Phaedrus

PLATO

c. 428–348 BC

Phaedrus

Φαῖδρος

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited



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Phaedrus · Plato (c. 428–348 BC)

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INTRODUCTION

On a hot summer day Socrates, who hardly ever leaves the city, walks out along the river Ilissus with the young Phaedrus, who has a speech by the orator Lysias hidden under his cloak. The speech argues that a boy should favour a man who is not in love with him rather than one who is.

Socrates first answers with a speech of his own on the same theme, then, ashamed, takes it back with a second speech in praise of love as a divine madness. Here Plato gives his great image of the soul as a charioteer driving two winged horses, one noble and one unruly, and of lovers who remember, through beauty, the forms they once saw.

The second half asks what makes speaking and writing good or bad, and ends with the famous story of the Egyptian god Theuth, who invented writing, and with Socrates' warning that written words cannot answer back.

Phaedrus

Outside the walls of Athens, by the river Ilissus, on a summer afternoon.
Three speeches about love, then a conversation about what makes speaking and writing good.

SOCRATES 227a Phaedrus, my friend! Where are you off to, and where have you come from?

PHAEDRUS From Lysias, son of Cephalus, Socrates. I'm going for a walk outside the wall; I spent a long time there, sitting since early morning. And I take my walks along the roads on the advice of our friend Acumenus—yours and mine—since he says they're more refreshing than walks on the 227b running tracks.[1]

SOCRATES He's right, my friend. So Lysias, it seems, was in town?

PHAEDRUS Yes, staying with Epicrates, in that house near the Olympieion, the one that belonged to Morychus.[2]

SOCRATES So how did you all spend the time? Obviously Lysias was treating you to a feast of speeches?

PHAEDRUS You'll hear about it, if you have the leisure to walk along and listen.

1 Lysias (c. 445–380 BC) was the most celebrated speechwriter in Athens; Acumenus was a doctor.
2 The Olympieion was the temple of Olympian Zeus, in the southeast of the city near the Ilissus.

SOCRATES What? Don't you think I'd make it, as Pindar says, "a thing above all business" to hear how you and Lysias spent your time?

PHAEDRUS 227c Lead on, then.

SOCRATES Tell me, please.

PHAEDRUS Well, Socrates, it's just the thing for you to hear, since the speech we were busy with was, in a way I can't quite explain, about love. Lysias has written about a handsome boy being propositioned—but not by a lover; that's exactly where the cleverness lies. He says one should grant favors to a man who isn't in love rather than to one who is.[3]

SOCRATES What a noble fellow! If only he'd write that one should favor a poor man rather than a rich one, an older man rather than a younger, and all the other things 227d that apply to me and to most of us. Then his speeches really would be sophisticated and a public service. Anyway, I'm so eager to hear it that even if you make your walk all the way to Megara and, like Herodicus, go up to the wall and come straight back, I won't fall behind you.[4]

PHAEDRUS What do you mean, my excellent Socrates? Do you suppose that what 228a Lysias, the most skilled writer of our day, composed at his leisure over a long time, I, an amateur, will recite from memory in a way worthy of him? Far from it—though I'd like that more than coming into a lot of gold.

SOCRATES Phaedrus, if I don't know Phaedrus, I've forgotten myself too. But neither is the case. I know very well that when he was listening to Lysias's speech, he didn't hear it just once; he kept asking him to repeat it again and again, and Lysias gladly 228b obliged. Even that wasn't enough for him. In the end he took the book and pored over the parts he wanted most, and after sit-

3 In Athens an older man (the lover) might court a youth (the beloved), offering friendship, protection and guidance in return for his company and sexual favors; "grant favors" is the usual term for the youth's consent.

4 Herodicus was a physician who prescribed long walks for health; Megara lay some twenty-five miles west of Athens.

ting at this since early morning, he got tired and went out for a walk—knowing the speech by heart, I'd swear, by the Dog, unless it was very long. He was heading outside the wall to practice it. Then he ran into a man sick with a passion for hearing speeches, and when he saw him—saw him!—he was delighted that he'd have a partner in his frenzy, 228c and told him to lead on.[5] But when the lover of speeches begged him to recite it, he played coy, as if he didn't want to. In the end, though, he was going to recite it even if he had to force it on an unwilling listener. So, Phaedrus, ask him to do right now what he's bound to do soon anyway.

PHAEDRUS Really, the best thing for me is to recite it as well as I can, since it seems to me you'll never let me go until I say it somehow or other.

SOCRATES Yes, you've read me quite rightly.

PHAEDRUS 228d Then here's what I'll do. The truth is, Socrates, I really didn't learn the words by heart. But the gist of nearly all the points he made about how the lover's case differs from the non-lover's I'll go through in summary, one after another, starting with the first.

SOCRATES Yes, after you've shown me first, my dear, what you've got in your left hand under your cloak. I suspect it's the speech itself. If so, here's what you should think of me: 228e I'm very fond of you, but when Lysias himself is here, I'm not at all inclined to offer myself for you to practice on. Come on, show me.

PHAEDRUS Stop it. You've dashed the hope I had, Socrates, of using you for practice. Well, where would you like us to sit and read it?

SOCRATES 229a Let's turn off here and go along the Ilissus; then we'll sit down somewhere quiet, wherever seems best.[6]

PHAEDRUS It's lucky, it seems, that I happen to be barefoot—you, of course, always are. So the easiest thing is for us to walk

5 "By the Dog" is Socrates' favorite oath.

along the stream with our feet in the water, and it won't be unpleasant either, especially at this season of the year and this time of day.

SOCRATES Lead on, then, and look out for a place to sit as we go.

PHAEDRUS Do you see that very tall plane tree over there?

SOCRATES Of course.

PHAEDRUS 229b There's shade there, and a gentle breeze, and grass to sit on or, if we like, to lie down on.

SOCRATES Lead on.

PHAEDRUS Tell me, Socrates, isn't it somewhere around here on the Ilissus that Boreas is supposed to have carried off Oreithyia?[7]

SOCRATES So they say.

PHAEDRUS From right here, then? The water certainly looks lovely—pure and clear, just right for girls to play beside.

SOCRATES 229c No, it's about two or three stades downstream, where we cross to the sanctuary at Agra; there's an altar of Boreas somewhere there.[8]

PHAEDRUS I've never noticed it. But tell me, by Zeus, Socrates: do you believe this myth is true?

SOCRATES If I disbelieved it, as the wise do, I wouldn't be out of place. Then I could play the clever one and say that a gust of Boreas pushed her off the nearby rocks while she was playing with Pharmaceia, and that because she died that way she was said to have been snatched away by Boreas 229d —or from the Areopagus, since there's this story too, that she was carried off from there and not from here.[9] For my part, Phaedrus, I think such explanations are charming in their way, but the work of a

6 The Ilissus is a small river running just outside the city walls of Athens.
7 Boreas is the North Wind; Oreithyia was the daughter of Erechtheus, a legendary king of Athens.
8 A stade is about 600 feet; Agra, just outside the city, had a sanctuary of Artemis.
9 Pharmaceia was a nymph of a local spring; the Areopagus is a hill in Athens.

man who is far too clever and hardworking and not altogether fortunate—for no other reason than that after this he'll have to set right the shape of the Hippocentaurs, and then of the Chimaera, and a whole crowd of such creatures floods in, Gorgons and Pegasuses, [229e] and hordes of other impossible and outlandish monsters of fable. If someone disbelieves in them and tries to reduce each one to what's plausible, using some rustic sort of wisdom, he'll need a great deal of leisure. I have no leisure for such things at all, and the reason, my friend, is this. I'm not yet able, as the Delphic inscription bids, to know myself; and it seems ridiculous to me, [230a] while I'm still ignorant of that, to investigate things that are none of my business.[10] So I leave those things alone and go along with the customary belief about them, and, as I was just saying, I investigate not them but myself: whether I happen to be some beast more complicated and more puffed up than Typhon, or a gentler and simpler creature, sharing by nature in some divine, unpuffed lot. But, my friend—to interrupt our talk—isn't this the tree you were taking us to?[11]

PHAEDRUS [230b] Yes, this is the one.

SOCRATES By Hera, it's a lovely place to stop! This plane tree is wide-spreading and tall, and the chaste-tree's height and deep shade are quite beautiful; and since it's in full bloom, it would make the place as fragrant as can be. Then again, the loveliest of springs flows under the plane tree, with very cold water, to judge by my foot. It seems to be a shrine of some nymphs and of Achelous, to judge by the figurines and statues. [230c] And again, if you like, how welcome and very sweet the breeze here is! It echoes with the shrill summer music of the cicadas' chorus. But the most exquisite thing of all is the grass, growing on the gentle slope thick enough to rest your head on beautifully as you lie

10 "Know yourself" was inscribed at Apollo's temple at Delphi.
11 Typhon was a monstrous, many-headed giant; Socrates plays on typhos, "smoke" or "conceit."

down. You've been an excellent guide to a stranger, my dear Phaedrus.[12]

PHAEDRUS And you, my remarkable friend, seem a very strange person. Just as you say, you really are like a stranger being shown around, not a local. 230d You don't leave town to travel abroad, and I don't think you even go outside the wall at all.

SOCRATES Forgive me, my good friend. I'm a lover of learning, you see, and the countryside and the trees won't teach me anything, while the people in the city will. But you seem to have found the remedy to get me out. Just as people lead hungry animals by dangling a green branch or some fruit in front of them, so you, by holding out speeches in books to me, will apparently lead me all around 230e Attica and anywhere else you like. Anyway, now that I've got here, I think I'll lie down for the moment; and you choose whatever position you think is easiest for reading, and read.[13]

PHAEDRUS Listen, then.

LYSIAS'S SPEECH

Phaedrus reads Lysias's speech arguing that a boy should favor a man who is not in love with him.

PHAEDRUS You know my situation, and you've heard how I think it would be to our advantage if this came about. I claim I shouldn't fail to get what I ask for 231a just because I don't happen to be in love with you. For lovers regret the good they've done once their desire has ended; but for the others there is no time when it's fitting to change their minds. They do good not under compulsion but willingly, as far as their means allow, just as they would plan their own affairs best. Besides, lovers consider the damage they've done to their own interests because of love,

12 Achelous was a river god, often worshipped together with the nymphs.
13 The Greek pharmakon means both "remedy" and "drug" or "poison"; the word returns in the discussion of writing.

and the benefits they've conferred, and adding in the trouble they've taken, 231b they think they've long since paid their beloveds all the thanks they owe. But those not in love can't plead that they've neglected their affairs on this account, or tally up past troubles, or blame it for quarrels with their relatives. So with all these ills removed, nothing is left for them but to do eagerly whatever they think will please the other. Again, if lovers deserve 231c high regard because, as they say, they love those they're in love with more than anyone, and are ready to make themselves hated by everyone else in word and deed to please their beloveds, it's easy to see, if they're telling the truth, that they'll value those they fall in love with later above these, and obviously, if the new ones wish it, they'll even treat these badly. And yet how can it be reasonable to hand over such a thing 231d to someone suffering from such an affliction—one that no one with any experience would even try to cure? They themselves admit they're sick rather than sane, and know that they're thinking badly but can't control themselves. So when they come to their senses, how could they think that the decisions they made in that state were sound? Moreover, if you were to choose the best from among your lovers, you'd be choosing from only a few; but if you chose the one best suited to you from everyone else, you'd have many to choose from. So there's far 231e more hope that among the many you'll find the one worthy of your friendship.

Now if you're afraid of established custom—afraid that people will find out and you'll be disgraced—it's likely 232a that lovers, imagining that others envy them as much as they congratulate themselves, will get carried away and talk, and in their vanity show everyone that their efforts haven't been wasted; while those not in love, being masters of themselves, will choose what's best rather than a reputation among people. Besides, many people are bound to hear about lovers and see them following their beloveds around and making a business of it, so that whenever they're seen talking 232b together, people think they're together because their desire has been or soon will be

satisfied. But no one even thinks of blaming those not in love for spending time together, since they know that everyone has to talk with someone, whether out of friendship or for some other pleasure. And again, if fear has come over you because you think it's hard for a friendship to last, and that while in any other circumstances a quarrel would be a misfortune shared by both, 232c once you've given up what you value most, it would be you who suffered great harm—then you'd have good reason to fear lovers more. Many things upset them, and they think everything that happens is aimed at harming them. That's why they discourage their beloveds from spending time with others: they fear the wealthy will outdo them with money, and the educated will prove their superiors in intelligence; and they guard against the influence of anyone who has any other 232d advantage. So by persuading you to make enemies of these people, they leave you without friends; and if you look out for your own interests and show more sense than they do, you'll end up quarreling with them. But those who weren't in love, and who got what they asked for because of their excellence, wouldn't resent the people you spend time with; they would rather hate those who didn't want your company, thinking that those people look down on them, while your companions do them good. So there's far 232e more hope that the affair will bring them friendship rather than enmity.

And again, many lovers desire the body before they know the person's character or are familiar with the rest of his circumstances, so it's unclear to them whether they'll still want to be friends once their desire has ended. 233a But with those not in love, who were friends with each other even before they did this, the pleasures they enjoy aren't likely to make their friendship smaller; instead these will remain as reminders of what is still to come. Again, you're likely to become a better person by listening to me than to a lover. Lovers praise what you say and do even when it's not for the best, partly because they're afraid of being disliked, and partly 233b because desire has impaired their own judgment. For these are the things love puts on dis-

play: when lovers are unlucky, it makes them think troublesome what causes others no pain; when they're lucky, it forces even what doesn't merit pleasure to win their praise. So beloveds deserve pity far more than envy. But if you listen to me, first of all I'll spend time with you not serving pleasure in the moment but 233c the benefit that is to come, not overpowered by love but master of myself, not taking up bitter enmity over small things but, even over big ones, slowly getting a little angry, forgiving what's unintentional and trying to prevent what's intentional. These are the signs of a friendship that will last a long time. But if perhaps it has occurred to you that a strong friendship can't arise unless one is in love, 233d you should keep in mind that then we wouldn't value our sons, or our fathers and mothers, nor would we have acquired loyal friends—and these have come about not from desire of this kind but from other sorts of relationship.

