

Plato's *Prescription*

**Medicine and Rhetoric in Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Possibilities for
Political Philosophy in an Enchanted Age**

Janice Mandryk

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Department of Political Science
Carleton University
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Abstract

What characterizes a healthy political community? For Plato, the health of the political community correlates to the quality of its dialogue. Plato's *Phaedrus* explores the relationship of speech and health by way of comparing rhetoric and medicine. Each practice shared the pursuit of the label "*technē*," a prized appellation, which conferred authority upon its practitioners. This essay will argue that while political knowledge qua rhetoric may be similar to medicine, it cannot offer a systematic account; therefore it cannot be rightly labelled a *technē*. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates' efforts as a medicine man or philosophic *pharmakos* treating the unhealthy city, demonstrate the deficiency of rhetoric's claim. His prescription is one that explores the necessary tensions between *technē* and *eros*, and *mythos* and *logos*. Such tensions maintain wonder, the condition necessary to foster philosophy and healthy political dialogue. Should these tensions dissipate, like an infectious plague, immoderation spreads through the city.

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Introduction

References to physicians permeate the beginning and end of Plato's *Phaedrus*. In a dialogue concerning the art of rhetoric, the prominence of these references is cause for investigation. Why does Plato choose to frame this dialogue ostensibly concerned with rhetoric, with the art of medicine? Common to both rhetoric and medicine is the claim to the status of a *technē*. That is, the claim to a practice that is "a thorough, masterful knowledge of a specific field that typically issues in a useful result, can be taught to others, and can be recognized, certified and rewarded" (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 1). Often translated as "craft" or "art," "*technē*" denotes an expertise in a particular discipline, and to have one's discipline receive this title conferred credibility upon its practitioner in fourth and fifth century Athens. In essence, "*technē*" is a benchmark for productive or useful knowledge. In arts such as carpentry, where the practice is guided by mathematical precision, such a label is easily granted. However, arts that take man as their subject and material, such as medicine and rhetoric, confront a greater burden of proof when seeking this accreditation.

Hippocrates, a contemporary of Socrates, was the first defender of medicine as a *technē*. His work opened the way for the broadening of the term, and the consideration of a stochastic *technē*. A stochastic *technē*, while accurate in its practice, relies more so on probability than the standard of mathematical precision associated with a traditional *technē*. For example, treating the human body is fundamentally different than shaping a piece of wood or smithing metal. Yet, Hippocrates defends his practice by stating that, "the [art] of medicine is seen to be real both in the causes of the various phenomena

which occur and in the provisions which it takes to meet them” (Lloyd 142).¹ There are demonstrable grounds upon which medicine, though it is less reliable than a mathematically precise art, is maintained as a *technē*. For this reason, medicine is a particularly compelling standpoint from which to explore rhetoric’s claim to the status of a *technē*.

Questioning the basis of medicinal knowledge participates in what has been labelled the “*technē* analogy.” In the Platonic dialogues, the use of this analogy prompts the interlocutor to give an account of their knowledge. It impels one to question whether their work meets the criteria of a *technē*. In doing so, it asks the practitioner to reflect and, as David Roochnik notes, “forces him to raise epistemological questions about both the nature of his subject matter and his cognitive access to it” (*Art and Wisdom* 13). For example, on the basis of his *technē*, an expert shoemaker can give an account from start to finish describing the production of a pair of quality shoes. By way of his rational account (*logos*), his knowledge is rendered repeatable, reliable and teachable.

The physician’s claim to a *technē* is based on his expertise of matters concerning the human body; the rhetorician’s claim to a *technē* is grounded upon a mastery of another uniquely human feature: *logos* (speech or reasoned argument). Man, as an animal with *logos*, is distinct in his ability to “reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust” (Aristotle I.ii.14-15). Therefore, rhetoric, in its capacity to promote and praise, or decry and denounce, is at its very base political. To claim a *technē* of rhetoric is to implicitly claim the possibility of an expertise in political matters.

¹ Lloyd uses the term science, though he notes at the beginning of his translation that he opts for “science” in place of “art” to demonstrate the exactitude of the subject matter in opposition to “an undefinable art” (139). I have chosen to use the translation “art” to maintain the closer connection to *technē* as opposed to *epistēmē* (knowledge).

With this in mind, we might consider the philosophical implications of such a claim. Questions such as whether the realm of public speech, the political arena, can be made fixed or stable, or whether the potential for man's wisdom includes access to stable standards or morals, arise from posing this challenge to the rhetorician's claim (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 88). The question, "is rhetoric a *technē*?" is central to Plato's philosophic pursuit and it is treated 'masterfully' in the *Phaedrus*. Thus, we are beholden to pose the same question, and to consider rhetoric's role in the dialogue, and its authority in the *polis*.

It has been argued that Plato's frequent allusions to *technē* reflect his desire to present ethics and morality as such. That is, to present them as a systematic account akin to medicine. Stated otherwise, this implies a *technē* of political knowledge, or what we have come to coin, "political science." This essay, however, will argue that while political knowledge qua rhetoric may be similar to medicine, it cannot offer a systematic account; therefore it cannot be rightly labelled a *technē*. Rhetoric, like medicine, requires *phronesis* (sound judgment) in the application of its 'treatments' or correctives. Wise judgments are necessary to human health. One might label this a certain "human wisdom" (*Apology* 20d). While the *Phaedrus* is laden with references to the medical art, Plato crafts these references so as to distinguish the pursuit of philosophy from medicine and rhetoric. The differences are first gleaned through an understanding of similarity. That is, each of these pursuits concerns the study of the human. As the human body is the object of medicinal knowledge, knowledge of the human soul is the object of rhetoric and philosophy. The project at hand is thereby to distinguish philosophy, rhetoric and

medicine from one another, and to further our understanding of the only art to which Socrates' lays claim to, *hē erōtikē* (erotics).²

The relationship of medicine and rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* demonstrates that the health of the political community is intrinsically connected to the quality of its dialogue. By sifting through the differences between medicine, rhetoric and philosophy, this undertaking will elaborate on the nature of the philosophic pursuit and the fertile conditions (via *erōs*), which make healthy dialogue possible. In large part, this argument intends to respond to a modern question. That is, whether or not philosophy is possible in our age. To question this potential, it is necessary to look to the conditions that permit such a practice to take place. Rosen notes that, “the possibility of philosophy stands or falls upon the possibility of a philosophical madness that is more sober than sobriety” (xiii). The *Phaedrus*, in particular, is a compelling gateway through which to examine these themes, as it explores the relationships between *technē* and *erōs*, *logos* and *mythos*, and sobriety and madness.

In order to explore these relationships and the questions that arise from them, we must pay heed to Socrates' advice throughout the dialogue. Socrates reminds us that the written word is an image of true dialogue, and therefore an image of, “living, breathing discourse” (276a). Though this is the case, Plato still chose to write dialogues. Notably, the dialogue, this particular form of the written word, “produces a seed from which more discourse grows” (277a); thereby, warranting its treatment as a dialogue imbued with life. In one sense, we must treat the dialogue between interlocutors occurring on the page, and in another, we must treat the ‘new’ discourse produced by the relationship of the reader to

² Cf. *Symposium* 177d.

Plato's words. In this manner, as an interpreter, we must act as a physician rather than a coroner. At 265e, Socrates advises the practitioner of a systematic art, that he should, like the butcher, "cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints." Alternately, the physician renders a diagnosis by engaging and studying an object that is wilful, complex and animated by desire. By way of this approach we hope to avoid the error of many scholars who have thought too systematically and not poetically enough about this very peculiar dialogue. The very form of the dialogue resists an overly 'technical' reading, and requires its reader to follow the dialogue's dynamic and dialectical structure.

Indeed, the *Phaedrus* is notorious for appearing disjointed. *Erōs* (the erotic passion of love) is the topic of the speeches, yet speech itself, and the art of rhetoric in particular, frame the discussion. This has led many scholars to presume that it is, "a good advertisement of Plato's ideas, but it is not a coherent or especially profound treatment of them" (Griswold 1). This essay's response to this presumption is simple. We will only assume that Plato was self-conscious of his project, "and that all portions of his written text are meant to convey their meaning to the careful reader" (Rosen 78). In this spirit, we will follow a close reading of the dialogue and offer an exegetical analysis of its contents. This is achieved by examining the *Phaedrus* in four stages.

Chapter one begins in motion, and change is its predominate theme. By way of three lenses, the *pharmakon*³, the *technē* of medicine and the mythology of the context, we will explore the shift from the mythological basis of the old tradition to the new practices and perceptions governed by reason and rationality. Chapter one takes us from

³ The meaning of *pharmakon* extends from medicine, to magical dose, to poison. The connotations of this term will be further explored and elaborated on in the first chapter, as it is a central term to the investigation.

motion to rest. It seeks out the grounds for new dialogue. This defines its importance, and the necessity of exploring this very strange beginning.

Where chapter one analyzes physicians, chapter two addresses rhetoricians. Specifically, in the second chapter, we examine Lysias' speech in praise of the non-lover. Through the assessment of the speech, we consider the relationships drawn between *erōs*, *logos* and *technē*. *Erōs* fundamentally involves risk or action into the unknown, whereas *technē* tries to master contingency and offer a predictable outcome. Lysias' speech represents a desire to eliminate risk and render the realm of human affairs determinable by self-interest and probability. This essay argues that *technē*, when applied to human affairs, is confronted by the problem of the indefinite, which is particularly represented by man's erotic inclinations and the boundaries of his wisdom.

Chapter three delves deeper into these boundaries and looks to delineate the limitations of human wisdom by way of Socrates' responses to Lysias' speech. It does so by reflecting upon three prominent depictions that arise in Socrates' responses: the Muses, madness and the immortal soul. In each account, man's relationship with memory and wisdom is recalled and is contrasted with the nature of godly or immortal wisdom. The boundaries are drawn and wonder in the face of the unknown is maintained. Taken together, Socrates' speeches are a poetic triumph. Though, like Lysias' paradigmatically mathematical speech, they appear equally unmeasured or immoderate.

This quarrel between the "mathematical speech" and the "poetical speeches" necessitates the last stage of the dialogue. In this spirit, chapter four matches the philosopher against the sophists (the teachers of rhetoric). It returns to the question, "is

rhetoric a *technē*?” and seeks to challenge the sophist’s claim to a *technē*. Like the *pharmakon* of the physician, the enchanting nature of speech is located at the centre of this question. Indeed, the intoxicating quality of speech holds with it the potential to captivate its listeners like a Siren song. Like medicine men hawking a miracle potion, the sophists market the mastery of this magic. With magic turned into *technē*, persuasion or enchantment is valued above truth. As a consequence, true political dialogue suffers. *Logos* needs to question itself as a *pharmakon* to, “reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust” (Aristotle I.ii.14-15), lest persuasion triumph, and dialogue cease. The *Phaedrus* concludes with a warning in the form of a philosophic myth. The myth demonstrates the need of sound judgment when confronted with technical wonders. Thus, at the peak of this dialogue’s rather erotic ascent is a sober, self-conscious madness – the mathematical and the poetical in one form.

Socrates’ invocation of the medical art is not unique to the *Phaedrus*; although, the manner in which he employs medicine as a foil to rhetoric in the dialogue is particularly thought provoking. By way of this foil, Socrates is able to show the deficiencies of rhetoric’s claim to *technē*, and through it, he attempts to guide Phaedrus to the doors of philosophy. Perhaps most importantly, through it Socrates is able to show the necessary conditions for maintaining philosophical discourse.

Chapter One
Medicine and Mythology (227a – 230e)

The dialogue begins in motion. Socrates and Phaedrus cross paths as Phaedrus is making his way for a walk beyond the city walls. In his possession is a speech of the rhetorician Lysias. Enamoured with the speech, Phaedrus is intending to commit it to memory, so that he may replicate its arguments. Hoping to practice his rhetorical charms on Socrates, Phaedrus uses the speech to lure Socrates to accompany him. Baiting Socrates with the promise of hearing the speech, Phaedrus draws him out of the *polis* and into the countryside, where the two interlocutors search for a suitable resting place. They move together, from motion to rest.

At the centre of their introductory exchanges are the words of the dialogue's silent interlocutor – Lysias. Underneath these exchanges, and embodied in the form of the written speech, a tense relationship between *mythos* and *logos* brews. In fifth century BCE Athens, with a growing faith in the reach of man's *logos*, a desire to render all accounts rational was simultaneously occurring. With these tensions in mind, we note that, in the opening scene, Socrates alludes to magic, medicine and mythology in a perplexing and strange manner. The question of authority informs the backdrop; it establishes itself in the first stages of the dialogue and remains present as a question throughout. If we consider authority to be no more and no less than that which you do not question, then on the basis of the opening stages of the dialogue it is prudent to thoroughly consider Phaedrus' only question concerning truth.¹ That is, in response to the myth of Boreas, he asks Socrates, "do you really believe that that legend is true?"

¹ I am indebted to Professor Darby for this definition of authority.

(229c). Enchanted by new innovations, Phaedrus willingly questions the stories of the old tradition. Lysias' *logos* draws them to their location, where *mythos* previously held fast in its authority.

To begin to understand the complexity of the scene, and its importance to the remainder of the dialogue, we will move through it in three stages. First, to explore the tensions between old and new practices and perceptions, as well as to provide the necessary context to Socrates' purposive relation of the art of medicine and the art of rhetoric, we will examine the *technē* debate that was occurring in Athens, in the fourth and fifth century BCE. Medicine's shift away from the temple and into a rational systematic practice is considered here as an example of this tension. Second, building from the shifting paradigm in the field of medicine, the prescription of the physician Acumenus that sets Phaedrus on his way will be considered. Medicine or *pharmakon*, as an aspect of the physician's art is explored as a specific instance of the change in perception from the mythological basis of the old tradition, to the prominence of reason in the new practice. Last, I will draw together the threads of rhetoric, magic, medicine, and mythology, through the exploration of the myth of Boreas, the legend that is recalled by the resting place where Socrates and Phaedrus pause to converse. It draws to the fore the contest between *mythos* and *logos*. Most importantly, Socrates' response sets the tone for the remainder of the dialogue, as it emphasizes the limitations of human wisdom and the pursuit of self-knowledge. In this manner, the opening scene provides the direction and momentum of the dialogue to follow. Thus we must start with the beginning by questioning the interwoven images of medicine, magic and mythology.

I. The *Technē* of Medicine

Crossing paths close to the periphery of the city, Socrates invites Phaedrus to converse by asking, “where have you been? And, where are you going?”(227a). These questions require Phaedrus to pause and give an account of his past actions and his future intentions. Socrates is asking Phaedrus to assess the direction in which he is travelling. These questions participate in the dramatic nature of the dialogue and help to establish its setting and momentum. However, they are also posed as a penetrating diagnostic tool. Socrates is gauging Phaedrus’ inclinations. We learn that Phaedrus has left the company of Lysias after feasting upon his eloquent speeches and is “going for a walk outside the city walls” (227a). He has gorged himself on beautiful words and is now headed for a digestive stroll.

The direction of his stroll has been determined by the advice of Acumenus, a doctor (227b).² From his obedience to the doctor’s recommendation, it appears that Phaedrus is mindful of his health, and quite conscious of the effect of feasting on his composition.³ This valetudinarian temperament is also present in the *Symposium*, where Phaedrus speaks favourably of the advice of Acumenus’ son, Eryximachus, when he advises the group against drinking heavily. He says here that he always follows Eryximachus’ counsel, particularly when he speaks as a physician (176d). As Stanley Rosen notes, “Phaedrus allows medicine to tend his body and rhetoric to tend his psyche. The defect of rhetoric as psychic medicine is suggested by the fact that it lacks

² It is worth noting that Acumenus is Eryximachus’ father. Eryximachus is also a physician and his close relationship to Phaedrus is revealed in the *Symposium* (177a-e) and in the *Protagoras* (315c).

³ I use the word composition here because during this period in Greek medicine health was considered a state of balance between the humours of the body (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile). Illness was conceived of as a disruption of the balance.

moderation; as a consequence, the lover of rhetoric seems actually to be ruled by the corporeal physician” (84). From the outset of the dialogue, medicine and rhetoric are woven together. Argument, and rhetoric in particular, is spoken of as an indulgence, a corporeal temptation akin to food, drink, or sex, which requires the physician to re-harmonize the corrupted disposition. The close proximity of medicine and rhetoric blurs the line between the physical and the psychic.

In these initial lines, Phaedrus’ erotic love (*erōs*) for argument or speech (*logos*) becomes quite apparent. Like the gourmand whose love of food compels him to over-eat, Phaedrus’ love of speech has compelled him to immoderate consumption. Such feasting is indicative of indecorous behaviour, or that which gratifies unnecessary pleasures. He has spent the early hours of the day with Lysias, listening and indulging in his words. While his desire does not reflect the typical vices of a young man (food, drink, sex), the manner in which it is portrayed is intended to call to mind the immoderate, appetitive pursuit of these temptations.⁴ Socrates is the one to apply the metaphor of feasting, which intentionally confounds the bodily and the psychic appetites; though Phaedrus’ pursuit of physical exercise after his consumption of speech supports the metaphor’s implications. Furthermore, Socrates’ application of the metaphor is suggestive of his initial diagnosis of Phaedrus. He perceives the young man to have an unhealthy attraction to rhetoric and takes note of his respect for the authority of both the physician and rhetorician.

⁴ It is interesting to consider the opening scene of the *Republic* for its commentary on the desires of the young versus the desires of the old, as related by Cephalus, Lysias’ father. Cephalus is praising old age for freeing him from the mad masters of his youth (sex, in particular), and for fostering a love of speech within him (328d – 329d). In this manner, we may consider Phaedrus ‘mature’ in his immoderation.

Abiding by the prescription to walk where the air is fresher (227b), Phaedrus is acting in accordance with a regime popularized by Hippocrates; one that concentrates upon diet, exercise and air.⁵ In *A Regimen for Health*, writing for those who enjoy gymnastics, Hippocrates⁶ states: “long walks in the cool part of the day should take place” (275). Interestingly, in three stages throughout the dialogue, the parts of the day are recalled: morning (227a; 229a), mid day (259a), and dusk (279b). Movement is restricted to the cool parts of the day, with the majority of the dialogue occurring when they have come to rest under the shade of the plane tree.⁷ From this we may surmise that Acumenus is a practitioner of the Hippocratic method or, at the very least, practices a similar brand of medicine; one that privileges rational explanation. The initial motion of the dialogue leads the reader to consider the nature of the authorities that set the dialogue in motion, namely, the physician’s *technē* of medicine and the rhetorician’s claim to a *technē* of *logos*.

This consideration draws us to the question of *technē*. What exactly does it mean to possess a *technē*? And, in what manner is the concept of authority related to the possession and practice of a *technē*? In Athens, during the fourth and fifth centuries BCE, questions such as these were prevalent. The use of “*technē*,” a term that had once been linked to very particular fields of knowledge and crafts, was extending to include a

⁵ A second century A.D. medical papyrus reads: “Hippocrates says that diseases come into being either from the air or from regimen...he says, whenever many are seized contemporaneously by the same disease, the causes must be attributed to air... however when many different forms of disease occur, he says...that the regimen must be responsible” (Longrigg 44).

⁶ It should be noted that the authorship of the Hippocratic corpus is largely indeterminable. The corpus is largely considered to have been composed by a number of Hippocrates’ students. However for the purposes at hand, given that the writings that constitute the corpus are all a product of Hippocrates’ school, and representative of his teachings and method, I will refer only to Hippocrates when speaking of the corpus.

⁷ Although plane trees are quite common throughout Greece and the islands, it is of interest to note that this tree is specified, as Hippocrates of Cos is famous for having taught under a plane tree.

variety of practices. As David Roochnik describes, at that time “a wide-ranging debate was taking place about the nature, limits, and epistemic character of *technē*” (*Art and Wisdom* 43). The label of a *technē* conferred credibility upon the practitioner and the practice; it became a “prized appellation” (Ibid). In works such as *On Technē*,⁸ Hippocrates provided one of the first accounts of *technē* that expanded its meaning to include such practices as medicine. As an art that was in the midst of shifting from the religious to the secular, the title of *technitēs* (the expert of the craft) was important to securing the credibility and authority of their practice. The *Phaedrus* weighs in on the *technē* question, as the art of medicine is applied as a foil to the discussion of the art of rhetoric. This foil is used to consider the implications and validity of rhetoric’s claim to the status of an art. Thus, to set the stage for the remainder of the dialogue, it is important to contextualize the *technē* debate and to seek a clear definition of the term.

Technē is derived from its Indo-European root “*tek*.” In its origins, *tek* refers to the process of house building; in particular, to the weaving together of wood to construct the shelter. This sort of building was associated with the beginnings of agriculture and the construction of permanent settlements. As the settlements grew, specialization was introduced, and the construction of the home was no longer necessarily left to families (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 19). With the rise in specialization, arose the term for the specialist: ‘the *teckton*’ or ‘the wood-worker.’ From these primitive roots we can begin to distinguish a couple of the characteristics that define the term. First, it was associated

⁸ G.E.R. Lloyd offers the alternate translation of this work as *The Science of Medicine*, to emphasize the writer’s argument for the exactitude of the science against an “undefinable art” (139). I however, have opted for Roochnik’s translation as it preserves the status and importance of a claim to a *technē* (art) in the context of the Greek Enlightenment. The word choice here is interesting as Heidegger points out, “From the earliest times until Plato the word *technē* is linked with the word *epistēmē*. Both words are names for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it” (13).

with a given field of specialized knowledge, which produced a particular end.⁹ Second, insofar as it reflects an effort to increase the efficiency of man's developments, we see that it is associated with the development of the political community. On this basis, its product is also useful. Third, the product of the wood-worker is a demonstration of the mastery of his craft. His skill is measured by the quality of the product. Finally, this is a skill that can be taught to an apprentice whose mastery of his lessons will result in his capacity to produce a reliable product. The layperson is able to become an expert as a result of the "set of rational principles, some sort of *logos*, governing the field, the subject matter, in question" (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 20). The ability to teach the craft on the basis of rational principles – in this case mathematical accuracy – allows for the repeatable, systematic knowledge that is necessary to create reliable products, and dependable craftsmen. In sum, *technē* consists of a particular knowledge that is productive, specialized, teachable, and authoritative.

Beginning with Homer, we see the expansion of the term to include skills apart from woodworking, which are similarly productive, teachable, reliable and useful. The skill of the physician, while not yet a *technē*, is drawn closer to its associated meaning, as we see demonstrated by the passage from the *Odyssey* below:

Now who'd go out, who on his own hook –
 not I – and ask a stranger in from nowhere
 unless he had some skills to serve the house?
 A prophet, a healer who cures disease, a worker in wood
 or even a god-inspired bard whose singing warms the heart –
 they're the ones asked in around the world. (Homer XVII.420 – 425)

⁹ In its etymology, *tek* refers back to *tiktō*, "to give birth," thus the emphasis on the term is on its productive qualities (Roochnik 19). Reflecting on the word's connotations of birth, we see in the origins of the term its potential for expansion to other productive practices. Rhetoric, in its ability to produce speeches, for example, draws on this connotation.

Listed in association with the ‘healer who cures disease’ is the prophet, poet, and the *teckton* or wood-worker. Each of these men is one who has “some skills to serve the house,” which reflects their usefulness to the household, and, by extension, to the political community. The potential for the expansion of the definition of *technē* is most apparent in this idea. The speaker is considering the grounds upon which it is prudent to allow a stranger into the house. These grounds concern the usefulness or practical nature of the stranger’s skill. From this starting point, a basis is being developed to decide whose entry should be granted and whose should be denied. If we take this formulation to its logical end, this basis also considers who should be expelled or praised. Although the passage reveals that the expertise of the wood-worker and the healer are drawn closer together, the healer is not yet identified as a *technitēs*. The healer is labelled however, as a man who is invited in. Roochnik clarifies that in this passage healers are specifically referred to as the *demiourgoi*, or “those who work for the *demos* rather than for themselves” (*Art and Wisdom* 24). While this distinction remains, the ground is laid for the further expansion of the definition.

The label *demiourgoi* suggests that the usefulness of the medical practitioner to the community is not in question. Rather, the basis and nature of the practitioner’s knowledge is the source of the maintained distinction. For example, the wood-worker’s knowledge is grounded upon the rational principles of mathematics, which allow the practice to be reliable and systematic. When we reach the writings of Hippocrates, the label of “*technē*” operates as a clear criterion for the community to distinguish the expert, or professional practitioner, from the fraud. In a context wherein medicine is still largely associated with religious or magical practice, Hippocrates’ goal of establishing medicine

as a *technē* reflects his desire to separate his practice from the temple¹⁰, and to establish the practice of his profession on “firm epistemic ground” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 43). The label of *technē*, as a means to distinguish credible practitioners from fraudulent ones, is thereby seen as a necessary step in promoting the new science of medicine. As G.E.R. Lloyd details the problem, “anyone could claim to heal the sick, and the doctors were in competition not only with midwives, herbalists and drug sellers, but also the type of ‘purifiers’ and sellers of charms and incantations who are criticized and rebutted in *The Sacred Disease*” (13). The reliable reputation of the craftsman thereby provides the basis for professional accreditation. Alternatively stated, *technē* provides a means to distinguish between who should be invited into the community, and who should be shown the door.

Unlike the wood-worker, the physician is challenged by a greater burden of proof to establish his profession as a *technē*, given the nature of the material he works with (the body) and the end he seeks (health). The Hippocratic practitioner will argue that though the body is alive, and therefore complex and changing, knowledge of it is determinable and verifiable. However, the problem faced by the physician is represented by the fact that such knowledge does not guarantee his success. Unlike the wood-worker, who is able to reliably produce houses, demonstrating the expert application of his knowledge, the physician’s application of his expertise does not always produce health. As a result, the objection to medicine being considered a *technē* is largely represented by the challenges of precision, measurement, and repeatability. In other words, the challenge

¹⁰ Pre-Socratic philosophers, such as Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes whose work is representative of the early stages of Greek rationalism, laid the way for Hippocrates’ approach to medicine by focusing on natural or rational explanations over and above the mythological. The three philosophers mentioned are of the Milesian school and they represent a shift from the religious expression of one’s experience, to an attempt to ground experience in nature. These men are early examples of a changing intellectual paradigm.

derives from the relationship of the medical practice to chance (*tuchē*). This objection is twofold: (1) “*technē* is a deliberate application of human intelligence to some part of the world, yielding some control over *tuche*;” (2) “*technē* effects a useful result that would not appear without the active intervention of the technician. Without the carpenter there would be no house ... without medicine there would be no cure of a disease” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 45).¹¹ The objection thereby concerns the limitations of the medical practice in terms of demonstrating the necessity of its use in effecting some control over chance circumstances.

In *On Technē*, Hippocrates addresses these challenges and argues that they do not preclude medicine’s incorporation into the definition of *technē*. His strategy is to broaden the definition. While he respects the term’s original criteria, he envisages a parallel definition under which the practice of medicine can be judged. Hippocrates, “self-consciously treats the question, How can knowledge take up an atypical, that is, a human object? How can it sustain failure, preserve indeterminacy, be subject to chance, and yet be knowledge?” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 61). To quote Roochnik at length, the *technē* of Hippocrates is a stochastic *technē* (*techne*₂) defined by the following eight criteria:

1. A *techne*₂ has a determinate but not a rigidly fixed or invariable subject matter. For example, the human body, like wood or number is a unit of epistemic content distinguishable from other such units. Because it is complex, alive, and wilful, however it is not as fixed or invariable as the subject matters of other *technai*.
2. It effects a useful result, for example, health.
3. It is reliable, but not totally so. It offers “rules of thumb,” rather than rigid rules. It is stochastic, requires appropriate responses to particular occasions, and is compatible with failure.
4. It is precise, but does not measure up to the standard provided by mathematics.

¹¹ Emphasis in italics my own.

5. Its end is distinct from its function. The function of medicine is to do everything possible to save the patient; since saving the patient is its end, it is possible for medicine to succeed in exercising its function but fail to achieve its end.
6. It is certifiable and recognized by the community, but not infallibly so. It is, for example, more difficult to distinguish a layman from a technical physician than to distinguish a layman from a professional shipbuilder.
7. Its language is ordinary, not technical. It can give a *logos*, but not one of unimpeachable clarity. It is not a theory derived from an originating "postulate."
8. It is teachable but not infallibly so. (*Art and Wisdom* 52)

While these criteria are based upon the standards set out in the original definition of *technē* (*techne*₁), they distinctively allow for a degree of failure due to the limitations of human knowledge concerning the complexity of the subject matter and the difficulty in assigning cause and effect. This is the basis of the claim to a stochastic *technē*, or a *technē* that is comprised of the study of patterns, which can be analyzed statistically, but not predicted precisely. On this basis, Hippocrates rebuts the objection concerning chance by stating:

Indeed, upon examination, the reality of chance disappears. Every phenomenon will be found to have some cause, and if it has a cause, chance can be no more than an empty name. The science of medicine is seen to be real both in the causes of the various phenomenon which occur and in the provisions which it takes to meet them, nor will it ever cease to be so. (Lloyd 142)

In this rebuttal, reason is privileged and is shown to be the basis of a science that recognizes that it cannot possess the mathematic precision of a *techne*₁, yet seeks to affect some control over chance by looking to a systematic understanding of the probability of cause. As a result, through stochastic *techne*, new questions arise about the limits and possibilities of knowledge concerning man, or the nature of knowing the human, in body and soul.

Aware of the limitations of his art, Hippocrates emphasizes prudent practice and sensitivity to occasion (*kairos*), under the consideration that the criteria of *techne*₂ reveal a less precise, more fallible practice. In particular, in the *Hippocratic Oath*, a

commitment is made to prudential judgment. Though the oath is sworn to the deities of medicine, Apollo and Asclepius, it is evident from the intention and scope of the Hippocratic corpus that the guiding principles defining prudent practice are to be found less in the mythological tradition and more so in technical handbooks. Thus, the oath is uniquely representative of a shift in authority towards the rational and systematic account provided by *technē*. Recognizing the manner in which the medical practice departs from other *technē*, but desiring to legitimize it in the eyes of the community, the oath appears as an attempt to secure the authority of medicine as a *technē*.

