

The Central Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*

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I SHALL ATTEMPT to analyze the myth of *Phaedrus* (246A3–256E2) as if it were poetry, more specifically, as if it were a choral lyric in a tragedy. Such an analysis will consist in examining the language and structure of the myth itself and thereafter exploring its connections with other parts of the dialogue. There are several reasons for choosing this approach and claiming for it philosophic no less than literary validity. First, Plato employs two modes of discourse: the dialectic and the mythopoeic or imagistic. His 'philosophy' as emergent from most of the dialogues comprises an interaction of the two.¹ Second, the myths and imagery of Plato have the quality and impact of great poetry.² Like poetry, theirs is "language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree."

Phaedrus especially calls for attention on this level. It teems with myths and mythic allusions, poetic tags and poetic allusions. Despite this, and despite the lip service paid to the importance of style and structure in Plato's work, the many treatments of *Phaedrus* have been either commentaries or inquiries into various problems raised by the dialogue.³ Neither reveal how in language and in form the dialogue so perfectly is what it discusses, exemplifies what it advocates, awakens the reactions which it describes.

¹ For a perceptive treatment of this interaction, see Aloys de Marignac, *Imagination et dialectique* (Paris 1951) 9–30. See also Perceval Frutiger, *Les mythes de Platon* (Paris 1930) 266–84.

² Perhaps the most emphatic statement of this fact comes from the poet Shelley: "Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form [metrics], so that the harmony, which is its spirit, be observed . . . Plato was essentially a poet—the truth and splendour of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive" ("A Defence of Poetry," *Harvard Classics* 27 [New York 1910] 380).

³ In *Platon* I (Berlin 1919) 454, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff made this intriguing and much quoted remark: "So nenne ich denn dies Kapitel, das den Phaidros behandelt, einen glücklichen Sommertag. Man wird es schelten oder verlachen; ich kenne das; gleichviel: so sehe ich den Dichter, in dessen Seele ich mich einzufühlen versuche." One could wish that he had then gone on to analyze those elements in the dialogue which produced his experience of it.

Socrates alludes to his second speech as a *μυθικός ὕμνος* (265c1).⁴ The myth itself is an aggregate of images fused into an organic whole, the manner in which they are interwoven reflecting the theme and shape of the dialogue. The myth forms a central point to which every idea in *Phaedrus* is related and should be referred. The following pages set forth the particulars on which these general conclusions are based.

The dialogue is in the form of a diptych, one side depicting the nature of real love, the other of true rhetoric. These two forces, Eros and Logos, are complements of one another: both lead the soul to ultimate harm or good. Such division into complementary pairs is manifest on other levels as well. Thus the first half of the dialogue itself falls into two parts. Seen from one angle it consists of a speech by the rhetorician Lysias and two by Socrates, the philosopher and dialectician. The former exists in writing and is read aloud; the latter are on-the-spot improvisations. Seen from another angle the first two speeches plead on behalf of the nonlover. Then Socrates recants and makes a plea for the true lover as opposed to Lysias' nonlover.

The myth which constitutes the major portion of the second speech is similarly divided. The first section (246A3–249D3) deals with the soul in its purest form, untrammelled by the body. This part is primarily focused on the philosopher, whose soul comes closest to deity. The second treats the striving of the soul to regain its former state. This part focuses upon the lover because love is the means by which that goal can be achieved. The first part concerns the intelligible world; the second describes its analogue in the world of sense perception. Thus one might call the one metaphysical, the other physical.⁵ Beauty is the link between the two parts and the two worlds.⁶

Socrates begins his second speech by disproving the assertion that one should give in to a nonlover rather than a lover because the latter is a victim of mania, while the former is fully rational (244–245c4). This would be true if all mania were harmful whereas, on the contrary, there are types of mania in which the mind becomes trans-

⁴ The text used throughout is that of John Burnet, *Platonis Opera* II (Oxford 1953).

⁵ As Herman L. Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato* (Chicago 1965) 107, observes, ". . . each succeeding section of the myth is a microcosmic repetition of the preceding section." He adds ". . . it appears that the relationship between a lover and beloved in this life is essentially a re-enactment or imitation on a small scale of the cosmic history of the soul."

⁶ See Martin Heidegger's discussion of the rôle of beauty in *Phaedrus*, *Nietzsche* I (Pfullingen 1961) 218–31.

figured and attains knowledge beyond the reach of consciousness. Socrates cites three examples: inspired prophecy, prescriptions for purifying hereditary guilt,⁷ and poetic inspiration. Each is an altered state of consciousness productive of deep insight. Socrates postpones his description of Eros, the fourth mania, but he has aroused the expectation that it will share this characteristic with its predecessors.

In order to demonstrate that erotic mania is a gift sent by the gods Socrates must first explore the nature of the soul (*ψυχῆς φύσεως περί*, 245c2–3). The next section (245c5–246a2), proof of the soul's immortality, differs sharply from what precedes and follows. The sentences are short, staccato, a string of propositions. Both the vocabulary (such words as *ἀρχή*, *ἀγέννητον*, *φύσις*) and the terseness suggest the 'lapidary' style of the Ionian *physikoi*.⁸ After the clipped incisive proof come the highly colored language, the complex verbal patterns, of the myth. They serve as foils to one another.

The proof of immortality which occupies the 'pre-Socratic' section is based upon the soul's automotive faculty. In this short paragraph *κινέω* and its derivatives are repeated thirteen times, hammering home that motion is the essential property of soul. An anticipatory use of the word in the preceding paragraph establishes a significant association. It is stated there that the emotional lover need not fear comparison with the cool nonlover. The lover is referred to as *τοῦ κεινημένου* (245B4). The word's connotation in this context is largely figurative ('moved' as in 'emotion') but the verbal link with what follows emerges as one reads on. The lover, moved by mania, is somehow more closely in touch with the natural motion of the soul than the nonlover.

In the myth proper, which begins at 246A3, the concept of the soul as a self-moving entity capable of ascent is symbolized by the wing. The soul itself is represented by a winged chariot, the forces within it by a charioteer and pair of horses, its varying states and conflicts (*πάθη τε καὶ ἔργα*, 245c3–4) by different kinds of motion: an army on the march, a chariot race at the games, the procession of a religious

⁷ An explanation of this difficult passage appears in Lobeck's *Aglaophamus*, quoted by W. H. Thomson, *The Phaedrus of Plato* (London 1868) 41–42. A brief but more recent bibliography on the subject can be found in Paul Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues III* (London 1969) 512 n.19.

⁸ Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction* (New York 1958) 192, points out similar terminology and line of argument in Parmenides, Empedocles and Heraclitus. Specific verbal parallels are noted on p.371 n.19. See also R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge 1952) 68.

celebration, or wandering from life to life until the movement of the heavens has come full circle.

Before its wings were lost the soul-chariot formed part of a great army following the chariot of Zeus, each company led by a different deity, each soul assigned its station (246E6–247A4). Those who can follow the gods to the end reach the surface of the heavens (*τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ νότῳ*); standing there, they are borne round and see what is beyond (247B6–C2). Many chariots, however, go out of control. At this point the movement and the image change. The ordered march gives way to a chariot race.⁹ Careening wildly, trampling one another, each contestant tries to take the lead. The competition is desperate, the noise deafening. Many are lamed; many more are left with crippled wings (248A8–B3).