Again, if one should grant favors most to those who need them most, then in other cases too one should do good not to the best people but to the most destitute, for once rid of the greatest ills they'll be the most grateful. And for 233e private dinners one shouldn't invite one's friends, but beggars and those in need of a full meal; for they'll be fond of you, and follow you around, and come to your door, and be most pleased, and be not a little grateful, and pray for many blessings on you. But perhaps one should favor not those in desperate need but those best able to repay the favor; not those who merely beg, 234a but those who deserve the thing; not those who will enjoy your youthful bloom, but those who will share their own goods with you when you're older; not those who, once they've succeeded, will boast about it to others, but those who will modestly keep silent before everyone; not those who are keen for a short time, but those who will be friends alike for the whole of life; not those who, when their desire ends, will look for a pretext for hostility, but those who, when your bloom has ended, will then 234b show their own excellence. So remember what's been said, and consider this too: lovers get warned by their friends that what

they're doing is bad, but no one close to those not in love has ever blamed them for being ill-advised about their own interests on that account.

Perhaps, then, you'll ask me whether I'm urging you to grant favors to everyone who isn't in love with you. I don't think even a lover would urge you to have that 234c attitude toward all your lovers. For it wouldn't earn equal gratitude from the one receiving it, and it wouldn't be equally possible for you to keep it hidden from others if you wanted to; and no harm should come from it, only benefit to both. Well, I think what I've said is enough; but if you feel something is still missing and think it's been left out, ask.

How does the speech strike you, Socrates? Isn't it extraordinary, especially in its language?

SOCRATES 234d Divinely so, my friend—I was astounded. And it was because of you that I felt this way, Phaedrus, as I watched you, because you seemed to me to be glowing with delight at the speech as you read. Thinking that you understand such things better than I do, I followed you, and following, I joined in the Bacchic frenzy with you, my inspired friend.

PHAEDRUS Come now! So you think this is a joke?

SOCRATES Do you think I'm joking and not serious?

PHAEDRUS 234e Not at all, Socrates. But tell me truly, by Zeus, god of friendship: do you think any other Greek could say more or better things on the same subject?

SOCRATES What? Must you and I also praise the speech on the grounds that its author said what was needed, and not only on the grounds that its language is clear and compact and every word precisely turned? If we must, I'll have to grant it for your sake, since it escaped me in my 235a incompetence. I was paying attention only to its rhetorical side, and I didn't think even Lysias himself would regard that as enough. In fact it seemed to me, Phaedrus—unless you say otherwise—that he said the same things two or three times, as though he didn't have much resource for saying a lot on one subject, or maybe didn't care

about such a thing. And he seemed to me to be showing off like a young man, displaying that he could say the same thing first one way and then another and put it superbly both ways.

PHAEDRUS 235b That's nonsense, Socrates. That's precisely the speech's greatest strength: it hasn't left out anything in the subject worth saying, so that beside what he's said no one could ever say anything more complete or of greater worth.

SOCRATES There I can no longer agree with you. Wise men and women of old, who have spoken and written on these matters, will refute me if I concede it just to please you.

PHAEDRUS 235c Who are they? And where have you heard anything better than this?

SOCRATES I can't say offhand just now. But clearly I've heard something—maybe from the lovely Sappho, or the wise Anacreon, or even some prose writers. What evidence makes me say so? My breast feels full, somehow, my wonderful friend, and I sense that I could say other things besides these, and no worse. I know very well that I haven't thought up any of them on my own, conscious as I am of my own ignorance. So the only possibility left, I think, is that I've been filled like a jug, through my ears, from someone else's 235d streams. But in my dullness I've forgotten even this—how I heard it and from whom.[14]

PHAEDRUS Why, my noble friend, you've put it beautifully. Don't tell me from whom or how you heard it, even if I ask you to; just do exactly what you say. You've promised to say other things, better than what's in the book and no less in quantity, while keeping clear of what it says; and I, like the nine archons, promise to set up at Delphi a life-size golden statue, not 235e only of myself but of you too.[15]

SOCRATES You're a dear, Phaedrus, and truly golden, if you think I'm saying that Lysias missed the mark entirely and that

14 Sappho and Anacreon were lyric poets of the sixth century BC, famous for their love poetry.

15 The nine archons, Athens' chief magistrates, swore to dedicate a golden statue if they broke the laws.

it's possible to say something different beyond everything he said. I don't think that could happen even to the worst writer. Take the subject of the speech: who do you suppose, arguing that one should favor the non-lover rather than the lover, could leave out praise of the one's good sense [236a] and blame of the other's folly—points that are unavoidable—and still have something else to say? No, I think such things must be allowed and forgiven the speaker; with them what deserves praise is not the invention but the arrangement, whereas with points that aren't unavoidable and are hard to find, it's the invention as well as the arrangement.

PHAEDRUS I grant what you say; you seem to me to have spoken reasonably. So here's what I'll do: I'll allow you to take as your premise that the lover [236b] is sicker than the non-lover; and if in the rest you say other things, more and of greater worth than what Lysias has here, you shall stand in hammered metal beside the offering of the Cypselids at Olympia.[16]

SOCRATES You've taken it seriously, Phaedrus, because I teased you by attacking your darling; and do you really think I'll try to say something more elaborate to rival his wisdom?

PHAEDRUS On that score, my friend, you've given me the same [236c] hold on you. You absolutely must speak as well as you can; and take care that we aren't forced into that vulgar routine of the comic actors, throwing the same lines back at each other. Don't make me say, "If I don't know Socrates, Socrates, I've forgotten myself too," and "He wanted to speak, but he played coy." Just realize that we're not leaving here until you've said what you claimed to have in your breast. We're alone in a deserted place, [236d] and I'm stronger and younger; from all this, "take my meaning," and don't choose to speak under compulsion rather than of your own free will.

16 The Cypselids, tyrants of Corinth in the seventh and sixth centuries BC, dedicated a colossal gilded statue of Zeus at Olympia.

SOCRATES But, my blessed Phaedrus, I'll make a fool of myself, an amateur improvising on the same subject beside a good author.

PHAEDRUS You know how things stand? Stop playing coy with me. I've more or less got something I can say that will force you to speak.

SOCRATES Then please don't say it.

PHAEDRUS No, I'm saying it right now, and my words will be an oath. I swear to you—but by whom, by which of the gods? Or would you like [236e] this plane tree here?—I swear that if you don't deliver your speech in its very presence, I will never again show you or tell you about any speech by anyone at all.

SOCRATES Oh, you scoundrel! How well you've found the way to force a lover of speeches to do whatever you tell him!

PHAEDRUS Then why are you still twisting and turning?

SOCRATES I'm not, any longer, since you've sworn this. How could I possibly keep away from such a feast?

PHAEDRUS [237a] Speak, then.

SOCRATES Do you know how I'll do it?

PHAEDRUS Do what?

SOCRATES I'll speak with my head covered, so that I can race through the speech as fast as possible and not lose my way from shame by looking at you.

PHAEDRUS Just speak; do everything else however you like.

SOCRATES' FIRST SPEECH

Head covered, Socrates defines love as irrational desire and lists the harms a lover does.

SOCRATES Come, Muses, clear-voiced ones—whether you get that name from the kind of song you sing or from the musical people of Liguria—"take part with me" in the tale this excellent

fellow is forcing me to tell, so that his friend, whom 237b he already thought wise, may seem even wiser to him now.[17]

Once upon a time there was a boy—or rather a youth—who was very handsome, and he had a great many lovers. One of them was wily: he was as much in love as any of them, but had persuaded the boy that he wasn't in love. And once, pressing his suit, he tried to persuade him of just this, that he ought to favor a non-lover over a lover, and he spoke as follows—

In every matter, my boy, there's one place to begin for those who mean to deliberate 237c well: they must know what the deliberation is about, or they're bound to go completely wrong. Most people don't realize that they don't know the essence of each thing. So, as though they knew it, they don't come to an agreement at the start of the inquiry, and as they go on they pay the natural penalty: they agree neither with themselves nor with each other. So let's not, you and I, suffer what we criticize in others. Since the question before us is whether one should enter into friendship with a lover or a non-lover, let's agree on a definition of love—what it is and what power it has— 237d and then, keeping our eyes on it and referring to it, let's inquire whether it brings benefit or harm. Now that love is some kind of desire is clear to everyone; and again, we know that even those who aren't in love desire what is beautiful. How, then, shall we tell the lover from the non-lover? We must realize, next, that in each of us there are two ruling and guiding principles, which we follow wherever they lead: one is an inborn desire for pleasures, the other an acquired judgment that aims at what is best. These two within us sometimes agree, 237e but at times they're in conflict, and sometimes one prevails, sometimes the other. Now when judgment leads us rationally toward the best and prevails, the name of that mastery is self-control; 238a but when desire drags us irrationally toward pleasures and rules within us, its rule is called excess. Excess, though, has many names—for it has many limbs and many parts—and whichever of these kinds hap-

17 Socrates puns on ligeiai, "clear-voiced," and the Ligurians, a people of northwest Italy.

pens to stand out gives its own name to the person who has it, a name neither fine nor worth acquiring. When it comes to food, the desire that prevails over reasoning about the best and over the other desires 238b is gluttony, and it will get its possessor called by that same name. When it tyrannizes over drinking and leads its possessor that way, it's clear what title it will earn. And as for the other names that are sisters to these, the names of sister desires, it's obvious what one should be called according to whichever desire holds power at the time. The desire for whose sake all this has been said is pretty well evident already, but everything is clearer said than unsaid. The desire that, without reason, overpowers judgment striving toward what is right, 238c and is carried toward the pleasure of beauty, and is mightily strengthened by its kindred desires toward bodily beauty, and wins out in leading us—this desire takes its name from that very strength and is called love.[18]

But, my dear Phaedrus, do you think, as I do, that something divine has come over me?

PHAEDRUS Very much so, Socrates. An unusual fluency has taken hold of you.

SOCRATES Then listen to me in silence. The place really does seem 238d to be divine, so if I become possessed by the nymphs as the speech goes on, don't be surprised. What I'm uttering now is already not far from dithyramb.[19]

PHAEDRUS That's very true.

SOCRATES You're to blame for it, though. But listen to the rest; perhaps what's coming on me can still be averted. That will be the god's concern; we must go back to the boy with our speech.

Well then, my excellent boy: what it is we have to deliberate about has been stated and defined. Keeping our eyes on it, 238e let's say what comes next: what benefit or harm is likely to come from a lover or a non-lover to the one who grants him favors. A man ruled by desire and enslaved to pleasure is bound, I sup-

18 Socrates playfully derives erōs, "love," from rhōmē, "strength."
19 The dithyramb was a choral hymn to Dionysus, known for its ecstatic style.

pose, to make his beloved as pleasing to himself as possible. To a sick man anything that doesn't resist him is pleasant, while anything stronger or equal is hateful. 239a So a lover won't willingly put up with a beloved who is his superior or his equal, but always makes him weaker and inferior. And the ignorant man is inferior to the wise, the coward to the brave, the poor speaker to the orator, the slow to the quick-witted. With so many faults of mind, and more besides, arising in the beloved or present in him by nature, the lover is bound to take pleasure in the latter and cultivate the former, or else be deprived of his immediate pleasure. 239b He is bound, then, to be jealous, and by keeping the boy away from many other associations, beneficial ones, which would do most to make a man of him, he causes him great harm —and the greatest harm by keeping him from the one that would make him wisest. That is divine philosophy, and a lover must keep his beloved far away from it, terrified of being despised. He must also contrive in other ways to keep him ignorant of everything and looking to his lover for everything, so that he will be most pleasing to the lover and most harmful to himself. So in matters of 239c the mind a man in love is no good at all as a guardian or companion.

Next we must see what condition of the body, and what care of it, will be given by the man who has become its master, a man who is compelled to pursue the pleasant rather than the good. He'll be seen pursuing someone soft rather than firm, raised not in the clear sun but in dappled shade, a stranger to manly toil and dry sweat, familiar with a delicate, unmanly 239d way of life, decked out with borrowed colors and ornaments for lack of his own, and following all the other habits that go with these. They are obvious and not worth dwelling on further; instead, let's define one main point and move on. In war and in other serious emergencies, a body like that gives the enemy confidence, while his friends, and his lovers themselves, fear for him.

Let's leave that, then, as obvious, and say what comes next: 239e what benefit or harm the lover's company and guardianship will bring us where property is concerned. This much is clear to

everyone, and above all to the lover: he would pray above all for his beloved to be bereft of his dearest, most loyal and most sacred possessions. He'd be glad to see him deprived of father and mother, relatives and friends, 240a since he regards them as obstacles and critics of his sweetest intimacy with the boy. Moreover, if the boy has property in gold or any other form, he'll think him neither so easy to catch nor, once caught, so easy to handle. From all this, a lover is bound to resent his beloved's having property and to rejoice when he loses it. Further, a lover would pray for his beloved to remain unmarried, childless and without a household for as long as possible, since he wants to enjoy his own sweet fruit for as long as he can.