Two examples from Hippocrates' ethical code are the close relationship of student to teacher, and the ability to identify and respond appropriately to particular circumstances. It explicitly enshrines the relationship of student to teacher: "I will hold my teacher in this art equal to my parents. I will share my life with him and, if he needs money, I will give him a share of my own" (Longrigg 101). It also provides an acknowledgement of fallibility, but requires the one taking the vow to commit himself to using his art to help and not harm: "I will use treatments for the benefit of the sick to the best of my ability and judgment; I will abstain from doing harm or wrongdoing any man by it" (Ibid). These affirmations recognize the limitations of the practice with respect to its other technical counterparts. However, they also represent a desire to set the standards of the credibility of the practice on the basis of *technē*, albeit in a qualified manner.

Hippocratic medicine demonstrates the manner in which a practice that takes man as its object can justifiably make a claim to the status of a *technē*. Rhetoric builds from this starting point. The rhetorician's claim to a *technē* extends from medicine's struggle to articulate its practice on these grounds. As Roochnik notes, "the early rhetoricians

sought just this sort of validation, for theirs was a new and, at least to those who held traditional seats of power, controversial subject” (*Art and Wisdom* 65). Seeking to also be invited into the community, the language of *technē* permeates the rhetoricians’ description of their practice. Defending their knowledge of the human, the rhetoricians follow the physicians’ lead. From Hippocrates’ defence of medicine, the grounds are laid for the rhetoricians to profess another particularly human knowledge, the knowledge of *logos*. As Werner Jaeger notes, “In classical Greek the politician is simply called *rhētor*, an orator” (291). The sophist, or ‘the educator of statesmen,’ makes a claim to the political art by devising a ‘*technē*’ of *logos* (speech). If we understand *logos* to be reasoned argument and the manner in which men participate in political dialogue and form opinions of right conduct or morality, then we note that, “to assert a *technē* of rhetoric... is to make, however unreflectively, a much larger claim, namely, to have a moral *technē*” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 66). The rhetorician, like the physician, prescribes correct action. They each claim to be a proper guide. The two authority figures by whom Phaedrus abides, Lysias and Acumenus, thus set the dialogue on its course with the question of whether rhetoric’s claim to a *technē* is valid on the same grounds as stated in the defence of medicine.

II. The Magical Dose

By sketching the growing conception of *technē*, and in particular, by considering its relationship to medicine, we see evidence of the building intellectual authority of systematic knowledge. However, though a turn towards rationalism was occurring, many elements of magic and mysticism remained. At the peak of this rational pursuit, often

referred to as the Greek Enlightenment, Athens was also suffering through the Peloponnesian War and the Great Plague. In the midst of the development of a new approach to knowledge and medicine, scepticism and superstition asserted themselves as these crises unfolded. As Thucydides details in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*:

At the beginning the doctors were quite incapable of treating the disease because of their ignorance of the right methods. In fact mortality among the doctors was the highest of all, since they came more frequently in contact with the sick. Nor was any other human art or science of any help at all. Equally useless were prayers made in temples, consultations of oracles, and so forth; indeed in the end people were so overcome by their sufferings that they paid no further attention to such things. (II. 47)

In a period of such despair, where all approaches appear useless, men are either willingly charmed or lost to a nihilistic malaise. When all is unrest or unsettled, it is the human propensity to seek for stability and meaning. As Roberto Calasso describes, “we enter the mythical when we enter the realm of risk, and myth is the enchantment we generate in ourselves at such moments. More than a belief, it is a magical bond that tightens around us. It is a spell the soul casts on itself” (278). Representative of man’s hope for purpose and meaning, even if it is inexplicable, magic and *mythos* act as guides when faced with the unfathomable. The decline from reason to superstition affected even those who were held as paragons of the Athenian enlightenment, as is shown by the example of Pericles: “Yet in his last days, even Pericles, Athens’ wartime leader, was reduced to pathetic false notions, and so wore an amulet around his neck to save him from the enfeebling disease” (Hanson 85). With the limitations of human wisdom exposed, and the mortality of man brutally present, our tendency to turn to magic is revealed. Polarized by the rise of the new rationalism and the reliance on the traditional mythology, the Greek mind is embattled with questions of guidance and authority. From this tension, as a result of the

crises of war and plague, spring dangerous, yet fertile, conditions for a new authority to assume leadership.

These tensions subtly inform the setting of the *Phaedrus*, and do so, in particular, through the “*pharmakon*,” a word whose meaning permeates medicine, rhetoric and mythology. Translated as drug, poison or medicine, *pharmakon* is a dosage intended to right an apparent dysfunction, which requires judgment in its dispersal. *Pharmakon* carries with it both the magical and mythological meaning of the old tradition, as well as the new understanding, which appears to harness the old magic in a new systematic or technical fashion. As Todd Compton elaborates, “both poison and drug were originally magical; so a *pharmakon* is a magical dose causing destruction or healing” (3).

The earliest accounts of Greek medicine are contained in the works of Homer and Hesiod, in which the connotations of magic surrounding the *pharmakon* are evident. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, a magical incantation is used to heal Odysseus’ wound: “The sons of Autolycus, working over Odysseus/ skilfully binding up his open wound/ the gallant, godlike prince/ chanted an old spell that stanchd the blood/ and quickly bore him home to their father’s palace” (XIX. 517-521). Thus, in the Archaic tradition, the predominant account for disease, illness, recovery and health is located in the supernatural and accounted for through mythology. Such a claim is further evidenced by Homer’s description of Apollo sending a plague upon the Greek army in the *Iliad*:

the god himself on the march and down he came like night. Over against the ships he dropped to a knee, let fly a shaft and a terrifying clash rang from the great silver bow. First he went for the mules and circling dogs but then, launching a piercing shaft at the men themselves, he cut them down in droves. (I. 54-59)

The plague forces men to confront their mortality and to assess themselves and their conduct. In other words, the justice of their actions is informed by a mythology of

reward and punishment. The presence of disease reflects a disruption of the order and is the correlative punishment for such a disturbance. As the practice of pre-Hippocratic medicine was intimately tied to mythology, judgments of conduct were bound by the limitations of human wisdom as defined by the predominant mythological tradition.

Extending from both the Archaic to the Hippocratic however, is the consistent stipulation that the action taken by the physician to restore the correct order must be prudent and well judged. Implicitly, the *pharmakon* must be considered in relation to proper application and dispersal. Near the end of the dialogue, Socrates makes this point explicitly:

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

PHAEDRUS: What could they say? They would ask him if he also knew to whom he should apply such treatments, when and to what extent. (268a-c)

The knowledge of the drug alone does not make one an expert physician. The qualified practitioner is distinguished from the layperson not only by their knowledge of the workings of the human body but, more importantly, by their sensitivity to the individual circumstances of each particular body. The physicians' art is guided by the practice of knowing which treatments are fitted for which patients. Moreover, as is evident from the definition of *pharmakon*, the one who possesses knowledge of its usage is also capable of administering it as either a medicine or a poison. If the physician is treating a murderer or criminal, on what basis does he decide to restore health or repeal life? How does he gauge what treatment is fitted for the patient? How does he determine a proper dose? There is nothing inherent in the drug itself that prescribes its usage. The physician, as

administrator, must decide upon a course of action. Prior to the rise of Hippocratic medicine, his decision was largely informed by the mythological tradition, wherein the limits and possibilities of his actions were revealed. With the weaning authority of *mythos*, we might ask on what basis are these judgments to be made?

In the opening stages of the *Phaedrus*, the absence of prudential judgment surrounds the employment of the term *pharmakon*, as evidenced by Phaedrus' incapacity to limit his consumption of the drug (speech) and his willingness to 'prescribe' it to others. In the first usage of the term *pharmakon* (230e), Phaedrus is the enchanter, the possessor, and the administrator of the drug.¹² With a speech that he believes Socrates is "just the right person to hear," Phaedrus draws Socrates away from Athens (227c). At 230e, Socrates describes the speech that Phaedrus has promised to share with him: "you, I think, have found a potion [*pharmakon*] to charm me into leaving [the *polis*]." It is of interest to note that due to the close connection between the *pharmakon* and its administrator – the *pharmakos* – the magical quality of the drug is also associated with its distributor. The administrator embodies the boundary between healing and poisoning that the *pharmakon* evokes. As Compton describes:

the early *pharmakos* might have been 'magic man' or he might have been 'sacred-man.' Then, presumably, he or she was 'healer, poisoner', then later, expiatory sacrifice for the city.... the *pharmakos* could be the medicine that heals the city; on the other hand, he could be the poison that had to be expelled from the system. (4)

¹² It should be noted that at 229c, in the description of the myth of Boreas and Orithuia, Pharmaceia is named as Orithuia's playmate. The name "Pharmaceia" is etymologically associated with the *pharmakon*; however, as it is a derivative of the word and not the word itself, I will start my exploration of the term here.

Removing himself and Socrates from Athens, Phaedrus' action plays upon the ideas of the exile or the scapegoat that needs to be sacrificed for the purification of the city.¹³

This is the only Platonic dialogue that is set outside of the *polis*, which has led many to claim that the dialogue is the least political of the Platonic corpus.¹⁴ Yet, in light of the connotations of the *pharmakon*, this position requires reconsideration. To the extent to which we consider the relationship of the philosopher to the city, as it is most memorably portrayed in Plato's account of Socrates' trial and execution in the *Apology*, we can observe the parallels drawn by way of the *pharmakos* in the *Phaedrus*. Socrates embodies the dual nature of the *pharmakos* as either the medicine man who heals the *polis* or, as his accusers charged, the administrator of a poison who needs to be removed from the system. The *pharmakos* speaks to the enchanting nature of the philosophic man, and the problem of distinguishing him from the charlatan or sophist. As the distributor of speeches, each fit to the interlocutor's soul, Socrates' medicinal qualities are further highlighted and contrasted against rival distributors. His rivals, the teachers of rhetoric or sophists, also distribute speeches they claim to be to the benefit of the city. Both Socrates and his competitors deal in the *pharmakon* of *logos*, though Socrates does not profess a cure. Rather, he spurs men to question the 'cures' that they have been offered. As these actions demonstrate, the *pharmakos* is intimately tied to the health of the political community. In light of this, it would appear that the *pharmakos* and the *polis* necessarily inform one another. Thus, the *Phaedrus* is an inherently political dialogue.

¹³ The dual nature of the *pharmakos* leads to the conception of the scapegoat, which is associated to the ritual sacrifice many religious cults performed (scapegoat is derived from the goat which was to be sacrificed for the health of the city, as appeasement to the gods). It is of interest to note that from historical records we learn that Phaedrus was exiled for profaning the Eleusinian mysteries in 415 BCE. Although the dramatic date of the dialogue is considered to be between 418-416 BCE, thus prefiguring his exile, it appears to call attention to common ground with Socrates, suggesting perhaps their similar natures.

¹⁴ Cf. Scully, Stephen. *Intro.* vii.

The introductory characterization of Phaedrus as a *pharmakos*, as the administrator of a charming potion, establishes his apparent similarity to Socrates. This resemblance is further evidenced by two comments Phaedrus makes about himself. First, he refers to himself as “a mere dilettante” (228a). He desires to memorize and perfectly reproduce Lysias’ speech more so than to “come into a large fortune” (Ibid). Phaedrus’ self-evaluation of his oratory skills is quite revealing. He is purposely self-effacing. Like Socrates, he claims not to know anything about speechmaking. Moreover, he emphasizes the extent of his love of speech by placing it above wealth, in a manner that recalls the basis of Socrates’ poverty. In the second comment, at 229a, Phaedrus calls attention to the fact that he is fortunate to be barefoot on this occasion. While this is not typical attire for Phaedrus, it is for Socrates, and it further emphasizes the preference of the philosopher for speech over wealth. Taken together, the manner in which Phaedrus describes himself calls to mind qualities that are typically associated with Socrates. Yet, to what degree are these particular characterizations merely superficial?

This unusual mirroring begs the reader to question the grounds upon which Socrates and Phaedrus are actually similar men in relation to the *polis*. That is, to pose a question that will carry through the text: to what degree is Phaedrus a philosophic soul? Does Phaedrus actually love *logos*, or is he merely enchanted by its *technē*? The object of the interlocutors’ love thus appears to be the grounds upon which we can begin to understand the problem of the *pharmakos*. This is first expressed through Phaedrus’ dual role as *pharmakos* and patient, which appears to mirror Socrates’ description of himself at 228b. There, Socrates confesses that he is “sick with passion for hearing speeches.” This admission of his own erotic longing, follows a perplexing declaration of similarity at

228a, where Socrates states, “Oh, Phaedrus, if I don’t know my Phaedrus I must be forgetting who I am myself.” The identification of similarity is centred upon their common affliction: their erotic desire for *logos*. Socrates refers to himself as a “lover of speeches” (228c), and from Phaedrus’ early morning actions we are to infer that Phaedrus also shares this title. Yet, we must be attuned to the manner in which their desires are not entirely the same.

To understand Socrates’ self-description as a “lover of speeches,” it is necessary to reflect upon his love of dialogue (228c). “Dialogue” is derived from what Plato calls “*dialegesthai*,” which is the process of describing how things appear or sharing one’s opinion in speech (Arendt 15). “*Dia-*” in Greek conveys the meaning of “through” (“Dialogue”). We might picture this as the movement of words, as they cross the boundary of the speaker’s lips and then are received by the listener’s ears. An image emerges of this exchange wherein words pass across and *through* from producer to receiver. “*Legein*,” or a derivative of “*logos*,” is located in the second half of “*dialegesthai*” and means “speech.” It is derived from the verb “to speak” and also carries the meaning of various forms of speech: discourse, argument and reason.¹⁵ By giving words to experience, *logos* demarcates and defines. Through (*dia-*) speech (*-legein*), understanding takes place.¹⁶ If we consider speech as that which enables the expression of *doxa* (opinion), we may consider dialogue, through its process of building common understanding by comparing similarity and difference, as a bridge to knowledge about nature, human and otherwise. However, a caveat is placed on the practice of dialogue. To engage in dialogue necessitates the presence of other men who likewise

¹⁵ In his translation of the *Republic*, Allan Bloom discusses the various facets of “logos” and notes that its meaning is tied to “what speech implies – human reason as expressed in speech” (443 - 444).

¹⁶ For the connection between dialectic, *dialegesthai* and *dialektikē* see Roochnik, *Beautiful City* 133- 151.

seek knowledge and find beauty in argument. It requires the participation of another. Socrates, as a lover of wisdom, requires the friendship of other men to satisfy his mortal longings. He needs philosophic dialogue, and the *logos* of other men. Socrates' passion for speech recalls the incompleteness of his own speech. It acknowledges the incompleteness of man, or, by definition, his desire. In other words, it reinforces the idea that he does not possess complete speech or wisdom. His love for speech is truly a love of dialogue.

At first glance, Phaedrus may be seen to possess similar qualities. Such a longing for a partner is recalled as Socrates recognizes Phaedrus' delight upon crossing his path:

And running into a man who is sick with passion for hearing speeches, seeing him – just seeing him – he was filled with delight: he found a partner for his frenzied dance, and he urged him to lead the way. But when that lover of speeches asked him to recite it, he played coy and pretended that he did not want to. In the end, of course, he was going to recite it even if he had to force an unwilling audience to listen. (228b-c)

Yet, the speech Phaedrus possesses is not his own progeny, it is not the expression of his own opinion. Lysias' words have spun him into this frenzy where his first inclination is to seek solitude and repeat his monologue until it has been etched into his memory. It would appear then that the harmful pharmaceutical is, from the start, particularly associated with Lysias' brand of speech. Indeed, Phaedrus does not seem to possess the desire to generate his own speeches, nor to necessarily engage in dialogue with others. If we reflect once more upon his comment at 228a, where he refers to himself as “a mere dilettante,” we note that he would rather memorize Lysias' speech than learn the techniques of speech making. As Griswold comments, “Phaedrus seems to be an eternal student and disciple” (21).¹⁷ Phaedrus admires the speeches of others and makes no

¹⁷ In the same place, Griswold notes that Phaedrus “manifests no desire to become a popular rhetorician, sophist, or *logographos* himself,” though this is a more contentious point. Phaedrus is clearly cognizant of

claim to be able to produce them himself. In this way, it would seem that Phaedrus may be barren, like Socrates, philosophy's eternal midwife. Their mutual lack of expertise is particularly represented by the exchanges between characters as they come upon their resting place. At one time, Socrates encourages Phaedrus to lead the way (229a; 229b), and at another, Phaedrus urges Socrates to do the same (227b). Socrates and Phaedrus remain inexpert students, though they may simultaneously be guiding one another. It is perhaps for this reason that Socrates chooses to converse with Phaedrus.¹⁸

We may consider Phaedrus' self-evaluation alongside his respect for, and obedience to, the medical art. He respects the physician's guidance because he is able to recognize his own lack of expertise. Believing that the mastery of the art of rhetoric is akin to the mastery of the art of medicine, he is able to distinguish expert from layperson, and to identify himself as inexpert. Thus, he begins with the recognition of his limited technical knowledge. It is also the acknowledgment of this lack that draws him to men like Lysias who continually supply him with *pharmaka* that have little therapeutic effect. These drugs serve only to deepen his appetite. Such desire leads him to the structured and systematic rhetoric of a speechmaker like Lysias. In other words, it leads him to a man who is able to offer his knowledge in a repeatable format; one that he is able to commit to memory. His love of speech sets him to the task of learning the speech by rote. Such dedication to a task represents his longing to replicate the *pharmakon*. While physicians also learn their art through memory and repetition, Phaedrus does not recognize the

the latest rhetorical innovations and the contents of the rhetorical handbooks as demonstrated from 266d to 268a. As well, we might question why he would bother with the memorization of Lysias' speech if he had no interest in charming other men with his talents. At some level, he must desire the power of the rhetorician for him to take such interest in their art.

¹⁸ For a commentary on the importance of the title of the dialogue *Phaedrus* in connection to the character of Phaedrus see Griswold 18-25. Of particular interest in Griswold's assessment is the fact that the dialogue is not named after a theme, or event, but after a person, thus it is important to grasp Phaedrus' particular nature in order to better understand the dialogue itself.

importance of the judgments they must make, nor the grounds upon which they make them. His desire requires the boundaries of sound judgment (*phronesis*). Though he plays with *pharmaka*, he is unable to separate the harmful from the helpful; particularly when it comes to the most important patient, himself.

The immoderate nature of Lysias' words is not apparent to Phaedrus, who loves the product of the art but does not pause to consider the nature of the art itself. The *logos* he craves is not dialogue, but rhetorical charm. A masterful rhetorician, like a magician, has the capacity to bind his audience with the spell of his speech, winning them over with the triumph of his rhetorical force. Hippocrates' attempts to systematize and rationalize the 'magic' of the temple priests is thus mirrored by the rhetoricians' attempt to capture the enchanting power of words in a *technē*. This charm is a powerful force in the *polis*. Calasso notes that through rhetorical persuasion, "the public good was able to claim its victims with the arrogant and peremptory authority that had once been the reserve of the gods" (256). As the above quotation expresses, the immoderate nature of Lysias' brand of enchanting rhetoric is expressed through its connection to public opinion and not to the pursuit of truth. Again, in this example we see the challenge of shifting authorities.

However, both old and new in their modes of authority are accused of immoderation, as

Calasso notes further:

where a god would speak through soothsayers or a Pythia, chanting in hexameters and using obscure images, the *polis* could get by with a less solemn apparatus: public opinion, the voice of the people, mutable and murderous as it sped, day after day through the *agore* [sic]. (Ibid)

The problem of the power of the *pharmakon*, particularly demonstrated by Phaedrus' attraction to rhetoric, is shown to be the incapacity for self-reflection that follows from it.

Without such a self-reflective capacity, without the ability to question, immoderation is the sovereign power.

III. The Myth of Boreas, Orithuia and Pharmaceia

Charmingly, Phaedrus guides Socrates to a scenic location to spend the remainder of the morning and afternoon. With poetic proficiency, the details of the setting are described in discussion. Phaedrus has already told us of the hour. It is mid-morning, not yet noon, and the sun beams brightly on their encounter.¹⁹ Spotting a “very tall plane tree,” they leave the path to walk in the stream of the Ilisus. They cross the stream to lie on the gentle grassy slope of the riverbank underneath the tree. Upon reaching this tranquil spot, Socrates remarks on its beauty:

By Hera, it really is a beautiful resting place.²⁰ The plane tree is tall and very broad; the chaste-tree, high as it is, is wonderfully shady and since it is in full bloom, the whole place is filled with its fragrance. From under the plane tree the loveliest spring runs with very cool water – our feet can testify to that. This place appears to be dedicated to Achelous and some of the Nymphs, if we can judge by the statues and votive offerings. Feel the freshness of the air; how pretty and pleasant it is; how it echoes with the summery, sweet song of the cicadas’ chorus! The most exquisite thing of all, of course, is the grassy slope: it rises so gently that you can rest your head perfectly when you lie down on it. (230b-c)

The senses are fully engaged. Fragrant blooms sweetly scent the area, and the air, fresh and crisp, carries the cicadas’ chorus. The setting is perfectly intoxicating. Although the

¹⁹ It is of interest to note that Phaedrus’ name means “bright and beaming,” so it would appear that the imagery of light surrounding the setting relates to Phaedrus’ character (Liddell and Scott 1652). Apollo is also both the god of light and medicine, so though there are multiple references to Dionysius and the Bacchae (all spoken by Socrates) throughout the dialogue (234d; 238d; 245a, and 265b), Apollo’s presence is consistent.

²⁰ First, Stephen Scully notes that “resting place” is translated from *katagoge*, which means “a bringing down.” We may consider this a prelude to the central myth of the dialogue that discusses the immortal soul falling down and then gaining the capacity to make the ascent upwards. Scully states, “in short, the grove functions as a conduit, allowing for movement up and down” (6). Second, when Socrates swears by Hera, he evokes the imagery associated to her of marriage and childbirth, perhaps speaking to the reproductive capacity of Phaedrus (the father of speeches from the *Symposium*).

beauty described seems to be such that it would distract one from any serious pursuit, Socrates and Phaedrus retain their sobriety and begin the exchange of speeches.

In the midst of coming to their resting place, Phaedrus makes reference to the myth of Boreas and Orithuia. He turns to Socrates to confirm the popular opinion that it is along the stretch of the Ilisus that they are travelling where, “people say Boreas carried Orithuia away” (229b). As the story goes, Boreas, the North Wind, forcibly captures the young girl as she is playing with a companion. He then proceeds to rape her, after which she produces children for him and he takes her as a bride.²¹ This dark and violent tale seems to contrast the lightness of the setting. Indeed, it imbues the area with the themes of love and childbirth, but through the lens of force, which is particularly represented by the violation of virginal purity.²² The tale anticipates the definition of *erōs* Socrates provides at 238c: “the unreasoning desire that overpowers a person’s considered impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in beauty, this desire, all-conquering in its forceful drive, takes its name from the word for force (*rhōmē*) and is called *erōs*.” The reproductive allusions in the scene recall the productive nature of *technē*, to the extent to which we may consider *technē* a “bringing forth.”²³ However, the allusion to the rape appears to suggest a distinction between a forced and a voluntary “bringing forth,” casting the former in the category of overstepping one’s boundaries or *hubris*.

²¹ There are many versions of this tale, although the consistent feature is the abduction of the young princess by the North Wind. It was apparently a well-known tale in fifth century Athens, as is indicated by its popularity as a scene on Attic vases from that period. The various depictions of the scene also appear to parallel some of the images Socrates constructs. In a fourth century scene Boreas is naked and with erect wings (re: the erotic overtones of the discussion of the growth of the soul’s wings at 252b). In another fourth century version he has the legs of a Typhon (re: Socrates’ comparison of himself to a Typhon at 230a) (Gardner 137-138).

²² In his discussions of various formulations of the abduction stories, Calasso notes, “Copulation, *mīxis*, means “mingling” with the world. Virgo, the virgin, is an isolated sovereign sign. Its counterpart, when the divine reaches down to touch the world, is rape” (52).

²³ These connotations are highlighted by Heidegger in “The Question Concerning Technology” (13).

Socrates responds that they are close to the story's location, but that he believes the tale to correspond to an altar to Boreas, which is a bit further downstream. The mention of the altar is significant for the reasons for which it is reputed to have been erected. Herodotus remarks that as a consequence of the marriage of Boreas and Orithuia (a woman from Attica), the North Wind was considered the son-in-law of Athens. When Athens was challenged by the approach of Xerxes' invading forces the city called upon Boreas for protection. Gracefully treading the line between the mythological and rational, Herodotus describes the outcome of the events:

I cannot say if this was really the reason why the fleet was caught at anchor by the north-easter, but the Athenians are quite positive about it: Boreas, they maintain, had helped them before, and it was Boreas who was responsible for what occurred on this occasion too. On their return home they built him a shrine by the river Ilissus. (VII.189)

This mythic force is heroized as a saviour of Athens. The image of the North Wind is thus one of tremendous power, but imbued with overbearing *erōs*, which is portrayed as either destructive of invading forces, or itself a powerful conqueror. Boreas is a significantly political character. Although presented in a playful and light-hearted manner on the surface, the reference to the myth with its connotations of force and rape darken the scene with the question of unbounded or immoderate *erōs*. Moreover, the mention of the myth alludes to the tension between mythological and rational accounts, so aptly captured by Herodotus.

Socrates' acknowledgement of the tale prompts Phaedrus to ask, "in the name of Zeus, do you really believe that that legend is true?" (229c). In response to Phaedrus' question, Socrates says that he would not be out of place among the intellectuals if he did not believe the story. This statement refers to the practice of men, like the Pre-Socratic philosophers, who sought to rationalize mythological explanations. Notably, the Pre-

Socratics heavily influenced the Hippocratic practice and outlook. This is demonstrated in Hippocrates' critique of "faith-healers, quacks and charlatans" in the *Sacred Disease*, where he states: "No god can be blamed and the purifications are useless and the idea of divine intervention comes to nought" (238). Though his practices and perceptions were also influenced by natural philosophy, Socrates does not identify himself among these men.²⁴ He concludes that it does not matter if the story is true or not, as it has little bearing on the most important pursuit, which is the search for self-knowledge. Hence, the distinction is drawn between his philosophic practice and the practice of the intellectuals.

If Acumenus' prescribed walk is the guide to the physical motion of the dialogue, Phaedrus' question concerning myth is the guide to its intellectual course. Noting the question's pivotal role, it is important to clarify Socrates' answer. As Book X of Plato's *Laws* treats a similar topic, it is prudent to consider its treatment of the popular intellectuals. Speaking of the arguments of "our new and wise men," (886d) the Athenian Stranger states:

Fire, water, earth, and air are all by nature and by chance, they claim, and none of these is by art; and the bodies that come after these – of the earth, sun, moon, and stars – came into being through these which are completely without soul. They are carried about by the chance of the power each has; when they fall together with things that somehow harmonize with what is proper to them – hot things with cold things, ... and all things that are mixed together, by the mixing of opposites according to chance, that arises out of necessity – then in this way and according to these means, the whole heaven and all things in heaven, and also all the animals and all the plants have come into being." (889b-889c)

In essence, the argument of the wise men attributes *phusis* (nature) to chance causal relationships. Because, "[a]ll of these mixtures come into being by happenstance, bereft of intelligence (*nous*), art (*technē*), or divine governance" (Newell 46), *technē* is

²⁴ Socrates affiliation with natural philosophers is famously parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

distinctly human (889d). In other words, they think that there is no divine plan or grand demiurge by nature that provides orderliness to the world. The basis for the distinction among arts is then attributed to the degree to which the art participates in nature's power. From the most serious, that is, "the ones that have their power in common with nature," to the most playful, that is, the ones that "don't partake much of truth," the arts descend from medicine and farming, to politics, to painting and music (889d). Medicine's place at the head of the hierarchy is explained by the degree to which its diagnoses and prescriptions are grounded upon the above account of causation. The arts, such as painting and music, are placed upon the bottom rung. Though it is not mentioned by name, it is likely that poetry, as an imitative art and a source of mythological explanations, is targeted by this assessment as well. To use an anachronistic term, the arts of the Muses are devalued.

On the basis of this account of causation, the Athenian Stranger turns next to the discussion of a relative conception of justice. Here he explains, "They [popular intellectuals] claim that the noble things by nature are different from those by convention, and that the just things are not at all by nature" (889e). Concluding, the Athenian states, "All these things, friends, are put forward by men considered wise by young people, private men who write in prose and poets, who explain that what is most just is whatever allows someone to triumph by force" (890a). As detailed in the *Laws*, the new wise men are the proponents of a relativistic notion of justice (nothing *is*, all is in motion), as based in a chance causality, which culminates in the necessity of persuasion or its counterpart, force (Newell 49). Force subtly becomes a prominent part of the scene.

The North Wind, Boreas, embodies both force and *erōs*. The speeches on *erōs* that follow in the *Phaedrus* begin with this understanding of man's erotic nature. Like a gust of wind, Boreas' spontaneous and unpredictable motion is representative of the human passions. His force and brutality against Orithuia demonstrate the extent to which his desires are unrestrained. As the proponents of the motion thesis detail, "The chance motions and unstructured energies of *phusis* well up in us as the drive to maintain our lives and gratify our passions. Law and convention (*nomos*) forbid us to gratify these desires, but these prohibitions are rootless constructions imposed against nature" (Ibid 46). As a result, the life modelled after Boreas, or the 'natural' life, dictates that: "nature drives us through the passions spontaneously to strive for 'victory' over others by 'force'" (Ibid 47). Boreas is the victor in both of the stories recorded of him. The hero honoured by the Athenians, who have erected an altar to his feats, is one defined by his conquests, both erotic and political.

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates' response to the tale of Boreas goes yet further. He states that upon rejecting the myth, he could then "tell a clever story" (229c). He could replace the mythological account with a plausible one. Imitating a popular intellectual, he offers Phaedrus an example of the story he could tell. In his version of the events, "a gust of the North Wind blew her over the rocks where she was playing with Pharmaceia; and once she was killed that way people said she had been carried off by Boreas – or was it, perhaps, from the Areopagus?" (Ibid). Strikingly, the tale of her "abduction" is now distinctly the tale of her death. This version of the tale is devoid of euphemism.²⁵ It forces the listener to acknowledge the mortality of the girl, and it does not carry her story

²⁵ It is interesting to contrast Herodotus' approach to recording the story of Boreas protecting the Athenians from the invading Persians, to the manner in which Socrates provides his example of a rational account. Herodotus casts doubt upon the Athenian's story, but records it and preserves the myth.

into a 'new life' where she is the wife and mother of Boreas' children. Her story concludes on the rocks.

