectic has a "self-motion." "[T]he desire for satisfaction leads to the acquisition of theory, which in turn expands our vocabulary and conception of eros"; "in order to understand our desire we have to do more than think about ourselves as particular individuals" (p. 66). We have to understand others. We have to consider social, even political matters. What is more, we begin to see that such apparent dichotomies as eros and logic, attraction and detachment, desire and moderation, desire and reason, are not so easily separable. "[A]t the highest level reason is erotic, or eros is rational" (p. 67).

We cannot just let our desires run away with us; they need to be made reflective in a way that allows them to be measured by an answer about what it means to be human. The measures cannot themselves be further desires or other discourses about desires. (P. 68)

Socrates' speech in reply to Lysias' speech is "superior but shameful" because, like Lysias' speech, it portrays lover and nonlover alike as "intelligent wolves, animals whose appetite is enlightened" (p. 69). Neither speech "gives us an account of eros that explains the willingness of Phaedrus and Socrates to listen to and deliver those very speeches" (pp. 68–69). Socrates (unlike Lysias) interrupts his own speech and threatens to leave, inducing Phaedrus to drop his pose of urbane detachment and act as a lover, imploring Socrates to stay. Socrates accedes to Phaedrus' desire, claiming (as a nonlover) that his inner daimon urges him to stay. That is, a set of moral considerations—the prophetic daimon, his respect for divine Eros, the opinion of an imagined gentleman who overheard the speeches, the feeling of shame after blaspheming, and so on—

compels Socrates to stay and to attempt to go beyond the level of reductionist naturalism. Moral considerations are needed in order “to articulate the ascent of knowledge” (p. 72). This ascent will next take a mythic turn, with some of the most striking imagery in Plato’s writings.

The palinode consists of two sections, the first a discussion of three “traditional” forms of madness (p. 74), the second an exposition defending a fourth form of madness. Once again Socrates conceals himself, this time by playing the role of the poet Stesichorus, a celebrator of noble love, to Phaedrus, cast rather optimistically in the role of the “potential philosopher” (p. 74). The three “traditional” forms of madness are prophetic, “telistic” (involving cures for sicknesses through catharses and rites), and poetic. Each of these is “sent by the gods” (p. 75). Religion is perhaps nearly indispensable to cure the soul of the all-too-human, techno-materialist conception of nature that grips Phaedrus. Shame, sensitivity to beauty, the experience of eros, and an “understanding of the religious premise” (p. 77)—that is, of human dependence on higher powers—form the bridge to philosophy, “a more archaic”—closer to the *arche*—conception of nature. ‘Modern’ techno-materialism destroys wonder, fills the soul with conceit, spoils potentially philosophic souls by making them into what we now call intellectuals. Religion promotes wonder if not awe, humbles the soul before the cosmos and the gods, provides the antidote to certain presumptions.

The fourth form of madness is “unconventional” (p. 75), internal to the individual (as is Socrates’ cautionary daimon, which may be its needed counterpart). Divine erotic madness comes to light in examining the human soul, whose two salient characteristics are self-motion and immortality. Self-motion (eros and thought) contradicts materialistic and deterministic conceptions of the soul that portray the soul as being buffeted by external forces, or as being composed of mindless particles. The soul directs itself, not ‘freely’ in the ‘German’ sense (‘autonomously’ or ‘creatively’)—the soul’s desires are given—but in the sense that the soul has the ability to choose among the desires. Immortality for Socrates does not mean personal immortality, a permanent joining of body and soul in a future life. Immortality rather serves as “a component of the thesis that every human soul has by nature some understanding of the Truth” (p. 85). “Intelligence does not inhabit an absurd world; there are eternal principles of intelligibility the understanding of which is an escape from our finitude” (p. 85). The soul is not necessarily able to exist without the body, but “there is a natural fit between soul and Ideas” (p. 87).