There are other evils too, of course, but with most of them some divinity has mixed 240b a momentary pleasure. A flatterer, for instance, is a dreadful beast and does great harm, yet nature has mixed in with him a pleasure that is not without charm; one might censure a courtesan as harmful, and many other creatures and practices of that sort, which at least for a day are very pleasant indeed. But to his beloved a lover, besides being harmful, is also the most unpleasant of all to spend one's days 240c with. As the old saying has it, "Age-mate delights age-mate"—for equality of age, I suppose, leads to similar pleasures and produces friendship through likeness. Yet even the company of age-mates brings its fill. And again, compulsion is said to weigh on everyone in everything, and that, on top of the difference between them, is what most marks a lover's relation to his beloved. For the older man, when he's with the younger, won't willingly leave him day or night; he is driven by compulsion 240d and frenzy, which keeps giving him pleasures and leading him on as he sees, hears, touches and perceives his beloved with every sense, so that he gladly clings to his service. But what consolation or what pleasures will he give his beloved to keep him, as he spends the same length of time together, from reaching the extreme of disgust? He looks at an aging face past its prime, and all the rest that goes with it, which isn't pleasant even to hear 240e described, let alone to have to handle in fact under con-

stant compulsion; he is guarded with suspicious watchfulness all the time and against everyone; he hears ill-timed and excessive praise, and likewise reproaches that are unbearable when the man is sober, and when he's drunk, shameful as well as unbearable, as he indulges in a tiresome and unbridled frankness.

While he's in love he is harmful and unpleasant; once his love has ended he is faithless for the time to come—the time for which he made many promises, with many oaths and entreaties, and barely [241a] managed, through the hope of good things, to make the boy put up with his company, burdensome as it was then. Then, when it's time to pay up, he has changed the ruler and master within him—intelligence and self-control in place of love and madness—and has become someone else without his beloved noticing. The boy asks him to return the favor for what he gave then, reminding him of what was done and said, as if talking to the same man; while he, out of shame, neither dares to say that he's become someone else, nor knows how to keep the oaths and promises of his former, mindless rule, [241b] now that he has come to his senses and is self-controlled, for fear that by doing the same things as before he'd become like his former self and the same man again. So he becomes a fugitive from all this; the former lover is forced to default, and, the shell having fallen the other way up, he switches roles and takes flight. The boy is forced to chase after him, angry and calling down the gods, having failed from the very beginning to understand the whole thing: that he should never have granted favors to someone in love, and so necessarily out of his mind, [241c] but much rather to someone not in love and in his right mind. Otherwise he was bound to give himself up to someone faithless, difficult, jealous and unpleasant, harmful to his property, harmful to his bodily condition, and by far most harmful to the education of his soul, than which nothing is, or ever will be, more truly precious to either human beings or gods. These are the things you must bear in mind, my boy, and you must know that a lover's friendship doesn't come with goodwill, but like an

appetite for food, for the sake of filling up: [241d] as wolves love lambs, so lovers are fond of a boy.[20]

There you have it, Phaedrus. You won't hear another word from me; let my speech end here.

PHAEDRUS But I thought it was only halfway through, and that you'd say just as much about the non-lover—that one should favor him instead—and list all the good things he has to offer. Why are you stopping now, Socrates?

SOCRATES [241e] Didn't you notice, my blessed friend, that I'm already uttering epic verse, no longer dithyramb, and that while finding fault? If I start praising the other, what do you think I'll do? Don't you know that I'll plainly be possessed by the nymphs, to whom you've deliberately thrown me? So I'll say in a word that for every fault we've found in the one, the other has the opposite good qualities. What need is there of a long speech? Enough has been said about both. And so the tale will suffer the fate it deserves to [242a] suffer; and I'll cross this river and go away before you force me into something worse.

PHAEDRUS Not yet, Socrates, not till the heat has passed. Don't you see it's nearly noon, "high standstill," as they call it? Let's stay and talk over what's been said, and go as soon as it's cooler.

SOCRATES You're superhuman when it comes to speeches, Phaedrus, simply amazing. I think that of all the speeches [242b] made in your lifetime, no one has brought more into being than you, either by delivering them yourself or by compelling others to in one way or another—Simmias of Thebes I except, but you beat all the rest by far. And now again you seem to me to have caused a speech of mine to be spoken.[21]

PHAEDRUS That's hardly a declaration of war! But how so, and what speech is this?

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20 In a children's game, a shell dark on one side and light on the other was tossed to decide which team fled and which chased.

21 Simmias of Thebes, a follower of Socrates, is one of the main speakers in the *Phaedo*.

THE DIVINE SIGN

Socrates' sign stops him leaving; he decides both speeches wronged Love and must be retracted.

SOCRATES Just as I was about to cross the river, my good friend, the divine sign, the sign that usually comes to me, came [242c] —it always holds me back from something I'm about to do—and I thought I heard a voice from that very spot, forbidding me to leave until I had purified myself, as though I had committed some offense against the divine. Now I am a seer—not a very good one, but, like people who are poor at reading and writing, just good enough for my own purposes; so I now understand my offense clearly. For the soul too, my friend, has a kind of prophetic power. Something troubled me a while ago, even as I was giving the speech, and I had a certain misgiving, as Ibycus puts it, that "for offending against the gods [242d] I might win honor among men." But now I've realized my offense.[22]

PHAEDRUS What do you mean?

SOCRATES A terrible speech, Phaedrus, a terrible one—both the speech you brought and the one you forced me to give.

PHAEDRUS How so?

SOCRATES It was foolish, and somewhat impious. What could be more terrible than that?

PHAEDRUS Nothing, if what you say is true.

SOCRATES Well then? Don't you believe that Love is the son of Aphrodite, and a god?

PHAEDRUS So it's said, at any rate.

SOCRATES But not by Lysias, nor by your speech, which [242e] was spoken through my mouth after you'd put it under a spell. If Love is, as indeed he is, a god or something divine, he can't be anything bad; but the two speeches just now spoke of him as if

22 The divine sign is the inner voice that, Socrates says, warned him against certain actions; Ibycus was a lyric poet of the sixth century BC.

he were. So in this respect they offended against Love, and besides, their foolishness was really quite refined: though they said nothing sound [243a] or true, they put on airs as if they amounted to something, in case they might fool a few little people and win a reputation among them. So I must purify myself, my friend. For those who offend in telling myths there is an ancient purification, which Homer didn't know of, but Stesichorus did.[23] For when he was robbed of his sight for slandering Helen, he didn't fail to understand the cause, as Homer did; as a true follower of the Muses, he recognized it, and at once composed: "That story is not true; you never went on the well-benched ships, [243b] nor came to the towers of Troy." And when he had composed the whole of the so-called Palinode, he immediately regained his sight. So I will be wiser than they were, at least in this: before anything happens to me for slandering Love, I'll try to pay him back with my palinode, with my head bare, and not covered in shame as it was before.[24]

PHAEDRUS Nothing you could tell me, Socrates, would please me more than this.

SOCRATES [243c] Yes, my good Phaedrus, for you realize how shamelessly the two speeches were delivered, this one and the one read out from the book. Suppose a man of noble and gentle character, in love with someone like himself or once in love before, happened to hear us saying that lovers take up great enmities over small things and are jealous and harmful toward their beloveds. Don't you think he'd imagine he was listening to people brought up among sailors, who had never seen a love fit for free people? Wouldn't he be very far [243d] from agreeing with us in our criticisms of love?

PHAEDRUS Very likely, by Zeus, Socrates.

SOCRATES Well, I'm ashamed before this man, and afraid of Love himself, and I want to wash the salt taste out of my ears, as

23 Stesichorus of Himera in Sicily was a lyric poet of the sixth century BC.
24 In his Palinode ("Recantation") Stesichorus claimed that only a phantom of Helen went to Troy; Homer was traditionally said to be blind.

it were, with a fresh-water speech. And I advise Lysias too to write as soon as possible that, other things being equal, one should favor a lover rather than a non-lover.

PHAEDRUS Rest assured it will be so. Once you've given your praise of the lover, there's no way Lysias won't be 243e compelled by me to write a speech on the same subject in turn.

SOCRATES That I believe, as long as you remain who you are.

PHAEDRUS Then speak, and have no fear.

SOCRATES Where's that boy I was talking to? He should hear this too, so that he doesn't, for lack of hearing it, rush to grant his favors to the non-lover.

PHAEDRUS He's right here beside you, very close, always, whenever you want him.

THE PALINODE: DIVINE MADNESS

Socrates' second speech argues that madness sent by the gods brings the greatest goods.

SOCRATES Then understand this, my fair boy: the 244a previous speech was by Phaedrus, son of Pythocles, of Myrrhinus; the one I'm about to give is by Stesichorus, son of Euphemus, of Himera. And this is how it must go: That story is not true which says that when a lover is at hand one should rather favor the non-lover, because the one is mad and the other sane. If it were simply true that madness is bad, that would be well said; but in fact the greatest of goods come to us through madness, when it is granted as a divine gift.[25] The prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at 244b Dodona have done many fine things for Greece, both privately and publicly, when they were mad, but little or nothing when they were sane. And if we were to speak of the Sibyl and all the others who, using inspired prophecy, have set many people on the right path by foretelling the future, we'd go on too long telling what everyone knows. But this is

25 The names are apt: Euphemus suggests "speaking auspiciously," and Himera recalls himeros, "longing."

worth adding as evidence: those among the ancients who gave things their names didn't think madness shameful or a disgrace; 244c otherwise they wouldn't have woven this very word into the name of the finest art, the one by which the future is discerned, and called it the manic art. They gave it that name because they thought madness a fine thing when it comes by divine dispensation; but people nowadays, lacking all taste, stick in a t and call it the mantic art.[26] So too with the inquiry into the future practiced by sane people through birds and other signs: since those who practice it use thought to supply intelligence (nous) and information (historia) to human opinion (oiēsis), the ancients named it oionoistic; 244d but the younger generation now call it oionistic, dignifying it with a long o. So, by as much as prophecy is more perfect and more honored than augury, both name than name and deed than deed, by so much more beautifully do the ancients testify that madness coming from a god is finer than sanity of human origin.[27] Again, when terrible diseases and afflictions have come upon certain families because of some ancient divine wrath, madness has arisen in them and, by prophesying, has found relief for those in need, 244e taking refuge in prayers and worship of the gods. From there, obtaining purifications and rites, it has made the one who has it safe both for the present and for time to come, finding for the one who is rightly mad and possessed a release 245a from his present troubles. Third is the possession and madness that comes from the Muses. It takes hold of a tender, untouched soul, rouses it and fills it with Bacchic frenzy for songs and other kinds of poetry, and by glorifying countless deeds of the ancients it educates those who come after. But whoever comes to the doors of poetry without the Muses' madness, convinced that skill alone will make him a good poet, fails to reach fulfillment, he and his poetry alike: the poetry of the sane man is eclipsed by that of the mad. 245b

26 Mantikē means "prophecy"; Socrates derives it from manikē, "the art of madness." Dodona, in northwest Greece, had an ancient oracle of Zeus.
27 Oiōnistikē, "augury," actually comes from oiōnos, "bird of omen."

These are the sorts of fine achievements—and I could tell you still more—of madness that comes from the gods. So let's not be afraid of this point, at least, and let no argument throw us into a panic by frightening us into thinking that we should prefer the sensible friend to the one who is stirred up. Let it carry off the prize only when it has also shown, besides that, that love is not sent from the gods to the lover and the beloved for their benefit. We, for our part, have to prove the opposite: that madness of this kind is given by the gods for the greatest good fortune. 245c The proof will be unconvincing to the clever but convincing to the wise. First, then, we must see the truth about the nature of soul, divine and human, by observing what it undergoes and what it does. And the proof begins like this.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Soul is what moves itself, so it has no beginning and can never be destroyed.

SOCRATES All soul is immortal. For what is always in motion is immortal. But what moves something else and is moved by something else, since its motion comes to a stop, comes to a stop in its life. Only what moves itself, since it never abandons itself, never ceases to be in motion; and for everything else that moves, it is the source and first principle of motion. 245d A first principle has no coming into being. Everything that comes into being must come into being from a first principle, but the principle itself not from anything at all; for if a first principle came into being from something, it would no longer be a first principle. And since it has no coming into being, it must also be indestructible. For if a first principle were destroyed, it would never itself come into being from anything, nor would anything else come into being from it—given that everything must come into being from a first principle. So it is what moves itself that is the first principle of motion. This can neither be destroyed nor come into being; otherwise the whole heaven 245e and all the earth would collapse together into one and stand still, and never

again have anything from which they could be set in motion and come into being. Now that what is moved by itself has been shown to be immortal, no one will be ashamed to say that this very thing is the essence and the definition of soul. Every body whose motion comes from outside is soulless, while every body whose motion comes from inside, from itself, is ensouled, since that is the nature of soul. And if this is so—if what moves itself [246a] is nothing other than soul—then of necessity soul would have no coming into being and would be immortal.

THE CHARIOTEER AND THE TWO HORSES

The soul is pictured as a winged charioteer driving two horses on a journey toward heaven.

SOCRATES So much, then, for its immortality. About its form, this is what must be said. To describe what it is would be in every way a task for a god, and a long telling; to say what it resembles is a human task, and a shorter one. So let's speak in that way. Let it be likened, then, to the natural union of powers in a winged team of horses and their charioteer. Now the gods' horses and charioteers are all good themselves and of good stock, [246b] while those of everyone else are mixed. In our case, first of all, the ruler drives a pair; and then, of his horses, one is beautiful and good and of such stock, while the other is of the opposite stock and has the opposite character. So our charioteering is, of necessity, difficult and troublesome. Now we must try to say how a living being came to be called mortal and immortal. All soul has charge of all that is soulless, and it ranges over the whole heaven, appearing now in one shape, now in another. When it is [246c] perfect and fully winged, it travels on high and governs the whole cosmos; but the soul that has lost its wings is carried along until it gets hold of something solid. There it settles, taking on an earthly body that seems to move itself because of the soul's power, and the whole, soul and body fastened together, is called a living being, and gets the name "mortal." It is not called "immortal" on the strength of any

reasoned argument; rather, without having seen or adequately understood 246d a god, we invent one: some immortal living being that has a soul and has a body, the two grown together for all time. But let these things be, and be spoken of, however the god pleases. Let us take up the cause of the loss of the wings—why they fall away from a soul. It is something like this.