The sense of struggle is heightened by another image. The wing is the symbol of the soul because it can lift a heavy weight into the air (246D6–7). But souls that cannot follow the gods are burdened by heaviness in excess of a soul's power (247B3–5). They struggle with their weight as if moving under water trying to reach the air. This metaphor is introduced by a phrase which does not of itself possess great image-making power, *οὐρανοῦ νότῳ* (247B7–8). *νότον* most often refers to the surface of the sea, but in poetry, usually with a qualifying genitive or adjective as here, it frequently denotes other surfaces as well (*LSJ s.v. η*). Nonetheless, it still retains metaphoric force when viewed as an anticipation of the image developed some thirty lines away. As lesser souls strive to reach the surface of the heavens, only the most perfect manage to keep their heads above water (*ἡ μὲν ἄριστα θεῶν ἐπομένη καὶ εἰκασμένη ὑπερῆρεν εἰς τὸν ἔξω τόπον τῆν τοῦ ἡμιόχου κεφαλήν*, 248A1–3). The less fortunate alternately rise and sink (*ἡ δὲ*

⁹ The image of a victory at the games appears in various forms throughout the dialogue. The opening Pindaric citation (227B9–10) is from *Isthmian I*, an ode commemorating the victory of Herodotus the Theban in a chariot race. In this lyric it is stressed that Herodotus drove the chariot himself (19–21). At the opening of his second speech Socrates warns that praise of the nonlover's self-restraint should not throw them into an uproar (*θορυβεῖται*, 245B3; cf. *θορυβουμένη*, 248A4, and *θόρυβος*, 248B1, in the later chariot race image) because a different argument may win the prize of victory (*φέρεσθω τὰ νικητήρια*, 245B5). At the end of the speech Socrates states that lovers who hold their lower nature permanently in check have, when they depart this life, won the first of three rounds in the true Olympic match, *τῶν τριῶν παλαιμάτων τῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς Ὀλυμπιακῶν ἐν νενικήκασι* (256B3–7). Even those who cannot adhere to this highest standard win no small prize from the contest (*οὐ μικρὸν ἔθλον . . . φέρονται*, 256D5–6). In the second part of the dialogue such words as *ἀγωνιστήν* (269D2) and *ἄμλλα* (271A1), now applied to rhetoric, echo this image.

τοτέ μὲν ἦρεν, τοτέ δ' ἔδν, 248A5); still others never surface but are borne round underwater (ὑποβρύχια κυμασιφέρονται, 248A7–8).¹⁰ Such souls as cannot surface shed their wings like molting birds (πτερορρυήση, 248C8) and fall to earth. There, while the *annus magnus* runs its course, they move through a cycle of death and rebirth; only the philosopher and the lover can break free before the appointed time (248C5–249A5).

The first section of the myth (246A3–249D3) comes to a close by explaining why the philosopher is thus privileged. He alone is perpetually involved with that vision the sight of which confers their divinity on the gods. Moved by the excitement of this memory he appears mad to other men. Here again, as at the close of the first part of the speech (245B4), κινέω is used to describe a salutary state not unlike madness. There it refers to the lover (τοῦ κεκινημένου), here to the philosopher (παρακινῶν, 249D2). The next section deals with the fourth madness, love. It both resumes the train of thought interrupted at 245C4 and applies the insights gained in the intervening section.

What follows (249D4–256E2) is the heart of the myth as of the speech; what preceded was but preparation. This section begins by recapitulating the story of the soul-chariot prior to revealing its relevance for the phenomenon of love. The struggle of the soul to behold τὰ ὄντα ὄντως was previously described as the orderly march of an army, then as a frenzied race. Here the culmination of that struggle, the perception of Being, is depicted as a religious procession which culminates in the ceremony of mystic initiation.¹¹ The image developed here has already appeared but its precise significance was until now unclear. At the opening of the speech the careful versifier is called ἀτελής (245A7) as compared with the inspired poet. The primary meaning of this word in its context is 'incomplete, imperfect, unfinished'. But in the language of the mysteries the term means 'uninitiated', and at least an overtone of that meaning can be heard here. For when it next occurs this is clearly the significance intended. In the

¹⁰ Thomson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 51, notes the underwater imagery in this passage. The scene is recapitulated at 249C3–4 with another phrase: ἀνακύψασα εἰς τὸ ὄν ὄντως. ἀνακύπτω means 'to lift up the head' and is often found in a context which lends the sense 'pop up out of the water'. Here that context is supplied not by a single word (as, e.g., ἐκ τῆς θαλάττης, *Phaedo* 109D) but by the totality of phrases suggesting aquatic movement.

¹¹ Frutiger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 264 n.4, remarks that this image may reflect the procession of mystic celebrants along the Sacred Way from Athens to the temple of Demeter at Eleusis.

earlier description of the soul-chariot's struggle, those who fail must return ἀτελείς τῆς τοῦ ὄντος θέας (248B4), uninitiated into the spectacle of Being. And immediately before the new section begins it is said of the philosopher, whose life is governed by the memory of that vision: τελέουσι ἀεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενοι, τέλος ὄντως μόνος γίγνεται (249C7–8).¹² He alone becomes perfect, because perpetually perfecting the highest level of initiation.

This image appears in its fullness at 250B5–C6. Various elements associated with initiation rites are present: the dazzling light, the sight of sacred objects, the bliss experienced by the viewer both at this moment and hereafter.¹³ The passage is replete with terms which either directly or indirectly evoke the mysteries (e.g., μνούμενοι, ἐποπτεύοντες, δλόκληροι, ἀπαθείς κακῶν).¹⁴ The repetition of these words creates a liturgical quality, all the more mystical since certain epithets are used to describe both the perceiving subject and the objects perceived. The latter seem to infuse the initiate with their own attributes.

At this point the connection between the vision of the Forms and love at first sight is established. When a soul has come fresh from the mystery of Being, the beauty which it sees here awakens memory and a yearning for its winged state. Then it beheld all the Forms shining. But, whereas their light is no longer visible to the dull lacklustre

¹² Plato, in a manner similar to the dramatists, uses thematic repetition as a means of keeping certain ideas before the reader. Such repetition, both in the Platonic dialogue and in Greek tragedy, manifests the following characteristics. Since the word is employed in more than one sense, its repetition takes on a paronomasiac quality. That is, the theme meaning and the meaning uppermost in the context are not always identical. (Compare the study of τέλος repetition in the author's *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure* [Cambridge (Mass.) 1971] 68–73.) The recurrence of ἀτελής mentioned above is a good example. And what can be seen from this single instance is true of τέλος repetition throughout the dialogue.

In the introduction to the speech, the root is associated with each of the three types of mania (244D2, 244E2, 245A7–8). And in the first part of the myth, the winged soul, being τελέα, maintains the order of the cosmos (246B7). None of these occurrences is synonymous with the thematic significance of τέλος as the crowning rite of initiation, yet taken together they prepare the mind for the emergence of this motif. τέλος continues to recur in the second half of the dialogue (269C2, D2 and 6, E2, 270A2, 272A7, 276B8, 278A5). It is applied most often to the art of rhetoric when fully realized or to the rhetorician as consummate exponent of this art. Although there is no explicit reference to the τέλος of the mysteries, the insistence with which the word is repeated suggests an overtone, a carry-over of this meaning.