In keeping with his antitechnical strategy here, Socrates describes the soul in terms of myth. The soul is not to be described scientifically or in terms of epistemic knowledge. The soul is not unchanging; there is no eternal Idea of the soul as there is of, say, Justice. “Human souls are not intelligible as images of an original principle of Soul, and the world is populated not by images of Soul but by souls” (p. 89). There is no “immutable essence of man” (p. 89),

but man does have a self-moving nature, a 'look,' an articulation, certain given and stable limits. Self-knowledge is not epistemic but 'gnostic,' and must be approached through myths.

Here Socrates introduces the myth of the charioteer and the winged horses. The charioteer represents reason. The black horse represents sexual desire, the white horse spiritedness, sensitivity to honor and shame. All have wings, representing eros. The human soul, then, is a complex entity of interdependent but often conflicting elements whose unity is "functional and teleological" as well as hierarchical, with the charioteer rightfully in control (p. 93). At the same time the soul also appears somewhat unnatural, even monstrous, "a seemingly impossible grafting together of the human, the equine, and the avian" (p. 95). It is not in itself good or evil, being good only if rightly ordered. Eros sets the soul on its quest for its "true self" (p. 98). "To be oneself one must know oneself. This is the secret the philosopher understands" (p. 98). And to know ourselves we must see ourselves "as a part of a larger Whole, elements of which naturally attract and fulfill us when we understand them" (p. 98). The Whole helps us fulfill the eros of the well-governed soul. Virtue is no teachable method, no *techne* or skill, but "knowledge of the true ends of desire" (p. 98).

Virtue is difficult for human beings. The gods ascend to the divine banquet of the Ideas with ease. They need no erotic madness, have no black horse to overcome. They do not assist the human souls, this "anarchic mob striving for self-preservation," for a taste of divine food, in a "state of nature" that for them is "a war of all against all" (p. 99). For Socrates "the origins of human nature are prepolitical" but "not unambiguously good" (p. 99). The soul is "ambiguously natural" (p. 101), the result of a "murky" relationship between "choice and fate" (p. 100). But the soul is natural in the sense that it is not "to be understood historically as a process of social-political development" (p. 101). There is little or no 'progress' to be seen in the human species as a whole. "Man is to be understood primarily in terms of his ends" (p. 101). Not all human souls pursue the same ends, at least immediately and for the most part. There is a hierarchy of elements within the individual soul. This means that "a soul in one category will not see things in the same light as a soul in a different category," and rhetoric (also government generally?) is necessary (p. 103).

Socratic gods do not rule men, do not care for them. Socratic gods do nothing but look when 'feasting' at the divine banquet. "Being *appears* to them as it is" (p. 104); they need no self-knowledge because their 'selves' neither impede nor struggle to obtain knowledge of the Ideas. "[T]he mind's perfection is not to master, shape, make, or alter what *is* but rather to be formed by it"; "in this sense eros is the yearning for death," the suppression of 'subjectivity' (p. 104). Human beings are not pure mind. To forget this one would need to be subhuman or superhuman. To be fully human is to be perpetually dissatisfied yet somehow "satisfied with (or in) this state of perpetual dissatisfaction," to know our own ignorance, our incompleteness, to desire to overcome it, and yet to

know that “in this life such overcoming is impossible” (p. 106). Central to his chapter on the palinode is Griswold’s acknowledgment of the “disquieting” (thus self-moving, literally disquieting?) teaching of the *Phaedrus* that dialectic “cannot in principle arrive . . . at a comprehensive understanding of reality,” despite the dialogue’s “edifying rhetoric” (p. 106). “The *Phaedrus* seems to substitute Beauty for the Good” (p. 266, n. 47). Whereas “the highest form of Episteme is noetic,” a matter of intellectual intuition, not speech, “there is no pure intellectual intuition for human beings” (pp. 106–7). Nor is there any “noesis of nous” or self-consciousness with respect to the activity of intuition, a Kantian ‘metaintuition’ (p. 108). Therefore “the problem of knowing whether and when one knows something truly is critical” both in the sense of ‘extremely important’ and in the sense of skeptical or questioning: “uncritical acceptance of one’s insights is dangerous” (p. 108). The human soul needs to look at itself “through the eyes of others” and also through its own eyes retrospectively (p. 108). By so doing it can move closer to the “objective truth the human individual needs for his “subjective happiness” (p. 109), closer to the Being that nourishes the soul.