The wing's natural power is to lift what is heavy upward, raising it aloft to where the race of gods dwells; and of the things that belong to the body, it has in a way the greatest share in the divine. The divine is 246e beautiful, wise, good, and everything of that kind. It is by these above all that the soul's plumage is nourished and grows, while by the ugly and the bad and the other opposites it wastes away and perishes. Now Zeus, the great leader in heaven, driving a winged chariot, goes first, ordering all things and caring for them. After him follows an army of gods and divinities, 247a marshaled in eleven divisions. For Hestia stays alone in the gods' house; of the rest, all those ranked among the number of the twelve lead as commanders, each in the place to which he has been assigned.[28] Within heaven there are many blessed sights and many paths to and fro, along which the race of happy gods moves, each of them doing his own work; and anyone who is willing and able follows, for envy stands outside the divine chorus. But when they go to a feast and banquet, they travel steeply upward to the top of 247b the vault beneath heaven. There the gods' chariots, well balanced and easy to steer, travel with ease, but the others only with difficulty; for the horse that has a share of badness is heavy, sinking toward the earth and weighing down whichever charioteer has not trained him well. This is where the ultimate toil and struggle lies before a soul. For the souls called immortal, when they reach the top, go outside and take their stand on the back 247c of heaven; and as they stand there its revolution carries them round, and they gaze at the things outside heaven.

The place beyond heaven no poet here has ever yet sung, nor will any ever sing of it as it deserves. But it is like this—for one

28 Hestia is the goddess of the hearth; the twelve are the Olympian gods.

must dare to speak the truth, especially when one's subject is truth. The being that really is—colorless, shapeless, intangible, visible only to the soul's pilot, intelligence, the being with which the whole class of true knowledge is concerned—occupies 247d this place. Now since a god's mind is nourished by intelligence and pure knowledge, as is the mind of every soul that cares to take in what befits it, it delights in seeing what is, at last, and it is nourished and flourishes by contemplating what is true, until the revolution brings it round in a circle to the same place. In the course of the circuit it beholds justice itself, it beholds self-control, it beholds knowledge—not the knowledge that has coming into being attached to it, nor the knowledge that differs as it is 247e in one or another of the things we now call beings, but the knowledge that is in what really is. And when it has beheld the other things that really are in the same way and feasted on them, it sinks back into the inside of heaven and comes home. When it has arrived, the charioteer stands the horses at the manger, throws them ambrosia, and gives them nectar to drink besides. 248a

That is the life of the gods. As for the other souls, the one that follows a god best and has become most like him raises its charioteer's head into the region outside and is carried round with the revolution, harried by its horses and barely able to see the things that are. Another rises at one moment and sinks at the next, and because its horses are unruly it sees some things but not others. The rest all strain after the heights and follow, but they can't make it; they are carried round beneath the surface, trampling and colliding with one another, each trying to get 248b ahead of the next. So there is uproar, rivalry, and the most extreme sweat, and there, through the charioteers' incompetence, many are lamed and many have many of their feathers broken. And all of them, after great toil, go away without having achieved the sight of what is, and once they have gone they feed on the food of opinion. The reason for all this eagerness to see where the plain of truth lies is that the pasture fit for the best part of the soul comes from the meadow 248c there, and that the

nature of the wing, by which the soul is made light, is nourished by it. And this is the ordinance of Adrasteia.[29] Any soul that has become a god's companion and caught sight of something of what is true remains free from harm until the next circuit, and if it can always do this, it is always unharmed. But when it cannot keep up and fails to see, and through some mishap is filled with forgetfulness and badness and grows heavy, and once heavy loses its wings and falls to earth, then the law is that this soul 248d is not to be planted in any animal nature at its first birth. Rather, the soul that has seen the most is to go into the seed of a man who will become a philosopher, or a lover of beauty, or someone devoted to the Muses and to love; the second, into a law-abiding king or a warrior and commander; the third, into a statesman, or someone who manages an estate or makes money; the fourth, into someone who loves hard exercise, an athletic trainer, or someone who will heal bodies; the fifth will have the life of a prophet 248e or someone who performs rites of initiation. For the sixth, a poet or someone else concerned with imitation will be fitting; for the seventh, a craftsman or farmer; for the eighth, a sophist or a demagogue; for the ninth, a tyrant. In all of these lives, whoever lives justly receives a better lot, and whoever lives unjustly a worse one. For no soul returns to the place it came from for ten thousand years— 249a it does not grow its wings before that much time has passed—except the soul of someone who has practiced philosophy without deceit, or has loved a boy together with philosophy. These souls, in the third thousand-year circuit, if they choose this life three times in a row, regain their wings and depart in the three-thousandth year. The others, when they have ended their first life, come to judgment; and once judged, some go to the places of punishment beneath the earth and pay the penalty, while others are raised up by Justice to some region of heaven and live in a way worthy of the life they lived in 249b human form. In the thousandth year both groups come to the drawing of lots and the choice of their second life, and each chooses whatever life it wishes. At this

29 Adrasteia ("the one who cannot be escaped") is a goddess of inevitable destiny.

point a human soul may pass into the life of an animal, and someone who was once human may pass from an animal back into a human being. For a soul that has never seen the truth will never come into this shape. A human being must understand what is said in terms of a form, which proceeds from many perceptions [249c] and is gathered together into one by reasoning. And this is recollection of those things our soul once saw when it traveled with a god, looking beyond what we now say "is" and rising up into what really is. That is why it is just that only the philosopher's mind grows wings: by memory it is always, as far as it can be, close to those things by being close to which a god is divine. A man who uses such reminders correctly, always being initiated into perfect rites, is the only one who becomes truly perfect. Standing apart from [249d] human concerns and drawing close to the divine, he is scolded by the many for being out of his mind; they fail to notice that he is possessed by a god.

BEAUTY AND RECOLLECTION

The sight of beauty reminds the lover of beauty itself, and his soul begins to regrow its wings.

SOCRATES Here, then, is where our whole account of the fourth kind of madness has been heading. This is the madness of someone who sees beauty here and recollects true beauty, and so grows wings and, newly winged, is eager to fly up but cannot; gazing upward like a bird and paying no attention to what is below, he is blamed for being in a state of madness. Our account has come to this: that [249e] this is the best of all the forms of divine possession, and from the best sources, both for the one who has it and for the one who shares in it; and that it is by partaking of this madness that one who loves beautiful people is called a lover. For, as has been said, every human soul has by nature beheld the things that are, or it would not have entered [250a] this living being. But recollecting those things from the things here is not easy for every soul—not for those that saw the things there only briefly back then, nor for those that had bad luck when

they fell here, so that they were turned toward injustice by bad company and have forgotten the holy things they saw then. Few are left that have enough memory. These, when they see some likeness of the things there, are struck with amazement and are no longer themselves; but they do not know what is happening to them, 250b because they do not perceive it clearly enough. Now justice and self-control and everything else that souls value have no radiance in their likenesses here; only a few, approaching their images through dim organs of sense, and with difficulty, see the kind of thing they are images of. But beauty was there to be seen in its brilliance back then, when, with a happy chorus—we following Zeus, others with another of the gods—they saw a blessed sight and vision and were initiated into the mystery that it is right to call 250c the most blessed of all. We celebrated it whole ourselves, untouched by the evils that awaited us in later time; we were initiated into apparitions whole and simple and unchanging and happy, and beheld them in pure light, being pure ourselves and not entombed in this thing we now carry around and call the body, imprisoned in it like an oyster in its shell.[30]

Let that be our tribute to memory, which has made me speak at such length now, out of longing for what was then. As for beauty, as we said, 250d it shone out among those other things as a being, and now that we have come here, we have grasped it through the clearest of our senses, gleaming with the greatest clarity. For sight is the sharpest of the senses that come to us through the body. Understanding is not seen by it—it would arouse terrible loves if it offered some such clear image of itself to our sight—nor are the other things worth loving. But as it is, beauty alone has been given this lot: to be the most manifest 250e and the most lovable. Now someone who is not newly initiated, or who has been corrupted, is not quickly carried from here to there, to beauty itself, when he looks at what bears its name here. So he does not revere it when he looks at it; instead he sur-

30 The language here is drawn from the Mysteries, secret initiation rites like those at Eleusis near Athens, which culminated in a revealed vision.

renders to pleasure and tries to mount it like a four-footed beast and sow children, and in his consort with excess he is neither afraid [251a] nor ashamed to pursue pleasure against nature. But the newly initiated, who saw much of what was there then, when he sees a godlike face that imitates beauty well, or some form of body, first shudders, and something of the awe he felt then steals over him; then, gazing at it, he reveres it like a god, and if he were not afraid of being thought completely mad, he would sacrifice to his beloved as to a statue of a god. And once he has seen him, a change comes over him, as after a shudder, [251b] and sweat and an unaccustomed heat take hold of him. For as he receives the stream of beauty through his eyes, he grows warm with the stream that waters the nature of the wing; and as he warms, the parts where the wings emerge soften—parts that had long been closed up by hardness, preventing them from sprouting—and as the nourishment flows in, the quill of the wing swells and starts to grow from the root, under the whole form of the soul; for the soul was once winged all over. [251c] So all this while it seethes and throbs all over. What teething children go through with their teeth when the teeth are just coming in—an itching and aching around the gums—is exactly what the soul of someone beginning to grow wings goes through: it seethes and aches and tickles as it grows its wings. Now when it looks at the boy's beauty and receives the particles that come from there and flow in—which is why it is called "desire"—when it takes in this desire and is watered and warmed, it gets relief from its pain [251d] and is glad. But when it is apart from him and dries out, the mouths of the passages where the wing pushes through dry up as well, and close, and shut in the wing's sprouting. The sprouting, shut in along with the desire, leaps like a throbbing pulse and pricks at the passage it belongs to, each at its own, so that the whole soul, stung all around, goes wild with pain; yet when it remembers the beautiful one, it is glad again.[31] From the mixture of the two it is distressed by the strangeness of its con-

31 The pun: Greek himeros, "desire," is derived here from mere, "particles," ienai, "to come," and rhein, "to flow."

dition and rages in its helplessness; and in its madness [251e] it can neither sleep at night nor stay put by day wherever it is, but runs, full of longing, wherever it thinks it will see the one who has the beauty. When it has seen him and let desire flow in, it releases what was shut up before; it gets a breath of relief, is freed from the stings and pangs, and in turn enjoys this pleasure, the sweetest there is, for [252a] the moment. That is why it will never willingly be left behind, and why it values no one above the beautiful one. It forgets mothers and brothers and all its friends; it thinks nothing of its property being lost through neglect; and scorning all the customs and proprieties it used to pride itself on, it is ready to be a slave and to sleep wherever it is allowed, as near as it can be to the object of its longing. For besides revering the one who has [252b] beauty, it has found in him the only healer of its greatest sufferings. This experience, my beautiful boy—you to whom my speech is addressed—human beings call love; but when you hear what the gods call it, you'll probably laugh, being young. Some of the Homeridae, I think, recite two verses about Love from the unpublished poems, one of which is quite outrageous and not very well metered. They sing it like this: [252c] "Mortals, it's true, call him Eros, the winged one; the immortals call him Pteros, for his power to force out wings." You can believe this or not. All the same, the cause of lovers' experience, and the experience itself, is just what I have said.[32]

Now among the followers of Zeus, the one who is seized by love can bear the burden of the winged one with more dignity. But those who were servants of Ares and ranged the heavens with him, when they are caught by Love and think they are being wronged in any way by their beloved, turn murderous and are ready to sacrifice both themselves and the one they love. [252d] And so it goes with each god: everyone lives honoring and imitating, as far as he can, the god in whose chorus he danced, so long as he remains uncorrupted and is living his first life

32 The Homeridae were a guild of reciters claiming descent from Homer; "Pteros" puns on Eros and pteron, "wing."

here; and that is how he associates with and behaves toward his beloveds and everyone else. So each one chooses his love from among the beautiful according to his own character, and, as though the beloved were himself a god, he fashions him for himself like a statue and adorns him, 252e to honor him and celebrate his rites. Those who belong to Zeus look for someone Zeus-like in soul to be their beloved. So they check whether he is by nature a philosopher and a leader, and when they have found him and fallen in love, they do everything they can to make him that. If they have not taken up this pursuit before, they set about it now, learning from wherever they can and seeking it out themselves. And as they track down, from within themselves, 253a the nature of their own god, they succeed, because they have been forced to gaze intently at the god. Grasping him by memory and possessed by him, they take from him his character and his ways, so far as a human being can share in a god. And since they give the credit for this to their beloved, they cherish him all the more; and if they draw from Zeus, like the Bacchants, they pour it out over the beloved's soul and make him as like 253b their own god as they possibly can.[33] Those who followed Hera, in turn, look for someone kingly, and when they find him they do all the same things for him. Those who belong to Apollo and to each of the other gods go about it the same way, following their god: they look for a boy whose nature is like the god's, and when they have won him, they imitate the god themselves, and by persuading and training their beloved they lead him into that god's way of life and character, as far as each is able. They show no envy or mean-spirited ill will toward the boy they love, but do everything they do because they are trying their very hardest to bring him into complete likeness 253c with themselves and with the god they honor. So the eagerness of those who truly love, and their initiation—if they achieve what they are eager for, in the way I describe—turns out this beautiful, and this full of happiness, for the one who is loved, thanks

33 The Bacchants, women possessed by Dionysus, were said to draw milk and honey from rivers.

to the friend who has gone mad through love, if he is caught. And the one who is caught is caught in the following way.