While he compresses the tale with his synopsis, he adds one significant element. Socrates' account makes specific reference to the name of Orithuia's playmate – Pharmaceia.²⁶ The name of the playmate is also “the common noun signifying the administration of the *pharmakon*, the drug: medicine and/or poison” (Derrida 70). With Socrates' re-fashioned account, we may perhaps have the Socratic version of the “after-school special,” that is: playing with drugs can be deadly. In his re-telling of the story, the emphasis shifts from Boreas' overpowering *erōs*, to Orithuia playing haphazardly with Pharmaceia in the waters of the Ilisus. This is a subtle suggestion, but it is one that shifts the emphasis from *erōs* to the importance of the *pharmakon*. If the mythical tale itself is a *pharmakon*, a relief for our anxiety about our mortality, perhaps this is an expression of the danger we face when we play with the composition or the deconstruction of these stories. Socrates' response to Phaedrus' question thus appears to tread the line that Herodotus preserved so well: that is, the balance between the mythological and the rational account. If we consider the role of mythology in human life, as that which, “enabled us to place our lives in a larger setting, that revealed an underlying pattern, and gave us a sense that, against all the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary, life had meaning and value,” we are able to appreciate Socrates' cautionary approach (Armstrong 2).

²⁶ There is little evidence of the original tale to specify whether or not a playmate named Pharmaceia was present. This appears to be exclusive to Socrates' account. Most versions of the story come down to us through the vase art of the fourth and fifth century, which offer various depictions of the tale. In these scenes often Orithuia and Boreas are depicted by themselves, but in some cases, characters such as Aphrodite, Eros, or a Silenus appear.

After offering his clever story in place of the traditional tale, Socrates goes on to say that to give a rational account would necessarily precipitate explanations of other stories and creatures. While such explanations are amusing, he says that they are far too much work for him. This would require a great deal of time, an eternity in fact, and he does not have the leisure for such a project because he is consumed with the pursuit to know himself as per the Delphic inscription (229c - 230a). To engage in the process of de-mythologizing is to enter into a ceaseless cycle of work and this demonstrates a particular madness. It is a seemingly Sisyphean task. Once a plausible explanation for one story is given, you still must account for the perpetual number of creatures, gods and demi-gods that the human imagination can conjure up. In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, this sentiment is recollected in the form of Socratic counsel: "And he said that the one who was anxious about these things ran the risk of going out of his mind no less than Anaxagoras²⁷ went out of his mind, he who took the greatest pride in explaining the contrivances of the gods" (IV.vii.vi). The madness depicted in Socrates' response appears as a consequence of a transgression.²⁸ The offence in question concerns man's relationship to *mythos* and the temptation to render all accounts rational.

After explaining the task he will not do, Socrates explains the priority of his current quest. It seems ridiculous to him to explore these other things until he has

²⁷ Anaxagoras was a Pre-Socratic philosopher born c.500 BCE. A politically contentious figure, he was banished from Athens, and he spent the remainder of his life in exile, even though he had been a teacher to Pericles, the famous and influential statesman (Wheelwright 154 – 155).

²⁸ Visser's description of transgression is particularly interesting in this context, "The Furies, handmaids of fate, responded to such an action, whether it had been intentional or not, with one – or both – of two punishments: either they tied the transgressor up or they pursued him, forcing him to flee from them in terror. The hybristic sinner, as spoiler of the pattern of bounded areas that was fate, was made to pay by being tied up in ropes – lines that confined his body, rendering him incapable of movement. The Furies might on the other hand, drive the transgressor mad, chasing him away from the sheltering city walls, away from the map of streets and all the city's other structures, and out across a featureless plain. Madness was confusion, a loss of points of reference" (94-95).

knowledge of himself. He states: “I accept what is generally believed, and as I was saying, I look not into them but into my own self: Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon, or am I a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature?” (230a). This response is an affirmation of Socrates’ human wisdom. He knows his limitations with respect to the mythological accounts. Thus, he is focused upon that of which he can give the best account: himself.

Questioning his psychic composition, the first image Socrates turns to is the complex beast, the Typhon. This creature springs to life from the oral tradition. From Hesiod we learn that the Typhon is the last child born of vast Earth (Gaia) and the Underworld (Tartarus) (XII.820-1022). A monster of unimaginable proportion, “from the thighs downward he was nothing but coiled serpents, and his arms which, when he spread them out, reached a hundred leagues in either direction, had countless serpents’ heads instead of hands” (Graves 134). It is of interest to note, that this imagery is also shared with winds, such as Boreas, who were habitually depicted with serpent tails. Representative of destruction and cyclic regeneration, the imagery of the serpent is of particular interest as we begin to consider the erotic themes of the dialogue. This is further expressed in the dragon-like description of the Typhon. As Hesiod relates, fire blazed from every head and different voices came from each mouth (XII. 820-1022). The creature’s name, “Typhon,” means “stupefying smoke,” drawing on the imagery of the fire and flames that he emitted, and alluding to the confusing and intoxicating affect of his presence (Ibid 135). Further, as an image Socrates poses in relation to his soul, we might also consider this allusion to the dragon, with its fiery and multiple heads, as a description of the desires. In the *Republic*, this is made explicit in the description of the

creature that represents the appetitive part of the soul. It is a many-coloured, many-headed beast that competes with the lion and the man for leadership of the soul (588c). By employing the image of the Typhon, Socrates evokes this “complicated and savage” creature to draw a portrait of the soul that is complex, savage, dangerous, and dark (230a).

The second suggestion, representative of the simple version of the soul, is by contrast a much more basic sketch. The proposition is that Socrates could be, “a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature” (230a). Of the descriptors, the first seems to draw the greatest contrast to the previous image. To tame is to make easier to control, or to make less powerful. Further, the process of domestication is a skill man has developed into a *technē*. There is a systematic body of knowledge that effects the desired result. To domesticate animals is to employ this knowledge to render them under man’s control and thus manage them, nullifying their wild inclinations. This tamer, simpler creature starkly contrasts the power and savagery of the Typhon, which can only be killed and never tamed. Whereas the Typhon’s multiple heads move in many directions representing its many and competing desires, the simple animal appears able to share in divine contentment rendering it gentle and tame. We might note that in either description the mention of “man” is omitted. Instead, Socrates distinguishes between a mythological beast and a tame animal, to pose the question of the nature of his soul. He furthers this suggestion by describing the way he is lured outside the city walls by Lysias’ speech, “just as people lead hungry animals forward by shaking branches of fruit before them” (230e). Although these images focus on animalistic depictions, they illustrate something distinctly human. That is, they are representations of man’s self-conscious

ability to give an account of desire. On one hand, the complex creature describes unbounded and intoxicating desire; on the other hand, the simple creature describes ordered and contented desire.

When describing Hippocrates' approach to understanding nature close to the end of the dialogue, Socrates states, "we must consider whether the object regarding which we intend to become experts and capable of transmitting our expertise is simple or complex" (270d). This is the initial step in building a system of knowledge. As it arises later in the dialogue, the statement is couched in the language of *technē*. It is also used as a description of the means by which rhetoric and medicine are comparable as *technē*. When considering Socrates' answer in light of this, it would appear that he might be referring to the process of self-knowledge as a stochastic *technē* like medicine. Yet, is the knowledge of the soul the same as the knowledge of body? And, what would the expertise of the soul entail? His statement to Phaedrus regarding the complexity or simplicity of his soul implies that self-knowledge can be gained through the application of an art or ordered procedure. In one sense, this is the most honest answer Socrates can produce. His self-knowledge is the product of an art; but his art concerns that which he desires, or that which he lacks. Both images speak to the nature of his desires, or attempt to give an account of his *erōs*. By subtly referring to an art, or a systematic knowledge through his answer, Socrates appeals to Phaedrus' attraction to *technē*. His words are tailored to Phaedrus' erotic inclinations.

Beginning with the initial encounter, and concluding upon the place where they come to rest, the opening scene describes with unusual detail the setting, movements, and inclinations of the interlocutors. Perplexing and enchanting, it foreshadows the themes of

technē, rhetoric, force, and love, which are to follow. In particular, the tension between old and new practices and perceptions carry through the balance of the dialogue. The rise of the new, as particularly represented by Phaedrus' enchantment with the rhetorician's *pharmakon*, stands to displace the authority of the old mythological accounts. To this quarrel, Socrates has responded by pointing only to himself, and the virtue of pursuing self-knowledge. The erotic art or knowledge of one's ignorance is drawn forth by the setting and it forms the backdrop for the balance of the dialogue. With these considerations in mind, we are now able to turn to Lysias' speech of the non-lover, an example of rhetoric, which claims to be the product of a *technē*.

Chapter Two Illness and Treatment (231a-242a)

With a speech in hand that pronounces on the virtues of the “non-lover” (Rosen 78), composed by a professional rhetorician, Phaedrus carries not just a speech, but a discourse on the difficult relationship between *erōs*, *logos*, and *technē*. *Erōs*¹ is a sickness, Lysias’ speech (*logos*) argues, and the rhetorician’s art (*technē*) prescribes the cure. That is, one should offer favours to the non-lover (231d). In this chapter, the speeches concerning the virtues of the un-erotic man will be explored with the intention of elaborating on the comparison of love to illness, and on the relationship between *technē* and *erōs*. Thinly veiled under the guise of moderation, Lysias’ thesis will be shown to be highly immoderate as it attempts to rationalize eros through a system of utility and calculation. To examine the nature and implications of Lysias’ speech, we will first examine Phaedrus’ thoughts on *erōs*, in the *Symposium*, in order to glean an understanding of his attraction to this speech. Second, the speech in question will be explored for the manner in which it appeals to a *technē* of self-mastery. Last, the pause between speeches, where the frenzy of the Bacchantes is recalled, leads to a consideration of the tension between the rational and irrational aspects of the human soul, and the possibility of a non-technical conception of moral knowledge.

Taken together, this chapter will argue that *technē*, when it is applied to human affairs, is confronted by the problem of indeterminacy, which is particularly represented by man’s erotic inclinations. Rhetoric’s attempt to mirror the systematic and calculative

¹ With respect to the terms *erōs* and love, because translators Nehamas and Woodruff use Love in place of *Erōs* as a proper noun in reference to the god, I will also use Love when referring to the deity. For the term *erōs*, I refer to the erotic passion of love; the frenzied, entranced state of soul that does not necessarily need to be viewed through the deity of the same name. Therefore, when referring to the passion, I will use *erōs*. This distinction will be maintained from this point forward.

nature of *technē* is therefore fundamentally flawed. While Lysias' speech appeals to the authority of *technē*, it fails to consider the possibility of non-technical knowledge. It cannot account for the possibility or worth of philosophic or erotic knowledge.

I. The Virtue of the Non-Lover

In the *Symposium*, Phaedrus is the first to speak and the father of the evening's subject. He encourages the group to praise Love with the aid of his friend and physician, Eryximachus (177d). As revealed by Eryximachus, Phaedrus is troubled that the poets who "have composed hymns in honour of just about any god," have not properly praised Love (177a-c). This is an interesting subject for him to be so fixated upon, as it seems to contradict his attraction to the rational and calculative aspects of Lysias' speech, which appears to try to tame *erōs*. With this initial impression in mind, it is necessary to turn to Phaedrus' speech.

Considering the speech as a whole, Phaedrus' praise focuses on the connection between *erōs* and virtue. He calls Love a guide to virtue²:

There is a certain guidance each person needs for his whole life, if he is to live well; and nothing imparts this guidance – not high kinship, not public honour, not wealth – nothing imparts this guidance as well as Love. What guidance do I mean? I mean a sense of shame at acting shamefully, and a sense of pride in acting well. Without these, nothing fine or great can be accomplished, in public or in private. (178c-d)

Love is the arbiter of action, or that which renders the judgment of right action. Like a drug that causes a particular physiological response, Love produces one of two effects: shame or pride. Curiously, the majority of his speech focuses on shame, and treats pride

² We might consider the implications of Love as a guide, next to our consideration in the previous chapter of mythology's role as that which enables us to judge what is important and valuable in our lives. Good judgment may be said to come from good guides, in this manner, Phaedrus' speech has distinct implications for the shift from the old authorities to the new.

only secondarily. Phaedrus explains that men are more cautious in the eyes of their beloved. He states that nothing is more painful for lovers than to be caught in a shameful act by the object of their affection (178d). Offering an interesting political statement, Phaedrus goes on to say that the “best possible system of society” would be composed of lovers and the boys they love, as it would draw men toward virtue, from fear of shame (178e). Supporting his argument, he recalls the power of a beloved’s presence in battle: “For a man in love would never allow his loved one, of all people, to see him leaving ranks or dropping weapons. He’d rather die a thousand deaths!” (179a). Like a loyal hoplite soldier, one would stand steadfast at one’s post and never betray the line for want of his beloved’s respect, and for fear of the loss of his loved one’s favours. He concludes the first section of his speech by emphasizing that the shame that love produces is productive of a sort of virtue. Yet, is there a higher virtue according to Phaedrus? Is there a kind of virtue, like the sort found in men, who would act virtuously simply, without the eyes of their judging beloved upon them? To this question he provides three stories of lovers and beloveds.

To examine virtue and its connection to Love, the speech turns to the highest expression of courage, action in the face of death. Phaedrus states: “no one will die for you but a lover” (179b). He goes on to offer three tales; the first of Admetus and Alcestis, the second of Orpheus and Euridice, and the last of Achilles and Patroclus. In the first example, Alcestis sacrifices herself for her husband.³ She chooses to die, so that

³ This example comes from Euripides’ play the *Alcestis*. Apollo is exiled (cf. *pharmakos*) to Pherae for killing the Cyclopes that forged a thunderbolt, which killed his son. Because Apollo felt kindly towards his master, Admetus, he persuaded (via intoxication) the Moirai (Fates) to allow the king a longer life. They however required that someone die in his place, and the only one who would make this sacrifice was his devoted wife, Alcestis. She goes down to Hades, but in the end is rescued by Heracles. This is a particularly interesting omission in Phaedrus’ recounting (Morford and Lenardon 178).

he can go on living. Through its indifference to sex, Love broadens the meaning of courage (*andreia*), which is typically associated with manliness (*andrei*). Phaedrus goes further. By his account: “the gods were so delighted, in fact, they gave her the prize they reserve for a handful chosen from the throngs of noble heroes – they sent her soul back from the dead” (179c). Not only is a woman capable of courage, she is rewarded as a noble hero. Her courage and heroism are defined on the basis of her sacrifice for her beloved. By this portrait, Love is asymmetrical, and the best and noblest action of the lover is to sacrifice everything for the beloved.

Further exploring the connection drawn between virtue and courage, the second story rebukes Orpheus for failing to exhibit true courage. When contrasted with the previous example, Phaedrus implies that Alcestis’ death was more courageous than Orpheus’ journey to Hades. While Orpheus loves Euridice enough to cross into the underworld, he loves his mortal life more. This being so, he does not offer his own life; rather he contrives a plan to enter Hades. After noting Orpheus’ stratagem, Phaedrus edits the story. He does not mention Orpheus’ song, which persuades the gods to release his beloved, nor the story of the loss of Euridice, by Orpheus’ backward glance (Morford and Lenardon 274). Instead, he skips forward to his punishment. By Phaedrus’ account, because he did not die “for Love’s sake,” the gods punished him and “made him die at the hands of women” (179d). In the previous story, courage was associated with a woman; in this story, women are the distributors of justice. In either tale, the lesson gleaned concerns the way in which the virtue of the lover is defined on the basis of a genuine sacrifice. Though this seems like a noble lesson, the manner in which he

associates courage and justice with womanliness should stand as our first warning that he might not be so genuine with his words.

The last example of Achilles and Patroclus plays on the notions of lover and beloved developed to this point. According to Phaedrus' speech, Achilles is the beloved, and what is extraordinary about his death is that he consciously chooses to die for his dead lover, Patroclus. This seemingly contradicts the statement Phaedrus made leading into this discussion that, "no one will die for you but a lover," (179b). It also sheds further light on Phaedrus' thesis that Love is productive of virtue (179b). Achilles is a hero, and a demi-god. He is born from a blend of immortal and mortal parentage. As a result, he is born with *andreia*, and his virtue is not inspired by *erōs* alone. He is loved by Patroclus, and following the asymmetrical presentation of love to this point, he does not have to return Patroclus' love. Thus, the sacrifice of his life for his lover is particularly courageous, as the act is inspired by a natural virtue over and above *erōs*. Such courage draws us back to the traditional associations of the term with manliness. Notably, women are not present in this example. Only the hero possesses the capacity to confront death; not out of blind love like Alcestis, nor with the reasoned valuation of life like Orpheus, but with the courage it takes to cross into the unknown while fully conscious of this crossing.

Just prior to summarizing his argument, Phaedrus states:

In truth, the gods honour virtue most highly when it belongs to Love. They are more impressed and delighted, however, and are more generous with a loved one who cherishes his lover, than with a lover who cherishes the boy he loves. A lover is more godlike than his boy, you see, since he is inspired by a god. (180a-b)

Achilles, a beloved, is more virtuous than Alcestis, a lover, because he courageously faces death without the inspiration of Love, without a guide.⁴ The virtue of the beloved consequently becomes the highest form of virtue. As Strauss states, “the gods themselves bear witness to the fact that virtue which is not god-inspired is higher than virtue which is god-inspired. Lack of eros is superior to eros” (53). Thus, Phaedrus locates the potential for virtue apart from Love in the beloved. It appears that the beloved, as a non-lover, has the greatest potential for ‘genuine’ courage. The beloved occupies a much more attractive position. The lover acknowledges the superiority of his beloved by sacrificing for him, even forgoing his life for the sake of his favour. As in the first example, Admetus receives all of the benefit of Alcestis’ god-inspired actions. He does not have to die, because she faces death in his place. Strauss comments, “what Phaedrus wittingly or unwittingly does is to subject eros to the criterion of gain, a selfish consideration. Therefore the speech is the lowest of all the speeches” (Ibid). However subtly and ironically, Phaedrus begins the discussions praising Love, with an argument that the superior man is the one who lacks eros, or is a non-lover. Speaking to the pleasure and utility of the beloved’s role, Phaedrus provides a compelling glimpse at his own inclinations in this speech. It is on this basis that we now turn to Lysias’ speech in the *Phaedrus*, to which Phaedrus is naturally predisposed.

⁴ Phaedrus’ account omits mention of Achilles’ rage, which arguably makes his avenging of Patroclus’ death not “fully conscious” but rather blinded by rage. As with his treatment of the other mythological accounts, he is selective with the information he chooses to include about the story for the persuasive intent of his argument.

II. The Appeal of *Technē*

The non-lover appeals to the boy: “you can expect to become a better person if you are won over by me, rather than by a lover” (233a). Presumably, this same claim is being made by Lysias: if you are won over by my speech, you can expect to become a better man. In essence, Lysias is claiming an expertise. Abiding by his *prescribed* words produces a healthier regime. As stated earlier, a *technē* is the application of expert knowledge that results in a product that is repeatable, reliable and useful. Lysias’ rhetoric thus represents an attempt to systematize a conception of virtue. Characteristic of the sophistic approach to rhetoric, Lysias professes to possess the means by which a man may become a gentleman and a virtuous citizen. By way of this approach to speechmaking, the virtue of a man is claimed to result from the persuasiveness of his rhetoric. Lysias, it appears, is representative of a class of new wise men, such as those the Athenian Stranger targets in the *Laws* (890a). Though the subject matter of the speech concerns human affairs, it speaks of justice only in terms of the pleasure or benefit to be rendered by the men involved in the decision. As it is argued, the right choice is tied to a calculus of pleasure and pain (or, more specifically, shame). Lysias privileges the non-lover (the un-erotic man) because he fancies himself a *technites*. As a claimant to knowledge of a complete system, Lysias thinks himself without lack or un-erotic. Rosen notes, “Lysias’ mastery of the rhetorical *technē* permits him to give a “disinterested” or just presentation of the merits of the non-lover” (86). Lysias’ disinterest is rooted in the sobriety and technical skill of the argument; his conception of

justice is defined on the basis of the success of the persuasion.⁵ If the boy is swayed, the non-lover's claim to the just or good action has succeeded. With this in mind, it is necessary to turn to the speech itself and evaluate its style and content.

Observing the speech as a whole, its character is revealed by its distinctive style. Written as if one hand were on a technical guide, and the other on the composition, the text follows the rules of rhetoric precisely. Indeed, when compared to the dialogue's later discussion of rhetorical handbooks, Lysias' speech is a clear example of the execution of this formula.⁶ At 266d – 267d, in a rather uncharacteristic manner, Socrates describes his familiarity with these parts of speech. They are: the preamble, the statement of facts and evidence of witnesses, indirect evidence, claims to plausibility, and the recapitulation.

Lysias begins with a preamble: "You understand my situation: I've told you how good it would be for us, in my opinion, if this worked out..." (231a). This short preamble is followed by a sober evaluation of fact. That is, Lysias describes the rational and calculative nature of the non-lover and contrasts this to the irrational and unpredictable state of the lover. Drawing on evidence from witnesses, Lysias accuses the lover of "all those words and deeds that are so annoying to everyone else" (231c). Turning to the indirect evidence, he reaches to the state of mind of the lover. Here he reaches into the lover's psyche, and says: "A lover will admit that he is more sick than sound in the head" (231d). In the longest section of the argument, Lysias then establishes his claims to plausibility. Among his more persuasive claims, he states that the lover,

⁵ The persuasive aim of the speech (the boy's favour) defeats the premise of the thesis, indeed the non-lover, is rather a "concealed lover," so the disinterest of Lysias is questionable on these grounds (Rosen 90).

⁶ Charles Griswold argues against this stating that "the nonlover thereby ignores the rules for artful rhetoric outlined later in the Phaedrus, for his speech contains no ad hominem qualities," though earlier he states that "the speech reads like a very sober legal brief," which it appears the rules for artful rhetoric provided are grounded upon (45-46).

possessed with jealousy, will not allow the boy to spend time with others, as he will see this as a threat to himself (232c – d). Further, he emphasizes the lover’s attraction to the boy’s body and the way in which the desire for physical contact impedes the lover’s judgment. This impaired judgment also taints the capacity of the lover to act as a proper teacher, as he will be more likely to offer undue praise (233a – b). Recapitulating the argument, Lysias reiterates the threat of the lover’s impaired judgment, and draws on examples of non-erotic relationships to prove the desirability of the non-lover as a friend and guide. After covering the full formula of speech, he concludes by stating that he believes his argument to be “long enough” (234c). This self-evaluation of his work is a subtle reference to a lesson of Prodicus, a teacher of rhetoric. Prodicus states that the art of a proper speech is tied to a judgment of length, or to what resembles the ‘goldilocks formula’: it should not be too long, nor too short, but of the right length (267b). A textbook example of rhetorical *technē*, Lysias masterfully crafts his speech as per the specifications of the manual.

Let us now turn to the content. Following the preamble, Lysias begins his argument by comparing the lover and non-lover through the scope of a business transaction: “That is because the favours he [the non-lover] does for you are not forced but voluntary; and he does the best that he possibly can for you, just as he would for his own business” (231a). Indeed, by offering advice on the basis of mutual gain, in the terminology of the businessman, the non-lover’s advice is saturated in the language of calculation, risk, and utility.⁷ Through his first words, the non-lover clearly indicates that

⁷ This method of argumentation appears consistent to the manner in which Lysias’ father Cephalus, and brother Polemarchus argue their opinion of Justice in the *Republic*. Business and utility are the primary concerns.

such an agreement or investment in the ‘partnership’ would be beneficial to both parties.

In comparison to the depiction of the lover, Rosen observes that the non-lover:

because he acts from freedom rather than necessity, in a sober and businesslike manner, which does not interfere with an efficient and technically accurate calculation of profits and losses, nor lead him to quarrel with relatives over the distribution of property, may devote his energies to the beloved. (87)

In other words, the relationship that is portrayed as the most useful and efficient is the one undertaken with the non-lover. To further couch this description in the authoritative language of mathematics, which is also the language of *technē*, Lysias states that by subtracting the headaches and burdens of the lover’s desire, the remainder left for the non-lover is his dedication to pleasure (231b). A hint of hedonism creeps into this otherwise cold, technical formula. Both beloved and non-lover are to benefit from following this arrangement, the boy from becoming virtuous and the non-lover from the pleasure he derives from the boy.

As the non-lover presents his case, to partner with him is to invest in the future, to take the path of least calculative risk, and thereby be guaranteed, “to become a better person” (233a). By acknowledging the presence of risk, Lysias’ approach appears stochastic in nature; to the extent to which it recognizes that its recommendations have their basis in probability and not predictability. Yet, the portrait he paints of the non-lover suggests that the only risk present is the alternative choice, the choice of the lover. The non-lover is presented as steadfast, logical, and predictable; in other words, governed entirely by reason. Thus, the argument indicates that to take the risk and choose the lover is to act irrationally. While the freedom to choose remains, Lysias’ argument represents the calculated benefit of the most rational choice, thereby creating predictability and

effectively eliminating risk.⁸ When this mathematical model is applied to human life it seeks to determine outcomes or foresee into the future by trying to overcome *erōs*. This first statement of the argument thereby sets the tone for the balance of the speech.

As an administrator of advice, the non-lover builds his argument for the beloved to follow his guidance. Speaking first as a businessman, and now as another professional, a physician, the non-lover claims that *erōs* is an illness, and the man stricken with this ‘disease’ “has fallen into such a miserable condition” and “will admit that he’s more sick than sound in the head” (231d). Detailing the symptoms of this illness, the non-lover claims the man afflicted with *erōs* is immoderate, unpredictable and jealous. In other words, it is in the better interest of the boy to partner with a healthy, reliable man, than one who is enfeebled by this malady.

By way of this argument, the non-lover separates the nature of his desire (for partnership with the boy) from the erotic desire of the lover. As Rosen fittingly notes, “The non-lover minimizes the connection between his position and desire; however, reflection shows that his more serious claim is not to eliminate desire but to make it autonomous” (88). The autonomy of desire, thereby locates it, and its control, in man. In other words, the desire of the non-lover is not divinely inspired (present on account of the god/daimon Love), but rather based in man’s physical needs. Such an account of passion would be counterintuitive to the common Greek. As Dodds explains, “The Greek had always felt the experience of passion as something mysterious and frightening, the experience of a force that was in him, possessing him, rather than possessed by him” (185). Similarly, as was demonstrated in the last chapter, the predominant account for

⁸ Rosen makes an interesting observation when he notes, “the non-lover terminates in the advanced sciences of cost-accounting, game theory, and in an anticipatory sense, of computer-based psychology” (87).

disease and illness had been located in the supernatural, and accounted for through mythology. Thus, appearing to follow in Hippocrates' footsteps, Lysias applies a "quasi-mathematical version of division and collection to human affairs," but one whose success depends upon "the debasement of Eros by physiology" (Rosen 88). To make desire autonomous allows man to master his *erōs*. However, this self-mastery is only possible due to "a new and lower interpretation of the self" (Ibid). Human desire is debased to the lowest common denominator. That is, the appetitive impulse of sexual intercourse is generalized to be the impetus behind the lover's pursuit of the beloved's affections. Operating on this generalization, the non-lover starkly contrasts his sobriety against the erotic madness of the sexually driven man.

Lysias appears to be acting as one of the popular intellectuals Socrates described in his response to the myth of Boreas.⁹ By replacing the divine with the reasonable, he reduces the impulse of the lover's action to the appetitive desire for bodily contact. More precisely, through the process of de-mythologizing, he surgically removes the mystery of the divine, and instead casts *erōs* as a problem to be addressed or manipulated by *technē*. On the surface, it would appear that the approach Lysias takes would be one that Socrates would support due to the number of ways the non-lover resembles the philosopher. Indeed, we might consider the way in which Lysias' speech could be praised for the way it privileges calculation and rationality. In this fashion, thinking through the implications of Lysias' speech also compels us to consider the nature of philosophy. To quote Rosen at length:

⁹ To this point in the dialogue, two human acts have been evoked in reference to a process of de-mythologizing: death and desire. Like any other animal, man experiences both of these features of mortality. Yet, as a self-conscious political animal, man imbues meaning into each act through discourse. He gives them words in an effort to describe the experience. Particularly in the case of death, where a rational account is not accessible or possible, he employs myth to account for that which he cannot.

The low teaching, physical gratification, is balanced by a high teaching, praise of intelligence, the necessary instrument for the calculation of advantage. We may see here a prototypical version of “the cunning of reason.” But intelligence is here *logismos* rather than *logos*. If intelligence means efficiency, and efficiency is defined, as in all forms of technicism, by corporeal pleasure, then the distinction between intelligence and desire disappears. Intelligence is not merely an instrument of desire, but it is the finally unintelligible projection of desire. Nevertheless, the speech of Lysias, precisely as a low detachment from erotic madness, introduces the nonerotic or technical, and technically discursive, component in philosophy. (94)

The non-lover, like the philosopher, “is a sober master of the *technē* of division and collection” and “he disregards human individuality in his pursuit of the general or steadfast” (Rosen 87). Further, he recognizes the importance of friendship and the way in which passion can interfere with a healthy relationship. He also praises the qualities of “moderation, intelligence and a prudent concern for the future” (Ibid 90). Like the philosopher, he also acknowledges the importance of a patient and steadfast spirit, which are indicative of the internal subordination of passion to reason, or self-mastery. The depiction of the non-lover in the speech appears to reflect the virtues of the philosopher.