Anamnesis or recollection is the capacity that enables the soul to go beyond the many sense perceptions to “a one gathered together by reasoning” (p. 111). The myth of the divine banquet illustrates that anamnesis is “both a rational and an ontological unification,” both “theoretical” and “existential” (pp. 112–13).

In anamnesis we are both recalled to a sense of our primordial status, our place in the cosmos as a whole, and brought by means of lengthy questioning to rational insight into the form of things. These forms, we’re told, nourish the wings and the soul; and in remembering the forms we become again what we were. In this sense insight into the Beings is the same as becoming oneself, one’s true or whole self. But the insight is always partial, as the myth also makes clear. Recognition of that fact is knowledge of ignorance. (P.114)

Anamnesis shows us what we desire, where we are in the cosmos. It also shows us our limits. All of these insights together amount to self-knowledge.

“The philosopher must be able to lead opinions to rational unity through insight into eidos” (p. 115). Anamnesis is not a religious conversion. Anamnesis is “a process that takes place through time,” “an activity, not a state, of the soul” (p. 115). Socrates’ erotic art is “the dialectical rhetoric that uses the power of questioning” to lead the soul to insight (pp. 115–16). Socratic eroticism sees the beloved as an image, however partial, of an intelligible beauty. Socratic speech intends “a return to the arche” (p. 121). Socrates is Freud in reverse: “Stated very crudely, instead of explaining the desire for philosophy as a modification of sexual desire, Socrates explains sexual desire as a low manifestation of the desire for wisdom” (p. 121).

Self-knowledge is not exclusively theoretical or even verbal. It is also “a matter of a person’s *acting* in a certain manner, of *living* his life in a certain

way,” the “living out of a philosophical life” that is “never quite fulfilled” (p. 122). As a kind of lover, the philosopher uses eros to move his mind toward the truth.

The lover loses himself in order to find himself at a deeper level. The lover unconsciously transfers his own character-ideal to the beloved to whom he has taken a fancy, and then sees himself in the beloved. The role of the imagination is crucial here. . . . (P. 126)

The philosopher does this consciously, divinizing the beloved, mythologizing nature, and externalizing himself, thereby “creating for himself a route to self-knowledge” (p. 126). True friendship benefits both friends and recollects the Beings. This is not Christian *agape*, the unmerited love of a person as a creature of God regardless of individual qualities, nor is this the love of a unique individual ‘for better or for worse.’ “Socrates’ lover and beloved love each other so as to love themselves, not in a selfish way, but in a way that helps the other to love himself qua whole and fulfilling his nature” (p. 129).

Why should widening the scope of ‘subjectivity’ by including other flawed subjects necessarily guard the philosopher from self-deception? It does not. “[D]istinguishing between the truth about oneself and what one has been persuaded of remains a grave difficulty” (p. 131). “[T]he palinode teaches that in thinking we cannot safely distinguish theory . . . and production,” that is, “what we *see* to be the case and what we (falsely) *make* to be the case” (p. 132). Still, the philosopher finds greater ‘noetic safety,’ so to speak, in the talkative city than in the silent country. He does not find greater physical safety in the city; many of his fellow-citizens call him mad and may kill him. Because recollection “seems inseparable from sense perception” and therefore “cannot take place independently of the body” (pp. 114–15), this, too, is a threat to noetic safety. There is also a considerable danger in making philosophic madness “double as political doctrine,” a debasing move indeed for all concerned (p. 133). This is where sophrosyne, moderation, comes in. True sophrosyne results from the “recollection of noetically presented truth”; “the sources of true self-restraint are suprapolitical” (p. 134) but not without ethical and political ramifications. “[T]he desire of reason can control the other desires” (p. 134). This is the sense in which virtue *is* knowledge, “an understanding of what is good for the soul as a whole,” within the Whole (p. 135). Taken literally, philosophic asceticism would result in the end of the human species, could all human beings become philosophers. As this is unlikely to be Socrates’ intention, “possibly the point is that only pederastic sexual relations (which are ‘unnatural’; 251a1, 254b1) and sex indulged in for pleasure alone are to be rejected completely” (p. 135).