TAMING THE UNRULY HORSE

The unruly horse drags the soul toward the beloved until it is broken; love becomes mutual.

SOCRATES At the beginning of this story we divided each soul in three: two parts in the form of horses, and a third [253d] in the form of a charioteer. Let that still stand now. Of the horses, one, we say, is good and the other is not; but what the excellence of the good one is, or the badness of the bad one, we did not explain, and now we must. The one of the pair that stands in the more honorable position is upright in form and clean-limbed, with a high neck and a slightly hooked nose; he is white to look at, with dark eyes; a lover of honor, with self-control and a sense of shame; a companion of true opinion; he needs no whip, but is driven by command and [253e] word alone. The other is crooked, bulky, thrown together any which way, with a thick, strong neck and a short throat, snub-nosed, black-coated, gray-eyed, and bloodshot; a companion of arrogance and boasting, shaggy around the ears, deaf, barely yielding to whip and goad together. Now when the charioteer sees the sight that arouses love, and his whole soul is warmed through by the perception, and he is filled with tickling and with longing's [254a] goads, the horse that is obedient to the charioteer, held back then as always by shame, restrains himself from leaping on the beloved. But the other no longer heeds the charioteer's goads or whip; he leaps and bolts violently, and, making every kind of trouble for his yokemate and the charioteer, forces them to approach the boy and bring up the pleasures of sex. At first the two of them strain against him, [254b] indignant at being forced into terrible, lawless acts; but in the end, when there is no limit to the trouble, they let themselves be led forward, giving in and agreeing to do what they are told. And they came up close to him and saw the boy's face, flashing like lightning. When the charioteer saw it, his memory

was carried back to the nature of beauty, and he saw it again, standing with self-control upon a holy pedestal. At the sight he was afraid, and in awe he fell over backward, and at the same time he was forced to pull the reins 254c back so hard that he brought both horses down on their haunches—the one willingly, since he offers no resistance, but the unruly one very much against his will. When they had drawn some way off, the one drenched the whole soul with sweat out of shame and amazement; but the other, once he was over the pain the bit and the fall had given him, and had barely got his breath back, broke into angry abuse, heaping reproaches on the charioteer and his yokemate for deserting their post and 254d their agreement out of cowardice and unmanliness. And once more he tried to force them to go forward, though they were unwilling, and only reluctantly gave in when they begged him to put it off till another time. When the agreed time came and they pretended not to remember, he reminded them—using force, neighing, dragging—and compelled them to approach the beloved again with the same proposals. When they were close, he lowered his head, stretched out his tail, bit down on the bit, and pulled shamelessly. But the 254e charioteer, feeling the same thing even more strongly, like a racer falling back from the starting rope, wrenched the bit back even harder out of the unruly horse's teeth, bloodied his foul-mouthed tongue and jaws, forced his legs and haunches to the ground, and handed him over to pain. When the bad horse has gone through the same thing many times and gives up his unruliness, he is humbled, and now follows the charioteer's lead; and when he sees the beautiful boy, he nearly dies of fear. So it comes about that only then does the lover's soul follow its beloved 255a with reverence and fear. So the beloved receives every kind of attention, as if he were equal to a god, from a lover who is not pretending but has truly been affected this way; and he is himself by nature friendly to the one who attends to him. Even if earlier he has been set against love by his schoolfellows or others, who say it is shameful to associate with a lover, and pushes the lover away for that reason, still,

as time goes on, his age and what must be lead him 255b to admit the lover into his company. For it is never fated that bad should be a friend to bad, or good not be a friend to good. Once he has admitted him and accepted his conversation and company, the lover's goodwill, felt at close quarters, astonishes the beloved, as he realizes that all his other friends and relatives put together offer no share of friendship to compare with this friend, possessed by a god. When he has kept this up for a while, and is near him, even touching him, at the gymnasium and wherever else they meet, 255c then the spring of that stream which Zeus, when he loved Ganymede, called "desire" pours abundantly toward the lover. Some of it sinks into him, and when he is filled up the rest flows away outside. And just as a breeze or an echo rebounds from smooth, hard surfaces and is carried back to where it started, so the stream of beauty goes back into the beautiful boy through his eyes, the natural route to the soul; and arriving there and setting him aflutter, 255d it waters the passages of the wings, starts them growing, and fills the beloved's soul with love in its turn.[34] So he is in love, but with what, he has no idea. He doesn't know what has happened to him and can't explain it; like someone who has caught an eye disease from another, he can't say what caused it, and he doesn't realize that he is seeing himself in his lover as in a mirror. When the lover is with him, his pain stops, just as the lover's does; when the lover is away, he longs, just as he is longed for, since he has a counter-love, an image 255e of love. He calls it, and thinks it, not love but friendship. He desires, as the lover does, though less strongly, to see him, to touch him, to kiss him, to lie down with him; and, as you might expect, soon afterward he does these things. So when they lie together, the lover's undisciplined horse has something to say to the charioteer, and claims that in return for all his labors 256a he deserves a little enjoyment. The beloved's horse has nothing to say, but, swelling with desire and not knowing what to do, he embraces the lover and kisses him, welcoming

34 Ganymede was a Trojan youth whom Zeus loved and carried off to be his cup-bearer.

him as someone who wishes him very well; and when they lie together, he is inclined not to refuse his part in gratifying the lover, if the lover should ask for it. But his yokemate, together with the charioteer, resists these things with shame and reason. If, then, the better parts of the mind prevail and lead them to an ordered way of life and to philosophy, they spend their life here in happiness 256b and harmony, masters of themselves and well-ordered, having enslaved the part through which badness entered the soul and freed the part through which excellence did. And when they die, winged and light, they have won one of their three falls in the truly Olympic wrestling match—and neither human self-control nor divine madness can provide a human being with any greater good than this.[35] But if they turn to a coarser way of life, 256c without philosophy but devoted to honor, then perhaps when they are drunk or in some other careless moment, their two undisciplined horses will catch their souls off guard, bring them together, and make the choice the many count as blissful, and carry it through. And having carried it through once, they go on doing it afterward, though rarely, since what they are doing has not been approved by their whole mind. These two also live as friends, though less so than the others, 256d both while their love lasts and after they have passed beyond it, believing they have given and received the most solemn pledges, which it would be wrong ever to break and so become enemies. At the end they leave the body without wings, but eager to grow them, so the prize they carry off for their erotic madness is no small one. For those who have already begun the journey beneath heaven, the law is that they no longer go into darkness and the journey under the earth; instead they live a bright life and are happy 256e traveling together, and when they grow their wings, they grow them together, because of their love.

These are the gifts, my boy, so great and so divine, that a lover's friendship will give you. But the intimacy of the non-lover, diluted with a mortal kind of self-control and dispensing

35 An Olympic wrestler won by throwing his opponent three times.

mortal, stingy benefits, breeds a meanness that the many praise as excellence [257a] in the soul of its friend, and will make that soul roll around the earth and under the earth, mindless, for nine thousand years.

There, dear Love, is our palinode, offered and paid to you as beautiful and as good as we could make it—forced as it was, among other things, to use somewhat poetic language on Phaedrus's account. Forgive what came before, and accept this with favor; be kind and gracious, and do not in anger take away or maim the art of love you gave me, but grant that I be valued by the beautiful even more than I am now. [257b] If earlier Phaedrus and I said anything harsh against you, blame Lysias, the father of that speech; stop him from making speeches like that, and turn him to philosophy, as his brother Polemarchus has been turned, so that his lover here may no longer waver as he does now, but may simply devote his life to Love with philosophical discussions.[36]

IS WRITING SPEECHES SHAMEFUL?

Phaedrus fears Lysias will stop writing; Socrates says writing is shameful only when done badly.

PHAEDRUS I join you in that prayer, Socrates: if this really is better [257c] for us, may it come about. But I've been marveling at your speech all this while, at how much more beautiful you made it than the first. So I'm afraid Lysias will look feeble to me, if he's even willing to set another speech against it. In fact, my remarkable friend, one of the politicians was attacking him for this very thing only recently, and all through his tirade he kept calling him a "speechwriter." So perhaps his pride will make him hold back from writing.[37]

SOCRATES That's a ridiculous idea, young man, and you're badly mistaken about your [257d] friend if you think he's so easily

36 Polemarchus, Lysias's brother, appears in Plato's *Republic*.

37 A speechwriter (logographos) composed speeches for others to deliver in court, a paid trade of doubtful prestige.

scared by noise. And perhaps you also think the man who abused him meant what he said as a reproach.

PHAEDRUS He certainly seemed to, Socrates. And you know yourself, I'm sure, that the most powerful and respected men in the cities are ashamed to write speeches and leave writings of their own behind, for fear of what later generations will think of them—afraid of being called sophists.

SOCRATES "Sweet bend," Phaedrus—you've forgotten that the phrase comes from 257e the long bend in the Nile. And besides the bend, you're forgetting that the proudest of the politicians are the ones most in love with speechwriting and with leaving writings behind. Whenever they write a speech, they're so fond of their admirers that they add, right at the top, the names of whoever admires them on each occasion.[38]

PHAEDRUS What do you mean? I don't follow.

SOCRATES 258a Don't you see that at the start of a politician's writing, the first thing written down is his admirer?

PHAEDRUS How so?

SOCRATES "Resolved," it says somewhere, "by the Council" or "by the People," or both, and "So-and-so moved"—the author naming himself, of course, with great solemnity and praising himself—and after that he goes on, showing off his wisdom to his admirers, sometimes producing a very long piece of writing. Does a thing like that look to you like anything other than a written speech?[39]

PHAEDRUS 258b Not to me.

SOCRATES So if it stands, the poet leaves the theater delighted; but if it's struck out and he is denied a share in speechwriting and the honor of being thought worth writing, he goes into mourning, and so do his friends.

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38 "Sweet bend" was proverbial for something called by the opposite of what it is; the origin Socrates gives is uncertain.

39 This was the standard opening formula of an Athenian decree, which named the man who proposed it.

PHAEDRUS Very much so.

SOCRATES Clearly not because they look down on the practice, but because they admire it.

PHAEDRUS Absolutely.

SOCRATES And what about this? When an orator or a king becomes capable enough 258c to acquire the power of a Lycurgus or a Solon or a Darius and become an immortal speechwriter in his city, doesn't he think himself equal to a god while he is still alive, and don't later generations believe the very same thing about him when they look at his writings?[40]

PHAEDRUS Very much so.

SOCRATES Do you think, then, that anyone like that, however ill-disposed toward Lysias, would reproach him for the very fact that he writes?

PHAEDRUS Not likely, given what you say. He'd be reproaching his own ambition, it seems.

SOCRATES 258d Then this much is clear to everyone: writing speeches is not shameful in itself.

PHAEDRUS How could it be?

SOCRATES But what I think is shameful is not speaking and writing well, but shamefully and badly.

PHAEDRUS Clearly.

SOCRATES So what is the way to write well, and badly? Do we need, Phaedrus, to examine Lysias on this, and anyone else who has ever written or will write anything, whether a public document or a private one, in verse like a poet or without verse like a layman?

PHAEDRUS 258e You ask whether we need to? What else would anyone live for, so to speak, if not for pleasures like these? Surely not for the kind that you have to be pained before you

40 Lycurgus and Solon were the celebrated lawgivers of Sparta and Athens; Darius I of Persia was also remembered as a lawgiver.

can enjoy, or else enjoy not at all—which is true of nearly all the pleasures of the body. That's why they are rightly called slavish.

THE CICADAS

Socrates tells how the cicadas were once men who sang themselves to death for the Muses.

SOCRATES We have time, it seems. And besides, it looks to me as if the cicadas, singing over our heads in the heat as they do and [259a] conversing with one another, are looking down on us too. So if they saw the two of us, like most people at midday, not conversing but nodding off, lulled to sleep by them through laziness of mind, they would be right to laugh at us, thinking some slaves had come to their retreat to take their midday nap by the spring like sheep. But if they see us conversing and sailing past them as if they were Sirens, [259b] unbewitched, perhaps they would admire us and give us the gift they have from the gods to give to human beings.[41]

PHAEDRUS What is this gift they have? I don't seem to have heard of it.

SOCRATES It hardly suits a man who loves the Muses not to have heard of such things. The story goes that these creatures were once human beings, before the Muses were born; and when the Muses were born and song appeared, some of the people of that time were so overwhelmed with pleasure [259c] that they kept singing and neglected food and drink, and died without noticing it. From them the race of cicadas springs, having received this gift from the Muses: once born, they need no nourishment, but sing from the start without food or drink until they die; and after that they go to the Muses and report which people here honor which of them. To Terpsichore they report those who have honored her in the dance, [259d] and make them dearer to her; to Erato, those who have honored her in the

41 In the *Odyssey* the Sirens lure passing sailors to their death with song; Odysseus sailed past them unharmed.

affairs of love; and so with the others, according to the kind of honor each one receives. To Calliope, the eldest, and to Urania, who comes after her, they report those who spend their lives in philosophy and honor the music that belongs to those two, who, more than any of the Muses, are concerned with heaven and with discourse both divine and human, and send forth the most beautiful voice. So for many reasons we should talk, and not sleep, at midday.

PHAEDRUS Yes, we should talk.

WHAT MAKES SPEECH GOOD

Socrates argues that a real art of speaking requires knowing the truth about one's subject.

SOCRATES [259e] Then we should examine the question we set ourselves just now: what makes a speech well spoken and well written, and what does not.

PHAEDRUS Clearly.

SOCRATES Well, if something is going to be said well and finely, mustn't the speaker's mind know the truth about whatever he is going to speak on?

PHAEDRUS What I've heard about this, my dear Socrates, is that there is no [260a] need for someone who is going to be an orator to learn what is really just, but what would seem just to the crowd who are going to judge, and not what is really good or fine, but whatever will seem so; for persuasion comes from these, and not from the truth.