Phaedrus thinks that Socrates is “just the right person to hear the speech” (227c), which reveals that Phaedrus’ conception of philosophy is perhaps more analytic or mathematic, than it is musical or poetic. Socrates may be the right person to hear the speech, but not for the reasons Phaedrus presumes. Socrates stands apart from the non-lover for two principal reasons. First, in the last section of his speech, Lysias concludes by stating: “Besides if it were true that we ought to give the biggest favour to those who need it most, then we should all be helping out the very poorest people, not the best ones, because the people we’ve saved from the worst troubles will give us the most thanks” (233d-e). We may recall from Plato’s *Symposium* that through Socrates’ questioning of Agathon, it was established that, “Love is the love of something, and second, that he loves things of which he has a present need” (200e). Working from these premises,

Socrates continues, “Then if Love needs beautiful things, and if all good things are beautiful, he will need good things too” (201c). By needing the beautiful and the good, he is not in possession of them. *Erōs* is not, himself, beautiful and good. According to Lysias’ argument, if it were true that the beloved should offer his favour to the most necessitous (the lover), he would be offering his favour to the worst man instead of the best (Rosen 90). This critique of the Socratic description of *erōs* certainly is a valid one. It is particularly effective in the speech, due to the manner in which Lysias depreciates *erōs* to a bodily affliction. The neediest man is the most depraved or ill.

Applying the same logic to the philosopher’s search for wisdom reveals the manner in which this is a critique of Socrates’ erotic knowledge. If the philosophic man is most in need of wisdom, then he is also the one with the least wisdom. Consequently, the student searching for a proper teacher should rather engage those men who have a reputation for wisdom. As compared to the philosopher’s acknowledged lack, the non-lover offers tangible, calculable, and predictable benefits. In other words, the expert advice that the non-lover offers produces a given end; and it is his confidence in his knowledge of the materials that enables him to construct this argument as a knowledge claim. The non-lover is able to give a rational account (*logos*) of the productive nature of his art (*techne*). If the philosopher makes no claim to expertise, upon what basis is the philosophic pursuit certifiable? How is one to distinguish the charlatan from the true philosopher? These questions rest on the challenge posed to philosophy to have its practice rest on epistemologically verifiable grounds. Lysias’ concealed argument appears as a device to attract students to his art, the art of rhetoric, by which he claims that both student and teacher will benefit. The consistent references to reputation, social

stigma, and the perceptions of others reinforce the non-lover's argument. With an eye to honours, and a steady reputation, one should secure the means to that end by partnering with the wise man, the one who has the repeatable and reliable key to success.

The second way in which Socrates is distinguished from the non-lover relies on his response to Phaedrus' question concerning the myth of Boreas. His lack of enthusiasm for the de-mythologizing project of the intellectuals reveals something peculiar about the nature of *erōs*, and its peculiarity is the cause of its importance. *Erōs* is, "the one mode of experience which brings together the two natures of man," the simple and the complex, the divine and the animal (Dodds 218; cf. 230a). Thus, to debase *erōs*, by only considering the animalistic impulse for sex, is to deny its liminal quality. The logic behind this conclusion is supported by Socrates' recounting of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, where she discusses the daimonic quality of Love:

They [the *daimonion*] are messengers who shuttle back and forth between the two, conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men they bring commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices. Being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all. (202e)

The liminal nature of *erōs* has a share in both the mortal and the immortal, and uniquely distinguishes man from mere animal. Lysias' conception redefines the limits and possibilities of man's control over himself. His speech suggests that through an artful practice of division and collection, man can level a measure of control over the chance (*tuchē*) of *erōs*. He can possess a *technē* of self-mastery. In the same way the doctor is able to exert control over the body, the rhetorician is claiming to teach young men to be able to exert control over the soul. Although this resembles Socratic soul crafting, by maintaining that *erōs* is liminal, it would appear that such a *technē* of self-control is not

entirely possible or reliable. This leads us to question: what are the limits of *technē*?

And, in particular, what are the limits of *technē* with respect to man?

III. The Charm of *Logos*

Playing upon Phaedrus' name (bright, beaming), Socrates divulges the way in which the speech appeared to make Phaedrus "radiant with delight" as he read (234d). In a not so subtle fashion, Socrates is poking fun at his interlocutor's 'enlightenment.' Referring back to the idea of the guide, and Phaedrus' superior understanding, Socrates states, "I followed your lead, and following you I shared in your Bacchic frenzy" (Ibid). Recalling the "frenzied dance" of the "man who is sick with passion for hearing speeches," Socrates intentionally plays upon the distinction between Phaedrus' perspective of himself (rational, enlightened, Apollonian), and the intoxicating or Dionysiac effect of the speech upon his constitution (228b). Dionysus would stir women into a frenzy, as Euripides details in the *Bacchae*: "I have stung them with frenzy, hounded them from home, up to the mountains where they wander, crazed of mind... Every woman in Thebes – but the women only – I drove from home, mad" (32-36). This statement bears weight on the setting of the dialogue, and further reveals that Socrates is not so subtly insulting Phaedrus by implying that he is womanly.¹⁰

The comedic and exaggerated quality of Socrates' response is intended to reveal more than it is to conceal. Faced with a man enchanted by Lysias' technical skill, yet ignorant of his own *erōs*, Socrates is targeting his ridicule at the aspects of Phaedrus' soul

¹⁰ This is further supported by the oath Socrates swears when they arrive at their resting spot. He swears by Hera, which is an oath typically sworn by women. We may also consider the way in which this teasing is a response to Phaedrus' speech in the *Symposium* in which he argued that true erotic courage can only be demonstrated by women.

of which Phaedrus is not self-conscious. Phaedrus is intended to take notice of the teasing, and he does, though he considers it in jest. In the exchange that follows, he asks, “Come, Socrates, do you think you should joke about this?” (234d). Socrates responds, “Do you really think I am joking, that I am not serious?” indicating that this comedic prodding is truly a *serious joke* (Ibid). Its serious nature concerns Phaedrus’ self-knowledge, and his enchantment with *technē*, as it is representative of systematic, rationally ordered knowledge. To perceive that the elimination of *erōs* through the *technē* of self-mastery is the highest form of virtue is to debase and generalize erotic inclinations. It challenges the very basis of the erotic art.

This Socratic teasing is not the response Phaedrus predicted. Like a defensive lover, he states: “You are not at all serious, Socrates. But now tell me the truth, in the name of Zeus, god of friendship: Do you think that any other Greek could say anything more impressive or more complete on this same subject” (234e). The challenge he poses is on the basis of completeness or wholeness. In Phaedrus’ eyes, the speech is impressive because it lacks nothing. He continues, “[Lysias] has omitted nothing worth mentioning about the subject, so that no one will ever be able to add anything of value to complete what he has already said himself” (235b). According to Phaedrus, the speech not only reiterates what he already holds to be true, that the non-lover is superior to the lover, but it does so in an exhaustive manner. He is attracted to it because it is a ‘complete’ speech. This divulges his attraction to wisdom, though the artifact, and not the pursuit of wisdom itself, enchants him. He has yet to see that the complete speech in his possession is only a guise.

Drawing attention to Phaedrus' transgression, Socrates states: "You go too far" (Ibid). A line has been crossed, and though Socrates has followed Phaedrus' lead to this point, he cannot follow him to this conclusion. Attuned to the seriousness of Phaedrus' misstep, in a rather uncharacteristic manner, Socrates claims that he "can make a different speech, even better than Lysias'" (235c). Quickly following this claim, however, are two expressions of his ignorance. The first attributes the fullness of his breast to the ideas of other speechmakers: "none of these ideas have come from me – I know my own ignorance" (Ibid). Following in the same vein, the second possibility he offers is that "I was filled, like an empty jar, by the words of other people streaming in through my ears, though I'm so stupid that I've even forgotten where and from whom I heard them" (235d). This second pronouncement of his ignorance is particularly interesting as it employs the metaphor of the jar, which is also found in another Platonic dialogue on *erōs* and rhetoric, the *Gorgias*, a dialogue named after the famous rhetorician.

In the *Gorgias*, the jar metaphor is raised in the context of a discussion on moderation and the treatment of desires. Callicles poses the argument:

the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by virtue of his bravery and intelligence, and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time. (491e – 492a)

This argument recalls the savagery of the Typhon, the mythic character Socrates evoked at the beginning of the *Phaedrus* when discussing the complexity of soul, due to the lack of possible restraint over the beast. Interestingly, his response to Callicles draws on the other image he evokes in reference to his soul, the "tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature" (230a). His response takes the form of a question, "So then

those who have no need of anything are wrongly said to be happy?" (492e). This question presupposes the possibility of human contentment, which would exist in a state of satisfaction devoid of the pain, or longing, of desire. Defining life on the basis of desire (in so far as we are mortal, we are incomplete, therefore we desire), Callicles replies, "Yes, for in that case stones and corpses would be happiest" (Ibid). Fulfilment either requires that one does not lack, or one ceases to lack.¹¹ Callicles' unrestrained *erōs*, and Socrates' moderation of the desires to the point of contentment (what appears as a true non-lover argument) look polarized and irreconcilable. In this debate of freedom and restraint, Socrates tries to draw Callicles closer to his side by recalling the words of a wise man who compared the appetitive part of the soul to a jar (Ibid).¹² As Socrates recounts:

some clever man, a teller of stories...named this part a jar [*pithos*], on account of its being a persuadable [*pithanon*] and suggestible thing, thus slightly changing the name. And fools [*anoētoi*] he named the uninitiated [*amuētoi*], suggesting that that part of the souls of fools where their appetites are located is their undisciplined part, one not tightly closed, a leaky jar, as it were. (493a-b)

The metaphor of the leaky jar expresses the nature of the insatiable appetite. It is in a constant state of striving, never content, always leaking. Socrates continues, "he likened the souls of fools to sieves; for their untrustworthiness and forgetfulness makes them unable to retain anything" (493c). His pronouncement in the *Phaedrus*, of his forgetfulness, plays on this image. Considering that Phaedrus' erotic inclinations are considerably different from Callicles' appetites, it would seem that instead of emphasizing restraint, as he must with Callicles, he is using the image to express the

¹¹ Interestingly, Callicles does not include the possibility of a god among his examples.

¹² With respect to freedom and restraint, it is of interest to consider Dodds' compelling assessment of the necessity of both the Apollonian and Dionysian rituals to Archaic Greece. He says, "Dionysus was in the Archaic Age as much a social necessity as Apollo; each ministered in his own way to the anxieties characteristic of a guilt-culture. Apollo promised security... Dionysus offered freedom" (76).

philosophic motivation, the *erōs* of *logos*, as it is based in the knowledge of one's ignorance.¹³

Socrates' pleadings of ignorance, however, are lost on Phaedrus, who is baited by the possibility of hearing a more complete speech. Indeed, Phaedrus is not concerned with the origin of Socrates' words, only the words themselves. Holding Socrates to his promise, he offers, "like the Nine Archons, I shall set up in return a life-sized golden statue at Delphi, not only of myself but also of you" (235e). This promise appears as a bribe, or a prize for the completion of a successful speech. Given its opulence it also bespeaks Phaedrus' doubt that anything "more impressive or more complete" could be said on the subject (234e). That said, his 'reward' is an interesting choice. As translators Nehamas and Woodruff note, the archons are to erect a golden statue of themselves at Delphi if they violate the laws (ft. 10). The erection of the statue is thereby a punishment and not a prize. Furthermore, it is a punishment for transgressing the boundaries of the law. Though this is the case, there is also evidence of a golden statue erected at Delphi for the purposes of honour and not shame. Curiously, this statue is dedicated to, and in the image of, Gorgias (Morgan 376).¹⁴ Such a reward speaks to degree to which Phaedrus is attracted to the new wise men, to rhetorical prowess and cleverness, and not necessarily to the pursuit of wisdom itself. It implores the reader to consider the similarities and differences between Gorgias, the prized rhetorician, and Socrates, the old philosopher.

¹³ Interestingly, the comparison between the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias* shows the degree to which Socrates' argument is dependant upon an assessment of the interlocutor's soul. When faced with a man who praises what appears to be the hyper-rational, he draws on the frenzy of the Bacchantes to recall the freedom of the Dionysian.

¹⁴ As Morgan notes, "Given the constraints of chronology, of course, the character of Phaedrus cannot be aware that he is assimilating Socrates to the model of Gorgias; Gorgias' dedication and his encounter with Plato must occur after Socrates' death" (377). The comment is thus intended for the reader.

Failing to win Socrates' words with his bribe, Phaedrus turns to force. Boreas' forceful and erotic conquering of Orithuia is recalled as Phaedrus threatens Socrates on account of his stinging desire for a more complete speech. Imitating Socrates, like a vulgar comedian, he states: "Socrates, if I don't know my Socrates, I must be forgetting who I am myself" (236c). The imitation is intended to recall the mutual desires of the men, but in this context it draws to the fore the *thumotic* impulse that accompanies Phaedrus' desire. The statement is directly followed by a threat: "Get it into your head that we shall not leave here until you recite what you claimed to have "in your breast." We are alone, in a deserted place, and I am younger and stronger" (236c-d). The failure of persuasion is violence.

The inversion of roles (persuader and persuaded) continues, as Socrates now uses Phaedrus' words to describe himself as a "mere dilettante" (228a; 236d). Losing patience with this exchange, Phaedrus makes a final threat. That is, "I shall never, never again recite another speech for you – I shall never utter another word about speeches to you!" (236e). He threatens silence. Rosen notes that Phaedrus,

has been led upward in his choice of threats: bribery, coercion by physical force, silence – threats which themselves correspond to the three speeches in the dialogue: base calculation of mutual advantage, rhetorical or concealed coercion, the silence of divine madness. (96)

His final threat is unacceptable to Socrates. Socrates' love of speech is driven by his love of wisdom; to deny him an interlocutor is to deny him what may be a particularly fruitful way to approach his love. He submits, and grants Phaedrus his speeches.

Prior to turning to Socrates' words, it is helpful to look back upon the path we have tread. Socrates, from the start, has been gauging Phaedrus' inclinations, and with the pronouncement of Lysias' speech, he is able to diagnose the tension that exists in

Phaedrus' soul (227a). Phaedrus is a concealed lover. He is a man enchanted by wisdom, yet wary of the risk of madness. His speech from the *Symposium* demonstrated a concern with virtue, and an attempt to seek virtue of the highest order. However, the speech also displayed his faults. It became the lowest speech because it was shown to be more concerned with acquiring affections and honours than actually considering courage. Further, the actions of the love-inspired were demonstrated to be lower than those of the non-lover, thus instead of praising Love, his speech truly praises the non-lover. Lysias' speech appealed to his desire for virtue, and to his approval of the non-lover. In a manner of speaking, it is a confirmation of his opinion.

Yet, Lysias goes further. His speech accomplishes two objectives. First, he is able to provide a calculus of predictability concerning the best or most pleasurable choice of the boy by debasing *erōs*.¹⁵ Second, this understanding of *erōs*, through its emphasis upon the physiological, offers a façade of self-mastery. That is, its claim is to use reason to conquer the chance 'affliction' of *erōs*. Like a physician attempting to prevent an illness from entering the body, Lysias' speech is attempting to apply a *technē* of self-mastery to erotic matters. To a man like Phaedrus, who is prone to guard himself from the intoxication of Love (though he is not self-conscious of the effect Lysias' words have had on him), Lysias' un-erotic and supposedly complete speech is a masterpiece. Socrates' reaction to this is strange. It seems contradictory to his predominantly rational disposition, but it reveals the necessary relationship between the rational and the irrational aspects of man's, and in particular, the philosopher's soul. In this spirit, to madness and the inspired Muse, we turn next.

¹⁵ I include "best and most pleasurable" because the Good in the speech is defined in terms of profit, pleasure and reputation.

Chapter Three Muses, Memory, and Madness (237a – 257b)

I suppose, my friend, that this is what must be understood about all such things: when anyone reports to us about someone, saying that he has encountered a human being who knows all crafts and everything else that single men severally know, and there is nothing that he does not know more precisely than anyone else, it would have to be replied to such a one that he is an innocent human being and that, as it seems, he has encountered some wizard and imitator and been deceived. Because he himself is unable to put knowledge and lack of knowledge and imitation to the test, that man seemed all-wise to him. (*Republic* X.598c-d)

With the wisdom or completeness of Lysias' speech in question, Socrates must produce "a different speech, even better than Lysias'" (235c). What follows are two speeches, equally strange and equally shrouded. These poetic speeches contrast Lysias' technical or mathematical argument. The first speech, prompted by Phaedrus' threats, is poised to be superior to Lysias' on the grounds that it will offer a more complete account. The second speech is an apology for the first. Like the dialogue in its entirety, the speeches are dialectical in nature, and we will explore each of them in turn. On the whole, this chapter will be an exploration of the limitations of human knowledge, by working through particular images that arise in the two speeches. In order, these are: the Muses, madness, and the depiction of the immortal soul. Each of these images engages the question of memory, and man's ability to give an account of himself and his experiences. This leads us to question: what is man's capacity for wisdom? Is a complete account possible? Socrates' speeches treat these questions poetically and cautiously. His responses to Lysias distinguish between the philosopher and rhetorician; thus the pursuit of these questions will prepare us for the interlocutors' return to the *polis*.

I. The Possession of the Muses

“Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns,” Homer begins his epic *Odyssey*, launching into the tale of the hero Odysseus and his journey home (I.1). In this tale, the goddess Pallas Athene guides Odysseus back to Ithaca through foreign territory. Athene, the goddess “responsible for the crafts of war, weaving, and the cultivation of the olive, is identified with *technē*” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 22).¹ She watches over the traveller, and his craftiness and ingenuity are inspired by her presence. Inspired with a similar craftiness, and navigating unfamiliar terrain, Socrates ceases “twisting and turning” and responds to Phaedrus’ demand in the voice of a poet: “Come to me, O you clear-voiced Muses, whether you are called so because of the quality of your song or from the musical people of Liguria” (236e; 237a). In the entire Platonic corpus this is the only speech that has a speaker call upon the Muses (Scully 15). This begs the question, why here? What is distinctive about Phaedrus’ character and inclinations that requires Socrates to produce a speech in the voice of an inspired poet?

To explore these questions, and their implications, it is necessary to understand what it means to evoke the Muses. The daughters of Zeus (“the lord of wisdom”) and Mnemosyne (Memory), the Muses are considered divine sources of inspiration, or “reminders” (Hesiod I.51-55; Morford and Lenardon I.34). They are part wisdom and part memory. Wisdom is not fallible; however, memory is. Memory can never perfectly recapture the moment past. From their parentage, the Muses are glimpses of wisdom.

¹ Baring and Cashford observe of Athena that her myth, “explores above all the quality of reflection, and her stories often compose a mediation on the value of thinking something through or seeing beyond the immediate response to an event. She assists so many heroes that this quality is thereby recommended for those on the heroic journey for self-mastery and understanding” (345). Socrates appears to be mirroring Athena in this respect. He is asking Phaedrus to reflect upon his response to Lysias’ speech and to think through his desire for speech.

They are glimpses into wisdom's waters, in which the pristine image is distorted by the ripples of time. In other words, they reflect immortal wisdom (complete knowledge), yet their reflection is twice removed from the source.² Though this may be, without the inspiration of the Muses, man is "all belly;" in other words, all appetite with no "forgetfulness of evil and rest from cares" (Hesiod I.24; I.53-54).³ Man, by this description, has no unaided ability to touch the eternal and unchanging. This also implies that man relies upon the goodwill of the Muses for his poetic account. The Muses tell Hesiod, "we know how to tell many falsehoods that seem real: but we also know how to speak the truth when we wish to" (I.25-26). A caveat is placed on the truth of the poet's song. He cannot demonstrate the truth, or give a full account, of the words inspired by the Muses. "[H]e is fully self-conscious of these limits of his song," Roochnik describes in the *Tragedy of Reason*. He elaborates:

Hesiod makes explicit what is implicit in most poetry: He has no rational basis for his faith in the goodwill and competence of the Muses. The poet is in the grip of the Muses and cannot see beyond what she reveals to him. Unlike the practitioner of logos, the poet cannot defend, cannot argue for the goodness of his poem; he can only sing. (130)

Thus, when Hesiod describes, "They breathed into me their divine voice, so that I might tell of things to come and things past," his prophecy for the future or account of the past is limited by his gift of the Muse; he himself cannot give a complete account (I.29-30). The Muses' command to place themselves at the beginning and the end of the poetic account reflects their desire to not only be a reminder of the knowledge requested, but

² Those who pronounce their inspired words are thereby three times removed from the Truth. (cf. *Republic* Book X. In the context of reflecting upon poetry, Socrates and Glaucon comment on the degrees to which the product of the artist or artisan is removed from the Truth. Imitation is at the heart of their discussion, and in particular the poet's imitative craft is closely examined for its charming ability).

³ It is interesting to compare this description to the metaphor of the leaky jar from the *Gorgias* discussed in the last chapter, both are depictions of insatiable appetites.

also a reminder to the listener to acknowledge the gap between man's spoken words and Zeus' wisdom (Hesiod I.32-33).

Hesiod's call to the Muses is necessitated by the acknowledgement of his limitation. The Muses, as an aid to the poet's memory, also speak to the confines of the oral tradition, wherein the poetic account relies upon the formidable memory of the singer. In relation to this, we may also consider the centrepiece of the dialogue – Lysias' written words. The transition from the spoken account to the written account amounts to a changing relationship with the Muse. With the technical invention of writing, man is no longer dependant upon the reminders of the Muse; rather he is able to craft them himself. Such a transition is described in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, as Prometheus details his gifts to mankind: "And numbering as well, preeminent of subtle devices, and letter combinations that hold all in memory, the Muses' mother skilled in craft, I found for them" (458-461). The role once played by the Muses, the offspring of Memory and Wisdom, is now served by a skilled craft. *Technē* now assumes the prominent role. Speaking to the way this describes humanity's growing self-sufficiency, Roochnik states, "it is clear that writing tokens some measure of liberation from the gods and fate; with this *technē*, human beings become their own Muse" (*Art and Wisdom* 36). With reason accompanying a skilled hand, man records and provides an account of his actions; he creates his own reminders of that which has passed.⁴ He creates a written history. Though *technē* aids his memory, does it also aid his wisdom?

⁴ The tension between traditional mythology and the new philosophic and scientific accounts of nature, which we discussed by way of the myth of Boreas, is drawn to the fore here. Roochnik describes Thales as the first philosopher to attempt to offer a completely rational account of nature, thereby not requiring the assistance of the Muse (*Tragedy* 126).

By calling upon the Muses to aid his memory, which Socrates has already described as poor (235d), he follows through on Phaedrus' demand, yet stays true to his claim to know his own ignorance. The call upon the Muses signals the limitations of his account. It recalls the oral tradition, the importance of memory, and the boundary between immortal and mortal knowledge. In this manner, he is able to produce a better speech, but on his terms. Using the Muses as inspiration, he composes a tale for Phaedrus.⁵ But before he commences, he covers his head. Concealing himself from potential embarrassment, like an actor donning a mask, he layers his words with the fabric of his cloak.⁶ He is not seen; he is only heard. He begins to describe a boy and his very many competing lovers. One lover in particular, he depicts as wily, persuasive, and duplicitous for the manner in which he had concealed his true motivations from the boy. This lover convinced the boy that, "he was not in love, though he loved the lad no less than the others" (237b). Though his tale begins by calling attention to the contradiction in Lysias' argument, it also recalls a lover's craftiness in the pursuit of his beloved.⁷ Like Lysias, Socrates is also concealing his love. Similar to the wily and persuasive lover he begins his speech with; Socrates' physical concealing recalls the image of the wily Odysseus. According to the poet's song, when Odysseus is entertained by the Phaeacians on his journey home to Ithaca, a Muse-inspired bard draws tears to his eyes: "Odysseus, clutching his flaring sea-blue cape in both powerful hands, drew it over his head and

⁵ The choice of a poetic response is also interesting considered in light of Phaedrus' questioning of the myth of Boreas. Phaedrus appears to act like the men described in the *Laws* who "refuse to believe the myths which they heard from their nurses and mothers" (887d). The choice of an inspired tale draws directly upon this tension between *mythos* and *logos* in the city.

⁶ It is of interest to note the parallel between the veiling of speeches that occurs with both Phaedrus and Socrates. Socrates' spoken words are concealed under his robe and Lysias' written words are concealed under Phaedrus' cloak (228d).

⁷ Such craftiness seems to call to mind feminine guile in matters of seduction, with respect to the dissembling or flirtatious nature of the actions.

buried his handsome face, ashamed his hosts might see him shedding tears” (Homer VIII. 99-102). Potential shame provokes each of these wily men to take refuge under their cloaks. What is the source of this shame?

Although shrouded in layers, Socrates begins his speech in a familiar manner. He tells Phaedrus that if he is to reach a good decision, he must begin by knowing what the decision concerns (237c). Like Apollo, the archer-god and associate of the Muses (Morford and Lenardon 84), he must act as a good hunter and first discern the characteristics of his game before beginning to track it. It is necessary to define what you are inquiring about before proceeding to offer arguments about it. In the *Symposium*, Socrates praises Agathon for composing his speech in this manner; specifically, he praises him for proceeding first with, “the qualities of Love himself, and only then those of his deeds” (199c). Socrates’ speech for Phaedrus follows a similar formula, defining: “what love is and what effects it has” (237d). To quote further:

Now, as everyone plainly knows, love is some kind of desire; but we also know that even men who are not in love have a desire for what is beautiful. So how shall we distinguish between a man who is in love and one who is not? We must realize that each of us is ruled by two principles which we follow wherever they lead: one is our inborn desire for pleasures, the other is our acquired judgment that pursues what is best. (Ibid)

By his description, the distinction between the non-lover and the lover rests with the division between man’s natural desire for pleasure and his judgment of what is best.

Anticipating the well-known image of the charioteer, Socrates describes the internal quarrel of the soul. The quarrel is between the two principles that govern man’s actions. He details:

Now, when judgment is in control and leads us by reasoning toward what is best, that sort of self-control is called ‘being in your right mind’; but when desire takes command in us and drags us without reasoning toward pleasure, then its command is known as ‘outrageousness’. Now outrageousness has as many names as the forms it can take, and these are quite diverse. (237e-238a)

Parsing through this description, a distinction is made between “what is best” and what is pleasurable. Presumably, this is intended to distinguish between the true Good and a hedonistic conception of the Good, which is subtly present in Lysias’ speech. This is demonstrated by the degree to which Lysias’ speech represents a utilitarian approach to the pleasurable. The non-lover, as a lover in disguise, feeds off the beloved’s desire for honour and status, and seeks his own satisfaction through the boy by presenting a calculus of pleasure and shame. Thus, the simple identification of the Good with the pleasurable is implied. Though on the surface, Socrates’ statement appears quite similar to Lysias’ rhetoric of moderation, he is purposively distinguishing himself from the rhetorician by speaking directly to the hedonistic undertones of his competitor’s speech.

Socrates’ distinguishes himself further by drawing attention to limitations once more. The illness of the lover is here described as “outrageousness.” The translators note that the word “outrageousness” refers to hubristic action (p. 517; fn. 14). Socrates has already told Phaedrus that he has gone too far; he has transgressed a boundary (235b). To this point, Phaedrus remains unaware of the extent of his hubris, though it is progressively being brought to his attention. In this connection, it is helpful to consider the effect of the written account once more: “it is clear that writing tokens some measure of liberation from the gods and fate; with this *technē*, human beings become their own Muse” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 36). The written recording of man’s speech, human *logos* made tangible, marks a changing understanding of the possibility and potential for god-like wisdom. Whereas the tradition held that each person had a fate or portion of wisdom, the new possibilities for the accumulation of wisdom tested the permeability of these limitations.

By responding to Lysias' speech on his own terms, in the voice of a poet, Socrates is recalling the presence of these limitations. Even though his speech seeks to be a more complete account, he recalls the Muses at the beginning, middle, and end, to indicate that this is *mythos* and not a rhetorician's *logos*.⁸ Like Hesiod, he cannot defend the goodness of his speech, he can only sing. His song is contrasted against Lysias' words, in which a claim to, and defence of, goodness is implicitly made. Socrates holds fast to the Delphic inscriptions, where fate and shame are intricately connected. As Margaret Visser explains the Greek conception of fate:

The ancient Greek diagram of fate saw human lives as portions of a society conceived as a limited whole. Shame kept people within bounds. The god Apollo had ten commandments, the first two of which were "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much." These were two aspects of one wisdom: know your limits, but also know your extent (that is, how far you can possibly go). (Visser 95)

Exploring the primary command, "Know thyself," asks the surveyor to concern himself with the idea of fittedness; it asks him to seek his possibilities and limitations. Socrates is entreating Phaedrus to consider him as an example of the pursuit of self-knowledge. Like the competing images he set forth in response to Phaedrus' question concerning the myth of Boreas, he is demonstrating the necessity of self-reflection.⁹ Is the nature of his soul as complex as the Typhon or as contented as the gentle creature?

In this light, Socrates' concealment, for want of protection from shame, is thereby also revealed to be a consequence of the self-conscious testing of the potential transgression that his speech represents. Mimicking the poet's *technē*, the wily Socrates

⁸ Morford and Lenardon note that Muses are a type of Nymph (86). Therefore, I think it is safe to conclude that the Nymphs that Socrates refers to at 238d and 241e, are the same as the Muses he evokes at the beginning. At least this would be in keeping with Hesiod's formula.

⁹ It is no coincidence that he refers to outrageousness as diverse and multi-formed, like the Typhon he uses to depict the complex image of his soul. Translators Nehamas and Woodruff note that the literal reading of *polumeles kai polueides* is "multilimbed and multiformed" (p 517; fn. 15).

implicitly indicts rhetoric with the same charge laid against poetry in Book X of the *Republic*. That is, by way of imitation, the poet charms his listener into believing that he possesses extraordinary knowledge, or the knowledge of many arts. While the poet may at least place the caveat on his knowledge that it results from the Muses, the rhetorician does not. He is either ignorant of, or disingenuous about, his limitations, and makes the claim to know the things of virtue and vice, whether explicitly or implicitly. Though Socrates' response to Lysias' speech is a rival for the most complete speech, and it appears to represent a claim to knowledge that he knows he does not possess, it also contains the first phase of an antidote to the charm of the rhetorician. It implores Phaedrus to reflect upon himself, and his desires. This is the first stage in the erotic art – knowing what one lacks.