Platonic myths exemplify philosophic logos. Their “symbolically expressed meaning requires interpretation in order to be understood” (p. 139). A logos may be a factual account or a more directly rational argument, but it is not

absolutely distinguishable from a myth, inasmuch as the myth also conveys a truth. (Similarly, opinion is not absolutely distinguishable from a rational *logos*, else one could not reach the truth 'through' opinions). The myth of the immortality of the soul means "the capacity of a mind that exists in time to think what is eternal"; "the 'punishment' a person undergoes for having lived a nonphilosophic life is simply the quality of that one life—a life devoid of true happiness, satisfaction, love" (p. 145). Mythic language well expresses "our *experience* of desire and love," regardless of reductionist materialism, and also expresses our recognition of who we "might become at [our] best" (p. 147). By means of imagery, metaphor, and symbols "the world revealed by the senses is transposed to the inner world of the soul," transposed in a personal way that abstract propositions and arguments cannot match (p. 148). The myth "tells us what we are by telling us what we are like rather than by dissolving or reducing us into sub- or suprahuman principles" (p. 148). Myth is perhaps unsurpassed in describing the experience of love and insight, central to the life of philosophers. And because the human soul 'has' no Idea corresponding to it, myth can express the soul's motion, its gaining and losing of unity, without suggesting that the soul is historically generated. The advantages of Platonic myth resemble the advantages of good rhetoric.

The second half of the *Phaedrus* concerns rhetoric. "[T]he enthusiastic and erotic idiom of the first half seems replaced by a detached and analytic idiom" (p. 157). Dialogue replaces monologue. Self-knowledge remains the underlying theme. After the enthusiasm of the palinode "we need . . . to talk about talking" in a "sober and uninspired" way (p. 163).

Socrates uses Phaedrus' passion for rhetoric "to seduce Phaedrus into listening to some more philosophical, and so more beautiful, speeches" (p. 158). "[T]he desire to seduce requires rhetoric," "the art of leading the soul through words" (p. 159). The rhetorician is both lover and nonlover. The *techne* of rhetoric is, in modern language, "value free" (p. 160)—an intellectual procedure involving a determinate number of steps that operates on complexes of elements by means of division and collection as a means to some end. A *techne* is teachable. However, rhetoric is not only a *techne*. Philosophic dialogue, "the perfection of rhetoric," is "not equivalent to technical discourse" (pp. 160–61).

This may be seen in the myth of the cicadas who report to the Muses on the songs and speeches of men. Socrates relates this myth at high noon, the mid-point of the day. For Phaedrus "pure pleasure is freedom," the easy, sleepy listening to beautiful speeches; he has no sense of the benefits of wakefulness, of "painful philosophic labor" (p. 165). The myth warns Phaedrus "about the dangers of a drugged mind"—the cicadas were so enamored of speeches they forgot to eat and died—and also "turns our attention from the political goal of the cultivation of honor among men to that of pleasing the Muses" (p. 165). Without the self-consciousness dialogue can bring, the soul degenerates into a whirring cicada; sufficiently disunited, the human soul *can* become subhuman.