SOCRATES "Not a word to be cast aside," Phaedrus, should anything be that wise men say; we should look to see whether they have a point. And in particular what you've just said shouldn't be dismissed.[42]

PHAEDRUS You're right.

SOCRATES Let's examine it this way, then.

42 The quoted phrase is from Homer, *Iliad* 2.361.

PHAEDRUS How?

SOCRATES 260b Suppose I tried to persuade you to get a horse and fight off the enemy, and neither of us knew what a horse was, but I happened to know this much about you: that Phaedrus thinks a horse is the tame animal with the longest ears —

PHAEDRUS That would be ridiculous, Socrates.

SOCRATES Not yet. But suppose I seriously tried to persuade you, composing a speech in praise of the donkey, calling it a horse, and saying that the beast is worth everything to own, both at home and on campaign—handy to fight from, able to carry 260c your baggage besides, and useful for plenty of other things.

PHAEDRUS Then it would be utterly ridiculous.

SOCRATES Well, isn't it better to be ridiculous and a friend than clever and an enemy?

PHAEDRUS Apparently.

SOCRATES So when an expert in rhetoric who doesn't know good from bad takes on a city in the same condition and persuades it—not by praising a donkey's shadow as if it were a horse, but by praising bad as if it were good—and, having studied the opinions of the crowd, persuades it to do bad things instead of good, what sort of crop do you think rhetoric 260d will harvest after that from the seed it has sown?[43]

PHAEDRUS Not a very good one.

SOCRATES Well then, my good friend, have we abused the art of speaking more crudely than we should? Perhaps she would say: "What nonsense are you talking, you remarkable people? I don't force anyone who is ignorant of the truth to learn to speak. But if my advice counts for anything, he should first acquire the truth and then take me up. What I do proudly claim is this: without

43 "A donkey's shadow" was proverbial for something worthless to argue about.

me, even someone who knows the things that are will be no better able to persuade by art."

PHAEDRUS [260e] Won't she be right to say so?

SOCRATES I agree—provided the arguments that come against her testify that she is an art. For I seem to hear some arguments approaching and protesting that she is lying, and is not an art but an artless knack. As the Spartan says, a genuine art of speaking without a grasp of the truth does not exist and never will.[44]

PHAEDRUS [261a] We need these arguments, Socrates. Bring them here and examine what they say, and how.

SOCRATES Come forward, then, noble creatures, and persuade Phaedrus, father of beautiful offspring, that unless he pursues philosophy properly, he will never be able to speak properly about anything either. Let Phaedrus answer.[45]

PHAEDRUS Ask away.

SOCRATES Taken as a whole, then, wouldn't rhetoric be an art of leading the soul by means of words, not only in the law courts and other public gatherings but in private ones too—the same art whether the matter is small [261b] or great, and no more honored when it is correctly used on serious matters than on trivial ones? Or how have you heard it described?

PHAEDRUS No, by Zeus, not quite like that. It's mainly in lawsuits, I'd say, that people speak and write by art, and also in speeches to the Assembly; I haven't heard of it going any further.

SOCRATES Have you only heard of the handbooks on speaking by Nestor and Odysseus, which they wrote in their spare time at Troy? Have you never heard of those by Palamedes?

44 The Spartans were proverbial for terse speech; the source of this saying is unknown.

45 Phaedrus's "offspring" are the speeches he has caused to be made.

PHAEDRUS 261c By Zeus, I haven't even heard of Nestor's—unless you're making Gorgias out to be some sort of Nestor, or Thrasymachus and Theodorus some sort of Odysseus.[46]

SOCRATES Perhaps. But let's leave them aside. Tell me: in the law courts, what do opposing parties do? Don't they argue against each other? Or what shall we say?

PHAEDRUS Exactly that.

SOCRATES About what is just and unjust?

PHAEDRUS Yes.

SOCRATES Then won't the one who does this by art make the same thing 261d appear just to the same people at one moment and, whenever he likes, unjust?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES And in speaking to the Assembly, he'll make the same things seem good to the city at one moment and the opposite at another?

PHAEDRUS Just so.

SOCRATES And don't we know that the Eleatic Palamedes speaks with such art that the same things appear to his listeners both like and unlike, both one and many, both at rest and in motion?[47]

PHAEDRUS Certainly.

SOCRATES So the art of arguing both sides isn't confined to law courts 261e and public assemblies. It seems that for everything that is said there would be one single art—if it is an art at all—by which a person will be able to make anything resemble anything else, among things that can be made alike and for those to whom it can be done, and, when someone else does this and conceals it, to drag it into the light.

46 Gorgias, Thrasymachus of Chalcedon and Theodorus of Byzantium were well-known teachers of rhetoric; Nestor and Odysseus are Homer's eloquent counselors, and Palamedes a hero famed for his inventions.
47 Probably Zeno of Elea, famous for paradoxical arguments of just this kind.

PHAEDRUS What exactly do you mean by that?

SOCRATES I think it will become clear if we look at it this way. Is deception more likely where things differ a great deal, or where they differ only a little?

PHAEDRUS 262a Where they differ a little.

SOCRATES And certainly, if you move over by small steps, you're more likely to reach the opposite without being noticed than if you move in big ones.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES So someone who means to deceive another, without being deceived himself, has to know precisely how things resemble and differ from one another.

PHAEDRUS Yes, he must.

SOCRATES Now if he doesn't know the truth about each thing, will he be able to recognize the resemblance, great or small, between the thing he doesn't know and other things?

PHAEDRUS 262b Impossible.

SOCRATES So when people hold opinions at odds with the way things are, and are deceived, this condition has clearly slipped in through certain resemblances.

PHAEDRUS That's certainly how it happens.

SOCRATES Then is there any way that someone who hasn't come to know what each thing really is could be skilled at leading people over by small steps, through resemblances, away from what is in each case to its opposite—or at escaping this himself?

PHAEDRUS Never.

SOCRATES 262c Then the art of speech, my friend, offered by someone who doesn't know the truth but has gone hunting after opinions, will be a laughable sort of art, it seems—no art at all.

PHAEDRUS Probably so.

SOCRATES Would you like, then, to look in the speech of Lysias you're carrying, and in the ones we gave, for some examples of what we're calling artless and artful?

PHAEDRUS More than anything—since as it is we're talking rather abstractly, without adequate examples.

SOCRATES And, as luck would have it, the two speeches 262d that were given contain an example of how someone who knows the truth can play with words and lead his listeners astray. For my part, Phaedrus, I blame the local gods; and perhaps the Muses' spokesmen too, the singers over our heads, may have breathed this gift into us—because I certainly have no share in any art of speaking.[48]

PHAEDRUS Let's say so. Just explain what you mean.

LYSIAS'S SPEECH EXAMINED

Lysias never defined love and piled up his points in no order, like a lifeless epitaph.

SOCRATES Come on, then, read me the beginning of Lysias's speech.

PHAEDRUS 262e "You know my situation, and you've heard how I think it would be to our advantage if this came about. I claim I shouldn't fail to get what I ask for just because I don't happen to be in love with you. For lovers regret"—

SOCRATES Stop. We have to say what he gets wrong and where his work lacks art, don't we?

PHAEDRUS 263a Yes.

SOCRATES Isn't this much obvious to everyone: that about some things of this kind we're of one mind, and about others we're at odds?

PHAEDRUS I think I follow you, but say it more clearly.

48 The "singers over our heads" are the cicadas in the trees, whom Socrates earlier called messengers of the Muses.

SOCRATES When someone says the word "iron" or "silver," don't we all have the same thing in mind?

PHAEDRUS Certainly.

SOCRATES And when he says "just" or "good"? Doesn't each of us go off in a different direction, and don't we disagree with one another and even with ourselves?

PHAEDRUS Very much so.

SOCRATES 263b So in some cases we agree, and in others we don't.

PHAEDRUS Right.

SOCRATES Then where are we easier to deceive, and in which cases does rhetoric have more power?

PHAEDRUS Obviously where we wander.

SOCRATES Then anyone who means to pursue an art of rhetoric must first have divided these things methodically, and grasped some distinguishing mark of each kind: the kind where the crowd is bound to wander, and the kind where it isn't.

PHAEDRUS 263c Anyone who grasped that, Socrates, would certainly have understood a fine distinction.

SOCRATES Next, I think, when he comes to each particular case, it mustn't escape him; he must perceive keenly which of the two kinds the thing he's about to speak of belongs to.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES Well then, love: should we say it's one of the disputed things or not?

PHAEDRUS One of the disputed ones, surely. Or do you think you could have said what you just said about it—that it's harmful to beloved and lover, and then again that it's the greatest of goods?

SOCRATES 263d Excellently put. But tell me this too—I was so possessed that I don't quite remember—did I define love at the beginning of my speech?

PHAEDRUS By Zeus, you did—remarkably thoroughly.

SOCRATES Oh! How much more skilled at speeches you make the Nymphs, daughters of Achelous, and Pan, son of Hermes, than Lysias, son of Cephalus! Or am I wrong, and did Lysias too, at the start of his love speech, compel us to take love as some one thing that 263e he himself chose, and then arrange the whole rest of his speech with reference to that and carry it through to the end? Shall we read his beginning again?[49]

PHAEDRUS If you like. But what you're looking for isn't there.

SOCRATES Read it, so I can hear it from the man himself.

PHAEDRUS "You know my situation, and you've heard how I think it would be to our advantage if this came about. I claim 264a I shouldn't fail to get what I ask for just because I don't happen to be in love with you. For lovers regret the good they've done once their desire has ended"—

SOCRATES He's a long way, it seems, from doing what we're looking for. He doesn't even start from the beginning; he starts from the end, trying to swim through his speech backwards, on his back. He begins with what a lover would say to his beloved once he was already finished. Or is there nothing in what I said, Phaedrus, dear heart?

PHAEDRUS 264b Well, Socrates, what he's making his speech about is an ending.

SOCRATES And the rest? Don't the parts of the speech look as if they've been thrown together in a heap? Is there any evident necessity why the second point had to be placed second, or any of the others where it is? It seemed to me—knowing nothing, of course—that the writer said whatever came to him, and not without some flair. But do you know some principle of speech-writing that made him set these points side by side in this order?

49 Socrates credits his eloquence to the local deities.

PHAEDRUS You're kind to think me capable of discerning his work 264c so precisely.

SOCRATES But this much, I think, you would say: every speech must be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own, so that it isn't missing its head or its feet but has a middle and extremities, written to fit one another and the whole.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES Then look at your friend's speech and see whether it's like that or not. You'll find it's no different from the epitaph that some say is inscribed for Midas the Phrygian.[50]

PHAEDRUS 264d What epitaph is that, and what's wrong with it?

SOCRATES It goes like this: "I am a maiden of bronze, and I lie on the tomb of Midas. As long as water flows and tall trees flourish, I shall stay right here on his much-lamented grave and tell those passing by that Midas is buried here." 264e That it makes no difference which line is said first or last, you notice, I think.

PHAEDRUS You're making fun of our speech, Socrates.

SOCRATES Well then, let's let it go, so you won't be upset—though it seems to me to have plenty of examples that someone could profit from looking at, as long as he doesn't try too hard to imitate them—and let's move on to the other speeches. There was something in them, I think, that anyone who wants to study speeches ought to see.

PHAEDRUS 265a What sort of thing do you mean?

SOCRATES They were opposites, I suppose: one said the lover should be gratified, the other the non-lover.

PHAEDRUS And very manfully, too.

SOCRATES I thought you were going to say the truth—"madly." Still, that's exactly what I was looking for. We said love was a kind of madness, didn't we?

PHAEDRUS Yes.

50 Midas was a legendary king of Phrygia in Asia Minor.

SOCRATES And there are two kinds of madness: one arising from human illnesses, the other from a divine release from our accustomed ways.

PHAEDRUS 265b Certainly.

SOCRATES And we divided the divine kind into four parts belonging to four gods: we assigned prophetic inspiration to Apollo, the inspiration of the mystic rites to Dionysus, poetic inspiration to the Muses, and the fourth to Aphrodite and Love—the madness of love, which we said was the best. And, picturing the experience of love in some fashion or other—perhaps touching on some truth, perhaps getting carried off in another direction—we mixed together a not altogether implausible speech 265c and playfully sang a sort of mythic hymn, in a measured and reverent way, to your master and mine, Phaedrus—Love, guardian of beautiful boys.

PHAEDRUS And it was a real pleasure for me to hear.

SOCRATES Then let's take up this point from it: how the speech managed to pass from blame to praise.

PHAEDRUS What do you mean by that?

SOCRATES It seems to me that everything else really was just play, done in fun. But among the things said by chance there were two procedures, 265d and if someone could grasp their power by art, it would be well worth it.

PHAEDRUS What are they?

SOCRATES The first is to take a comprehensive view and bring things scattered in many places together into a single form, so that by defining each thing one makes clear what one wants to teach about at any given time. So it was with what we said just now about Love—what it is, once defined: whether it was well or badly said, at any rate that is what enabled the speech to say something clear and consistent with itself.

PHAEDRUS And what is the other procedure, Socrates?

SOCRATES 265e To be able, in turn, to cut things up by forms, at their natural joints, and not try to hack any part to pieces like a bad butcher. Just now the two speeches took the irrational part of the mind as a single common form; and just as 266a from a single body there naturally grow paired parts with the same names, called left and right, so too the two speeches treated derangement as a single form naturally present in us. One speech cut off the part on the left, and kept cutting it again, and didn't stop until it found among its pieces a sort of "left-handed" love, as it's called, and abused it, quite rightly. The other led us to the parts of madness on the right, found there a love that has the same name as the first, but is divine, held it 266b up, and praised it as the cause of our greatest goods.

PHAEDRUS Very true.