¹³ See George Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1969) 261–85; Georges Méautis, *Les dieux de la Grèce et les mystères d'Eleusis* (Paris 1959) 99–118.

¹⁴ Marignac, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 54 nn.2 and 5.

vision of this world, Beauty shines even here with fierce brightness (250B1–6, 250C8–E1). At the recollection aroused by this radiance, the soul feels its wings, long withered, start to sprout.

The description of the growing wings (251A7–252) is in itself an aggregate of images. Many of the words have multiple associations and some of them are onomatopoeic. As a result they tease both mind and ear, and the passage produces that tickling irritation which it so well describes. Thus the delineation of sexual excitement stimulates intellectual excitement, the two being, for Plato, inextricably linked.¹⁵

The ideas developed here were anticipated by the bird simile with which the section began (249D4–E4). This loose disjointed sentence sums up the preceding statements about the philosopher and at the same time adds a new element. It has just been said that the intelligence of the philosopher alone becomes winged (*πτεροῦται*, 249C4) because he concentrates continuously on the memory of his winged existence. Now a similar statement is made of the lover whose memory is stirred by beauty. When the mania of love overtakes him, he becomes winged and in excitement raising up his wings like a bird he longs to fly away (249D5–E1). The word *ἀναπτερούμενος* (D6) has several connotations. As regards usage, it is most often figurative, ‘to be excited, have one’s hopes raised’. But in the context of the bird simile, two literal meanings are also suggested: ‘to raise up the wings or feathers’ preparatory to flying and ‘to grow wings again’, depending on the force of the prefix *ἀνα*.¹⁶ The multiple meaning of this single word anticipates the excitation caused by the regrowth of the wings.

Two major images are fused in 251–52: plant growth and the growth, attended by various physiological symptoms, of an organic part of the body. These two give rise to a series of other images. It would be a mistake to look behind the imagery for a specific bodily state which would include the diverse medical phenomena. It is equally unprofitable to fix precise limits to each phase, searching for

¹⁵ Even the wing itself, symbol of the soul’s capacity for elevation, functions in this passage as a sexual symbol. Growing wings, raising up the wings, suggest an erection. And the later exchange of fluids between lover and beloved clearly has sexual connotations. An analysis of the complex nature of Platonic Eros can be found in Thomas Gould, *Platonic Love* (London 1963) 15–17 and 21–23.

¹⁶ *LSJ s.v.* Compare 255c7, where the word is applied to the beloved and also has a triple connotation.

some clear picture presumed to exist in the author's mind. The only excuse for tampering with the passage in analytic fashion is to observe the fusion, to apprehend a development of ideas which obeys no law but that of fantasy.¹⁷

At his first sight of the beloved's beauty the lover shudders and fear overcomes him. The first verb, *ἔφριξε* (251A4), is a common metaphor describing the effects of fright. It is accompanied by *δαιμάτων* and *ἔδεδίδει*, which strengthen its figurative force. But as he gazes on his beloved, the lover's symptoms become those of a fever: first the fit of shivering which often precedes (*φρίκης*, 251A7), then the flush and beads of sweat (*ἰδρῶς καὶ θερμότης*, 251B1).

As the lover receives the stream of beauty (*τοῦ κάλλους τὴν ἀπορροήν*, 251B1–2) through his eyes, he is filled with warmth. The *φύσις* of the wing is watered by this stream and the warmth melts the area around the *ἔκφυσις*, which, hardened and closed, had prevented the budding of the wings (251B3–4). While nutrients pour in, the wing's quill swells and starts to grow from the root. *ἐθερμάνθη* and *θερμανθέντος* (251B2–3) are linked in the mind with the fever (*θερμότης*) but at the same time evoke the warmth necessary for the growth of vegetation. In using the word *ἀπορροήν* (251B2), Plato has taken Empedocles' theory of vision (*ἀπορροαί*) and refashioned it into an image for the desire which sight arouses. This concept of an outpouring of tiny particles then leads into the watering of the wing shoots (*ἄρδεται* and *ἐπιρρυείης* (251B3 and 5); heat and water combine to melt (*ἐτάκη*, 251B3) the hardened area. *ἡ τοῦ πτεροῦ φύσις* (251B3) is taken as a periphrasis not uncommon in Plato.¹⁸ This may be one level on which the phrase operates. But in a passage where nearly every word has a double connotation, another appropriate meaning should not be overlooked. As a medical term *φύσις* refers to the natural position of a bone or joint. And here it occurs in the vicinity of a related word, *ἔκφυσις*, which is medical terminology for a bony projection and also designates the origin or attachment of nerves or muscles. While

¹⁷ Marignac, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 127–28, sees a philosophic principle behind such blurring and blending of disparate images. According to his view, the more realistic an image, the less it is suited to send the mind beyond it to an intelligible reality. Consequently, Plato guards against an exact correspondence between the image and the reality that it strives to embody.

¹⁸ *LSJ s.v.* π.2.5. They cite several examples in addition to this passage: *ἡ φύσις τῆς ἀσθενείας Phd.* 87E, *ἡ τοῦ μυελοῦ φύσις Ti.* 84C.

βλαστάνειν and *ρίζη* (251B5–6) primarily regard plant growth, the following words hover in between: *ἔκφυσις* (a seedling or shoot as well as the meanings given above), *κκληρότης* (251B4, hardness either of internal organs or of the soil), *συμμεμυκότης* (251B4, closing of the womb, closing of flowers), *καυλός* (251B6, any tubular structure in the body, stem of a plant). *ῥῶδες* (251B5) furnishes a transition to the simile of cutting teeth since it suggests an area swollen like the gums.

At this point heat and water are combined to form another image which encircles the teething simile just mentioned. The soul boils and bubbles (*ζεῖ . . . καὶ ἀνακηκίει*, 251c1),¹⁹ and just as the gums feel itchy and tender when the teeth start to come through, the entire soul experiences these sensations when the wings begin to grow: it boils, is in a ferment,²⁰ tickles (*ζεῖ τε καὶ ἀγανακτεῖ καὶ γαργαλίζεται*, 251c4–5). What boils and bubbles in the lover's veins is the stream of particles mentioned earlier. The language of 251B recurs. When the boy's beauty floods the lover's senses with particles of desire, the soul is warmed and watered (*ἄρδηταί τε καὶ θερμαίνηται*, 251c8: cf. 251B2–3). Pain ceases. But when apart from this beauty, the soul is parched and the mouths of the passages through which the wings grow dry up and close (*μύσαντα*, 251D2; cf. *συμμεμυκότης*), blocking the bud.

Next there is developed an image which, a few sentences before, was sketched by juxtaposition of two ideas (the soul boils, 251c4–5; the stream of desire enters the soul, 251c6–7). The stream of desire and the imprisoned plumules throb like the pulse (*πηδῶσα οἶον τὰ φύζοντα*) and prick against the closed passages so that the entire soul is goaded to frenzy, yet at the same time rejoices in its memory of beauty (251D3–7). The description of the soul growing wings comes to an end with a sentence in which physiology and planting mingle. As the soul looks on the possessor of beauty it pipes in desire (*ἐποχετεύσαμένη ἡμερον*), causing the closed passages (*τὰ τότε συμπεφραγμένα*) to open; for the moment frenzy ceases and the soul reaps a harvest (*καρποῦται*) of the sweetest pleasure (251E3–252). *ἐποχετεύω* means to carry water in sluices, thus repeating the notion of desire watering or irrigating the soul (251B3 and c8). As a medical term it is used of the

¹⁹ Homer uses *ἀνακηκίω*, a rather rare word, to describe blood gushing from a wound (*Il.* 7.262) and the drench of sweat that comes with great exertion (*Il.* 13.705).