Leading by way of his example, Socrates' depiction of the quarrel between judgment and pleasure is an attempt to lift the effect of Lysias' spell. In a not so subtle fashion, Socrates accuses Phaedrus of being outrageous. The first example he offers of outrageousness is "desire for food that overpowers a person's reasoning about what is best and suppresses his other desires, it is called gluttony" (238b). Desire, in this context, is compared to a tyrant that leads and controls the direction of man's soul (Ibid). Phaedrus' appetite for speech has already been compared to feasting (p.4; 227b), so it is prudent to consider the ways in which, by implication, Socrates is charging Lysias' rhetoric with instituting a tyranny in the young man's soul. In order to do so, it is necessary to reflect on the nature of man's appetites.

Appetites are a shared form of desire among all men. Reason and prudence indicate and separate out which desires are necessary and unnecessary, and inform the

means by which we go about fulfilling our desires. In the *Republic*, Socrates explains the genesis of the tyrant by reference to the leadership of the soul by a “great winged drone” (572e). He continues, “Or do you suppose that love in such men is anything other than a winged drone?” (573a). *Erōs*, as leader of the soul, “takes madness for its armed guard and is stung to frenzy” (573b). This stinging frenzy is not unlike the Bacchic frenzy Socrates is playfully yet seriously accusing Phaedrus of exhibiting. The reasoned approach to fulfilment is overcome by the weight of his desire. More generally, the appetitive desires are easily susceptible to the persuasion toward excess. To illustrate, hunger arises in all men in a similar fashion; it is the of need for sustenance, but how that hunger is met varies from man to man. One may tame the growling beast of a stomach with the basic staples of a diet, while another may seek something more luxurious and gorge oneself with ten ice cream sundaes and call that a meal. Children, who hold a somewhat different conception of the good from their parents, would in more instances than naught, seek the ice cream sundae option. This choice is rendered due to the manner they perceive pleasure and the good they associate with it. It is no wonder that children are often referred to as little tyrants. The warning of Socrates’ reference to tyranny (238b) speaks to the degree to which *erōs*, when in leadership of the soul, can obscure the distinction between the good and the pleasant. Further, the limitations, as acknowledged by acquired judgment, are displaced in favour of what appears to be most pleasurable. Phaedrus’ euphoric reception of Lysias’ words show the degree to which, like a child with sundaes, his whetted appetite has interfered with his prudential judgment.

The musical Socrates then heightens the tempo. Playing upon Phaedrus’ appetite for speech, he pauses in the midst of his account to ask for quiet to listen to the divinity of

the place. He says, “There’s something really divine about this place, so don’t be surprised if I’m quite taken by the Nymph’s madness as I go on with the speech. I’m on the edge of speaking in dithyrambs as it is” (238d). Toying with his erotically inspired interlocutor, Socrates once more makes reference to the worship of Dionysus, for whom dithyrambs were originally composed.¹⁰ Fully drawn into this musical account, which Socrates claims is on the verge of madness, Phaedrus has yet to realize that the playful jab concerning his “Bacchic frenzy,” has just become the basis for the speech at hand. Phaedrus’ forceful demand has been partly satisfied, though, in the process, a mirror is being held up to his desire. The young man that is usually so conscious of his disposition is gently being goaded to take a look at his own illness. Socrates’ serious joke is now writ large.

Failing to keep his end of the bargain, Socrates concludes his speech having only discussed the illness of the lover. Phaedrus, who has still not caught on, remains concerned about the completeness of the speech: “But I thought you were right in the middle – I thought you were about to speak at the same length about the non-lover, to list his good points and argue that it’s better to give one’s favours to him” (241d). As before, the technical perfection of the speech remains first in Phaedrus’ mind, and the content second. Keeping steadfast to his original course, Socrates responds by maintaining the emphasis upon his musicality. He points out that he has crossed “beyond lyric into epic poetry” and must conclude, or risk “complete possession” by the Nymphs (241e). Nehamas and Woodruff note that the meter of his words supports his claim (p 520; fn. 17). Yet we might also consider Socrates’ statement in light of his comments in the

¹⁰ (p 517; fn. 16)

Republic: “imitation is a kind of play and not serious; and those who take up tragic poetry in iambs and in epics are all imitators in the highest possible degree” (602b). Speaking from under his cloak, the masked Socrates must conclude his speech before he goes further into epic poetry. His joke is on the verge of losing itself in playfulness. The underlying argument concerning Phaedrus as an immoderate lover is the serious task at hand. Thus, to lose track of *logos* and fall into absurdity is the present danger.

Content to leave his speech here and “cross the river” before Phaedrus makes him “do something even worse,” Socrates is about to depart until Phaedrus urges him to stay and discuss the speeches (242a). Phaedrus’ urging is prefaced by the sun’s position in the sky. It is “almost exactly noon,” or the brightest time of day, the sun is “straight-up” in the sky. It is very nearly the time when the shadows cast upon the ground disappear (Ibid).¹¹ Phaedrus argues that they should stay and discuss the speeches until the temperature cools. In light of the young man’s persuasion, Socrates comments upon Phaedrus’ unique ability to beget and preside over the delivery of speeches. This recalls an art that Socrates himself has laid claim to, maieutics, or the art of midwifery.¹² Extending this metaphor, Socrates does not have a fertile womb, but he understands the mystery of pregnancy, gestation, and delivery. Consequently, he seeks out those with fertile minds to “give birth to what they themselves thought anyhow, to find the Truth in their *doxa* [opinion]” (Arendt 15). Speech acts as a potion or drug for the pregnant soul. Oddly, the roles appear reversed here. It is Phaedrus, Socrates says, who “charmed me through your potion into delivering myself” (242d). Indeed this is a “superhuman” act, as

¹¹ It is of interest to consider the imagery of light in this dialogue against the Allegory of the Cave from Book VII of the *Republic*.

¹² Midwifery is the practice of aiding in birth, but not the birthing of one’s own. Typically, the midwife was an older female who was past her childbearing years, but versed in the mysteries of birth. For Socrates’ description of himself as a midwife see Plato’s *Theaetetus* 148e – 151e.

it implies that the barren Socrates is able to give birth to his own speeches (242a).

Phaedrus, it appears, is the possessor of a particularly potent magical dose.

The father of speeches, as he is called in the *Symposium* (177d), Phaedrus seems to share in the ability to draw speeches out of men. Though he is gifted in this manner, his practice has no direction, apart from the one determined by his appetite. Like the child with sundaes, he seeks merely to consume more and more of what he perceives to be good, without questioning what the Good is. Though his stomach may ache upon excessive consumption, he simply turns to the physician for advice to make room for more ice cream. His youth and strength enable him to use the maieutic art to gratify his appetite through force. Unlike Socrates, the patient practitioner, Phaedrus forces early delivery. This forcefulness speaks to his spirited pursuit of the object of his love – speech. It also speaks to his attraction to persuasive speech, to the forcefulness of rhetoric, and sophistic argumentation. It is clear that Socrates’ definition of *erōs* at 238c: “this desire, all-conquering in its forceful drive, takes its name from the word for force (*rhōmē*) and is called *erōs*,” is sculpted to Phaedrus’ disposition.

Conscious of the young man’s demands, Socrates has tried to reveal Phaedrus’ love to himself. He has spoken of the lover’s illness with the intent of persuading Phaedrus to reflect upon his love, and his actions at the behest of this love. Further, he has attempted to expose Lysias’ speech for what it is – an erotic speech of a concealed lover. Phaedrus believes himself to be in pursuit of complete speech, or wisdom, yet he lacks the reflective capacity to assess the object of his desire. Stirred by a love of his own (the speech in his hands) and deceived by a false sense of moderation (Lysias’ calculus), he cannot see the flaws through his rose coloured glasses. Although Phaedrus

has yet to indicate that he is internalizing Socrates' words, his suggestion to discuss the speeches allows Socrates the opportunity to try a new tactic. Instead of speaking of the lover's illness, he turns to a new speech, an apology for the first, about love and recollection.

II. The Gifts of Divine Madness

"I am a seer, and though I am not particularly good at it, still – like people who are just barely able to read and write – I am good enough for my own purposes," Socrates explains his hesitation upon crossing the river (242c). A "familiar divine sign" has held him back from crossing; he believes he hears a forbidding voice telling him to make "atonement for some offense against the gods" (Ibid). Hearing and sight are both emphasized as agents of his understanding. The sound of this voice gives him insight into his offence, and he realizes he must offer a palinode. The word "palinode" is based in the Greek word *palinoidia*, from "*palin*" meaning "again," and "*oide*" meaning "song" ("Palinode"). Once more Socrates is speaking poetically; this time he specifies the type of poem he is crafting, one that retracts the sentiment of the previous poem. Describing the origins of this type of poem, he evokes sight yet again. He explains:

Now for those whose offense lies in telling false stories about matters divine, there is an ancient rite of purification – Homer did not know it, but Stesichorus did. When he lost his sight for speaking ill of Helen, he did not, like Homer, remain in the dark about the reason why. (243a)

He begins by stating that this is an act of purification. To purify is to remove contamination, it is an action associated with the *pharmakon*, both in its political/religious connotations as a scapegoat, and in its medical connotations as a drug. Through the act of purification, Stesichorus is able to regain his sight. He lost perspective speaking falsely, but because he is able to examine his words and understand

his transgression, he is given sight once more. Homer, the blind poet, is left in the dark. Socrates concludes by stating that he will, “prove to be wiser than Homer and Stesichorus” by offering a palinode to Love before a punishment can be inflicted. With this statement, he bares his head, and is “no longer covered in shame” (243b).

Before proving to exceed two more speechmakers in his very human wisdom, shame is revisited once more. He entreats Phaedrus to see “how shameless the speeches were” (243c). Shame, being that which keeps you in bounds, indicates an understanding of limitations. It also expresses the presence of its counterpart, pride. Intimately connected to the love of one’s own and the good, it is an expression of *thumos*. These speeches overstepped their boundaries. Yet, how does this transgressive act differ from the philosopher’s practice? How is he wiser in this endeavour? At 243a, he describes Lysias’ speech and the speech he delivered for Phaedrus as offences against Love. He continues: “they’ve compounded it with their utter foolishness in parading their dangerous falsehoods and preening themselves over perhaps deceiving a few silly people and coming to be admired by them” (Ibid). The trappings of pride appear to be the first clue to answering our question. The relationship between man’s *erōs* and *thumos* (spirit) appears foremost here, as the lovers of victory and honour are shown to be preoccupied with the admiration of others. This preoccupation often causes man to lose sight of his boundaries. Phaedrus, and his gluttony for speech and the admiration it wins, is one such individual who, though normally temperate, needs to learn his limitations. He is a lover who is not self-conscious of the nature of his love.

Recognizing perhaps that the young man is tempted by the new wisdom of the city, Socrates begins his speech by harkening back to tradition. The palinode brings to

light three forms of divine madness. As Dodds delineates them, they are: (1) Prophetic madness, whose patron god is Apollo; (2) Teletic or ritual madness, whose patron is Dionysus; and (3) Poetic madness, inspired by the Muses (64). Beginning by once more drawing upon the poetic, he recollects the words of the poet who regained his sight, “Stesichorus, Euphemus’ son, from Himera” (244a).¹³ Once again, his own words are carefully concealed. Though he attributes his speech to Stesichorus, his first lines seem oddly apropos to the subject matter at hand. He begins, “‘There’s no truth to that story’ – that when a lover is available you should give your favours to a man who doesn’t love you instead, because he is in control of himself while the lover has lost his head” (Ibid). His first line is borrowed directly from Stesichorus’ poem (243a-b); the ones that follow though seem to be in Socrates’ own voice. Presumably, so is the next line: “That would be fine to say if madness were bad, pure and simple; but in fact the best things have come from madness, when it is given as a gift of the god” (244a). The two preceding speeches discussed *erōs* as an illness, a madness that needed to be avoided. This speech, as an apology for Socrates’ first, retracts this generalized diagnosis. While it was important to first discuss the virtues of moderation and limitation, he must now soberly stroll through the madness of inspiration, to help Phaedrus reflect upon his own “Muse,” and its capacity for health or illness.

Reflecting upon “the Apolline mediumship which aims at knowledge, whether of the future or of the hidden present” (Dodds 69), Socrates first speaks of the prophetesses

¹³ The translators note that the title with which Stesichorus is introduced means “son of Good Speaker, from the Land of Desire” (p 522; fn. 21). This is of interest as Phaedrus’ main preoccupation still concerns the quest for good speech, though to this point he defines goodness on the basis of persuasion, completeness, and technical precision. As noted previously, his failing is in terms of the recognition and understanding of his own desires and their fulfilment.

and priestesses of Delphi and Dodona (244b).¹⁴ Their aim is to give an account of events to come. Noting the manner in which their work effects both the personal and the political, Socrates begins by stating that they “accomplish little or nothing when they are in control of themselves,” whether they perform their “fine work” for “all of Greece, either for an individual person or for a whole city” (244b). Like Hesiod though, their prophecy for the future is limited by the gift of Apollo; it cannot be a complete account.¹⁵ As Dodds describes, the revelation of oracles relied “on “enthusiasm” in its original and literal sense. The Pythia became *entheos*, *plena deo*: the god entered into her and used her vocal organs as if they were his own...” (70). This blurs the distinction between a mortal and immortal account; between the possibilities of what man can account for, and what is beyond his reach. Dodds also notes that in the case of the priestesses at Dodona, it is recorded that they did not remember the words they had spoken after coming out of their trance. Unfortunately, in the case of the Pythia, there is no definitive statement concerning her recollection (72). As a medium, the god’s voice is said to enter the priestess, thus in a manner of speaking her words are not her own. It is of interest to contrast the Pythia’s and Phaedrus’ enthusiasm. Hers is the result of entering a trance-like state and acting as a medium for the god, Apollo. His is the result of acting as a medium for a man, Lysias, as he pronounces his written words. Unlike the Pythia, he hopes to commit Lysias’ words to memory, having captured them on a page. He is attempting to make Lysias’ words, his “wisdom,” his own.

¹⁴ This is the second important allusion to Delphi in this dialogue. The first occurs when Phaedrus offers to erect a golden statue of Socrates at Delphi. This is to say that the two prominent centres of the Ancient Greece, Delphi and Athens, and the tension between them, representing the tension between the old and the new, is particularly apparent in the dialogue.

¹⁵ We might also consider the importance of beginning with prophetic madness and its connections to Delphi and Apollo. Again the imagery of birth is present, as Delphi was understood as the navel of the Earth, the centre of the centre, and connected to the Greek word for womb – *δελφός* (*delphus*).

Socrates continues. He recalls the tradition once more; here it is with respect to “[t]he people who designed our language in the old days” (244b). The people of the old ways, “never thought of madness as something to be ashamed of or worthy of blame” (Ibid). This implies that those in the current context are more suspicious of madness. As with the challenges faced by physicians to distinguish themselves from charlatans, once again the growing influence of *technē* as a measure for knowledge subtly appears in the background. The failure to be able to account for knowledge in a systematic fashion, leads to scepticism and suspicion. Further, this reveals a disjuncture between the old and the new. Interestingly, Socrates labels those who are the “finest experts of all,” “manic” (244c). With the expansion of the term *technē* to include a number of different expertises, and as a standard for professional accreditation, Socrates is purposively applying the term “expert” in a challenging manner.

He follows this example by a discussion of the “*oionoïstic*” art – “the clear-headed study of the future” (Ibid). The transition is one from the art in which the god is in the man, to the art that attempts a rational dissection of the gods’ inclinations and purposes. As he details, the practice uses “birds and other signs,” which were the basis for discussion and reasoning, “to bring intelligence (*nous*) and learning (*historia*) into human thought” (Ibid). Socrates says that modern speakers now pronounce “*oionoïstic*” with a long “ō,” placing the emphasis on “bird” or *oiōnos*, effectively detracting from the art’s discursive qualities and focusing on the mechanism by which the god is understood.¹⁶ While the patterned behaviour of birds can be codified to interpret meaning, this codification occurs at the expense of debate and dialogue. The tool

¹⁶ Translator Stephen Scully notes “making the second “o” long switches the etymology from “understanding” (*no*) with a short “o” to “bird” (*oiōnos*). Socrates’ etymology is, needless to say, fanciful” (25).

becomes more authoritative than discursive intelligence. The learning that once was the basis for the practice is paved over by the perception of it as superstitious bird watching.

He concludes this first section noting that, “madness (*mania*) from a god is finer than self-control of human origin” (244d). These words speak directly to Phaedrus’ desire for a *technē* of self-mastery. They recall the “self-control” of the non-lover, and require Phaedrus to reconsider the relationship between madness and sobriety. Last, they set forth a challenge to Lysias’ portrayal of sobriety, which redefines the limits and possibilities of man’s control over himself, through the debasement of *erōs*.

The healing powers of Dionysus are recalled in the second type of madness, that of purification and healing. Socrates begins, “madness can provide relief from the greatest plagues of trouble that beset certain families because of their guilt for ancient crimes” (Ibid). His description recalls an older Greek tradition, wherein bloodguilt, strife and disease were attributed to an act of man that disrupted a balance. As noted earlier, in the Archaic tradition, the predominant account for disease and illness, recovery and health, is located in the supernatural and accounted for through mythology. The “plagues of trouble” require men to reflect upon their actions and then offer apologies for their transgressions. The means to remedy such infractions were sought through prophecy, prayer and worship, where a prescription of “mystic rites and purification” is discovered to restore the balance (244e). The mysticism and magic of the early conception of *pharmakon* is recalled by this description. Commenting on the incorporation of Dionysus’ sting of madness into the rituals of the Greek *polis*, Dodds notes that it served “medicinal” purposes: “its social function was essentially cathartic, in the psychological sense: it purged the individual of those infectious irrational impulses” (76). Thus, like the

pharmakon it “could cause madness, and in homoeopathic doses [it] could also cure it” (273). Like the first madness described, this madness also has an important political function. It offered the freedom of release.

Lastly, with the third account of madness, we make a return to the beginning of Socrates’ first speech. That is, we confront the poetic madness of the Muses once more. Here he says the Muses take, “a tender virgin soul” and sting it to “a Bacchic frenzy of songs and poetry that glorifies the achievements of the past and teaches them to future generations” (245a). This statement seems consistent with Hesiod’s account, as he describes the Muses’ as inspiration, “so that I might tell of things to come and things past” (I.29-30). However, Socrates’ description departs slightly. In Socrates’ account, the Muse aids the poet in recollecting the past. No mention is made of prophesizing the future. The emphasis shifts to memory away from prophecy. These songs and poems, recording the great achievements of a time past, are to be taught – reproduced – for the education of the future generations.¹⁷ Socrates’ next line gently takes Phaedrus’ education to task:

If anyone comes to the gates of poetry and expects to become an adequate poet by acquiring expert knowledge of the subject without the Muses’ madness, he will fail, and his self-controlled verses will be eclipsed by the poetry of men who have been driven out of their minds. (245a)

In particular, his emphasis upon “expert knowledge” and “self-controlled verses” speak to men, like Lysias, who attempt to conform their practice to the demands of *technē*.

Their claim is to a practice that consists of particularized knowledge that is productive,

¹⁷ This statement at 245a seems contradictory to Socrates’ most notable censorship/expulsion of the poets in Books II, III, and X of the *Republic*. This is not to suggest that his criticisms of poetry are retracted, rather that this statement in the *Phaedrus* is evidence of the necessity of poetry to the city, and of the necessary relationship between philosophy and poetry.

specialized, teachable, and authoritative. Socrates is distinctly showing here that the mathematical cannot simply substitute for the poetic.

To this point in the dialogue, these three types of madness, the prophetic, teletic and poetic, have been alluded to at various intervals. Of particular interest are Socrates' evocation of the Muses and his reference to his ability as a "seer" (242c). He appears to be signalling that there are similarities between himself and the prophetesses and poets. To understand the nature of this similarity, and to appreciate the role Socrates is attempting to play with Phaedrus, once more we must tarry with the threads laid in the *Symposium*, and consider the parallels between Socrates and Diotima.

We might recall from Phaedrus' speech in the *Symposium* that he describes Love as a force that guides men, acts through them and provides an impetus for action; specifically, in the confrontation with one's mortality. By his account, virtue that is not god-inspired is higher than the virtue of a lover. Therefore, he concludes that a lack of *erōs* is superior to the possession of *erōs*. His is an argument for the non-lover, the beloved. Phaedrus' speech is the first "praise" of Love, and Socrates' is the last. Their speeches respectively reflect the lowest and the highest accounts. In his praise of Love, Socrates recounts his initiation into the erotic art. At the beginning of the *Symposium* he tells us, "the only thing I say I understand is the art of love" (177e), and in his speech towards the conclusion, he tells of how he gained this expertise. Diotima, "a woman of Mantinea," is the one, he says, "who taught me the art of love, and I shall go through her speech as best as I can on my own" (201d). As in the *Phaedrus*, when speaking of the most intimate of topics, Socrates is carefully concealed behind the words of another person, whether fictional or real.

Let us focus on two sections of Diotima's speech, which appear to address some of the baser qualities of Phaedrus' speech. First, as with Phaedrus' account (178b-d), Diotima begins by offering an explanation of Love's genesis. She details the tale of Love's parents, Poros (resource) and Penia (poverty), and how by nature of his birth, Love is always in need, but cunning, creative and clever in his ability to pursue his needs (203c-e). The description she offers of the traits he acquires from his father's side is particularly interesting. She says,

he is a schemer after the beautiful and the good; he is brave, impetuous, and intense, an awesome hunter, always weaving snares, resourceful in the pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom through all his life, a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings. (Ibid)

In this description of Love, we note an emphasis on heroic qualities. In particular, the word choice appears to allude to the Homeric portrait of Odysseus. For instance, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus describes his plotting in the mouth of the Cyclops' cave: "My wits kept weaving, weaving cunning schemes" (IX. 472). He is Homer's immortal progeny, and his name will forever be associated with his intelligence and resourcefulness. A connection between the heroic demi-god and Love, who is also in an in-between state, appears to be wrought here. Lastly, this description of Love's father concludes on his proficiency with "enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings," which is particularly important as we consider the kinship of philosophy, rhetoric and medicine. Odysseus' talents with such charms is described by the loyal swineherd:

You know how you can stare at a bard in wonder –
 trained by the gods to sing and hold men spellbound –
 how you can long to sit there, listening, all your life
 when the man begins to sing. So he charmed my heart...
 (Homer, *Odyssey* XVII. 575-578)

This is especially significant considering Phaedrus' burgeoning talents with charming potions, or *pharmakon*. Through her description, Diotima appears to be weaving a tightly knit connection between Love, the philosopher and the poet's hero.

Secondly, Diotima's speech attempts to address the question of how Love could possibly benefit the lover. She and Phaedrus agree upon the asymmetry of *erōs* and that the beloved is greater than the lover. However, Diotima introduces immortality into the lover's actions. She first establishes that Love wants, "reproduction and birth in beauty," and wants this because, "it is what mortals have in place of immortality" (206e – 207a). Man is not complete, therefore not content – he desires. Limited by his mortality, man desires immortality but is restrained in the ways in which he can touch the eternal. She begins with childbirth. Sexual reproduction allows man to leave an image of himself behind in the world, bridging part of himself into the life after his death. But, this is imperfect. Children, and their progeny, are but fading images of the man.

Next, she speaks of men who seek immortality through honour, and in this context, at 208c-e, Diotima's speech revisits two of Phaedrus' examples. These are men who will, "brave any danger... and are prepared to spend money, suffer through all sorts of ordeals, and even die for the sake of glory" (208c). These spirited souls seek to have the poets sing their songs to preserve their memory after they pass away. Diotima argues that Alcestis' act, her death, was motivated by the expectation that her memory would live on. She then turns to the story of Achilles, whose song has braved the ages, and attributes his action to the expectation that his virtue would be remembered (208d). By explaining the motives of Alcestis and Achilles in this way, Diotima is indicating that the lover is not tethered to their mortal love, but rather to preservation of their memory

earned by immortality. *Erōs* (in this case self-love) is satisfied by the poets' production. By tying the acts of the lovers to immortality, and not to their mortal beloveds, Diotima's words attempt to widen Phaedrus' perspective of Love. To incite wonder in the young man, it is necessary to open the door to the possibility of the immortal, to show that Love can round, "out the whole and bind fast the all to the all" (202e). The examples speak to Phaedrus' desire for honour and his desire for recognition. Though while they play on his self-love, at the same time they require him to begin to look beyond himself, to understand his mortality, to understand his lack.

Introducing Phaedrus to the erotic art requires an initiation. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates is, in effect, Phaedrus' Diotima. Curiously, the prophetess of Mantinea possesses all three of the classifications of madness that Socrates speaks of in his palinode. He says of Diotima, that she "was wise about many things besides this: once she even put off the plague for ten years by telling the Athenians what sacrifices to make" (201d). She is a priestess (type 1), who was able to preclude the plague by way of her 'preventative medicine' (type 2), and she was able to give Socrates words to edify his moral and intellectual education (type 3). She is a particularly complex character, but one who was able to find the proper and potent words to draw Socrates to the philosophic pursuit. By way of his discussion of madness, Socrates appears to be trying to mirror his mentor. In this way, he is drawing Phaedrus towards the boundary, the one that separates beloved from lover, which allows for the select few who are capable of philosophy to pursue their love. This is a risky venture, as love is unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Socrates cannot guarantee Phaedrus that he will not lose himself in its madness; only that by loving he gains the potential to truly love and serve wisdom – to be

a philosopher. Socrates concludes his sober accounting of madness by stating that he and Phaedrus must prove, “that this sort of madness is given to us by the gods to ensure our greatest good fortune. It will be a proof that convinces the wise if not the clever” (245c). The proof has just begun. To the madness that stands alone, the madness of Love, we will turn next.

III. The Bridled Beasts

“Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer,” begins Socrates, in his description of the immortal soul (246a). In the *Symposium* he attempted to incite wonder in Phaedrus through a discussion of immortality, or the living memory of one’s self. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates goes further and speaks not of eternal life as an image in the poet’s song, but of the immortality of the soul. With this in mind, this section will expound upon the themes of mortality, memory, and love that have been developed to this point. Its aim is to expand upon the complexity of Socrates’ response. More to the point, it will strive to shed some light on the importance of this apology with respect to the troubled and persistent relationship between philosophy and poetry.

Like a physician examining a body, Socrates begins his proof of the immortal nature of the soul by looking to causal relationships: “what it does and what is done to it” (245c). Importantly, in this first statement of his method, he separates two types of souls: divine and human (Ibid). All soul is immortal. Immortality is defined as that which moves itself and never desists from motion. Further, it is, “the source and spring of motion in everything else that moves; and a source has no beginning” (245c-d). It is

spoken of as the animating principle of existence; and something cannot come from nothing, as Parmenides argues. One might say that it is a closed system with respect to the eternal or continuous nature of its animating principle. It is cyclical, with no beginning or end. In other words, it is that which is self-sufficient and contained in its movement. Socrates then relates the principle of the self-mover to the soul:

But since we have found that a self-mover is immortal, we should have no qualms about declaring that this is the very essence and principle of a soul, for every bodily object that is moved from outside has no soul, while a body whose motion comes from within, from itself, does have a soul, that being the nature of a soul; and if this is so – that whatever moves itself is essentially a soul – then it follows necessarily that soul should have neither birth nor death. (245e)

This section is particularly troublesome. It is problematic because it is an introduction to Socrates' discussion of the madness of *erōs*, which we have considered in relation to man's pursuit of immortality. If man's soul is immortal, and thereby complete, to what end does it strive? Where is *erōs* in this equation? Further if the divine soul is immortal, to what end does it move? Is it not placated and content? It is interesting to note that Socrates' language seems similar to that of the new wise men previously discussed (cf. p 23-25), though he is careful to avoid the primacy of chance. Socrates turns next to the structure of the soul and the boundary between mortal and immortal.

Time, it appears, is the first factor distinguishing human from divine. Prior to constructing his image of the soul, Socrates points out: "To describe what the soul actually is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like is humanly possible and takes less time" (246a). A god would have infinite time to dedicate to the description, whereas man's time is limited and in being so, he must speak metaphorically to approximate the god's account. Poetic

imagery is necessary when a complete account is not possible. With this disclaimer, he crafts his image:

Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture. To begin with, our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business. (246a-b)

The standard of perfection is the god's team. As a unit comprised of parts, each align perfectly or beautifully with one another, and the team operates without conflict or strife. With this the second human distinction from the gods arises. That is, unlike the gods, man must deal with strife. The direction his team takes is informed on the basis of the struggle between competing elements.

Representative of power, energy and motion, the winged horses, the bridled beasts, also distinguish men from gods through the state of their wings. That is to say, mortal beings are said to be the product of "a soul that sheds its wings" (246c). This moulting or loss of plumage is the result of poor nourishment. Ice cream sundaes for dinner perhaps are not so tempting in this light. Rather, proper sustenance is found in "beauty, wisdom and goodness," which feed the soul and create the conditions of fertility (246e). When faced with "foulness and ugliness," the wings "shrink and disappear" and the soul "takes on an earthly body" (Ibid; 246c). Socrates then describes the attempt to feast at the banquet of the gods. Feasting, or the gluttonous consumption of wisdom, is set before all charioteers, though only the god's teams – the "balanced and well under control" – make it to the table (247b). The mortal man's lack of ability to tame his dark horse drags the team down, and with this propulsion, he loses sight of "what is real and watching what is true" (247d). Some men fare better than others following close behind

the god, permitting a clearer view. Yet most lose balance and control, and are trampled in the violent struggle that ensues. Their vision is interrupted by the “noisy, very sweaty, and disorderly” (248b) battle that occurs before the “banquet table.” They are left with “what they think is nourishment – their own opinions” (Ibid). Opinion is never quite as satisfying as true knowledge. In this light, we might consider once more Phaedrus’ condition upon meeting Socrates. If we consider rhetoric as an agent of opinion, as that which falsely presents itself as nourishment, then we might also consider this palinode Socrates’ *pharmakon*. This is an attempt to turn Phaedrus away from the buffet of opinion to the delicacy of true knowledge.