SOCRATES Well, I myself, Phaedrus, am a lover of these divisions and collections, so that I can speak and think. And if I believe anyone else is able to see what is by nature one and many, I follow "in his footsteps, as if he were a god." And those who can do this—whether I'm right or wrong to call them so, god knows—I have up till now been calling 266c dialecticians. But tell me what we should call those who've learned from you and Lysias. Or is this that very art of speeches by which Thrasymachus and the others have become wise at speaking themselves, and make others so too—anyone willing to bring them gifts as if they were kings?[51]

PHAEDRUS Kingly men they are, but certainly not experts in what you're asking about. Still, I think you're calling this kind by the right name when you call it dialectical. But rhetoric still seems to escape us.

SOCRATES 266d What do you mean? Could there be something fine that is left out of these and is still grasped by art? In any case, you and I mustn't disrespect it; we must say what exactly is left over for rhetoric.

51 The quotation adapts a line of Homer's *Odyssey*.

PHAEDRUS Quite a lot, surely, Socrates—all the things in the books written on the art of speaking.

SOCRATES Thank you for the reminder. First, I believe, a prologue has to be spoken at the beginning of the speech. These are what you mean—aren't they?—the refinements of the art?

PHAEDRUS 266e Yes.

SOCRATES Second comes a narrative, with testimony to support it; third, evidence; fourth, probabilities. And confirmation and further confirmation are mentioned, I think, by that superb master craftsman of speech from Byzantium.

PHAEDRUS You mean the worthy Theodorus?

SOCRATES 267a Who else? And how refutation and further refutation are to be done, in prosecution and in defense. And shan't we bring forward the splendid Evenus of Paros, who first invented insinuation and indirect praise? Some say he even put indirect censure into verse, to help the memory—a wise man. And shall we let Tisias and Gorgias sleep, who saw that probabilities deserve more honor than truths, and who by the force of speech make small things appear great and great things small, 267b present new things in an old way and the opposite in a new way, and discovered both conciseness and boundless length on every subject? When Prodicus once heard me say this, he laughed and said that he alone had found the art that speeches need: they should be neither long nor short, but of the right length.[52]

PHAEDRUS Very wise, Prodicus!

SOCRATES And aren't we mentioning Hippias? I think our visitor from Elis would vote with Prodicus too.[53]

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES And how shall we describe Polus's showroom of speech— 267c his "double-speak," "maxim-speak" and "image-

52 Evenus of Paros, Tisias of Syracuse and Prodicus of Ceos were sophists and teachers of rhetoric of the fifth century BC.
53 Hippias of Elis, a well-known sophist.

speak"—and the vocabulary of Licymnius that was given to him as a present for producing elegant diction?[54]

PHAEDRUS But weren't there things of that sort from Protagoras, Socrates?

SOCRATES Yes, my boy—a certain correctness of diction, and many other fine things. But when it comes to tearful speeches dragged out over old age and poverty, the art that has mastered them seems to me that of the mighty Chalcedonian. The man has also become formidable at making a crowd angry 267d and then, when they're angry, charming them again with his spells, as he put it; and he's the best there is at creating slanders and dispelling them, whatever their source. As for the ending of speeches, everyone seems to be in common agreement; some call it a recapitulation, others give it another name.

PHAEDRUS You mean reminding the listeners at the end of each of the points made, in summary?

SOCRATES That's what I mean—and anything else you can mention about the art of speeches.

PHAEDRUS Just minor things, not worth mentioning.

SOCRATES 268a Let's leave the minor things aside, then. Let's hold these up to the light instead and see what power of art they have, and when.

PHAEDRUS A very strong power, Socrates—at any rate in mass gatherings.

SOCRATES Yes, it has that. But look, my good friend, and see whether their fabric seems as full of gaps to you as it does to me.

PHAEDRUS Just show me.

SOCRATES Tell me, then: suppose someone went to your friend Eryximachus or to his father Acumenus and said, "I know how to apply things to bodies so as to warm 268b them if I want, or cool them, and, if I see fit, make them vomit, or make their bowels

54 Polus of Acragas, a pupil of Gorgias; Licymnius of Chios was a poet and teacher of rhetoric.

move, and a great many other things of that sort. And because I know this, I claim to be a doctor, and to make a doctor of anyone else I pass this knowledge on to." What do you think they'd say when they heard that?[55]

PHAEDRUS What else but ask whether he also knows whom he should do each of these things to, and when, and to what extent?

SOCRATES And suppose he said, "Not at all. But I expect that whoever has learned these things 268c from me will be able to do what you ask on his own"?

PHAEDRUS They'd say, I think, that the man is mad, and that because he's heard something from a book somewhere, or come across some medicines, he thinks he has become a doctor, though he understands nothing of the art.

SOCRATES And what if someone went to Sophocles and Euripides and said he knew how to make very long speeches about a small matter and very short ones about a great matter, and pitiful ones when he wanted, and, on the other hand, frightening and threatening ones, and all 268d that sort of thing, and he believed that by teaching this he was passing on the art of composing tragedy?

PHAEDRUS They too, Socrates, would laugh at him, I think, if he believed tragedy was anything other than the arrangement of these elements so that they fit one another and the whole.

SOCRATES But they wouldn't abuse him crudely, I think. They'd be like a musician who met a man who believed he was an expert in harmony because he happened to know how to make a string sound the highest and lowest 268e note possible. The musician wouldn't say savagely, "You wretch, you're out of your mind!" Being a musician, he'd say more gently, "My good man, anyone who's going to be an expert in harmony must know these things too, but nothing prevents someone at your stage

55 Eryximachus, Acumenus's son, was also a doctor; he is a speaker in Plato's *Symposium*.

from understanding nothing at all about harmony. You know what has to be learned before harmony, but not harmony itself."

PHAEDRUS Quite right.

SOCRATES 269a So Sophocles, too, would say that the man showing off to them knew the preliminaries of tragedy, not tragedy; and Acumenus that he knew the preliminaries of medicine, not medicine.

PHAEDRUS Absolutely.

SOCRATES And what do we think honey-voiced Adrastus, or Pericles, would say if they heard about the wonderful techniques we went through just now—the brief speech-making and image-speak and all the rest we said must be examined in the light? Would 269b they, like you and me, be harsh and, out of boorishness, say something rude to those who've written and teach these things as the art of rhetoric? Or, being wiser than we are, would they rebuke us as well and say: "Phaedrus and Socrates, you shouldn't be harsh but forgiving, if some people who don't know how to practice dialectic were unable to define what rhetoric is, and as a result of this condition believed that, since they had the studies necessary before the art, they had discovered 269c rhetoric. They teach these things to others and believe they've taught them rhetoric completely; but saying each of these things persuasively and putting the whole together is no great task, they think, and their students must supply it for themselves in their own speeches"?[56]

PHAEDRUS Well, Socrates, it does look as if that's what the art amounts to that these men teach and write about as rhetoric, and I think what you've said is true. But the art of the truly rhetorical and persuasive speaker— 269d how and where could someone acquire it?

SOCRATES Being able to become a finished competitor, Phaedrus, is probably—perhaps even necessarily—like

56 Adrastus, legendary king of Argos, is called "honey-voiced" by the poet Tyrtaeus.

everything else. If you have a natural gift for rhetoric, you'll become a renowned orator, once you add knowledge and practice; wherever you fall short of these, there you'll be incomplete. But as for the part of it that is an art, I don't think the method is to be found in the direction Lysias and Thrasymachus are going.

PHAEDRUS Then where?

RHETORIC AND THE SOUL

A true art of rhetoric must know the kinds of soul and which speeches persuade each.

SOCRATES 269e It may well be, my excellent friend, that Pericles, with good reason, became the most accomplished of all in rhetoric.

PHAEDRUS How so?

SOCRATES All the great arts need, in addition, 270a idle chatter and lofty speculation about nature, since that loftiness of mind and all-round effectiveness seem to come in from there somehow. Pericles acquired this on top of his natural gifts. He came across Anaxagoras, I think, who was just that sort of man, took his fill of lofty speculation, and arrived at the nature of mind and thought—the very subjects Anaxagoras discoursed on at such length—and from there he drew into the art of speeches whatever was useful to it.[57]

PHAEDRUS What do you mean by that?

SOCRATES 270b The method of the art of medicine is surely the same as that of rhetoric.

PHAEDRUS How so?

SOCRATES In both you have to analyze a nature—of the body in the one, of the soul in the other—if you're going, not by mere knack and experience but by art, to produce health and strength in the one by applying medicines and food, and to instill in the

57 Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, a philosopher of nature who taught that mind orders the cosmos, was a friend of Pericles.

other whatever conviction you want, and excellence, by applying speeches and lawful practices.

PHAEDRUS That's likely, Socrates, at any rate.

SOCRATES 270c Then do you think it's possible to understand the nature of the soul in any way worth mentioning without the nature of the whole?

PHAEDRUS If we're to believe Hippocrates the Asclepiad at all, you can't even understand the body without this method.[58]

SOCRATES And he's right, my friend. Still, besides Hippocrates, we have to examine the argument and see whether it agrees.

PHAEDRUS I agree.

SOCRATES Then consider what Hippocrates and the true argument say about nature. Isn't this how one should think 270d about the nature of anything? First, whether the thing we want to be experts in ourselves, and to be able to make others expert in, is simple or has many forms. Then, if it's simple, examine its power: what power it naturally has to act on what, or to be acted on by what. And if it has more forms, count them and see for each what one saw in the case of the single one: what it naturally does to what, or has done to it by what.

PHAEDRUS It looks that way, Socrates.

SOCRATES At any rate, a method without these would be like 270e a blind man's walk. But surely someone who pursues anything by art mustn't be compared to a blind man or a deaf one. Clearly, if someone teaches speeches by art, he'll show precisely the essential nature of the thing to which he'll apply his speeches; and that, surely, will be the soul.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES 271a So his whole effort is aimed at this, since it's in the soul that he's trying to produce conviction. Isn't that so?

PHAEDRUS Yes.

58 Hippocrates of Cos, the famous physician; the Asclepiads were a guild of doctors who claimed descent from the healing god Asclepius.

SOCRATES Clearly, then, Thrasymachus, and anyone else who seriously teaches an art of rhetoric, will first describe the soul with complete precision and make us see whether it is by nature one and uniform or, like the shape of the body, has many forms. That's what we call showing its nature.

PHAEDRUS Absolutely.

SOCRATES And second, what it naturally does to what, or has done to it by what.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES [271b] Third, having classified the kinds of speeches and of soul, and the ways they're affected, he'll go through all the causes, fitting each to each, and teaching what kind of soul is necessarily persuaded by what kind of speeches, and for what reason, and why another is not.

PHAEDRUS That would certainly be the finest way, it seems.

SOCRATES In fact, my friend, nothing presented or spoken in any other way will ever be spoken or written with art—neither this subject nor anything [271c] else. But those who write arts of speech nowadays, whom you've heard, are crafty: they hide it, though they know all about the soul. So until they speak and write in this way, let's not believe that they write with art.

PHAEDRUS What way is that?

SOCRATES It isn't easy to give the actual words; but I'm willing to say how one ought to write if it's to be as artful as possible.

PHAEDRUS Go on, then.

SOCRATES Since the power of speech is in fact that of leading the soul, [271d] anyone who means to be a rhetorician must know how many forms the soul has. There are so many, of such and such kinds, which is why some people are like this and others like that. With these distinctions made, there are in turn so many forms of speech, each of such a kind. So people of this sort are easily persuaded by speeches of that sort, for this reason, to do such things, while people of that sort are hard to persuade,

for these reasons. Having understood all this adequately, he must then watch it actually happening and being done in real life, [271e] and be able to follow it keenly with his perception; otherwise he'll be no better off than he was with the lessons he heard back when he was a student. But when he's able to say adequately what sort of person is persuaded by what sorts of speeches, and is able, when he meets someone, to perceive him and point out to himself that [272a] this is the man, this the nature, that the lessons were about back then, now actually present before him, to which he must apply these speeches in this way to persuade it of these things—when he has all this, and has also grasped the right moments for speaking and for holding back, and has learned to distinguish the right and wrong occasions for brevity, for pathos, for intensity, and for every form of speech he has learned—then, and not before, his art is finely and completely finished. But whenever anyone falls short in any of these [272b] while speaking or teaching or writing, and yet claims to speak with art, the one who doesn't believe him wins. "Well then," our treatise-writer may say, "Phaedrus and Socrates, do you agree?" "Or should an art of speeches described in some other way be accepted?"

PHAEDRUS It can't be otherwise, Socrates, I suppose. And yet it looks like no small task.

SOCRATES True. That's why we must turn all the arguments upside down and examine them to see whether some [272c] easier, shorter road to it appears anywhere, so that no one sets off on a long, rough one for nothing when a short, smooth one is available. If you've heard anything helpful from Lysias or anyone else, try to remember it and tell me.

PHAEDRUS I could if it were just a matter of trying, but right now I have nothing.

SOCRATES Then would you like me to tell you something I've heard from people concerned with these matters?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES They do say, Phaedrus, that it's only fair to give even the wolf's side.

PHAEDRUS 272d Then you do just that.

SOCRATES Well, they say there's no need to make so solemn a matter of these things, or take such a long way round to raise them so high. For, as we said at the start of this discussion, someone who means to be an adequate rhetorician needs no share at all of the truth about just or good actions, or about people who are just or good by nature or upbringing. In the law courts, they say, nobody cares in the least about the truth of these things, only about what's persuasive; 272e and that is the probable, which anyone who means to speak with art must attend to. Sometimes you shouldn't even state what was actually done, if it wasn't done in a probable way, but what's probable, whether in prosecution or defense. Whatever you say, you must pursue the probable and say a long goodbye to the truth. When this runs through 273a the whole speech, it provides the entire art.