²⁰ In medical parlance *ἀγανακτέω* refers to the effects of violent irritation on the body. It is commonly used of emotional irritants as well. Plutarch employs it to describe wine fermenting. See *LSJ s.v.*

heart pumping blood, a connotation reinforced by the pulsing of desire at 251D4. *συμφράσσω* too appears in Hippocrates, referring to passages of the body which have closed (*LSJ s.v. II.2*). And *καρποῦται* speaks for itself.²¹

This entire part²² closes with a return to the myth's opening: the procession of the gods and the initiation in which it culminates (described at 246E4–248B5). Here the lover chooses a beloved who resembles the god he followed then. In the same way he follows the one he loves, fashioning the beloved as an image of the god which he adorns and worships (252D–E, cf. 251A5). The end for both, if the lover's will be accomplished, is a mystic rite both beautiful and blessed (*τελετή . . . καλή τε καὶ εὐδαιμονική*, 253C3–4).

The next section contains an account of the lover's struggle with himself (253C7–255), his conflict recalling the initial *ἀγών* of the soul-chariot as it strove to reach the plain of Truth. The language also re-

²¹ The medical imagery of this passage is the outgrowth of an earlier idea. Lysias called love a sickness (231D2), and Phaedrus granted Socrates permission to use this *topos* in his speech against love (236A8–B1). The second speech then picks up the analogy between love and illness, converting it from negative to positive. The symptoms which accompany regrowth of the wings, while similar to sickness, are salutary. And love of beauty turns out to be *ἰατρὸν . . . μόνον τῶν μεγίστων πόνων* (252B1).

With this as its central thematic significance the motif of medicine plays a varied rôle throughout the dialogue. For example, Socrates encounters Phaedrus after the latter has spent a sedentary morning with Lysias: he is out to stretch his legs on the advice of his physician (227A2–7). This adds another element of contrast between Lysias and Socrates, between lover and nonlover, rhetorician and dialectician. The way which Socrates goes is associated with health, the time spent in the company of Lysias with something less than healthful. Phaedrus in his turn takes Socrates further on this walk prescribed for health by using discourse as *ἐξόδου τὸ φάρμακον*, a medicine, a drug, a charm to draw him on (230D6). Then in the second half of the dialogue medicine emerges as the physical analogue of rhetoric, the latter acting on the psyche as does the former on the body (270B1–9). And the art of medicine becomes the yardstick by which that of rhetoric is measured (268A8–C4).

²² Perhaps a brief summary of the myth's structure would be advantageous at this point. It falls into two major divisions. The first, 246A3–249D3, is the story of the disincarnate soul and its ultimate imprisonment in the body (images: procession, chariot *agon*, mysteries). The second, 249D4–256E2, is the story of the lover and the beloved whose souls are enabled by Eros to escape the body. This second section is twice as long as the first and contains two parts of approximately equal length: 249D4–253C6 (images: mysteries, medicine and plant growth, procession) and 253C7–256E2 (chariot *agon*, medicine and plant growth). However it must be stressed that other divisions are possible. Sinaiko, for example, sees the myth as having three independent sections, and his detailed complex "Simplified Outline of Socrates' Second Speech," *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 40–41, is excellent. But outlines and structural summaries are invariably inadequate, since by their very nature they are limited to elucidating only one set of relationships between the parts, whereas the number and type of relationships are most often multiple.

calls the experience that attended the growth of wings, indicating the close temporal relation between the two incidents despite their slight separation in the narrative. This part then has a double link with what precedes: reintroduction of the chariot and contest establishes a connection with the first part of the myth, the soul in its winged disincarnate state (247A8–248C5). The verbal echoes of heat, tickling, etc., evoke the excitement caused by the regrowth of the wings (251A7–252). This excitement reaches a climax in the following manner.

As earlier near the plain of Truth, the lover's soul is hampered by disharmony between the charioteer and the brutish member of the yoked pair. The conflict that arises here is underlined by a contrasting literal and figurative use of the word *κέντρον*. The ungovernable black horse hardly obeys even when the driver applies both whip and goad (*μάστιγι μετὰ κέντρων μόγις ὑπέικων*, 253E4–5). As the charioteer gazes on the beloved his soul grows warm (*διαθερμήνας*, 253E6); he is filled with a tickling sensation (*γαργαλισμοῦ*, 253E6). He too now feels a goad, the goad of desire (*πόθου κέντρων ὑποπλησθηῆ*, 253E6–254A1). This goad of desire in its turn affects the black horse: refusing to heed the warning of the driver's whip and goad (*οὔτε κέντρων ἠνιοχικῶν οὔτε μάστιγος ἐντρέπεται*, 254A3–4) he strives to rush at the beloved. A particular kind of interweaving connects this passage with that which it recalls, 251B–D7. The images of heat and tickling which echo here were fully developed there (*θερμότης, ἐθερμάνθη, θερμανθέντος, γαργαλίζεται*). The image of the goad, on the other hand, which is fully developed here, was anticipated there: as a result of the throbbing caused by desire the soul is goaded in a circle and maddened like a horse stung by a gadfly (*κεντουμένη κύκλω ἢ ψυχὴ οἰστρεῖ*, 251D5–6). But sight of the beloved gives the soul a rest from *κέντρων τε καὶ ὠδίνων* (251E4–5). The full appropriateness of the earlier goad image does not become apparent until the charioteer and horses reappear and the goad of desire is played against the real goad which tries to govern it.

Dragging driver and yoke-mate forward, the black horse exerts all his force (*βία φέρεται*, 254A4; cf. *βιαζόμενος*, 254D4). But at that moment the charioteer is dazzled by the brightness which flashes from the beloved. He remembers Beauty and sees it once again standing on a pure altar along with Sophrosyne. At this sight and the memory thus evoked the driver is overcome with fear and pulls the horses up short (254B3–C2). The soul of the good horse is drenched with sweat, filled with shame and horror (*ὕπ' αἰσχύνης τε καὶ θάμβους ἰδρῶτι πᾶσαν ἔβρεξε*

τὴν ψυχὴν, 254C4–5).²³ This conflict is a reenactment of the struggle to glimpse Being with its sweat and tumult: *θόρυβος οὖν καὶ ἄμιλλα καὶ ἰδρῶς ἔσχατος γίγνεται* (248B1–2). There the evil horse drags the chariot down (247B3–5). The soul, as it tries to see, is thrown into confusion by the horses, which resist with force all efforts to control them (*βιαζομένων δὲ τῶν ἵππων*, 248A5–6). This is a moment of terrible trial for the soul: *ἐνθα δὴ πόνος τε καὶ ἀγὼν ἔσχατος ψυχῆ πρόκειται* (247B5–6). Thus the *agon* of the soul in the presence of the beloved serves as rehearsal for the ultimate contest in which the soul-chariot must enter every ten thousand years. The struggle in which the wings were lost is repeated when the incarnate soul begins to grow its wings anew.