This vulnerability is exploited by the wrongful use of value-free rhetorical technique. “Regardless of what the crowd is persuaded of, someone who rides a donkey instead of a horse into battle is going to pay a heavy price” (p. 169), as is the soul that mistakes evil for good. “[T]he artful rhetorician must know the truth if he is himself to avoid being deceived” (p. 170). To avoid self-deception as much as possible the philosopher “creates a climate of disagreement for himself” (p. 172) with his questioning. Better a gadfly than a cicada. Dialogue is the best form of rhetoric for a philosopher’s purposes, as “it is dangerous for a philosopher to talk to himself only” (p.173), although a philosopher *does* talk to himself. The results of the technician’s collecting and dividing must be “re-absorbed into the dialectic of philosophizing” (p. 176). “Opinion unravels its intuitions unreflectively; *techne* grapples with them and imposes an order; and *dialogesthai* forces reflection on them by means of questions” (p. 176). Mental operations “depend on the capacity to *see* what it is we wish to say or analyze, to see how to analyze it, and to see when the analysis is finished and completed” (p. 176). Analytical technique alone does not “resolve the critical problem of distinguishing between intuition of Beings and intuition governed by opinion, even if the *techne* is helpful in training the mind to make some steps in solving the problem” (p. 176). Analytical technique cannot “grasp the whole of nature” (p. 185); it misses the soul, it misses life (p. 181).

The art of rhetoric, including dialectic, “is an episteme comparable to the arts of medicine, music, and the composition of tragedy” (p. 187). All the arts have their techniques that must be guided by “sound judgment,” which “can be perfected only by experience” (p. 187). Learning the rules is one thing, but there are no rules telling you how to apply the rules. For that you need prudence. A similar observation should be made with respect to the study of nature. As “the orderly and intelligible sequence of actions and reactions of single and clustered monads,” nature contains parts that can be analyzed with respect to their capacity for action and for being acted upon (pp. 191–92). But to understand how a complex natural phenomenon acts and is acted upon *as a whole* one needs recourse to teleology. Under the influence of certain rhetoricians, Phaedrus supposes that “in matters concerning the good and the just what counts is the probable (*eikos*, *pithanos*), not what is true” (p. 196) because a seductive presentation of the probable is all that is needed to persuade the many (p. 196). But how will the rhetorician know what he manipulates if he does not know the truth of the matter? Or—conceding that many ‘successful’ rhetoricians don’t know what they’re talking about—“to what end ought the rhetorician bother persuading others?” (p. 199). Once again, self-knowledge becomes indispensable. Rhetoric or the leading of human souls with words leads itself to education, etymologically a sort of leading or drawing out.

One conspicuous technique of rhetoric and of education is writing. Socrates does not much like it. Writing is as fixed as an Idea but not nearly so true, giving the appearance of a finality it does not really have and nourishing dog-

matism instead of questioning. The reader becomes mentally lazy, forgetful, unthoughtful, ignorant of his own ignorance. Books are sophists, “dwelling in the realm of what *seems* rather than of truth” (p. 206). They impede self-knowledge because “it does not seem possible to engage in a live dialogue with a book” (p. 208). Writing on a page replaces writing in the soul. The human soul should love wisdom; too much reading encourages the soul to imagine it now possesses wisdom. How can a dialectician who “knows what soul to pick and how to make it dialectical” exercise his good judgment in writing for an audience that will select *him*?

Plato’s mastery of the written dialogue enables him to refute the Socratic critique of writing. No more than Socrates does he believe it “possible or desirable to try to transform everyone into a philosopher” (p. 221). His dialogues speak both to philosophers and nonphilosophers. More important, Plato’s dialogues can “locate potential philosophers and transform them into philosophers” (p. 222). The dialogues “*show* rather than *tell* us” that philosophy is a search, questioning a quest (p. 223). “Dialectic can be learned only by the practice of it; it depends on something like *phronesis* rather than rule-governed methods” (p. 223). To understand the activity of coming to an insight one must experience it; the dialogues provide opportunities for that experience. They “recant their authority as *written* in order to return the reader to the life of ensouled discourse” (p. 225). “Recognizing that the unexamined life is not worth living, one searches out oneself” (p. 241).