PHAEDRUS That's exactly what they say, Socrates, the people who claim to be experts in speeches. I remember that earlier we touched on this sort of thing briefly, and people involved in these matters think it's tremendously important.

SOCRATES Well, you've certainly pored over Tisias himself with care. So let Tisias tell us this too: does he mean by 273b the probable anything other than what the crowd believes?

PHAEDRUS What else?

SOCRATES It seems it was this clever and artful discovery that led him to write that if a weak but brave man beats up a strong coward and steals his cloak or something else, and is taken to court, neither of them should tell the truth. The coward should say he wasn't beaten up by the brave man alone, while the other should prove that the two of them were alone, and make use of that 273c famous line: "How could someone like me have attacked someone like him?" The coward won't admit his own cowardice,

but by trying to tell some other lie he might hand his opponent a way to refute him. And in other cases too, what's said with art is something like this. Isn't it, Phaedrus?

PHAEDRUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Oh! It's a marvelously well-hidden art, it seems, that Tisias discovered—or whoever else it was, and whatever name he's pleased to be called by. But, my friend, should we say to him or not—[59]

PHAEDRUS 273d Say what?

SOCRATES That, Tisias, we've been saying for some time now, since before you came along, that this probability arises in the minds of the many through its resemblance to the truth; and we've just explained that in every case the person who knows the truth knows best how to find resemblances. So if you have anything else to say about the art of speeches, we'd like to hear it. If not, we'll trust what we've just explained: that unless someone counts up the natures of his future listeners, 273e and is able to divide things according to their forms and to encompass each individual thing under a single form, he will never be an expert in speeches to the degree possible for a human being. And he will never acquire this without a great deal of effort. A sensible man shouldn't labor at it for the sake of speaking and acting before other people, but to be able to say what pleases the gods, and to act in all things, as far as he can, in a way that pleases them. For, Tisias, as those wiser than we are say, a man with sense shouldn't practice pleasing his fellow slaves, 274a except incidentally, but masters who are good and come from good stock. So if the way round is long, don't be surprised: it's for great things that one must take it, not the ones you have in mind. And yet, as our argument says, if one wants, these too will turn out finest as a result of those.

PHAEDRUS That seems to me very finely said, Socrates—if only someone could do it.

59 Possibly a joke on Corax ("Crow"), said to have been Tisias's teacher.

SOCRATES But for someone who attempts fine things, it's fine 274b even to suffer whatever he happens to suffer.

PHAEDRUS Very much so.

SOCRATES So let that be enough about art and artlessness in speeches.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES What remains is the propriety and impropriety of writing: under what conditions it is well done, and under what conditions unfitting. Isn't that right?

PHAEDRUS Yes.

SOCRATES Do you know, then, how you would best please god in matters of speech, in what you do or in what you say?

PHAEDRUS Not at all. Do you?

SOCRATES 274c I can tell you something I've heard from those who came before us; the truth only they know. But if we could find that out for ourselves, would we still care at all about human opinions?

PHAEDRUS What a ridiculous question! But tell me what you say you've heard.

THE MYTH OF THEUTH AND THAMUS

The god Theuth offers writing to King Thamus, who says it will weaken memory.

SOCRATES Well, I heard that at Naucratis in Egypt there lived one of the ancient gods of that country, the one whose sacred bird is the one they call the ibis; the divinity's own name was Theuth. He was the first to invent number and calculation, 274d geometry and astronomy, as well as board games and dice—and above all, writing. At that time the king of all Egypt was Thamus, who lived in the great city of the upper region that the Greeks call Egyptian Thebes; and the god himself they call Ammon. Theuth came to him and displayed his arts, saying they ought to be passed on to the rest of the Egyptians. Thamus asked

what benefit each one had, and as Theuth went through them, Thamus criticized one thing and praised another, according to whether he thought Theuth was speaking well or not 274e well.[60] Thamus is said to have expressed many views to Theuth about each art, both for and against, which it would take a long speech to go through. But when they came to writing, Theuth said, "This study, King, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories: I've discovered a remedy for memory and wisdom." The king replied, "Most ingenious Theuth, one person is able to give birth to the products of an art, another to judge what share of harm and benefit they hold for those who will use them. And now 275a you, as the father of writing, have out of fondness said the opposite of what it can do. For it will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who learn it, through neglect of memory, since, trusting in writing, they will be reminded from outside, by marks that belong to others, not from inside, by themselves. So you have discovered a remedy not for memory but for reminding." "And you're providing your students with the appearance of wisdom, not the truth of it. Having heard many things without being taught, they'll seem 275b to know a great deal, while for the most part they know nothing; and they'll be difficult company, since they'll have become wise in their own conceit instead of wise."

PHAEDRUS Socrates, you easily make up stories from Egypt or anywhere else you like.

SOCRATES Well, my friend, the people at the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona said that the first prophetic words came from an oak. People in those days, not being as wise as you young people, were content in their simplicity to listen to an oak or a rock, as long as 275c it told the truth. But for you, perhaps, it makes a difference who the speaker is and where he's from. You don't just consider whether it's so or not.[61]

60 Naucratis was a Greek trading town in the Nile Delta; Theuth is the Egyptian god Thoth, patron of writing.

61 At Dodona the rustling of a sacred oak was interpreted as the god's answers.

PHAEDRUS You're right to rebuke me, and I think it is with writing just as the Theban says.

SOCRATES Then anyone who thinks he has left an art behind in writing, and anyone who takes it over thinking that something clear and reliable will come from writing, must be full of simplicity, and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophecy, if he thinks written words are anything more 275d than a way to remind someone who knows about what the writing concerns.

PHAEDRUS Quite right.

THE LIVING WORD

Written words cannot answer questions; the better kind of speech is written in the learner's soul.

SOCRATES Yes, Phaedrus, writing has this strange feature, and in this it's truly like painting. The offspring of painting stand there as if alive, but if you ask them something, they maintain a very solemn silence. It's the same with written words: you might think they speak as if they had some understanding, but if you ask them about something they say, wanting to learn, they always indicate one and the same thing. And once 275e it's written, every speech rolls around everywhere, alike among those who understand and among those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom not. When it's mistreated and unjustly abused, it always needs its father to come to its aid, since it can neither defend nor help itself.

PHAEDRUS That's quite right too.

SOCRATES 276a Well then, do we see another kind of speech, the legitimate brother of this one? How does it come about, and how much better and more powerful than this one is it by nature?

PHAEDRUS What speech is that, and how do you say it comes about?

SOCRATES The one that's written with knowledge in the soul of the learner: it can defend itself, and it knows to whom it should speak and before whom it should keep silent.

PHAEDRUS You mean the living speech of the one who knows, which has a soul, and of which the written speech could fairly be called an image.

SOCRATES 276b Exactly. Now tell me this. Would a sensible farmer, who cared about his seeds and wanted them to bear fruit, seriously plant them in summer in gardens of Adonis and enjoy watching them grow fine in eight days? Or would he do that for amusement and for the festival, if he did it at all, while for the seeds he was serious about he would use the art of farming, sow them in suitable ground, and be content if what he sowed reached maturity in the eighth month?[62]

PHAEDRUS 276c That's how it would be, I think, Socrates: some things he'd do seriously, and others in the other way, as you say.

SOCRATES And shall we say that someone who has knowledge of what is just and fine and good has less sense than the farmer about his own seeds?

PHAEDRUS Not in the least.

SOCRATES Then he won't seriously write them in water—black water, that is, ink—sowing them with a pen, along with words that can't come to their own aid by speaking and can't adequately teach the truth.

PHAEDRUS No, probably not.

SOCRATES 276d No. Rather, it seems, he'll sow gardens of letters and write for the sake of amusement. When he does write, he'll be storing up reminders for himself, in case he reaches the forgetfulness of old age, and for anyone who follows the same track, and he'll enjoy watching them grow up tender. When others turn to other amusements, soaking themselves in drinking

62 Gardens of Adonis were pots of quick-sprouting plants grown for a summer festival of Adonis; they withered almost at once.

parties and everything akin to them, he, it seems, will pass his time amusing himself with what I'm describing instead.

PHAEDRUS 276e It's a very fine amusement you describe, Socrates, compared with a worthless one: the amusement of someone who can play with words, telling stories about justice and the other things you mention.

SOCRATES So it is, Phaedrus my friend. But much finer, I think, is serious work on these things, when someone uses the art of dialectic, takes a suitable soul, and plants and sows in it, with knowledge, words that can come to their own aid and to the aid of the one who planted 277a them, and that are not fruitless but contain seed, from which other words grow up in other characters, able to make that seed forever immortal, and to make the one who has it as happy as a human being can be.

PHAEDRUS Yes, that's finer still, what you're describing.

SOCRATES Now, Phaedrus, with these points agreed, we can decide those other questions.

PHAEDRUS Which ones?

SOCRATES The ones we wanted to look into, which brought us to this point: to examine the reproach against Lysias for writing 277b speeches, and speeches themselves, which are written with art and which without. Now I think what's artful and what isn't has been made reasonably clear.

PHAEDRUS It seemed so, yes; but remind me again how.

SOCRATES Until someone knows the truth about each of the things he speaks or writes about, and becomes able to define everything in itself, and, having defined it, knows how to cut it up again by forms until it can't be cut any further; and until he has understood the nature of the soul in the same way, discovered 277c the kind of speech that fits each nature, and composes and arranges his speech accordingly, offering intricate, all-harmonious speeches to an intricate soul and simple ones to a simple soul—until then he won't be able to handle speech with

art, to the extent that its nature allows, either for teaching or for persuading, as our whole previous discussion has shown us.

PHAEDRUS Yes, that's more or less exactly how it appeared.

SOCRATES 277d And what about whether it's fine or shameful to speak and write speeches, and under what conditions it could rightly be called a reproach or not? Didn't what we said a little earlier make it clear—

PHAEDRUS What did we say?

SOCRATES That if Lysias or anyone else has ever written or ever will write, whether privately or publicly as a lawmaker, composing a political treatise and believing that it contains great reliability and clarity, then that is a reproach to the writer, whether anyone says so or not. For to be ignorant, waking or dreaming, of what is just 277e and unjust, bad and good, truly cannot escape being reproachable, even if the whole crowd praises it.

PHAEDRUS No, it can't.

SOCRATES But take the man who believes that in a written speech on any subject there's bound to be a great deal of play, and that no speech in verse or prose has ever been written that deserves much serious attention—or spoken, either, the way rhapsodes recite, without questioning or teaching, just to persuade; that in 278a fact the best of them have served as reminders for those who know; who believes that only in speeches that are taught and spoken for the sake of learning, and truly written in the soul, about what is just and fine and good, is there clarity and completeness and something worth serious attention; that such speeches should be called his own legitimate sons—first the one within himself, if it has been discovered and is present there, and then any offspring 278b and brothers of it that have grown up, as they deserve, in other souls of other people; and who says goodbye to the rest—that man, Phaedrus, may well be the sort that you and I would pray for us both to become.[63]

PHAEDRUS Yes, that's absolutely what I want and pray for.

63 Rhapsodes were professional reciters of Homer and other poets.

SOCRATES Then let's consider our play with the subject of speech to have gone on long enough. You, go and tell Lysias that the two of us went down to the spring of the Nymphs and sanctuary of the Muses, and heard words that told us 278c to tell Lysias, and anyone else who composes speeches, and Homer, and anyone else who has composed poetry, whether bare or set to song, and third, Solon, and anyone who has written treatises in the form of political speeches, calling them laws: if he composed these knowing how the truth stands, and can come to their aid when he's put to the test about what he wrote, and is himself able, by speaking, to show that the written things are slight, then such a man shouldn't be 278d called by a name taken from these, but from the things he's serious about.

PHAEDRUS Then what names do you give him?

SOCRATES To call him wise, Phaedrus, seems to me too grand, and fitting only for a god. But "philosopher"—lover of wisdom—or something like that would suit him better and be more in tune.

PHAEDRUS That's not at all out of place.

SOCRATES On the other hand, someone who has nothing more valuable than what he's composed or written, turning it upside down over time, gluing pieces 278e together and taking them apart—won't you rightly call him a poet or a speechwriter or a writer of laws?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES Then tell your friend this.

PHAEDRUS And what about you? What will you do? We mustn't pass over your friend either.

SOCRATES Who's that?

PHAEDRUS Handsome Isocrates. What message will you give him, Socrates? What shall we say he is?[64]

64 Isocrates (436–338 BC) later became the leading Athenian teacher of rhetoric; here he is imagined as still young.

SOCRATES Isocrates is still young, Phaedrus. But I'm willing to tell you what I prophesy [279a] for him.

PHAEDRUS What's that?

SOCRATES I think his natural gifts are too good to be compared with the speeches of Lysias and his circle, and besides, he's blended with a nobler character. So it wouldn't be at all surprising if, as he grows older, even in the very speeches he's now attempting he were to leave everyone who has ever taken up speeches further behind than men leave boys; and still more if these didn't satisfy him, and some more divine impulse led him on to greater things. For by nature, my friend, there is some philosophy in the man's [279b] mind. So this is the message I'm bringing from the gods here to Isocrates, as my beloved, and you take that other one to Lysias, as yours.

PHAEDRUS It shall be done. But let's go, since the heat has become gentler.

SOCRATES' PRAYER TO PAN

Before leaving, Socrates prays to Pan and the local gods for inner beauty.

SOCRATES Shouldn't we pray to the gods here before we go?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES Dear Pan, and all you other gods of this place, grant that I become beautiful within, and that whatever I have outside be on friendly terms with what is [279c] inside. May I count the wise man rich; and may I have as much gold as only a sensible person could carry or take away.

Do we need anything else, Phaedrus? For me that prayer is enough.

PHAEDRUS Pray for this for me too; for friends have everything in common.

SOCRATES Let's go.