The major theme of this last section (253C7–256E2) is the awakening of Eros in the beloved. The new stage of their relationship is expressed by images of liquid flowing. These are introduced at the close of the preceding section, before the lover's struggle with himself, and developed after it. In its brief initial appearance the image contains both of the elements later amplified. The lover begins by following the beloved as he followed his god in the procession (252C3–E). Thus he first discovers the god in the beloved. This perception leads him to discovery of the god within himself (252E5–253A5). Realizing that he has attained it through the beloved, the lover shares this new-found knowledge with him. Like a bacchante he draws from Zeus a stream to be poured over the soul of his beloved that the latter may become a still more perfect likeness of the deity (253A6–B). Now it is the lover who leads the beloved to the god (253B5–C2).

Following the charioteer's victory, the 'stream of desire' reappears, this time exercising its effect on the beloved. It is pointed up first by a mythic allusion involving Zeus, then by an image which describes this stream flowing from the lover to the soul of the beloved. Thus each expands a different aspect of the earlier bacchante simile.

As the beloved becomes friendly with the lover whose lower nature has been chastened, the stream of particles increases and overflows the lover's soul. Zeus named this stream *ἕμερον* on account of his love for Ganymede (255c1–2). What is the relevance of this allusion? Is its point merely that "Plato here attributes to the highest authority the

²³ These two elements, sweat and fear, were also cited among the conditions which led to the regrowth of the wings. Sight of a godlike face reminds the beholder of Beauty; he shivers in fear, then from a cold fit falls into a feverish sweat (251A2–B1).

whimsical etymology of ἴμερος given above” (251c6–7)?²⁴ There is, in fact, no clear indication in the text why Zeus should choose for the word ‘desire’ an acronym composed of *ίέναι*, *μέρος* and *ρέϊν*. The connection between the ‘stream of desire’ and the story of Ganymede is not spelled out but must be inferred by the reader who is familiar with the myth. Ganymede is the cupbearer of Zeus, thus his pouring of the wine suggests an image and name for the flood of desire which also flows from him to the god. First Zeus is drawn by the beauty of Ganymede; then Ganymede is carried to the heavens by Zeus.²⁵ In the same way the philosopher consecrated to Zeus (252E1–3) first follows the beloved, then raises him closer to the god. The counterparts of Zeus and Ganymede in the dialogue are the philosopher Socrates and Phaedrus whose name, like *γάνος*, means ‘bright’. And at 234D2–3 Socrates indulges in a play on *Φαίδρε* and *γάνυθαι*.

When the stream of desire has filled the lover to overflowing it flows back over the soul of the beloved, entering through the eyes from which it came. Then the wings of the beloved put forth buds. The vocabulary of the earlier passage describing wing growth recurs, but the quasi-medical terminology and simile of teething are replaced by a different image. The beloved is like a man who has caught eye-disease from another and cannot imagine how he picked up the infection (255D3–5). There are two points of likeness in this simile, one expressed, one implied. It is introduced to convey the perplexity of the beloved regarding his sudden indisposition. The implicit likeness, although unmentioned, is still more apposite. Ophthalmia makes the eyes run;²⁶ *ρέθυμα* is the name for such a discharge.²⁷ This word appeared in 255c1 and 6. At the moment of occurrence it seemed to have its less specialized meaning, continuing the metaphor ‘stream of desire’. But at the same time, as was the case with those words in 251 which functioned on two levels, the medical connotation establishes a basis for comparison between the stream of desire (*ρέθυμα*) which flows from the eyes and the discharge (*ρέθυμα*) which afflicts the patient with streaming eyes. Socrates ends his palinode with a prayer that Eros

²⁴ Thomson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 77.

²⁵ Explicit reference to Zeus as the ravisher of Ganymede is late in literature (*Ov. Met.* 10.155), but not in art. The famous Olympia terracotta, for example, is dated *ca.* 470–450 B.C. See Gisela M. A. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*⁴ (Yale 1970) 40, 253, and fig.110.

²⁶ Hippoc. *Aër.* 10, *Epid.* 1.5, *Vid.Ac.* 9.

²⁷ *LSJ s.v.* III.

neither do him physical harm nor deprive him of his *ἐρωτικὴν* . . . *τέχνην* (257A7–8). One is reminded that Socrates made his speech because he feared that he, like Stesichorus, would be blinded (243A3–7). By the end of the speech it is evident that, since Eros operates through the eyes,²⁸ blindness would put an end to all the art of love.

The Prologue

The prologue which creates a setting for the central myth has much in common with it. Both myth and prologue translate the same ideas into a story which unfolds in time and space; motifs and images which describe states of being in the myth appear in the prologue as part of the scenic background and the personal interchange between Socrates and Phaedrus. Thus in a sense the prologue is a dramatic enactment of the myth.

The place to which Socrates and Phaedrus go is described at length: there is a stream, verdant grass, the fragrance of a tree in bloom (229A–C, 230B2–C5). As time passes the noonday heat becomes stifling, and they are reluctant to leave the shade until afternoon (242A3–6, 259). In this way the setting introduces elements used later to describe love's symptoms and the soul's regrowth of wings: heat, flowing liquid and vegetation.

The motif of movement is crucial to both myth and prologue. The myth describes the disincarnate soul following its god in the procession. Once incarnate, the lover first follows the god in the beloved, then leads the beloved closer to the god. In the prologue Socrates and Phaedrus act out this alternation, first one and then the other leading. At the beginning Phaedrus says to Socrates, "Lead on!" (*πρόαγε δῆ*, 227C1), and Socrates echoes this at 228C1, asserting that Phaedrus urged him to take the lead (*πρόαγειν ἐκέλευε*). As they approach the shady spot they seek, Socrates addresses Phaedrus with the same words: *πρόαγε δῆ* (229A7), *πρόαγοις ἄν* (229B3). Further emphasis is added by Socrates' remark, "Isn't this the tree to which you were leading us?" (*ἄρ' οὐ τόδε ἦν τὸ δένδρον ἐφ' ὅπερ ἤγες ἡμᾶς*, 230A7) and

²⁸ At 253E5 the beloved is referred to as τὸ ἐρωτικὸν ὄμμα. Hackforth, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 103 n.3, comments, "τὸ ἐρωτικὸν ὄμμα is a difficult expression: the literal meaning is probably 'the form (or face) which stirs him to love'." Such a 'poetic periphrasis' is more meaningful when its thematic significance is recognized. See G. J. de Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Amsterdam 1969) 167.

his assertion that Phaedrus has led him on by dangling the speech before him like a carrot before a donkey (*ἀγουσιν*, 230D8, *περιάζειν*, 230E1).²⁹

In this and other ways Socrates and Phaedrus themselves play at the rôles of lover and beloved which the myth describes. It is a game ruled by irony and humor, mock-serious, like that *παιδιά* which alone the philosopher will trust to writing (277E5–8). In the context of the dialogue Phaedrus is a significant name. It designates the visible radiance that sets *τὸ κάλλος* apart from the other, purely intelligible forms (250B1–6, 250C8–E1). At the sight of the beloved the lover is dazzled by flashes of light (*τὴν ὄψιν τὴν τῶν παιδικῶν ἀστράπτουσιν*, 254B4–5). This luminous quality leads the soul to recollection of its vision (compare *μακαρίαν ὄψιν*, 250B6). And it is Phaedrus ‘the shining’ who leads Socrates to just such an experience. When asked how he liked Lysias’ speech Socrates replies that he was overcome with emotion. It was the sight of Phaedrus that roused these feelings; he became so radiant while reading the speech. And Socrates, making way before Phaedrus’ superior knowledge, followed after and let him lead them both in Bacchic frenzy (234D1–6).