Memory follows appetite. After describing the clash of charioteers, Socrates goes on to speak of the manner in which “the soul that has seen the most,” or the lover of wisdom, is the only soul that is able to grow its wings once more (248d; 249c). What follows is the introduction of the last type of divine madness. Set apart from the others, the fourth type of madness is “that which someone shows when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true beauty” (248d). The philosopher’s memory of the Beautiful is the source of his reverence of mortal beauty. It reminds him of the truly divine. Socrates notes the importance of reminders when he remarks, “A man who uses reminders of these things correctly is always at the highest, most perfect level of initiation” (249c). The product of memory and wisdom, reminders permit an image of the past to be carried forward into the present, though imperfect, they allow for a glimpse of what was.

Memory and its connection to astonishment or wonder is discussed by Socrates, as he says:

Only a few remain whose memory is good enough; and they are startled when they see an image of what they saw up there. Then they are beside themselves, and their experience is beyond their comprehension because they cannot fully grasp what it is that they are seeing. (250a)

The memory of the Beautiful is particularly referred to here, as he notes that beauty is the most radiant, bright, and beaming of the images recalled (250b). “Justice and self-control do not shine through their images down here,” he contrasts, “the senses are so murky that only a few people are able to make out, with difficulty, the original of the likeness they encounter here” (Ibid). Why beauty? Though Socrates does not directly offer an answer to this question, it is plausible to consider beauty’s relation to symmetry, pattern and order, to begin to understand its prominence in the image. It is also that which acts as a bridge between animal and divine. As Diotima emphasizes, beautiful bodies awaken the erotic, which also discloses man’s similarity to “a four-footed beast, eager to make babies; and wallowing in vice” (*Phaedrus* 251a). Beauty is that which awakens the soul to the memory of the divine, yet can also sting the soul to erotic frenzy. Nevertheless, as Socrates has told us, it is the memory of the Beautiful that allows the philosopher to grow his wings once more.

Like teething to a child, the growth of the soul’s wings is a painful process, as the feathers prick and sting the soul. Pain cedes to joy only in the sight of beauty (251c-d). Both pained and relieved, when the soul beholds his beautiful boy, it has found “the only doctor for all that terrible pain” (252b). The height of wonder in Beauty is achievable only through engaging that which is truly human. As such, the risk of stinging pain and frenzy is a necessary risk. It is fair to presume that *Phaedrus* is likely still considering whether or not risk can be eliminated from this equation. He might be questioning whether it is possible to break the dark horse; to domesticate it through a process of

technical mastery, thereby eliminating the risk of its savagery. To consider the image's implications for a *technē* of self-control, let us return to the charioteer and the horses.

Taking what was first a very simple depiction, Socrates sculpts greater detail into his image, building its complexity:

One of the horses, we said, is good, the other not; but we did not go into the details of the goodness of the good horse or the badness of the bad. Let us do that now. The horse that is on the right, or nobler, side is upright in frame and well jointed, with a high neck and a regal nose; his coat is white, his eyes are black, and he is a lover of honour with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone. The other horse is a crooked great jumble of limbs with a short bull-neck, a pug nose, black skin, and bloodshot white eyes; companion to wild boasts and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears – deaf as a post – and just barely yields to the horsewhip and goad combined. (253d – e)

At first glance, this image seems quite black and white. By their physical descriptions the horses simply appear to be each other's opposite. Whereas one has a high neck, the other has a short bull-neck; one has a regal nose, the other has a pug nose. Of their qualities, the most intriguing concerns their companionship, or the objects of their friendship or fellowship. Socrates says of the white horse that it is a "lover of honour with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory," whereas the black horse is a "companion to wild boasts and indecency." On this basis, it would seem that the horses are representations of the division of the spirit (*thumos*), to the extent to which they reflect a desire for honour, a concern with reputation, and victory.

Love does not disappear from the image in this interpretation. It remains present in each division, from one horse to the next, to the charioteer. The steersman (reason) loves not the reminder, but the thing itself, and desires the clarity of vision once more. The white horse is the natural ally of the steersman, needing no whip, and obedient to his verbal commands. This horse loves honour and seeks it under the leadership of reason. Last, the black horse, moved by a self-love gratified by pleasures, is deaf to reason's

guidance, and gives way to the feeling of pride found in outrageous boasts. From the very low, to the very high, the image speaks to the necessity of an erotic understanding of the soul that includes the base qualities of human beings. This image encapsulates that sentiment, as it depicts man as a unique blend of divine and animal, with the human located in between. The liminal nature of *erōs* is again revealed here as “the one mode of experience which brings together the two natures of man,” the simple and the complex, the divine and the animal (Dodds 218).

While *erōs* permeates the structure of the soul, a hierarchy remains discernable with reason at the helm. As Socrates relates the importance of the alliance between the steersman and the white horse, victory is introduced once more: “if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds, which lead them to follow the assigned regime of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding” (256a – b). What happens next is curious. Socrates compares the feat of the soul, and its victors, to Olympic heroes. He says, “After death, when they have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first of three rounds in these, the true Olympic Contests” (256b). The successful striving of the soul, its struggle within itself, and its recognition of its erotic nature, is compared here to the athletic striving of the Olympic games. Playing in these games is not the idle play of a child. Though they are games, they are serious endeavours. To win a contest earns the Greek the praise of a hero. The contests are governed by rules, and these rules lay out the limits and possibilities of the game, including the way in which a winner is determined. Yet, as Roochnik notes, “These rules, however, are arbitrary” or determined by convention and not nature (*Tragedy* 170). He continues:

Despite the fact that the goal is constituted by something artificial, we feel our playing to emerge from our natures; we are compelled by the experience of competitive play and relish the small but engrossing life-world of the game. What the above implies is that the simple achievement of victory cannot account for the experience of playing. Winning does not exhaust the meaning of the game. We must, it seems, play for the sake of playing and not for the sake of winning. (Ibid 170 – 171)

While Socrates' image sets out a reward for conducting oneself honourably, i.e., victory, the meaning of the contest is perhaps more so determined by the embattled experience. As Griswold notes, "self-knowledge is this living out of a philosophical life," and most importantly, "it is something that cannot be "finished" until that life is over" (122). Living in pursuit of self-knowledge thereby is the primary goal. True victory in this contest can only be reached by facing death, as death is the point where man no longer strives or desires – he is complete.

Setting the charioteer's journey as the most important game, Socrates speaks directly to his interlocutor's desire for victory. Replacing Phaedrus' reward or bribe of the commemorative golden statue, with "bliss and shared understanding," he raises the stakes of the game (256b). Further, instead of merely reflecting on the speech's form, Socrates' palinode requires Phaedrus to look at its content. Phaedrus' prize was to be awarded if Socrates composed a more complete speech. In this scenario, the prize is only visible after looking inwards and considering the ruling aspects of one's soul. Of winning the contest, Socrates says, "There is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man" (Ibid). Taking us back to the beginning of the dialogue, moderation and madness appear to exist side-by-side in the philosopher's soul. The Typhon and the tamer, simpler animal persist as images of self-reflection. Although instead of speaking of them as he initially did, Socrates has provided his young, spirited, yet, in many ways, moderate interlocutor with a new image that comprises both

whole (soul) and part (erotic and *thumotic* desires). In crafting this image, he has laid out the rules of the game and most importantly, its goal. Fittingly, the last images of his palinode concern death: “In death they are wingless when they leave the body, but their wings are bursting to sprout, so the prize they have won from the madness of love is considerable...” (256d).

What has the palinode accomplished? By the limitations set out at the beginning, in the discussion of the immortal soul, Socrates’ account clearly exceeds the boundaries he puts in place. This is evidenced by the fact that his account deals with both the divine and the mortal, and then proceeds to give an omniscient account of the strife within the human soul. Like Hesiod and his Muses, Socrates’ palinode cannot ground itself; it cannot be *logos*. He can only provide an image, not a rational account, of the whole, and an image, not a rational account, of the structure of the soul. Yet, through these images he is able to convey that which he does know. The central image of the myth, the charioteer and his steeds, demonstrates man’s lack, his murky vision, and his erotic longings. It speaks to that which Socrates knows he does not possess, nor cannot possess: complete knowledge or wisdom. Further, it requires that Phaedrus consider the strength of his own memory. He may have a capacity to learn by rote, but memorizing the words of others will not make him a wise man. More to the point, the palinode is a poetic reminder for Phaedrus, asking him to remember himself.

Addressing Love directly, Socrates asks him to, “be kind and gracious toward my expertise at love” (257a). This is the first time in the *Phaedrus* that Socrates makes a claim to an expertise. Even as he professes at 235c that he, “can make a different speech, even better than Lysias” he does not support this claim by referring to expertise, rather

he speaks of his poor recollection of the words of, “the wise men and women of old who have spoken or written about this subject” (235b). This claim to expertise can only follow an account of his limited knowledge. Socrates’ ability to give an account of himself (*logos*) draws to the surface the tense relationship between old and new, or the authority of *mythos* or *logos*. Speaking to a young man, who is captivated with the new and with the knowledge and credibility of the expert, Socrates’ use of myth is a fitting choice because it enables him to demonstrate the limitations of man’s knowledge. He can reveal his particularly human wisdom. His speeches were set forth from Phaedrus’ challenge to compose a more complete speech; to show himself as exceeding Lysias in wisdom. With this competition still in the air, the last thing Socrates asks of Love is for Phaedrus to “no longer play both sides as he does now, but simply dedicate his life to Love through philosophic discussions” (257b). With this, the two reach a crossroads and Phaedrus must choose between Socrates’ erotic art and the wisdom of the rhetoricians.

Chapter Four

The Magician's Art (257c – 279c)

Phaedrus joins Socrates in his prayer. In the same way that he places his trust in his physicians and friends, Eryximachus and Acumenus, he indicates that he trusts Socrates' assessment. While this may be the case, his mind is still on the form of the speeches and not the assessment of the content. Thus, in the closing section of the dialogue, before they turn back to the city, one final strategy is employed to turn Phaedrus from a lover of speech into a lover of wisdom. To achieve this turn, Socrates leads Phaedrus to reflect upon the speeches of the afternoon. By way of this looking back, Phaedrus is given a way to move forward, to return to the political forum, with a new understanding of the importance of speech.

This chapter will explore the closing of the dialogue and the return to the *polis*, in four stages. First, it will look closer at the honour of the rhetorical artist. Throughout the dialogue, pride and shame have been consistent themes drawing upon man's relationship to his boundaries. Here honour and immortality are connected once more, as Socrates and Phaedrus consider the desire to give birth to words that will preserve one's memory for ages to come. Second, similar to our exploration in the first chapter concerning medicine's struggle to be considered a *technē*, at this stage we will consider the manner in which sophistic rhetoric strives to earn its credibility as a *technē*. The division laid out in the first chapter between a *techne*₁ and a *techne*₂ (stochastic *technē*) will be recalled, as Socrates rebuts the technical handbooks of the rhetoricians as insufficient grounds for an art form. Socrates uses Hippocrates, and the medical art, to demonstrate this insufficiency and to point Phaedrus towards a proper exploration of the soul. Arts that

take men as their subject matter are shown to be intrinsically different and limited compared to the reliable, product-oriented arts of *technē*'s origin, where success is measured by the masterful completion of the product. Third, the final myth of the *Phaedrus*, the Myth of Theuth, will be considered. The exploration of the myth, memory and the role of the written reminder raise the question: in what way is wisdom best served? Finally, the turn back to the *polis*, and the departing prayer, will conclude the exploration of the text.

In all, this chapter will return to the central question set forth at the beginning. That is, can rhetoric be considered a *technē*? And, if so, what are the implications for the pursuit of wisdom? Following the trail laid, I will argue that while at first glance it would seem that Socrates believes in the possibility of a rhetorical *technē*, this is but a mask. He intends to set *Phaedrus* upon this course to reveal the limitations concerning the mastery of human affairs. As the pursuit of the good and the attempt to guide or mould citizens forms the basis of politics, we might consider the way in which the limitations revealed already point towards the absurdity of a *technē* model of political education. Thus, while the dialogue may appear to be a departure from the affairs of the *polis*, it is necessarily shaped by it and the philosophy's role within it.

I. The Honour of the Artist

Fulfilling *Phaedrus*' original request at 242a, to "wait and discuss the speeches," the interlocutors have come to a point where they are now able to reflect upon the afternoon's speeches. Indeed, this is the desire weighing primarily on *Phaedrus*' mind. Launching into an evaluation, *Phaedrus* comments: "As to your speech, I admired it from

the moment you began: You managed it much better than your first one” (257c).

Revealing his perception of the afternoon as an extension of the initial competition he set forth, Phaedrus speaks of the preceding speeches as competitors for admiration or glory.

He continues:

Lysias' effort to match it is bound to fall flat, if of course he even dares to try to offer a speech of his own. In fact, my marvelous friend, a politician I know was only recently taking Lysias to task for just that reason: All through his invective, he kept calling him a “speechwriter.” So perhaps his pride will keep him from writing speeches for us. (Ibid)

“Speechwriter” is intended here as an insult. On this basis, Phaedrus' comment transcends the instance of the competition between Lysias and Socrates, and raises the larger question as to the connection of written speech to pride. Further it points towards the questionable reputation of speechwriters. While Phaedrus admires Socrates for his speech, he also reveals the disrepute of speechwriting in the *polis*. Phaedrus makes the claim that, “the most powerful and renowned politicians are ashamed to compose speeches or leave any writings behind” for fear that “they may come to be known as ‘sophists’” (257d). This comment demonstrates the link between sophistry and speechwriting and, secondly, the wary or uncertain reputation of sophists in the *polis*. To reuse an earlier metaphor, the grounds upon which these men are invited in, or shown the door, is clearly contentious.

Who are these men, the sophists? And, why would such a label carry with it unsavoury connotations? A product of the Greek Enlightenment and the rise of Athenian democracy, these men sought to, “transcend the aristocratic principle of privileged education, which made it impossible for anyone to acquire [virtue] unless he already

possessed it by inheritance from his divine ancestors” (Jaeger 287).¹ Thus, in the main, they were educators. As Jaeger explains further: “it [the great educational movement] aimed, as the Greeks understood it, entirely at political education, training to serve the *polis*” (288). To this point, the endeavour of these educators does not seem particularly controversial. Looking a little closer, however, reveals the beginning of the debate concerning whether or not they are worthy of an invitation. Many prominent Athenians certainly thought so, as Jaeger notes: “their intellectual and psychological charm made the sophists illustrious and favoured guests at the homes of the rich and powerful” (297). The sophists were invited into the homes of the most politically influential men in the *polis*. Their claim is to be able to produce virtuous political men, which implies that virtue is something that can be taught. Like a master craftsman can transmit his knowledge to his apprentice, they claim to be able to impart virtue to would-be political men. In other words, the sophists claim to be shapers of virtuous statesmen, producers of *ho kaloskagathos* or the gentleman. This is an attractive skill, especially to those seeking power or influence in the *polis*.

The success of the statesman, particularly in a democratic context, weighed largely on his oratory ability. The ‘art’ of argumentation thus becomes central to the training of the political apprentice. While the style and emphasis of the sophistic teaching sometimes varied from one educator to the next, the majority of the training concerned the digestion of facts and memorization of the formal structure of argument (Jaeger 292). As compared to the study of moral and political questions, learning by rote elements of

¹ I replace Jaeger’s “areté” with virtue to stay consistent with my wording. Jaeger clarifies that though the sophistic movement appears democratic in principle, it really is “the old problem of aristocracy in a new form” (290). The pupils of the sophists were a select few men who sought to become politically influential, and leaders of the people (Ibid).

speech and effective turns of phrase enable a more efficient training. In this connection, rhetoric, the primary means of achieving power, persuasion and influence, becomes particularly important to the men who are seeking to become influential statesmen. On the basis of teaching argument, or the means to participate in the political arena, the educator can profess to teach virtue. Virtue is understood here as political virtue as represented by one's oratorical abilities and intellectual prowess (Jaeger 291). Though one produces good speakers, are they necessarily good statesmen? This question gives way to the unsavoury connotations surrounding the sophist:

whenever their new culture went beyond formal or factual education, whenever their political training attacked the deeper problems of morality and the state, it was in danger of teaching half-truths – unless it could be grounded on genuine and thorough political thought, searching for the truth for its own sake. (Jaeger 293)

Thus, many speechwriters and sophists earn a reputation of charlatanry. The dishonour of such an unsavoury reputation is the shame to which Phaedrus is referring to when he says, “renowned politicians are ashamed to leave any writings behind” (257d).

Where Phaedrus sees the source of their shame, Socrates sees the birthplace of their pride. Their written words preserve their memory, so in fact Socrates argues, “the most ambitious politicians love speechwriting and long for their writings to survive” (257e). A child of their mind, the preservation of their speech enables their memory to be passed forth to future generations. Socrates states that these politicians “don't feel contempt for speechwriting; on the contrary, they are in awe of it” (258b). They wonder at its ability to transcend their mortal lives. The written word, and its greater capacity to preserve memory, is thereby venerated. Commenting on the connection between writing, honour and immortality, Socrates argues further:

What of an orator or a king who acquires enough power to match Lycurgus, Solon, or Darius as a lawgiver and acquires immortal fame as a speechwriter in his city? Doesn't he think that he is equal to the gods while he is alive? And don't those who live in later times believe just the same about him when they behold his writings? (258c)²

On this basis, Socrates argues that speaking and writing are not themselves shameful, as they provide the impetus for great statesmen to arise and to be remembered. Rather, he somewhat ambiguously argues that it is shameful to engage in speaking or writing “shamefully or badly” (258d). If we consider his argument in light of his actions surrounding his first speech, wherein he covers his head for fear of shame, we might consider again the connection between shame and trespassing one's boundaries. Whereas the conversation began on the note that being a speechwriter itself was dishonourable, Socrates is beginning to make a distinction between good and bad speechwriters. Like the *pharmakos* (the administrator of the *pharmakon*), there are those men that are beneficial to the good of the city and those that are harmful. The difficulty lies in discerning one from the other.

Setting forth on this task, Socrates launches into their discussion of good and bad speech by once more recalling the Muses. This time, he does not ask for their song, instead he comments on their story. The cicadas' song overhead draws forth the tale, as he describes the gift of the Muses. Phaedrus mentions that he is not familiar with this tale, to which Socrates responds, “Everyone who loves the Muses should have heard this” (259b). This response prods Phaedrus' affections for the new wise men, who themselves depreciate the Muse. Those who love the Muses and those who do not are separated by this comment. Considered in relation to the transition from spoken to written accounts,

² Socrates' argument appears quite similar to one that we have already encountered. That is, from the *Symposium*, we considered Diotima's argument concerning Love's desire for “reproduction and birth in beauty,” because, “it is what mortals have in place of immortality” (206e – 207a).

and man's changing relationship with the Muses as a result of the technical invention of writing, Socrates appears to be dividing those who acknowledge reminders and those who seek memory and wisdom in the written record.

Continuing his tale, Socrates acknowledges that they are sailing into troubled waters. Of the conversation to follow, he notes that they will have to exhibit patient and steadfast courage, as they navigate the Siren call that enchants so many valiant sailors (Ibid). With this warning in place, he then begins to tell the cicadas' story. In a time before Muses, cicadas were human beings, but "when the Muses were born and song was created for the first time, some of the people of that time were so overwhelmed with the pleasure of singing that they forgot to eat or drink; so they died without realizing it" (259c). The Muses' songs, the poets' words, were so enchanting, so charming, so intoxicating, that those men immoderately abandoned themselves to the song. They received it with so much pleasure that they could not step back to question it. From these men, "the race of cicadas came into being; as a gift from the Muses, they have no need of nourishment once they are born. Instead they immediately burst into song, without food or drink, until it is time for them to die" (Ibid). Their only nourishment is the song, the music that tempts so many passing travellers to nod off, "diverted by their song and, sluggish of mind" (259a). At the end of the cicadas' life, it performs its gift to mankind. It reports to the Muses who among men have honoured her. He continues:

And to Calliope, the oldest among them, and Urania, the next after her, who preside over the heavens and all discourse, human and divine, and sing with the sweetest voice, they report those who honor their special kind of music by leading a philosophic life. (259d)

Calling upon Phaedrus' steadfast spirit, to rise up to the challenge lest his thoughts be diverted by song, Socrates incentivizes their pursuit. Upon the conclusion of the myth, Socrates returns to the topic at hand.

With the song of the cicadas' in the air, they move to consider whether rhetoric can be considered an art form, and on what basis the rhetorician is worthy of praise or blame. Taking up this challenge, the first qualification considered is whether or not "someone who is going to speak well and nobly" will need "the truth about the subject he is going to discuss" (259e). Sharing the opinion of other men on this matter, Phaedrus says, "it is not necessary for the intending orator to learn what is really just, but only what will seem just to the crowd who will act as judges" (260a). Persuasion proceeds from what seems to be and not from what really is. To this Socrates replies with a most "ridiculous" example (260c). "Suppose," he says, "I were trying to convince you that you should fight your enemies on horseback, and neither one of us knew what a horse is, but I happened to know ... that Phaedrus believes a horse is a tame animal with the longest ears" (260b). Public opinion in the matter of the horse is clearly mistaken. It has settled on a similar mammal, but is unaware of the horse's true form. He warns Phaedrus at 261e, that one is most likely to be deceived in things that differ little from one another, as the exaggerated example of the horse and donkey denotes. Having not considered the nature of the horse or its appearance, those deciding upon matters of horses could be persuaded to use donkeys in its place. This rather comedic example does raise a quite serious point. If the rhetorician himself is unable to distinguish bad from good, or donkey from horse, and he is simply aiming for the admiration and honours of the public,

by following their opinion, he might unknowingly praise the donkey. More importantly, the honours leave him blind to the pursuit of true knowledge.

Allowing rhetoric to respond, Socrates assumes its voice:

Look, I am not forcing anyone to learn how to make speeches without knowing the truth; on the contrary, my advice, for what it is worth, is to take me up only after mastering the truth. But I do make this boast: even someone who knows the truth couldn't produce conviction on the basis of a systematic art without me. (260d)

Rhetoric's response makes two important claims. First, that truth can be mastered. Alternatively stated, one can be made an expert in truth. Second, that conviction can only be produced through the practice of a systematic art. Having consistently maintained the difference between human wisdom and god-like wisdom, Socrates focuses his attention on the second claim. He raises the contentious status of rhetoric as an art, by summoning the arguments that challenge its claim to *technē*. He begins with a definition, as he had when he first spoke on *erōs*. He defines the rhetorical art as that which is, "a way of directing the soul by means of speech, not only in the lawcourts and on other public occasions but also in private" (261a). This definition is actually quite provocative. Scully notes that, "directing the soul" (*psychagogia tis*) held a negative connotation at the time (45). On the one hand it was related to "conjuring up" souls from the underworld, and on the other it implied the persuasion of the living "through witchcraft or enchantment" (Ibid). Further, and this is the aspect to which Phaedrus objects, it extends rhetoric to private discourse. This would be challenging for Phaedrus to accept, Scully remarks, because "all handbooks discussed rhetoric only in a public context" (Ibid). For Phaedrus, the boundaries of the rhetorical art end with the law courts and the Assembly. With this in mind, it is possible that Phaedrus did not consider the speech in his possession to be an example of rhetoric, as he understood its boundaries. By opening up

rhetoric to consider its presence apart from formal encounters, this definition speaks largely to the educative quality of speech. In this way, education, which occurs through stories, or informal debates on day-to-day affairs, qualifies as that which sets man on a particular course. Informal oratory is just as enchanting as its formal counterpart. Socrates' speeches are not excluded from this definition. They are rhetorical to the extent that they are educative and political. Thus, with the broadening of the definition, Socrates is also encouraging Phaedrus to begin to distinguish between helpful and harmful speeches, and to consider which words should guide him.

Trying to further open Phaedrus to the presence of rhetoric beyond the walls of the courts or Assembly, Socrates raises poetic examples. He inquires, "have you only heard of the rhetorical treatises of Nestor and Odysseus – those they wrote in their spare time in Troy?" (261b). Phaedrus replies: "No, by Zeus, I haven't even heard of Nestor's – unless by Nestor you mean Gorgias, and by Odysseus, Thrasymachus or Theodorus" (261c). Phaedrus' comment is quite revealing. It speaks to a shifting understanding of education and raises the idea of honour once more. Whereas once the poets were the primary educators, now the sophists have assumed a greater role. Jaeger comments on the sophists' challenge, "they entered into frank competition with poetry, in form as well as in content" (296). In keeping with the ideals of the Greek Enlightenment, Jaeger remarks further that, "the fact that educational theory was now transferred from poetry to prose is a sign that it was at last thoroughly rationalized" (Ibid). The Muses, it appeared, no longer need be relied upon. Through writing, man could act as the recorder of his own memory. While, in the oral tradition, only the names of the greatest heroes would be sung, with the rise of the written record many more men can record their names for

posterity. Interestingly, at this time it was popular in Athens to compare contemporary orators with Homeric heroes (Scully 46). The men named by Phaedrus — Gorgias, Thrasymachus and Theodorus — are all prominent sophists. By means of their persuasion they are able to earn the titles of heroes. Gorgias is “a kind of Nestor,” and Thrasymachus or Theodorus is an “Odysseus” (Ibid). Heroism is democratized. Their honour is dependent upon swaying popular opinion to achieve a glimpse at immortal fame and to be included in the public record. Therefore, to re-use Socrates’ ridiculous analogy, the sophists, if they seek glory, must praise the donkey instead of the horse. Thus, as educators they pass on the lessons of flattery and not truth. On these grounds, their potential to be good educators is challenged. Further, because their practice seeks and is based on opinion and not the pursuit of true knowledge, it cannot hold to the test of *technē* without falsely representing itself.

II. The Art of the *Pharmakos*

Socrates turns to consider the qualifications that must be addressed if we are to consider rhetoric an art. At 263b, he says that to acquire the art of rhetoric one must, “first make a systematic division and grasp the particular character of each of these two kinds of thing, both the kind where most people wander in different directions and the kind where they do not.” The “kinds of thing” he is referring to concern those topics such as justice or the good, where disagreement over their meaning is common. The second category concerns the meaning of words that are commonly agreed upon, such as “iron” or “silver” (263a). The first qualification for a rhetorical art is thereby concerned with the division aspect of the equation. It is based on the classification of words

according to their similarities and differences with one another. For an art of rhetoric, he argues, you must be able to classify those words that are contentious from those whose definitions are commonly accepted. He begins here what he will refer to later as a process of “divisions and collections” (266b). That is, a method of understanding that is built from knowledge of the relationship of wholes to parts and vice versa.

The second qualification follows from the first and concerns collection. Socrates says, “he must not be mistaken about his subject; he must have a sharp eye for the class to which whatever he is about to discuss belongs” (263c). The rhetorician must know which category (contentious or not) his topic belongs to before he proceeds to speak. If a contentious topic is spoken about, the speaker should offer his definition before he proceeds to speak. Using the speeches of the afternoon as examples of this, Socrates asks, “I can’t remember at all because I was completely possessed by the gods: Did I define love at the beginning of my speech?” (263d). Careful to note that his rhetorical ability is not his own, but rather that of “the Nymphs, daughters of Achelous, and Pan, son of Hermes,” Socrates claims that his speech was “much more artful” than Lysias’ speech, because it began in this systematic fashion. The inspired speech is more artful than the ‘technical’ speech. This contention is demonstrated by discussing the rational order of a speech. Socrates argues, “Every speech must be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own; it must be neither without head nor without legs; and it must have a middle and extremities that are fitting both to one another and to the whole work” (264c). Lysias’ speech falls short by this measure. Lines of his argument can be rearranged, cut and paste from the end to the beginning. Though it presumably is built upon the order of the textbook, each statement does not reveal a necessary connection to

its following or preceding statements. The truly artful speech Socrates argues, is one that advances rationally and, like the body, depends on different parts for different functions, but all in a view to the whole.

Together, division and collection are thereby shown to be the most important conditions of a systematic art. Though this is implicit in the first two explorations, here Socrates elaborates on it as a talent of the “dialecticians” (266c). Commenting on his own speech, Socrates says, “part of it [the speech] was given with Fortune’s guidance, and there were in it two kinds of things the nature of which it would be quite wonderful to grasp by means of a systematic art” (265d). When Phaedrus inquires as to which things Socrates is referring, Socrates replies first by commenting on collection: “The first consists in seeing together things that are scattered about everywhere and collecting them into one kind” (Ibid). A clear boundary is set around the topic by way of a comprehensible definition. Again the importance of beginning an exploration by defining one’s terms is shown to be essential if the speech is to “proceed clearly and consistently with itself” (Ibid). The second has to do with the process of division or “to be able to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints” (265e). To elaborate, Socrates refers back to the discussions of madness. Lysias’ speech makes the claim that *erōs* is a sort of illness and that the lover is deranged. By Socrates’ account, Lysias is guilty of having cast his definition too broad, without having considered the divisions that may exist in *erōs* itself. More likely, Lysias is aware of the divisions, but rather chooses to ignore them for the expediency of his argument. Thus, Socrates shows that it was necessary to discover the “left-handed” and “right-handed” parts of *erōs*. Looking back, we see that his speeches were in dialogue with one another, building off

what had been previously laid down, rounding out the picture of the whole. Following the assessment of the speeches, Socrates proceeds to define himself as a “lover of these divisions and collections” (266b). Those who have mastered this process he labels “dialecticians” and he sets them apart from men like Lysias and Thrasymachus (266c). Yet as cautious dividers and collectors ourselves, we might ask whether the grounds for this division have been sufficiently established. Further, has an answer to the status of rhetoric as a *technē* been established? Roochnik comments on the rhetorical *technē* of the sophists, noting that the general character of their work concerned, “conceptual division (*diaeresis*) issuing in rule-governed synthesis” (*Art and Wisdom* 69). Thus, to this point the distinction between dialecticians and rhetoricians remains unclear.

Upon concluding his survey of the qualifications of a rhetorical art, Socrates asks Phaedrus: “Could there be anything valuable which is independent of the methods I mentioned and is still grasped by art?” (266d). To which, Phaedrus replies, a lot is left to consider. The records of the rhetorician’s art, as found in his handbooks, detail their systematic practice. As a result, these written documents must be examined in the consideration of rhetoric’s status as an art.