This passage contains several charged words, that is, ones which assume significance at a later point. In this instance the words establish a link between Socrates’ ironic flowery tribute to Phaedrus and the experience of the lover as he gazes on the beloved. There is the emphatic repetition of *ἔπομαι* (234D5) and the play on the eponymous name Phaedrus (234D2–3). Parallel to *συνεβάκχευσα* (234D5) is Socrates’ statement in the myth that lovers, like bacchantes, draw a drink from Zeus and pour it over the soul of their beloved (253A6–7).³⁰ The phrases *ὥστε με ἐκπλαγῆναι, καὶ τοῦτο ἐγὼ ἔπαθον διὰ σέ* (234D1–2) are echoed when the sight of beauty awakens in the soul a memory of its prior state (250A6–B1):

αὐται δέ, ὅταν τι τῶν ἐκεῖ ὁμοίωμα ἴδωσιν, ἐκπλήττονται καὶ οὐκέτ’ <ἐν> αὐτῶν γίνονται, ὃ δ’ ἔστι τὸ πάθος ἀγνοοῦσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἰκανῶς διαισθάνεσθαι.

²⁹ The motif of leading and following is reinforced in the myth by constant repetition of *ἄγω* and *ἔπομαι*. For example 246D6 and E6, 247A6, 253B7–C2, 254E7, 255A1.

³⁰ The same verb with a different prefix (*ἐκβακχεύουσα*, 245A3) is used to describe also the mania of poets, thus establishing an early link between Eros and Logos.

The prologue also touches on another aspect of the love relationship. In finding one another the lover and beloved find themselves. This process is described at 252E5–253A5 and was discussed above: the beloved's likeness to the god makes it possible for the lover to discover the god within. Thus the pursuit of love is at the same time a search for self in accord with the injunction *γνώθι σαυτόν*. This idea is expressed indirectly in the prologue.

When Phaedrus asks whether he believes the Boreas-Oreithyia myth, Socrates rejects the rationalizing explanations that find favor with the learned. Such pedantry as theirs, he says, interferes with things of real importance, since a host of mythical beasts would soon present themselves demanding explanation. For this Socrates has no spare time (*αχολή*); he must save his energy for mastering the Delphic proverb *γνώθι σαυτόν* (229C6–E6).³¹ When Phaedrus meets Socrates at the beginning of the prologue he agrees to recount his morning's talk with Lysias. That is, if Socrates has time to spare (*πεύσῃ, εἴ σοι αχολή προῖόντι ἀκούειν*, 227B8). Socrates answers him with a quotation from Pindar: he considers the intercourse of Phaedrus and Lysias “*καὶ ἀαχολίας ὑπέρτερον*,” more important than busyness that takes away spare time (227B9–11). When these two passages are put together one notes that Socrates has *αχολή* for two things: *γνώθι σαυτόν* is one, Phaedrus the other.

Two more statements add to this picture. Socrates brushes aside Phaedrus' disclaimer that he has not learned the speech well enough to recite it. Socrates knows him better than that: *εἰ ἐγὼ Φαῖδρον ἀγνοῶ, καὶ ἐμαυτοῦ ἐπιλέλησμαι* (228A5–6), “If I don't know Phaedrus, I'm a stranger to myself.” Phaedrus later turns the tables. When Socrates hesitates to improvise a speech of his own he is twitted with the same words (236C4–6). For Socrates, to know Phaedrus is to seek himself and the *θείας . . . μοίρας* (230A5–6) in his nature. That is why he has *αχολή* for Phaedrus.

Socrates begins his second speech with a defence of madness. He enumerates three types which bring not harm but good and come to

³¹ Socrates then himself employs a mythological allusion as a means of emphasizing his point. The only mythic monster who holds his interest dwells within. Is the real Socrates a conglomerate beast swollen with passion like Typho or a tame and simple creature? In place of the rationalizing approach he has substituted a psychological interpretation of myth, has used the mythical figure Typho as an image of interior reality. The central myth develops Typho and his mild counterpart into an image of the psyche as a driver and two horses, one brutish, the other gentle.

man as a gift from the gods (244A5–8). In the scene with Phaedrus which precedes his speech, Socrates exhibits symptoms of all three, thus acting out the thesis he is shortly to expound. Inspiration or poetic mania (245A1–8 in the myth) begins to take hold midway in the first speech as Socrates responds to the idyllic charm of the place. His prose becomes dithyrambic and he fears nympholepsy (238D1–3). Shortly thereafter he breaks off entirely, refusing to utter a eulogy in honor of the nonlover. If he does so, he will surely be possessed by the nymphs: ὑπὸ τῶν Νυμφῶν . . . καφῶς ἐνθουσιάσω (241E3–5). In foreseeing that he may offend Eros and prescribing purification Socrates alludes to the two other forms of divine possession, that of prophecy and that of ritual purification (in the myth, *μαντικήν*, 244C5, and *καθαρμῶν*, 244E2). He tells Phaedrus that he knows himself guilty of transgression: εἰμὶ δὴ οὖν μάντις . . . μαντικόν γέ τι καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ (242C3–7). Accordingly he must purify himself by retracting his calumny of Eros: ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν, ὦ φίλε, καθήρασθαι ἀνάγκη. ἔστιν δὲ τοῖς ἀμαρτάνουσι περὶ μυθολογίαν καθαρμὸς ἀρχαῖος . . . (243A2–4).

Thus the prologue and following intermittent conversations between Socrates and Phaedrus perform an important function: they set in motion major themes of the dialogue, here enacted on the level of banter and small talk.

Conclusion of the Conversation on Rhetoric

The unity of the dialogue's two parts is reinforced by use in the second of images and motifs which appeared in the first but there explored a different problem. Thus similar images and complexes of related words link the theme of part one, Eros, with that of part two, Logos. The rhetorician or nonlover deals, like Lysias, in the written word and 'left-handed' love (*σκαϊόν τινα ἔρωτα*, 266A5), both of whose fruits are harmful and unreal. The dialectician employs the spoken word and love, both of which guide the soul to attain its happiness. In the course of the dialogue Socrates establishes that True Rhetoric is indistinguishable from Philosophy. The philosopher is the real rhetorician and the only man who arouses and makes love in the truest sense.

The second part of *Phaedrus* introduces two questions which are treated in chiasmic order. First, is there any disgrace attached to writing

(257B7–258D5)? The answer given here: writing in itself is nothing shameful, but it is a bad thing to write badly. At this point a new question is raised. What distinguishes good writing from bad, *τέχνη* from *ἀτεχνία*? This discussion occupies the middle of the dialogue's second half (258D7–274B5). At 274B6 Socrates returns to the original question and finds a new answer in the light of what has preceded.

The remaining pages of this essay will investigate the transvaluation of images in the second part of *Phaedrus*. First, a major motif will be studied briefly with attention to the various forms that it assumes throughout the dialogue. This motif occurs with great frequency in the middle segment of the conversation on rhetoric, 258D7 to 274B5. The last section on rhetoric, 274B6 to 278B4, is similar to the central myth: each comes at the end of its own half of the dialogue and each constitutes a climax. This section will be analysed much as the myth was and the relation between them explored.

Important for this dialogue and for Plato's philosophy as a whole is the image of motion and a way by which to go. On the one hand, movement symbolizes impermanence, flux, deranged perception. On the other, it is creation, life, soul. And intelligence is understanding things in their motion (*Crat.* 404D and 411D–412D). The first is disordered movement, aimless wandering, zig-zag. The second is ordered motion, turning in place, ascent. And *ἀλήθεια* is *θεία ἄλη* (*Crat.* 421B). Every dialogue, by virtue of form alone, is a symbol of such movement and the search for a way. This symbolism is sometimes reinforced through setting: the participants are out for a walk. That is, of course, a natural background for informal conversation but, as often in Plato, the natural and the symbolic are fused, the movement of mental discovery duplicated by the physical activity of those pursuing that discovery.³² In *Phaedrus* the implicit symbolic value of the dialogue form and its setting is made explicit through recurrent words and images.

In Socrates' second speech soul is defined by its capacity to move itself (245C5–246A2). This direct statement is then translated into a complex of motion imagery (246–250C6). The second half of the dialogue reworks these ideas and images into a new framework. Here it is the motion of the intellect in its search for understanding, specifically a

³² Pierre Louis, *Les métaphores de Platon* (Paris 1945) 45–47, gives a catalogue of metaphors which express dialogue and dialectic as a walk or journey but does not relate these metaphors to the setting of the dialogue, itself often an extended metaphor.

search for True Rhetoric. The metaphor in motion words whose literal meaning has largely faded is revived when they are joined with stronger words. Socrates asks Phaedrus whether it is easier to deceive people in matters about which they can form a clear picture (iron or silver) or about which they cannot (justice or goodness). Phaedrus replies that we are obviously easier to deceive when we wander in confusion (*πλανώμεθα*). Socrates concludes that the rhetorician must first by some way (*ὁδῶ*) distinguish between these two categories, that in which most people wander at a loss (*πλανᾶσθαι*) and that in which they do not (263B5–9). Later Socrates states that, insofar as rhetoric is a *τέχνη*, he does not think its method lies on that path which Lysias and Thrasymachus travel, *οὐχ ἢ Λυσίας τε καὶ Θρασύμαχος πορεύεται δοκεῖ μοι φαίνεσθαι ἢ μέθοδος* (269D6–8). A way of searching that lacks fundamental knowledge of its object is like the journey of a blind man: *ἢ γοῦν ἄνευ τούτων μέθοδος εἰκοίκοι ἂν ὥσπερ τυφλοῦ πορείᾳ* (270D9–E1). (Perhaps one should recall here how Socrates, by his palinode, saved himself from such a blind journey.) The attainment of this knowledge is a long and circuitous route, but in matters of magnitude one should be prepared to take the long way round: *ὥστ' εἰ μακρὰ ἢ περίοδος, μὴ θαυμάσῃς· μεγάλων γὰρ ἔνεκα περιυτέον . . .* (274A2–3). *περίοδος* and *περιυτέον* in this last passage, the end of the middle segment on rhetoric, recall the *περιφορά* or *περίοδος* of the heavens,³³ that fixed circuit of the stars during which the soul stood motionless outside of time and space or wandered over the earth from life to life (247C1, 247D4–6, 248C3–4, 249A3). One is also reminded that the dialogue itself begins and ends as a *περίπατος* (227A3, D3; the last words are *ἴωμεν*) interrupted when a paradisiacal resting place is reached.³⁴

The conclusion which unites the two parts of the dialogue is another cluster of mythic ideas and imagery. It brings to direct expression a theme whose antecedents can be traced back to the prologue. The development of this theme has two parts: the myth of Theuth and

³³ Friedländer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 239, points out the parallel.

³⁴ The motif of leading and following, discussed above, also belongs to this complex of motion imagery. In the second half of the dialogue, *ἄγω* and its derivatives are applied quite naturally to the influence which rhetoric or dialectic exercises on its hearers. Rhetoric is defined as *ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων* (261A7). The rhetorician uses this skill to lead people astray (*ἀπάγων*, 262B7; *παράγοι*, 262D2). The dialectician, on the other hand, is a man whose track one would pursue as if he were a god (266B5–7). And the philosopher, unlike the rhetorician, employs the written word only as a reminder to himself and others who pursue the same track (276D3–4).

Thamus and the 'myth' of the garden of the soul ('myth' in the sense of an extended image).

The myth of Theuth and Thamus suggests a contrast between the spoken and the written word, stressing the former's real benefits, the latter's illusory power. Socrates introduces his story with the title *ἀκοήν* (274c1), emphasizing that it embodies the mode of communication whose worth it sets out to establish. The god Theuth is the rhetorician *par excellence*, inventor of all *τέχναι* but unable to apprehend their place in the broader scheme of things. When he presents his greatest invention, the alphabet, to the god-king Thamus (who is also a mask for the philosopher),³⁵ Theuth promises that he has found a means of inducing wisdom and retentive memory in man (*μνήμης τε γὰρ καὶ σοφίας φάρμακον*, 274e6).³⁶ Thamus explains that writing is a spur not to memory but to forgetfulness. Trusting in the written document, an external means, man will cease to take the imprint of the truth within himself, calling it up from his own mind (275a3–6). The prologue gives an object lesson of this tale. Phaedrus has spent all morning memorizing the speech of Lysias and longs to practise his recitation on someone. Socrates is willing to rely on Phaedrus' memory until he sees a copy of the speech which Phaedrus has hidden in his cloak. Then Phaedrus is out of luck (228b–e2). The prediction of Thamus holds good: the written copy has not so much aided the exercise of memory as prevented it.

Socrates goes on to develop the idea of two distinct *logoi*, an idea implicit in the speech of Thamus. Several major themes come together in this passage. It is scattered with vivid words evoking earlier ideas, yet used here to create a new and different statement. Such words carry an overtone of their first occurrence and hence serve as reminders, later proven to be the prime function of the written word.

The written *logos*, says Socrates, is like a painting. Although life-like, it can not answer but repeats the same thing endlessly when questioned. Once abandoned by its creator it flits like a lost soul (*κυλινδείται* 275e1) among those who have no business with it. They

³⁵ Thomson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 135, notes that the unusual name Thamus seems a corruption or variety of *Ἄμωδς*, which according to Hdt. 2.42 is the Egyptian name for Zeus, the god in whose train the philosopher follows.

³⁶ The written speech of Lysias which Phaedrus dangled in front of Socrates as an inducement to leave the city was called a *φάρμακον* (230d6); thus another verbal link with the prologue is established.

unjustly abuse the *logos*, failing to understand that it needs parental support (275D4–E5). The translation above of *κυλιωδεῖται* is intended to mark its earlier occurrence: the soul of the boy persuaded by a non-lover's arguments wanders mindless for 9,000 years around the earth (*περὶ γῆν κυλιωδομένην*, 257A1–2).

The weak unprepossessing *logos* has a brother who is the legitimate child of their creator. This is the living *logos*, *ζῶντα καὶ ἔμφυχον* (276A8), of which the written word is but a pale insentient copy. This phrase links the *logos* written in the soul with the qualities of soul itself and the passage of the central myth in which it was defined. What is self-moving is *ἔμφυχον* (245E6) and, never reaching an end of motion, never reaches an end of life.