As discussed at the beginning of this exploration, the educator of a *technē* can give an account of his art that is able to “transform a layman into a fellow expert” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 20). Further, we are reminded that during the fifth century BCE, the label “*technē*” was a “prized appellation that could confer credibility on a subject and its practitioner” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 43). Therefore, to secure this label meant that the sophists could secure their status and justifiably ask for a fee from young men seeking virtue (Ibid 66). This requires the art to be articulated on the basis of

a “set of rational principles, some sort of logos, governing the field, the subject matter, in question” (Ibid). The sophistic educators, by placing their knowledge in writing, are conforming their practice to the criteria of *technē*. They are searching for credibility on the basis that their art is defined by repeatable, systematic knowledge that generates a reliable product. The written handbook is an educative tool intended to confer the knowledge possessed by the master of the art to the apprentice or reader.

Such systematic knowledge is established by demonstrating the relationship of the parts to the whole, and this is precisely where Socrates and Phaedrus begin. In the rhetorician’s handbook, the whole is defined as the speech itself. Its parts, as we explored by way of Lysias’ speech, are divided into categories such as: the preamble, statement of facts, evidence of witnesses, etc. (266d – e). This sort of written, rhetorical instruction, comprised of a collection of rules or precepts, was one of two popular forms of instruction. The second was comprised of “commonplaces” or “examples of basic argument patterns that could be memorized and used as needed” (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 67). The first method undertook to divide speeches into types; for example, “parliamentary,” “ceremonial,” and “forensic,” and then further subdivide speeches into their constituent parts, such as those parts discussed by Socrates and Phaedrus (Ibid 68). Unlike the first, the second method was less concerned with formal division, and concentrated more on imparting successful generic arguments. Memorization is key to both methods, though it figures largely in the second where the text and its numerous generic arguments are intended to be memorized and then reproduced when the occasion demands.

Interestingly, Socrates and Phaedrus only discuss the first method of instruction. This is likely because, of the rhetorical accounts, it is the most mindful of the demands of *technē*, whereas the second appears only to distribute the product of the art without clear instruction as to how and when to use the product in possession. Thus, an effort to demonstrate the capacity for reliable reproduction guides the first method as it seeks to give an account of speech, its constituent parts, and its appropriate context. It appears to follow Socrates' demand for collection and division, on the basis that it begins with a speech and then categorizes and orders its parts. As Roochnik notes, "The *Technē Rhetorikē* systematically analyzes its subject, public speeches, into its parts, defines these parts, and then orders them hierarchically" (Art and Wisdom 69). Thus, we are shown something that might be able to produce the type of living speech that Socrates demands, in so far as it follows the demand of a rational order. Grasping the method of the system and its hierarchical relationships is then held to result in a mastery of the rhetorical art (Ibid). Yet following the logic of this method, by beginning with speeches and breaking them into their constituent parts, one arrives at the systematic practice of "orthography" or correct spelling (Ibid 70). To achieve the precision of the craftsman one must reduce speeches to a "kind of logical and rhetorical atomism" (Ibid 69). By attempting to follow the arithmetic model of a *technē*₁, the rhetorician's art becomes a practice of word play. It studies the form of speech, but not its content or meaning. Yet, because *logos* is that which defines man as a uniquely political animal, and the content of speech is that which guides man's search for the good, claiming the mastery of speech in this respect also claims the mastery of the political or human realm. Though the first claim to the mastery of the combination of letters and words may be supported by the status of a *technē*, its

implied mastery of the political realm cannot hold because the study of the art is speech and not man.

Departing from the enumeration of rhetorical terminology, Socrates includes what appears as an odd example among the mix. In this example, he awards “the prize” for speeches “bemoaning the evils of poverty and old age” to “the mighty Chalcedonian” (267c). This mighty figure, we learn is Thrasymachus, who has already been mentioned once before, as an example of an orator who had been awarded the title of a Homeric hero. With tongue in cheek, Socrates says that Thrasymachus is worthy of this prize because he, “knows best how to inflame a crowd and, once they are inflamed, how to hush them again with his words’ magic spell, as he says himself” (267d). His magic earns him this honour. If we consider once more, Compton’s definition of the *pharmakos*, or the distributor of the *pharmakon*, we will recall the line tread between poison and medicine, and the overall connection to magic:

the early *pharmakos* might have been ‘magic man’ or he might have been ‘sacred-man.’ Then, presumably, he or she was ‘healer, poisoner’, then later, expiatory sacrifice for the city.... the *pharmakos* could be the medicine that heals the city; on the other hand, he could be the poison that had to be expelled from the system. (4)

The power of speech, with its ability to invade the human heart and mind, is an attractive power to seek to harness and direct. Attempting to liberate the gift of speech from the Muses, Thrasymachus’ magic is tied to his efforts to harness the powers of speech. Further, his practice focuses on the study of men and the effects of his speeches upon them. Like a physician studying the effects of *pharmakon* in matters of the body, Thrasymachus is studying the effects of his speeches in matters of the soul. To learn to inflame, calm, provoke, and stir a crowd with control is to master the magic of words.

Like Hippocrates, who sought to systematize the magic of the temple priests' art, Thrasymachus is attempting to turn magic into *technē*.

Thrasymachus is not alone in these efforts. Another prominent sophist, Gorgias, also appears to consider the manner in which the magical power of speech could be transformed into an art. Two particular passages from his *Encomium of Helen*, speak to this idea.³ In the largest section of his argument he argues that Helen should be exonerated because she was likely persuaded by Paris. First, he considers the force of persuasion and compares the persuader's words to incantations such as those performed by the temple priests:

Sacred incantations sung with words are bearers of pleasure and banishers of pain, for, merging with opinion in the soul, the power of incantation is wont to beguile it and persuade it and alter it by witchcraft. There have been discovered two arts of witchcraft and magic: one consists of errors of soul and the other of deceptions of opinion. All who have and do persuade people of things do so by molding a false argument. (10; 11)

The ability to persuade with art is best developed around the opinions of men. Gorgias notes further on, that due to the fallible nature of man's memory, opinion and not knowledge is usually the steersman of the soul (11). Opinion is thereby easier to manipulate with false argument, than knowledge is to gain with true argument. He again recalls the power of the physician:

The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion. (14)

By learning the cause and effect relationship between words and states of being, one could master the ability of knowing how, "to inflame a crowd and, once they are

³ As Roochnik notes, credit for this argument goes to deRomilly who wrote about the connections of magic and rhetoric in *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (72).

inflamed, how to hush them again with his words' magic spell" (267d). Instead of emphasizing the knowledge of the components of speech like the rhetorician's of the textbooks, Gorgias and Thrasymachus claim their knowledge to be of men and their souls. Striving to turn magic into *technē*, the rhetoricians seek authority over the soul, in the same way the physicians sought to become the authority over the body.

Socrates' interruption of the cataloguing of rhetorical terminology with the example of Thrasymachus' prized skill precedes the final item of the interlocutor's list: recapitulation. Noting the importance of aiding the audience's memory, reminding them of the important aspects of the argument by "summarizing everything at the end," Socrates and Phaedrus conclude their list (Ibid). Socrates does just this; he reminds Phaedrus of the way they have taken and entreats him to reflect on the rhetorician's argument for their art. Socrates remarks, "its fabric is a little threadbare" (268a). Like holding up a garment that from afar looks intact but when closely examined is poorly woven, Socrates entreats Phaedrus to look a little closer at the weave of the rhetoricians' argument for their art.

Turning to figures in whom Phaedrus places his trust; Socrates begins his examination by looking to the physicians. He posits:

Suppose someone came to your friend Eryximachus or his father Acumenus and said: "I know treatments to raise or lower (whichever I prefer) the temperature of people's bodies; if I decide to, I can make them vomit or make their bowels move, and all sorts of things. On the basis of this knowledge, I claim to be a physician; and I claim to be able to make others physicians as well by imparting it to them. (268a-b)

We considered this statement at the very beginning of our pursuit in the context of providing a definition of *pharmakon*. Returning to it now, we see the extent to which the possession of pharmaceuticals only implies that one has the preliminaries of the art of

medicine, and cannot rightly be said to be a doctor. Like someone who claims to be a musician on the basis of knowing “the highest and lowest notes on his strings,” without also understanding harmony, order, and how to read one’s audience, the man is surely mad to claim to possess the art of music (268e). Possessing causal knowledge does not in and of itself entail understanding. With a human subject, a being that is wilful, dynamic, and not always rational, the doctor must carefully assess his patient to be sure his dose is fitted to the patient. While the human body is generally the same from one patient to the next, the doctor is able to generalize treatments. However, he must maintain a keen eye for particularity. Further, unlike arts that work with inanimate objects, the physician must also have a keen eye for the nature and temperament of his subject if his treatments are to be successful. Rhetoric, like the art of medicine, requires this sensitivity to the particular. Imparting such knowledge to an apprentice demands a close relationship between student and teacher, as the Hippocratic practice emphasized. Thus, possession of the parts of the art is shown to be insufficient without the proper understanding of their relationship to the whole. In a true art of rhetoric, the expert of the art would possess a mastery of the soul and, further, knowledge of the whole, or wisdom. Thus, the magic of a man like Thrasymachus is shown to be uninspired. While he may have discovered a few potions to draw reactions from men, he cannot ground this knowledge in an account of the soul.

Convinced of the validity of Socrates’ argument, Phaedrus agrees that the rhetorician’s handbooks are insufficient as a means of producing “the really persuasive speaker” (269d). Yet, Phaedrus still persists in his demand to know how one could acquire the “art of the true rhetorician” (Ibid). Socrates patiently provides his answer in

two stages. First, he answers without reference to the possibility of an art of rhetoric. Denying its status as an art in his first reply, he begins to show the difficulties of labelling rhetoric an art. He states, “If you have a natural ability for rhetoric, you will become a famous rhetorician, provided you supplement your ability with knowledge and practice” (269d). In other words, to become a good orator requires the refining of natural ability that can only happen through experience. Socrates provides a similar answer in the *Gorgias*, where he replies to Polus that rhetoric is not an art, but “a knack [*empeiria*]” (462c). The translators note that *empeiria* is alternatively translated as experience. To learn to speak well, one must risk the unsuccessful speech and learn from their interlocutors. It is an ability that can be refined through practice, though the risk of failure is present with each oration. On this basis it cannot be systematized, only acquired experientially.

At first glance, the second stage of Socrates’ answer appears to argue that rhetoric can be considered a stochastic *technē* like medicine. To show their similarities, Socrates details: “In both cases we need to determine the nature of something – of the body in medicine, of the soul in rhetoric. Otherwise all we’ll have will be an empirical and artless practice” (270b). Whereas the rhetoricians of the handbooks dissected speeches, Socrates is arguing that the art of rhetoric should actually begin with the soul. We may recall that previously Socrates had warned Phaedrus of the danger of being deceived by similarities as the horse and donkey example illustrated. In this context we may consider whether Socrates is actually pointing Phaedrus towards rhetoric. By acknowledging that the study of the soul is the starting point, he entreats Phaedrus to pursue self-knowledge, which is the beginning of any philosophic pursuit. Because Phaedrus does not yet

understand the difference between rhetoric and philosophic dialectic, he remains under the impression that Socrates is still speaking of the art of rhetoric, and continues to follow his argument.

Going further, Socrates states, “Do you think, then, that is possible to reach a serious understanding of the nature of the soul without understanding the nature of the world as a whole?”(270c). Operating on the premise that, like the Hippocratic understanding of the body, the soul is a microcosm of nature, Phaedrus agrees to Socrates’ contention. At this point we see that in three stages Socrates has taken the object of rhetoric’s knowledge from speech, to the soul, to the whole. Using Hippocrates as an example once more, he posits:

Consider, then, what both Hippocrates and true argument say about nature. Isn’t this the way to think systematically about the nature of anything? First, we must consider whether the object regarding which we intend to become experts and capable of transmitting our expertise is simple or complex. Then, if it is simple, we must investigate its power: What things does it have what natural power of acting upon? By what things does it have what natural disposition to be acted upon? If on the other hand, it takes many forms, we must enumerate them all and, as we did in the simple case, investigate how each is naturally able to act upon what and how it has a natural disposition to be acted upon by what. (270d)

The argument he details is oddly familiar. Indeed, when we reflect back on the beginning of the dialogue, we notice that when Socrates describes his pursuit of self-knowledge, he does so by way of exploring whether he is simple or complex (230a). He models the beginning of a systematic pursuit of self-knowledge.⁴ Applying Socrates’ strictures for a systematic pursuit of rhetoric, the rhetorician must first demonstrate complete self-consciousness, that is, a full account of the complexity or simplicity of soul. Next, he must demonstrate the soul’s relationship to the whole: “By what things does it have a

⁴ His endeavour cannot make it past the first stage of the inquiry. Though as an aside, it would appear that modern psychologists take this systematization as a model of practice, though the soul (psyche) is no longer the main object of study, rather the brain is.

natural disposition to be acted upon?” (270d). Following in the precedent that craftsmen could be considered wise in their particular art, on the basis that they could provide a full account of their systematic *technē*, so too could a rhetorician be considered wise, though he must account for the whole. The sophists, as revealed by their name (wise men), would perhaps not object to this account of their practice, though it is unlikely that such knowledge could ever be demonstrated. In contrast, the philosopher (lover of wisdom) recognizes that he does not possess this complete knowledge, and thereby does not make the claim to the rhetorical art.

Pursuing the art of rhetoric more closely, Socrates lays out three criteria that the teacher of rhetoric must meet. In the first place his words are directed to teachers of rhetoric, like Thrasymachus. He says that any serious teacher, “will, first, describe the soul with absolute precision and enable us to understand what it is” (271a). While the Hippocratic doctor is able to give a precise account of the body, the rhetorician cannot fully account for the soul. Looking back upon the speeches of the afternoon, we recall that prior to giving his account of the nature of the human soul, Socrates distinguishes between the account possible by man and that possible by the gods. Emphasizing the limited nature of man’s time, he said that to describe the soul in detail would be “altogether a task for a god” (246a). Therefore, the first criterion he sets for the teacher of rhetoric is, by Socrates’ account, beyond the grasp of mortal man. Only the wise man, the one with complete knowledge, the god, is able to fully account for the nature of the human soul. Second, Socrates insists that the teacher of the rhetorical art must explain, “how, in virtue of its nature it acts and is acted upon by certain things” (271a). This standard follows directly from his account of the systematic method of knowledge at

270d. Building upon the second, the third criterion then requires that the teacher, “classify the kinds of speech and of soul there are, as well as the various ways in which they are affected, and explain what causes each” (271b). Following in the footsteps of the Hippocratic doctor, who sought to classify different types of maladies and afflictions, while at the same time classifying the various physical constitutions of men, this rhetorician must undergo a similar procedure with the soul.⁵ If we recall, the dialogue set foot on the advice of Acumenus, which was in keeping with the Hippocratic tradition and the classification of constitutions (cf. pg 11). By mirroring rhetoric with medicine, Socrates shows that rhetoric cannot meet the demands of a stochastic *technē*. Rather, when looking at matters concerning the soul, or the constitutions of men, Socrates points beyond *technē* to philosophy, and the knowledge of one’s ignorance. If this practice is to receive the title of an art, it can only be labelled the erotic art, or the knowledge of one’s desires.

As Phaedrus and Socrates’ discussion on the nature of the wisdom required by rhetoric comes to a close, Phaedrus exclaims, “What you’ve said is wonderful, Socrates – if only it could be done!” (274a). Socrates has set Phaedrus upon an unachievable task. He, like Heraclitus, understands that, “One would never discover the limits of the soul, should one traverse every road – so deep a measure does it possess” (frag.45, 33). The soul, unlike the body, cannot be detailed and categorized in the same manner. The road to understanding the soul is best achieved through the fertile process of the dialectic, as opposed to the technical accounting of rhetoric. Phaedrus recognizes the extent of the demands, and the enormity of the task Socrates has described, and his response conveys

⁵ An example of this process of classification and detailing of causation is found in “A Regimen for Health,” where Hippocrates describes: “people with a fleshy, soft or ruddy appearance are best kept on a dry diet for the greater part of the year as they are constitutionally moist” (273).

his wonder. Why would anyone undergo such an impossible task? How are one's efforts not rendered futile?

Socrates acknowledges Phaedrus' hesitation, and explains: "Yet surely whatever one must go through on the way to an honourable goal is itself honourable" (274b). By pursuing wisdom, Phaedrus will find honour. This corresponds to the message at the conclusion of Socrates' myth of the charioteer. In the myth, Socrates compared the feat of the soul, and its victory with its steeds, to the accomplishment of Olympic heroes. Once more, we gain a sense that living in pursuit of wisdom may be like playing a sort of game or contest. The goal is wisdom, though it is not the goal Socrates emphasizes, it is the playing of the game. As Roochnik notes, "our striving is to be prized" (*Tragedy* 173). This playfulness is serious rather than senseless. By demonstrating that the participation in this great game is itself honourable, Socrates extends the invitation to Phaedrus to turn his love of rhetoric into a pursuit of wisdom. A path to philosophy is opened.

III. The Father of Writing

Satisfied with their account of the "artfulness and artlessness" of rhetoric, the interlocutors turn to consider "aptness and ineptness in connection with writing" (274b). The transition to the topic of writing addresses the second component of Phaedrus' misguided erotic longing. The first pertained to his desire for the art of rhetoric; the second concerns the idea that the written preservation of memory can lead to wisdom. To address Phaedrus' understanding of the written word, Socrates answers with a myth. He introduces his tale by asking: "do you know how best to please the god when you either

use words or discuss them in general?” (Ibid).⁶ Speaking to the pleasure of an unnamed deity, and foreshadowing the tension between the oral and written tradition, Socrates addresses his own question by offering an account he heard from the ancients (274c). In the next two exchanges, hearing is further emphasized as Phaedrus first asks, “tell me what you say you’ve heard” and Socrates replies, “this is what I’ve heard” (Ibid).

Hearing is the key sense engaged. When one actively participates in hearing, one listens. A good listener is able to retain a story, remember the details, and recount it to another. Those who listen well are also those who acknowledge their need for education. In other words, they know that they do not know themselves and are receptive to learning. The philosophic dialectic depends upon its participants knowing how to listen to one another. Otherwise, it falls into a battle for rhetorical triumph. Thus, noting the significance of the sense of hearing, Socrates prefaces his final myth. With this in mind, the final distinction between apt and inept writing is pursued.

Socrates begins: “Among the ancient gods of Naucratis in Egypt there was one to whom the bird called the ibis is sacred. The name of that divinity was Theuth” (Ibid).⁷ Theuth, we learn, is a figure like Prometheus, who sought to impart the gifts of *technē* to mankind. Theuth, “the greatest of technicians,” is credited with the discovery of “number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing” (Scully 65; 274d). As the tale is told, Theuth came to exhibit his many arts to the king of Egypt, Thamus, whom the people called Ammon. Seeking to persuade the king to disseminate his arts to the people, Theuth presented each art in succession and allowed the king to comment and criticize each in turn. When they came

⁶ “God” in this usage is singular, and the specific deity is left ambiguous, thus we are left to wonder as to which god Socrates seeks to please.

⁷ Alternatively, Theuth is also known as Thoth.

to writing, Theuth said: “O King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and for wisdom” (274e). The wise king, however, was prudent in his evaluation of this charming potion. He replied to Theuth:

And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding.... (275a)

With this warning against the reliance upon writing for the appearance of wisdom, the story concludes. The potion held most dear to Theuth, what he thought would be his greatest gift, is shown to be an offering that requires great prudence to guide its power.

Looking back upon the myth, the first aspect that requires further exploration is the choice of the central deity. Theuth, as revealed by Socrates’ description, is the master of crafts; “the greatest of technicians.” He is a god who, like the wise man, “knows all crafts and everything else that single men severally know, and there is nothing that he does not know more precisely than anyone else” (*Republic* X.598c). On these grounds, he is considered the god of wisdom. He figures most prominently in Egyptian mythology alongside his female counterpart Maat. Both are deities of the moon, and the cyclic nature of the moon’s course (rebirth, growth, death) is celebrated through them.⁸

Through Maat, divine order, truth and justice are personified.⁹ She represents, “the spiritual order of the whole and the law of incarnation governing the principles whereby

⁸ It is of interest to note that the two prominent figures in the myth, Thamus and Theuth, represent the sun and the moon respectively. A balance between light and dark appears to be struck by the inclusion of both figures.

⁹ As Baring and Cashford note, in the Christian tradition this idea of divine harmony is reflected by the masculine term *logos* (263; John I.I), which is of interest to note considering the dialogue’s treatment of man’s relationship to *logos*.

unity became manifest as diversity. This was experienced as the continuous birth of all creation from the divine Mother” (Baring and Cashford 263). Through her the whole is divided into parts. As her masculine counterpart, Theuth’s most pronounced role is as the representative of immortal wisdom linking man and Maat. Specifically, Theuth plays the role of the guide to departed souls (Ibid 262). In this capacity, Theuth is often compared with Hermes who, in the Greek tradition, is the messenger god and the guide to the dead. In this connection, we might recall the language Socrates used to define the rhetorical art as that which directs the soul (*psychagogia tis*) at 261a. Theuth personifies this capacity. Prior to acting as a guide to the soul, Theuth would weigh with precision the heart of the deceased against the feather of Maat and record the result in his book. He used measurement and calculation to judge the soul in relation to Maat’s order and kept a written record of the justice he has rendered. Further, as a master of the in-between, he governed “mysteries, magic, and arcane knowledge, such as that contained in the *Book of Going Forth by Day* (“Book of the Dead”)” (“Thoth”). Accordingly, he possessed and recorded the knowledge of death, the greatest mystery for mortal men. A magic man, a distributor of justice, and the father of writing, Theuth represents the link between *technē* and the divine order of Maat.¹⁰ He is a link between mortal men and immortality.

The myth is recounted in response to the question concerning the aptness or ineptness of writing. It answers this question by first considering why writing is inept or lacking in skill. Writing is introduced by Theuth, who presents his art as, “a potion for memory and for wisdom” (274e). It is a *pharmakon*, a magical dose, which he holds as

¹⁰ As a note of interest worth further consideration, *technē*, as it is represented by Theuth, is held apart from *logos*, as it is represented by Maat, through their masculine-feminine pairing. In light of our modern interpenetration of *technē* and *logos* in and through technology, the manner in which the ancients treated these terms warrants closer attention.

the greatest gift to men. Of no small importance, magic and *technē* are spoken of as one and the same. Theuth, a god of mathematical precision, turns magic into *technē* and asks Thamus to extend it to mankind as a gift. The mystery of the Muse is rendered under man's possession and control, and wisdom and memory are produced by the technical *pharmakon*. Thamus is not easily bewildered by this technical wonder. He foresees that Theuth's *pharmakon* can only accomplish reminding and not remembering. To remind is to awaken the memory by way of an external stimuli, whereas to remember is to process an internal recollection. Remembering is to know. The difference, as Thamus describes, first concerns man's trust in the product of *technē* and his trust in himself. Men believe that they are improving their faculties by technical aid, when in fact they are hindering their memory by relying upon that "which is external and depends on signs that belong to others" (275a). They turn outside of themselves and forget to try "to remember from the inside, completely on their own" (Ibid). They lose sight of the Delphic demand to "know thyself," in the sense of knowing on one's own. Their eye is turned outwards instead of inwards. Losing this inward sight or "in-sight," the *pharmakon* "will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing" (275b). Though they hear, they do not truly listen, for they rely upon the text to impart them with wisdom.

How has Theuth, a god of wisdom, lost sight of these qualities of his *technē*? Thamus provides the answer. He describes Theuth as, "the father of writing," and notes that his affection for his progeny has clouded his judgment (275a). His love is so great for the art that he lacks the reflective capacity to assess the object of his affection. Phaedrus' own begetting of progeny is called to mind by this assessment. Socrates has

already noted Phaedrus' capacity to bring forth speeches (242a), and we have considered Eryximachus' comment concerning Phaedrus' role in the *Symposium* as the father of the speeches (177d). In the current context, a subtle comparison appears to be drawn between the two figures. The love of the written word obscures their vision and permits their belief that wisdom can be gained through reminders.

To elaborate upon the problem of the progeny, Socrates turns from the fathers to look more closely at their children. Comparing the written word with the painted image, Socrates states, "The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent" (275d). As products of the mimetic artist, they are deceiving, for they look like they could be alive, however they are but an imitation. This fascination with the product of one's creation recalls the tale of Pygmalion, a sculptor who fashioned the statue of a woman, "who you would believe was alive and willing to move" (Morford and Lenardon 119). The artist falls in love with his creation and though she is solemnly silent, she appears life-like to him. The image is confused for reality. The imitative artist is shown to be susceptible to forgetting what is truly life bearing and what is not. Against these examples, Socrates' argument that, "Every speech must be put together like a living creature" (264c), speaks to much more than the rational order of the argument. It considers the nature of the words themselves: do they contain life? Or, are they but images of life?

Phaedrus notes that writing, "can be fairly called an image" of the, "living, breathing discourse" (276a). As an image of the spoken word, the written word is furthest removed from the reality it imitates. Both children of men, the written word differs from its spoken sibling by reaching beyond its father's control. Once penned, "it

continues to signify just that very same thing forever” (275e). It survives beyond its author, who cannot defend his words, nor control who they reach. Captured on the page, it reaches, “indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn’t know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not” (Ibid). It is a *pharmakon* without measure, without the prudent practitioner to decide upon its distribution. Like the example put forward in relation to physicians at 268a-b, the proper distribution of medicines is tied to the knowledge of the practitioner who knows “to whom he should apply such treatments, when, and to what extent.” The product of the art, if it is to be properly employed and if it is to defend itself, “always needs its father’s support” (275e).

The spoken word or the “legitimate brother” of the written word, however, as it is a discourse written “in the soul of the listener” is able to come to its own defence, and able to discern to whom “it should speak and for whom it should remain silent” (276a).¹¹ Lysias’ words could not respond or account for themselves. They could only be pronounced as they were recorded on the page, whereas Socrates’ speeches were animated and in the moment; they could fit to what was required of the situation. Life, fertility and growth pulse through the spoken word. It responds dynamically to questioning and it is better able to assess the needs of its listener, including one’s capacity for truth.¹² Live discourse and its ability to imprint the soul help its interlocutors to “remember from the inside,” leading them to rely upon self-reflection, on knowing themselves, rather than “signs that belong to others” (275a). The discourse written in the

¹¹ Arguably, by writing dialogues Plato meets these criteria. As Griswold notes, “the stratification of meanings in the dialogues is purposively designed by Plato to achieve this goal [of discerning his audience]” (221).

¹² For example, one might tell a child a tale about doggy-heaven when their pet dog passes away, instead of detailing the morbid process of decomposition.

soul thereby contains with it the reflective capacity that is otherwise lacking from the written word, which cannot reflect upon itself alone, and can only transmit the same information.

From the difference between the living discourse to the image, Socrates pushes onward to consider the question of fertility and reproduction. He poses the question:

Would a sensible farmer, who cared about his seeds and wanted them to yield fruit, plant them in all seriousness in the gardens of Adonis in the middle of the summer and enjoy watching them bear fruit within seven days? Or would he do this as an amusement and in honor of the holiday, if he did it at all? Wouldn't he use his knowledge of farming to plant the seeds he cared for when it was appropriate and be content if they bore fruit seven months later? (276b)

If we consider this image of the farmer in relation to the educator, then we might consider the manner in which writing, as presented by Theuth and by the sophists, is able to more efficiently impart wisdom and memory to those who seek to become learned and virtuous men. Like a growth drug, or a potent fertilizer, which yields results closely following its administration, the sophists' method seeks to prove their *technē* by producing their "fruit" quickly. Rote memorization plays a key role in this educative process, and it is supplemented with handbooks that provide the student with reminders of the correct answer. The student is able to "hear many things" and repeat them back, but they do not listen, digest, and reflect upon the speeches they are consuming. The speech does not shape their soul because it cannot penetrate the interior.

Socrates notes that a serious farmer and, for that matter, one who is serious about the pursuit of wisdom or true education, is patient in his pursuit. True education is not governed by efficiency. Therefore, the noble pursuit is the practice of the dialectic, where:

The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge – discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be. (276e – 277a)

The dialectic seeks wisdom through growth and reproduction. When the aim of persuasion dominates education, speech ossifies. Life is no longer in the *logos*. The appearance of wisdom is taken to be not an image but the real thing, and the search for wisdom concludes. In other words, the possibility for philosophy is cast out of the city. The conclusion of the search presupposes satisfaction, which is the state where desire is satiated. Lysias' speech sought to depose *erōs* and, in that way, it represents the possibility for satisfaction. It presents itself as a wise speech, yet we see that the non-lover is actually a lover. He is not complete (or non-desiring) and his speech is not wise. He mimics wisdom. The dialectic, on the other hand, requires *erōs* to engender new life. Socrates' defence of *erōs* is, thereby, also a defence of philosophy against its accusations of sophistry. Philosophy does not presuppose itself wise. Thus, turning to the question that began this pursuit, that is, the distinction between “aptness and ineptness in connection with writing,” the apt pursuit is shown to be that which can write itself into the soul, can defend itself, and most importantly, reproduce. These speeches are written with art, but the art is not a typical *technē*. Socrates claims only to be an expert of the art of love: *hē erōtikē*. The apt speeches reflect this art and do not presuppose technical mastery. Those that are inept, or composed without art, are lacking art doubly. First, they lack the erotic art of the philosopher by proclaiming to be wise and, second, they lack the qualifications of a *technē* by not possessing systematic knowledge of the human soul, which is the object of their treatment. Rhetoric is not a *technē*. To presume otherwise is

to presume the possibility of expert knowledge of the human soul and mastery of human contingency.

IV. Departure

Reflecting back once more upon the way they have taken, Phaedrus asks Socrates to remind him of their path (277b). Phaedrus is still dependent upon reminders and has not yet internalized the argument to turn inwards to the knowledge of himself. A patient farmer, Socrates summarizes the argument and leaves him with a trail of reminders. Reminders do have a place and a function. They operate as trail-markers; they permit one who has already trodden a path to find his way back. Like breadcrumbs left on a trail, they mark a moment past. To understand the reminder, however, one must have taken the trail already. This is contrasted with the rhetoricians' handbooks, which lay out the crumbs and expect the traveller to put together the pieces without having walked the trail. However, one must be careful not to mistake them for memory; they do not leave an imprint on the soul, only on the page. Leaving this trail, Socrates recapitulates the argument. He maintains that "to use speech artfully, to the extent that its nature allows it to be used that way," it must address the criteria they laid out for it (277c). The artful speaker must know the truth of which he speaks, learn how to properly define one's topic, and know how to properly divide it. Second, he must understand the nature of the soul in the same manner (277b). Thus, though Phaedrus may not yet see that the demands of an art of rhetoric can only begin to be met through philosophy, he permits himself the possibility of this insight, by using these reminders to tread over the argument to which he has just bore witness. Socrates may have failed to turn Phaedrus to

philosophy through the course of this dialogue, but the seeds are planted for future growth and reproduction.

Socrates, in a manner of speaking, is playing the role of the true Muse. He has distributed his reminders, part memory and part wisdom, to the young poet who has called upon him. Yet, as a philosophic Muse, he is careful to emphasize that this is not wisdom that he is imparting. Socrates is contrasting himself against the practice of the sophists. These men, who have disregarded the function and caveat of the Muse, operate in a way that is immoderate. Men like Thrasymachus seek the knowledge of the soul in what appears to be a philosophic manner, but forget their boundaries. The rhetorician is like the blind poet to this extent; when he cannot see his limitations, he “runs the risk of replacing the whole by a part, or in other words replacing the original with an image” (cf. 243a – b; Rosen 26). The rhetorician runs the risk of replacing wisdom with its written image. Thereby, the sophist turns would-be philosophers into collectors of written pages, ossifying the pursuit of true wisdom.

Just before returning to the *polis*, Socrates asks Phaedrus to carry a message to the composers of speeches: the rhetoricians, the poets, and the legislators. To quote their exchange:

SOCRATES: If any one of you has composed these things with a knowledge of the truth, if you can defend your writing when you are challenged, and if you can yourself make the argument that your writing is of little worth, then you must be called by a name derived not from these writings but rather from those things that you are seriously pursuing.

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

SOCRATES: To call him wise, Phaedrus, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god. To call him wisdom’s lover – a philosopher – or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly. (278c – d)

The philosopher therefore is also a composer of *logos*, but his practice is shown to differ from the rhetorician, the poet and the legislator in three manners. First, he composes with a view to truth, not opinion. He speaks in search of the truth and is careful to acknowledge his limitations when he comes to that which he does not know. Second, to defend one's speech is to be able to give an account for it, to demonstrate the grounds of one's knowledge. Socrates grounds his knowledge in that which he can best account for: himself. Thus, the defence of *logos* begins with a turning inwards; it looks to insight. It looks to knowing thyself.

The last distinction must be treated by itself, as it speaks directly to Phaedrus' love of *logos*. Writing is shown to be a by-product of the greater hunt, thus the philosopher can acknowledge that his writing is of little worth. It is but a reminder of his trail. Phaedrus, the lover of *logos*, and the written reminder, has yet to see that wisdom and not words should be the object of his pursuit. His love of his progeny, like Theuth's love, obscures his vision and obstructs his critical eye. Writing is not to be esteemed itself, just as the image should not be held in greater esteem than the reality. Socrates notes further, "if a man has nothing more valuable than what he has composed or written ... wouldn't you be right to call him a poet or a speechwriter or an author of laws?" (278d). The poet, speechwriter and legislator are all susceptible to being caught in their own images, and mistaking the image for the truth. They fall prey to the problem of Pygmalion and are captured by the beauty of their progeny. Pride must not be placed in the written word. Rather, honour must be earned by the lived pursuit.

While Socrates asks Phaedrus to extend this message to his friend Lysias, and other composers of speeches, Phaedrus then asks Socrates if he will do the same with his

friend Isocrates. Further, Phaedrus asks Socrates to define Isocrates' practice with the criteria they have set out. Socrates begins his response by noting that, "Isocrates is still young," meaning that, though he has set out on a path now, with age that road may change (279a). But, by projecting on the basis of the direction Isocrates has set out upon, Socrates assesses that it is likely that he will continue to compose beautiful speeches, though these will be secondary to his love of wisdom. In fact, of the historical Isocrates, who was a teacher of rhetoric, we know that he modelled his study upon the Hippocratic stochastic *technē*, though he himself avoided the claim to a *technē* (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 80). Isocrates was modest. Roochnik notes that:

Isocrates realizes his subject is indeterminate and susceptible to the vagaries of chance; he must have students who are already good if he is to succeed in teaching; his is a personal, rather than a technical/formal mode of presentation; his subject is not analogous to orthography (or to mathematics). (Ibid)

Isocrates sought a moral education for his students, and insisted upon, "making his students into good men who will work for the betterment of Greece" (Ibid 81). He sought to have men refine their opinions and to speak well. Thus, to this extent, we can see why Socrates would speak favourably of him at this juncture. Isocrates holds to mind the pursuit of the Good. This is what leads Socrates to say of him, "nature ... has placed the love of wisdom in his mind" (279a). Though we might also note that by remaining in the realm of opinion, by striving only to go so far as right opinion, and not endeavouring to replace opinion with knowledge, Isocrates' stochastic *technē* is perhaps too moderate for philosophy. A love of wisdom is not satisfied with opinion, but seeks true knowledge and in this manner is erotically immoderate in its pursuit.

The heat of the day now cooled, Phaedrus suggests that it is time for them to be off. Before they ready themselves for their departure, Socrates pauses and proposes that they should, “offer a prayer to the gods here before we leave” (279b). He prays:

O dear Pan and all the other gods of this place, grant that I may be beautiful inside. Let all my external possessions be in friendly harmony with what is within. May I consider the wise man rich. As for gold, let me have as much as a moderate man could bear and carry with him.
(279b – c)

Although Socrates has already issued his reminders to Phaedrus, this prayer is the true summation of their afternoon journey. As Griswold points out, “Heavy emphasis is placed on the value of unity, harmony, and integrity in the face of the natural differentiation of life” (228). Socrates’ departing prayer, similar to his prayer for Phaedrus to “no longer play both sides” (257b), speaks to the harmonizing of the internal reality and the external appearance. Socrates prays for Phaedrus, the beautiful boy who relies upon external reminders instead of internal memory, to unify his love for *logos* in the love of wisdom.

However, we might also consider the playful manner in which this is expressed. Looking to himself, Socrates asks the gods to grant him beauty on the inside. Though Socrates is known for his ugliness, it was his external appearance that earned him this reputation and not his internal disposition.¹³ The lines that follow speak to harmonizing external possessions to internal beauty and, specifically, ask them to consider, “the wise man rich.” This reference to wealth draws us back to the beginning of the dialogue. Here, in response to Phaedrus’ comment that Socrates is “just the right person to hear the speech,” Socrates answers by calling Lysias “a wonderful man” (227c). He continues, “I

¹³ For future investigation, it is curious to consider this prayer to Pan, in light of Alcibiades’ description of Socrates in the *Symposium* at 215a-b, where he compares him to a satyr and silenus.

wish he would write that you should give your favors to a poor rather than to a rich man, to an older rather than to a younger one – that is, to someone like me” (227d). This, he says would, “contribute to the public good” (Ibid). Thus, his prayer recalls his poverty or lack of external possessions. However, the wealth, of which his prayer speaks, can be read in two ways. Wealth may be monetary, such as that of a rich sophist (wise man) who receives pay for education in his art. Alternatively, it may be wealth as wisdom, such as that of a true wise man, who can give both an exhaustive account of himself and of the whole. In the initial statement at 227d, to give favours to the poor man would be to give favours or affection to the philosopher, who neither receives pay, nor claims the wealth of wisdom. Yet, if we note the Pythia’s words, that “no one is wiser”(Apology 21a) than Socrates, then to harmonize interior beauty with exterior possessions is to say that the philosopher is deserving of the wealth of kings. In other words, the philosopher should be honoured above the sophist, though his outward appearances of wealth, in both usages of the term, would indicate otherwise. Perhaps this is the public good to which Socrates initially points. At the very least, even if Phaedrus does not see Socrates’ prayer as a praise of philosophy, he is left with the message that he should aim to harmonize his interior and exterior; praise the wise man, and pursue moderation. This is a prudent message to an otherwise disharmonious soul.

Such prudence may seem odd couched in a prayer to Pan, “the double-natured son of Hermes” (Griswold 228).¹⁴ A god who has, “much in common with the satyrs and silenoi of Dionysus, he is also a particularly erotic deity (Morford and Lenardon 227). Pan

¹⁴ We recall that Hermes is considered the counterpart in Greek mythology to Theuth, the father of writing from the Egyptian myth. Hermes is also credited as “the inventor of logos” (Griswold 228). The prayer is also directed to the “other gods of this place,” who we may presume from their mention in the text and association to the grove, are the Nymphs and Muses; however, because Pan is the only god mentioned by name, I have chosen to concentrate my analysis on his mention.

is a fusion of god and beast. To this extent, he represents man's highest and basest erotic longings. He represents the in-between nature of man and the necessity to seek to understand both the beast and the god. A prayer to him is a prayer that acknowledges the potential and the danger of man's erotic existence. *Erōs*, as the dialectic of the speeches has demonstrated, can be both an illness and an enlightened madness. It can inspire philosophers or tyrants. It is the animating principle of the philosopher's hunt for wisdom, yet philosophic *erōs* must be a self-conscious or sober madness. This is the key, the quandary, and the risk of the philosophic pursuit.

Pan, like Love, is a god that dwells in the in-between. He is best known as the "dangerous presence dwelling just beyond the protected zone of the village boundary" (Campbell 81). A god of the boundary, he would instil fear or panic in those who wandered into his woods by mistake (Ibid). Yet, he was also, "benign to those who paid him worship, yielding the boons of the divine hygiene of nature: bounty to the farmers...health to all those who properly approached his shrines of healing" (Ibid). Most importantly perhaps, "the wisdom of Omphalos, the World Navel, was his to bestow" (Ibid). The Omphalos, an egg-shaped stone marked Delphi as the centre of the world (Morford and Lenardon 167). The wisdom of the Omphalos is Delphic wisdom. Delphi, we might note, is the site upon which Apollo's commandments, such as the exhortation to, "know thyself," are located. Socrates illustrates his own erotic quest for self-knowledge as per the Delphic Oracle, as a search through the complexity (diversity of parts) and the simplicity (unity of harmony) of the soul. Self-knowledge is gained through the ability to give an account (*logos*) of one's experience. Yet it is spurred by wonder, or the continual confrontation with that for which you have no words. A prayer

to Pan is a plea for protection from the madness or panic of the unknown. At the same time, it is an expression of the desire for fertility, health and wisdom. It is an oddly philosophic prayer.

Most importantly, the prayer acknowledges the boundary to which they have come. Phaedrus has not turned to philosophy. He is still in pursuit of a formula for beautiful speech. Socrates has provided him with a *pharmakon*, a speech that set out what he should request of a rhetorician's art. This should set his constitution aright if he follows Socrates' prescription, though it is up to Phaedrus now to follow the doctor's orders. If he begins searching through the criteria for a *technē* of rhetoric, he will find himself searching out the nature of the human soul and, in this pursuit, he will have to turn to himself. Thus, the prayer to Pan is a prayer for the farmer's bounty: for the seed that has been planted in Phaedrus' soul to take root and to then reproduce itself in others. It is also a prayer for health, that is, for the rebalancing of his gluttonous constitution and a search for a healthier diet. Lastly, it is a prayer for wisdom, so that Phaedrus may turn inwards, and properly direct his love of *logos* to a love of wisdom. It is a prayer that respectfully recognizes the danger of the boundary, and embraces that risk as a necessary component of the philosophic act. Socrates has brought Phaedrus to the edge; it is up to Phaedrus though to take the next step. "Let's be off" (279c), Socrates pronounces, setting the dialogue in motion once more, returning to the *polis* and taking their journey full-circle back to where they began.

Conclusion

Circular in fashion, the dialogue returns to where it began. While the *Phaedrus* takes place outside of the *polis*, Athens and her political and intellectual climate are continually present on the horizon. The health of her political community hinges on those who claim to be her physicians. Yet, how is her health defined? And, whose prescriptions are authoritative? For Plato, the health of the political community correlates to the quality of its dialogue. As our exploration of the *Phaedrus* has shown, this relationship of speech to health is present through the comparison of rhetoric and medicine. Philosophic dialogue contains potential fertility, whereas sophistic rhetoric is at best a playful imitation and, at worst, it sows the seeds of sterility. Socrates' endeavours as a philosophic *pharmakos* demonstrate the deficiency of rhetoric's claim to political knowledge and his prescription explores the necessary tensions between *technē* and *erōs*, and *mythos* and *logos*. Rosen speaks to the necessity of these tensions, as he notes: "philosophy without poetry, exactly like poetry without philosophy, is immoderate and unmeasured" (26). Beautifully, by way of its dialectical structure, the *Phaedrus* demonstrates these compelling and difficult relationships. These tensions stimulate wonder, the condition requisite for the cultivation of philosophy and the growth of healthy political dialogue. Health, for the political community, is thereby coupled with the maintenance of the conversation between poetry and philosophy. One risks the sting of immoderation if either should triumph in the debate.

In this manner, we confront ourselves once more. That is, we are beholden to reflect upon the question of whether or not philosophy is possible in our modern age. We set out

on our pursuit with Rosen's comment that, "the possibility of philosophy stands or falls upon the possibility of a philosophical madness that is more sober than sobriety" (xiii). To understand the implications of this statement and the cautions offered to us by the *Phaedrus*, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the way we have taken.

In the same way that threads are pulled taut together as they are woven through a tapestry, two themes, *technē* and *erōs*, have been in tension with each other throughout the dialogue. *Technē* presupposes knowledge of a complete system, and *erōs* reminds us of the way in which man is incomplete. An intriguing portrait of the strange relationship between *technē* and *erōs* appears in Socrates' approach to Phaedrus. As Socrates' method demonstrated, the calculative or mathematic and the poetic or mad must exist alongside each other in the philosopher. In this light, Rosen's assessment of *erōs* is helpful:

The erotic appetite, in order to be satisfied, gives rise to a deliberation which is itself nonerotic. In order to satisfy his appetite, man must regain possession of himself, "recollect" himself, or detach himself from that appetite, and in this sense he must "conceal" his Eros, not merely from the object desired, but from himself as well. (99)

The madness of *erōs* and the sobriety of recollection and calculation are, in this way, coterminous with the philosophic pursuit. The philosopher is a concealed lover. As Rosen notes further, "The private aspect is related to the particularity of poetry and the immoderateness or hubris of divine madness. The public aspect is related to the universality of mathematics and the moderation of justice"(117).¹ In this manner, we can also consider the public and private nature of philosophy, and the way in which the *Phaedrus*, though private and intimate, is also political. Thus, the two central and

¹ Rosen makes these comments in reference to the *Republic* and the *Symposium*, although I think they are equally valid when applied to the *Phaedrus*.

seemingly disparate themes of the dialogue: *technē* and *erōs*, meet at this juncture. Though Socrates speaks in the language of *technē*, he does not presume the completion of the system of human knowledge. The conditions upon which rhetoric could be considered a *technē*, namely the knowledge of the human soul and its complete articulation, suggest that such a system would continually be lacking. Erotic self-consciousness must animate the search for true knowledge, yet this must be balanced by the recollection of one's self. Erotic madness must be coupled with remembering. This informs Socrates' choice in art form. The only art he lays claim to is the erotic art: "Because of his human wisdom, his knowledge of eros, Socrates knows how to live: in the active striving for knowledge. He knows what to urge others to do: philosophize" (Roochnik, *Art and Wisdom* 244). He urges others to accompany him in the pursuit of *logos*, and to exist in this state of sober madness. In this manner, he is the political *pharmakon*, *par excellence*.

This state of 'mad sobriety' is also expressed through the interplay between old and new perceptions and practices or through the quarrel between *mythos* and *logos*. Phaedrus crossed the boundaries of the *polis* to pursue his love of *logos*. *Logos* is the centrepiece of the dialogue. It is the object of their pursuit. It is Lysias' speech in Phaedrus' hand. It is the charming potion. Above all, it is that which the teacher of rhetoric, the sophist, claims to be able to teach and craft. Phaedrus does not need to be exhorted to pursue speech or reasoned argument. Nor does he require the exposure of his technical ignorance. He is self-aware of his lack of expertise (228a). Yet this is revealing. The lack he refers to is one of skill. He does not possess a *technē*, but desires one. Thus, it is not the speech and its reason *per se* that is the object of his affection;

rather it is the *technē* by which the speech was composed. Phaedrus is enchanted by *technē*, specifically, a *technē* of *logos*. The men that have sought to turn magic into *technē*, the sophists, have cast a spell over this young man. Moreover, he is hopeful that Socrates will participate in his training process; that he will help him master this magic for himself (228e). He wishes to be a wizard's apprentice.

Socrates responds to Phaedrus' desire with *mythos*. While *logos* is the focal point, *mythos* shadows each step. *Mythos* constitutes Socrates' image of his soul: the Typhon or the tame animal. It is that which Lysias' speech attempts to disable. It is the Muses' gift. It is the tale of Theuth. It is the prayer to Pan. We have traced these images throughout the dialogue, demonstrating the manner in which they collect and fit into the larger picture. Beginning with the interlocutor's arrival at their resting place, upon which the myth of Boreas is recalled, the struggle between *mythos* and *logos*, between old ways of doing and seeing things and new practices and perceptions, is a constant presence on the scene. The contrast is particularly apparent if we consider the way in which *mythos* clashes with the systematic quality that is paradigmatic of *technē*. As Calasso describes:

The mythical gesture is a wave which, as it breaks, assumes a shape, the way dice form a number when we toss them. But, as the wave withdraws, the unvanquished complications swell in the undertow, and likewise the muddle and disorder from which the next mythical gesture will be formed. So myth allows of no system. (281)

Technē presupposes a complete system and *mythos* resists it. *Mythos* and *logos*, and their corresponding practices of poetry and philosophy meet outside of Athens' walls, like soldiers on the field, to carry out their struggle. Strangely, Socrates, the infamous hunter of the *logos*, appears to carry the flag of *mythos*.

Why *mythos*? Posing the question on the place and role of myth in the human experience, George Grant comments:

What then is myth? It is an account of existence in its totality which reveals to most men their own mode of being in the world. Myths are the way that systems of meaning are given to most human beings. And it is from systems of meaning that we make judgments about what is valuable. Why is meaning given to most human beings in myth? The greatest of all philosophers answered this in saying that myths exist 'to enchant the soul.' Why is it necessary for the soul to be enchanted? So that it may be led to the true purposes of human existence. The myths are not then the truth about human life; they are the enchanting images by which most men are led to apprehend some purpose in their existence. They are the chief way that most of us apprehend the beauty of the world. Being that we are – neither gods nor beasts but human beings – we need to be enchanted into the good way. (Grant 230)

Myth, like a *pharmakon*, is enchanting. It provides an image from which men can further question themselves and their existence in relation to an idea of the Good. Its importance, particularly in the context of this dialogue, lies in the idea that *mythos* preserves an idea of the Good that is constant and worth striving for. It provides meaning to experience.

These considerations draw us back to the relationship between the art of medicine and the art of rhetoric. In particular, we note the importance of the judgments that must be made when practicing an art that takes man for its object. As we saw in the discussion of the *pharmakon*, the distribution of medicines requires ethical and moral knowledge to guide its practice. The physician must assess which medicaments are appropriate to which patients. His art relies on his ability and, perhaps more importantly, on his sound judgment. Even in the *Hippocratic Oath*, traces of the mythological remain to guide the physician's practice. The practitioner swears that he will, "be chaste and religious in my life and in my practice" (Lloyd 67). Prudence, sound judgment and a view to the Good direct and order this craft. When taking man as an object of one's art then, we note the importance of man's reliance upon a mode of understanding his experience in the world as a guide to moral and ethical decisions. *Mythos* is a medicament for our uncertainty of meaning or purpose in the world.

Thus, *mythos* plays a pivotal role in Socrates' efforts to turn Phaedrus' love for the art of speech into a love of good speech. Through the course of our analysis, we have seen that Phaedrus' love of the *technē* of rhetoric is separated from the goodness of the speech; he is enchanted by the art and not the quality of its product. In other words, his desire is not subject to the restrictions of temperance or moderation; his desire is unbounded. Thereby, in order to accomplish the redirection of Phaedrus' love towards good speech, boundaries must be put in place, and a distinction between good and bad speech is required. The *technē* of *logos* taught by the sophists accounts for "good" and "bad" on the basis of its persuasive capacity. The *technē* is judged by its product, like the *technē* of a shipbuilder is judged by the quality of his ship. Quality in this political art is determined by way of persuasion, and not by its adherence to the pursuit of the Good. Opinion is privileged above truth. Thus arises the problem.

Persuading the political community to "the good way" is an essential component of political discourse, thus rhetoric is not dismissed. Rather, its capacity to master *logos* is held to question. When Socrates calls rhetoric, "a certain guiding of souls through words" (261b), we might also consider the manner in which this guiding resembles the "enchancing" Grant refers to in his discussion of myth. Indeed, the human capacity to use language to describe our experience is the first means by which we are able to attribute meaning to it, and thereby come to understand nature, human and otherwise. Our capacity for dialogue and for mythology allows us to explore and give words to our experience. Rhetoric, insofar as it represents man's ability to communicate his experience of the world through reasoned argument and to explore the inherently political questions of the just or unjust, is able to fuel philosophic dialogue. Indeed, Socrates

employs rhetoric for these purposes. These conditions of dialogue presume that *logos* cannot be mastered and with them the necessity of the philosophic pursuit is maintained.

To presume that *logos* can be mastered (a.k.a. *technē* of rhetoric) is to presume that there is a political *technē*; that is, a means of mastering the political forum. The manner in which the sophists accomplished this claim was through the cessation of the pursuit of true knowledge and the engagement with the successful manipulation of political opinion. Man is made the measure. When the success of the rhetorical pursuit is governed by force and persuasion, the standards sought are not outside of man but are determined by him. The new wise man dismisses the old myths, attributes *phusis* to chance causal relationships, and pursues *technē* as that which is distinctly human in its capacity to create order from the chaos. In its fullest expression, this sentiment results in: “the wise man who understood the roots of *phusis* in *tuchē* could refashion the world, calling the great chaotic forces underlying the superficial stability into his service like a magician” (Newell 64).² Like a grand demiurge, this magician can create the world in his image. His project, or the object of his making, having controlled and composed it, is also that of which he can claim knowledge. The magician creates the conditions of his own wisdom and recreates himself as a wise man. The ability to enchant is channelled in the service of the overweening desire, and the *logos* of this rhetorician loses its reflective capacity. It becomes immoderate, even tyrannical. There is no room for philosophic debate in the successful mastery of *logos*, because there is nothing left to debate. The triumph of *technē* as an intellectual paradigm sacrifices wonder to reason, and in this way eliminates the conditions necessary to foster philosophy and political dialogue.

² Emphasis with italics is my own.

With *phronesis* evidently lacking in his young interlocutor who is fascinated by the possibilities of *technē*, Socrates turns to *mythos* to guide his response. This is necessary first to re-establish an image of order by nature and, second, to create the conditions for wonder. The first myth referred to in the *Phaedrus*, the myth of Boreas, functions as a template for the balance of Socrates' speeches. It does so namely by reference to the Delphic inscriptions. In particular, it accomplishes this through Socrates' emphasis upon his pursuit of self-knowledge, under the Delphic mantra: "Know thyself." If we recall, he points away from the attempt to de-mythologize the tale of the altar to Boreas and instead points towards himself. This type of self-pursuit is a search for one's limitations. By engaging in the search of one's self, the limits of *logos* are also tested and its mastery appears precarious. Thus, Socrates' erotic knowledge takes precedence over that for which he can only speculate on through the opinions of others. He allows the myth to stand as a marker of meaning, because a completely rational account is not within reach. The quarrel he presents is not with the epistemic basis of the myth, but rather with those who deconstruct its mystery to then artificially pronounce one 'rational' meaning of the tale, as its true meaning. Exhibiting no patience for such de-mythologizing, he looks inward to that which he is able to provide the best account of, himself.

Lysias' speech, by contrast, was 'masterful' for its ability first, to remove divine or mythological Love from the equation, and second, to use *technē* to master *erōs*. In its attempt to mirror the mathematical precision and predictability of traditional *technē*, it imposes a rational model upon human relationships to derive a probable outcome. In this manner, it exists as a sample of what a true political *technē* would accomplish, that is, the

elimination of strife within human relationships. To eliminate strife, however, *erōs* must be expelled from the city. *Erōs* is the scapegoat, the *pharmakon*. Yet, we saw that this rational model sought pleasure as its end, and not the Good. The measure of this speech is thereby set to a type of hedonistic utilitarian scale. While it poses as moderate speech, it actually reveals the immoderation of an unreflective rhetorician. In an attempt revealed to be overly mathematical, human *erōs* is denigrated to animal lust; in other words, one portrayal of *erōs* is falsely pronounced to be its one true meaning.

Socrates offers two poetic responses to Lysias' speech. In his palinode, like a musically inspired bard, he reaches well beyond the limitations of man's knowledge and proceeds to give an account of the immortal soul. Though he takes this immoderate leap, he warns Phaedrus of the difference between the image produced by man and the true account produced by the gods. He responds in *mythos*, yet it is *mythos* guided by the knowledge of his limitations; in other words it is a philosophic *mythos*. Further, it is an image that is used in conjunction with his *logos*, or his refutation of the rhetorician's *technē*. Through the image, Socrates asks Phaedrus to reflect upon man's capacity to give an account of the human soul. By relying upon *mythos*, he shows the limitations of providing a logical or reasoned account, and turns Phaedrus to the starting point of the philosophic pursuit: the self.

Acknowledging his limitations, Socrates uses the images of *mythos* where caution is needed, to ensure that he does not unwittingly do harm to an interlocutor. Phaedrus uses *technē* as a model for knowledge, as we have seen demonstrated by his reception and treatment of Lysias' speech. He conceives of *technē* as the means to master rational argument or *logos*. Phaedrus' conception of a *technē* of rhetoric reveals two things.

First, that he believes knowledge is attainable and that moral or political knowledge is accessible. Second, that such knowledge is worth pursuing, that it is good. Phaedrus' affirmation of the goodness of *technē*, and his respect for men like Acumenus, is itself a judgment that expert knowledge is good and worthy of pursuit. Though he believes that, like a doctor can master medicine, he can master *logos*. Socrates does not deny the goodness of *technē*; in fact he uses its criteria to guide his refutation of a *technē* of rhetoric. Though, as Roochnik comments, "it should be noted that to say that *technē* is good does not imply that it is the best or the exclusive mode of knowledge" (*Tragedy* 189). Socrates points beyond *technē* to another form of knowledge, one that begins in the self, in the self-conscious understanding of one's lack. Yet, this form of knowledge, this erotic 'expertise,' that evaluates the claim to a *technē* of the rhetoricians, cannot itself be grounded in the form of a *technē*. Considering that *technē* is treated as a measure of epistemic certainty, this creates a problem for determining the veracity of this sort of moral knowledge and opens the way for its critics to ponder the worth of such a pursuit. Asking Phaedrus to critique the knowledge of the rhetoricians, particularly by demonstrating that the knowledge that their art would require (the complete articulation of the soul) is itself an impossible feat, raises the possibility that he will not see the worth of such an endless search. The risk is that Phaedrus will become disenchanted with the pursuit of true knowledge and fall into the arms of absurdity, of pure playfulness, wherein right or wrong cannot be judged.

By way of his own example, and supported by *mythos*, Socrates is able to show why a life spent in the pursuit of true knowledge is the best life. His *pharmakon* is to instill the love of the hunt and to reiterate its importance as the basis for fertile political

and philosophical discussions. Thus he turns to the wonder provided by *mythos*. In his account of the immortal soul he shows that participation in the philosophic pursuit is the ultimate feat. It is a striving akin to the performance of the heroes of the Olympic games. It is a serious game worth playing, worth the risk and the continual tests of strength and courage. The conditions of this game require a context wherein others are willing and capable of participating as well. Thus, this game only thrives where discourse is able to grow. It cannot survive if either *mythos* or *logos* wins the day, or when any partial account is taken to represent the whole. Through this philosophic *mythos*, Socrates both reveals the necessity of the maintained pursuit of dialogue and the curious relationship between poetry and philosophy.

Side by side, the interior speeches of the dialogue (the monologues of Lysias and Socrates, including the palinode) comprise the quarrel between *mythos* and *logos*. The quarrel reveals their similarities to the extent that they each possess the capacity to enchant and guide. It also reveals their potential danger of immoderately, “replacing the original with an image” (Rosen 26). In the last analysis though, *mythos* and *logos* are shown to rely upon each other in the figure of the philosopher. There is no true quarrel, yet the conversation between the two ‘warring’ parties must be sustained. Maintaining the dialogue stands as a barrier to the danger of “replacing the original with an image.” Thus, Socrates comes to the defence of the Muses when confronted with an interlocutor who is ready to let the written word triumph and stand for wisdom.

As we reflect on ourselves in light of this dialogue, we might, simply pose two questions: where have we been? And, where are we going? These two questions began the *Phaedrus* and it is where we will end, in the hopes that political dialogue and the

dialectic will find fertile ground in our modern political society. We might begin to reflect, to consider the degree to which we, like Phaedrus, are enchanted by a *technē* of *logos*, or what has evolved into our modern notion of technology. Technology, or modern science, builds upon the sophists' efforts to harness and direct magic, and it does so with increasing efficiency and haste. Perhaps in our pursuit of sobriety, like Phaedrus, we have unwittingly come across the source of our Bacchic frenzy. To our acceptance of this wisdom, we might ask if we are not like Theuth, so enamoured with the product of our making that we cannot step back to evaluate the nature of our intoxicant. We might also inquire of ourselves, whether or not the possibilities of philosophic dialogue remain, or has the day gone to the triumph of the new wise men? The *Phaedrus* provides us the opportunity to reflect upon the state of philosophic dialogue in our modern world and our capacity to question. It asks us to turn inwards to consider erotic knowledge, or our ignorance, in the face of proclaimed wisdom. We have silenced the Muse and set sail in tune with the Siren song. Yet, will a wily Odysseus show himself to yet have some tricks up his sleeve?

Let us begin again.

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