Then comes the image of the false and true gardens. A commonsensical farmer reserves for serious planting the seed whose fruit he hopes to see and lavishes on it all his farmer's art. He would never sow this seed in the tiny artificial gardens made in honor of Adonis that bloom and fade within the week. This he might do for fun (*παιδιᾶς*) at festival time. But when it is a serious matter he will plant in the proper place and rejoice if, within eight months, the seeds that he has sown should reach their *τέλος* (276B1–8).

The man who possesses knowledge of what is just and beautiful and good will be no less careful in the sowing of his seed than was the farmer. The majority of men may find fun elsewhere, drenching themselves (*ἄρδοντες*)³⁷ with drink at parties and kindred diversions. He, on the other hand, will find amusement by planting word-gardens which may serve as reminders both to himself in his old age and to others following the same path. But when it is a serious matter he will seek out a fitting soul as subject and use his dialectician's skill. With knowledge he will sow *logoi* able to defend themselves and him who planted them. Taking root in the character of the recipient they will one day blossom. This process confers an immortality of its own and renders blessed (*εὐδαιμονεῖν*, 277A3) the man who shares it.

The parable of the garden growing in the soul of the philosopher's disciple recalls the soul regrowing wings under the tutelage of Eros. As noted above, this process was described in terms suitable to plant growth (e.g., *βλαστάνειν*, *ρίζης*, *καυλός*, *βλάστην*). There a stream of beauty filled with minute particles (*μέρη*, 251c6) enters the soul through

³⁷ In the myth this same word describes the stream of desire watering the wing shoots (251B3, c8).

the eyes and causes the wings, symbol of the soul's immortality, to sprout. Here the spoken *logoi* are like *σπέρματα* (276B2, 277A1) which reach the soul through the ears and, once planted and well tended, never die.³⁸ Finally, the effect produced by the true Eros is the same as that produced by the true Logos: each makes its possessor *εὐδαίμων* (of the Logos at 277A3; of Eros at 253C4, 256D8; cf. 250B6 and C3, 245B7).

The wit and irony that run throughout the dialogue culminate in Socrates' statement that the wise man never commits serious thoughts, his lawful sons, to writing. The written word is only *παιδιά*, a game to be played in fun (277E5–278B2). This statement pulls the reader up short, forcing him to ask several questions.³⁹ What purpose does such a statement serve? What is its import for *Phaedrus* in particular and the Platonic dialogue in general? First, it produces the equivalent of the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*⁴⁰ by breaking one's involvement with the dramatic form. Up until now all of Plato's art has been employed to create a sense of reality, a belief in the situation, the setting, the spontaneity. The illusion is suddenly broken. This *logos* is not the real thing; it is only an *εἶδωλον*, a poor relation.

The suspension of belief presents the reader with a paradox. In a sense every Platonic dialogue has two levels of reality, is a play within a play. The inner circle is the dialogue between Socrates and his companion; the outer circle the dialogue between Plato and the reader, that is, the reader's experience of the 'inner circle' dialogue, an experience formed and guided by the author.⁴¹ (Dialogues with frame

³⁸ At 235D1 Socrates describes his knowledge as drawn from other springs and poured through his hearing until it fills him like a jug, another link, albeit tenuous, between the *ἀπορροαί* and the stream of discourse. This association is reinforced by thematic repetition of *ρέω* compounds. Eloquence is *εὐροια* (238C7); at 229D7 a multitude of mythical monsters flood the consciousness (*ἐπιρρεῖ*); deception flows from the rhetorician into those he deceives (*εἰςεργύη*, 262B3).

³⁹ Compare Josef Pieper, *Enthusiasm and Divine Madness* (New York 1964) 97.

⁴⁰ See Bertolt Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater III* (Frankfort am Main 1963) 155 and 174: "Der Zweck dieser Technik des *Verfremdungseffekts* war es, dem Zuschauer eine untersuchende, kritische Haltung gegenüber dem darzustellenden Vorgang zu verliehen." "Der V-Effekt besteht darin, dass das Ding, das zum Verständnis gebracht, auf welches das Augenmerk gelenkt werden soll, aus einem gewöhnlichen, bekannten unmittelbar vorliegenden Ding zu einem besonderen, auffälligen, unerwarteten Ding gemacht wird. Das Selbstverständliche wird in gewisser Weise unverständlich gemacht, das geschieht aber nur, um es dann um so verständlicher zu machen."

⁴¹ Sinaiko, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 16, remarks, "In sum, Plato, through his use of the dialogue form . . . invites [the reader] to participate in a dialogue in which Plato's own writings play the role Socrates plays within the dramatic world of the dialogues." He discusses this idea at length, pp.1–18.

conversations actualize the relationship between Plato and his reader and incorporate it into the dialogue itself.)⁴² To a large extent the reader remains unaware of this duality, because the two circles are kept congruent. But at the end of *Phaedrus* he is purposely confronted with it. This awareness is forced upon him by the distinction between the spoken words of Socrates and the written words of Plato by which they are communicated. At this point the ultimate joke, the final *παιδιά*, becomes apparent. In a dialogue of Plato the real *logos* cannot be separated from its less real counterpart. Socrates downgrades the written word as only fit for playing, but this need not apply to anything which has thus far transpired between him and Phaedrus. One difference, after all, between Socrates' speeches and the speech of Lysias is that the former exemplify the spoken rather than the written *logos*. Plato is playing with the reader and Platonic irony rivals the Socratic.⁴³

This is not to say that the strictures on writing should be dismissed as no more than a joke, only that, in addition to the deeper implication, their irony should be appreciated. The ironic ambiguity of the end crystallizes one's experience of the whole, for *Phaedrus* is perhaps the most serious and the most playful of all Platonic dialogues.

Having explored the central myth both as a unity and in relation to the beginning and end of the dialogue, one is better equipped to speculate on its overall significance. A key doctrine of the myth is *anamnesis*, that process of recollection which culminates in insight. This same term could be used to describe the technique of verbal reminiscence which characterizes both myth and dialogue. As words and images recur they call up whole passages, major ideas. A network of association is created which continually expands the reader's consciousness. It is tempting to say that the literary technique employed by Plato here and elsewhere reflects a tenet of his philosophy. But this would be less than accurate. Rather, the indirect, non-conceptual expression of the idea cannot be separated from its conceptual content, so long, at least, as we wish to deal with the living *logos* of Plato's work. But we are constantly betrayed by language. The terms

⁴² Helen Bacon, "Socrates Crowned," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 35 (1959) 416–19, discusses this technique both with reference to the *Symposium* and to Plato's use of the dialogue as a philosophic form.

⁴³ See Friedländer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 144–53.

technique and tenet, style and content, constitute a trap; to deny their separateness is already to affirm our perception of it.

The myth describes a particular form of *anamnesis*: τὸ τῆδε κάλλος, beauty in the sensible world, awakens memories of τὸ κάλλος αὐτό which, by virtue of its link with them, evokes the purely intelligible forms. The poetic beauty of the myth should have this same effect upon the reader. Like the lover gazing upon the beloved, he is excited by the iridescence of the language, stimulated by points of light which appear and disappear. In this way is initiated an experience which could be crowned with insight. Thus the dialogue itself is *φαιδρός*, bright with beauty, inducing insight by that beauty.

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