

*Psychagogia* in Plato's *Phaedrus*

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From ancient times, there has been much discussion whether Plato's *Phaedrus* is a unified composition. The problem is that the dialogue seems to have a variety of topics—love, beauty, the soul, rhetoric, dialectic, and writing—and that it seems to fall into two halves, the first comprising three speeches, the second consisting of dialectical discussion. In favor of the unity of the dialogue, ancient and modern scholars have argued that the various topics are closely interwoven.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Neoplatonist Hermeias (5th century A.D.) discussed the unity of the *Phaedrus* in his commentary on the dialogue. He notes that the dialogue has been thought to be about love, rhetoric, the soul, the good, primary beauty, and beauty of every kind. He agrees with Iamblichus that the unifying topic of the *Phaedrus* is "beauty of every kind"; and he proposes that there is a gradual ascent from Lysias' love for the beauty of Phaedrus' body to Phaedrus' love for the beauty of Lysias' *logos*, then to psychic beauty, to the beauty of the cosmic gods, to intelligible beauty, and finally to Eros and beauty itself, with a subsequent reversal back to psychic beauty and then to the beauty of *logoi* (pp. 8–12 of P. Couvreur's edition, *Hermiae Alexandrini in Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, Paris 1901). I agree with Werner Jaeger that the *Phaedrus* is unified by the problem of rhetoric (*Paideia*, tr. by Gilbert Highet, vol. 3, New York 1944, p. 184). I also agree in large part with Ronald B. Levinson that unity is achieved through a series of "dialectical transformations and reconciliations" of a number of themes, among them love and beauty, madness, rhetoric, and philosophy ("Plato's *Phaedrus* and the New Criticism," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 46 [1964], 293–309). In a perceptive, short note Robert G. Hoerber proposes that the unity of the *Phaedrus* consists in the "proper Collection and Division" of the four topics: erotic passion, Platonic love, current rhetoric, and dialectic ("Love or Rhetoric in Plato's *Phaedrus*?" *Classical Bulletin* 34 [1958], 33). Others who have argued for the unity of the *Phaedrus* are: Gustav E. Mueller, who suggests that the real theme is the question "what is man?" in "Unity of the *Phaedrus*," *Classical Bulletin* 33 (1957), 50–53 and 63–65; John I. Beare, "The *Phaedrus*: its structure; the ἘΡΩΣ theme: notes," *Hermathena* 17 (1913), 312–34; W. C. Helmbold and W. B. Holther, "The Unity of the 'Phaedrus,'" *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 14 (1952), 387–417; and Paul Plass, "The Unity of the *Phaedrus*," *Symbolae Osloenses* 43 (1968), 7–38 (reprinted with numerous typographical errors in *Plato: True and Sophistic Rhetoric*, ed. by Keith V. Erickson, Amsterdam 1979).

This approach is, I think, correct. At the same time, the dialogue seems to me more unified than has been thought. The underlying theme that binds the whole dialogue is, I suggest, Plato's new definition of rhetoric as a certain "*psychagogia*" (261a, 271c). The dialogue begins with an illustration of the wrong type of *psychagogia* and moves gradually toward a revelation of the right kind of *psychagogia*; and throughout this progression Socrates exemplifies the right kind of *psychagogia* by leading the youthful Phaedrus from a fascination with the wrong kind of rhetoric to a contemplation of the right kind. This progression leads from Lysianic to Isocratean rhetoric and then to genuine, philosophical rhetoric.

The term *psychagogia* occurs twice in the *Phaedrus*, both times in the final, dialectical section of the dialogue. Socrates bases his examination of rhetoric on the definition of rhetoric as "a certain *psychagogia* through words, not only in the law-courts and all other public meetings, but also in private meetings, alike in matters small and large, and properly no more to be esteemed in important than in unimportant matters" (261a-b).<sup>2</sup> Later in the discussion, Socrates reverts to this definition by reminding Phaedrus that the function of speech is "*psychagogia*" (271c).

This new definition of rhetoric is immediately conspicuous as a revision of the view presented in the *Gorgias*. Here Gorgias describes rhetoric as "the ability to persuade by words jurors in the law-court, councillors in the council, assemblymen in the assembly, and anyone in any other meeting that is political" (452e).<sup>3</sup> In the *Gorgias*, rhetoric is the practice of public persuasion. In the *Phaedrus*, by contrast, Socrates views rhetoric as a means of influencing individuals, in private or in public, on matters of individual concern.

Plato signals this shift by alluding to the *Gorgias* both in the discussion that leads up to the new definition and in Phaedrus'

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedrus* 261a-b: . . . ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων, οὐ μόνον ἐν δικαστηρίοις καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλοι δημόσιοι σύλλογοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἰδίοις, ἢ αὐτῇ σμικρῶν τε καὶ μεγάλων πέρι, καὶ οὐδὲν ἐντιμότερον τό γε ὀρθὸν περὶ σπουδαῖα ἢ περὶ φαῦλα γιγνόμενον;

<sup>3</sup> *Gorgias* 452e: τὸ πείθειν . . . οἷόν τ' εἶναι τοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ δικαστὰς καὶ ἐν βουλευτηρίῳ βουλευτὰς καὶ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐκκλησιαστὰς καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ συλλόγῳ παντί, ὅστις ἐν πολιτικῷ σύλλογῳ γίγνηται. Cf. 454b, 455a. P. Kucharski examines in detail how the discussion of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* is an outgrowth of the discussion in the *Gorgias* in "La Rhétorique dans le *Gorgias* et le *Phèdre*," *Revue des Études grecques* 74 (1961), 371-406. Antje Hellwig's *Untersuchungen zur Theorie der Rhetorik bei Platon und Aristoteles* (*Hypomnemata* 38, Göttingen 1973) is also a valuable contribution to this topic.

response to it. Socrates begins the discussion by asking whether the rhetorician must know the truth (259e). This question is the focus of Socrates' entire examination of rhetoric. As a possible answer, Socrates sums up the position taken by Gorgias in the *Gorgias*: that if an aspiring rhetorician lacks knowledge, he must acquire it, but that knowledge by itself is insufficient for persuasion (*Gorgias* 458e–460a, *Phaedrus* 260d). Socrates also reminds Phaedrus that there are arguments purporting to show that rhetoric is not a skill, *τέχνη*, but an “unskilled routine” (*ἄτεχνος τριβή*), lacking in knowledge (*Phaedrus* 260e); Socrates used such arguments in the *Gorgias* (463b, 501a). Then, after stating his new definition, Socrates asks Phaedrus whether this is what he has heard; and Phaedrus expresses surprise, saying that he has heard no more than that rhetoric concerns lawsuits and public speaking (261b). Phaedrus' surprise is itself surprising, since all of the rhetoric exemplified previously in the *Phaedrus* has been of a conspicuously private kind. The three speeches that preceded all dealt with the intimate question of the relationship between lover and beloved. In expressing surprise, Phaedrus stands for the general reader who is familiar with the discussion in the *Gorgias* and who is now being alerted that a new view is being proposed.

Socrates responds to Phaedrus' surprise by arguing that his definition fits common rhetorical practice. Rhetoricians, he points out, practice an art (if indeed it is an art) of opposition (*ἀντιλογική*), which aims to make the same thing appear to be both one thing (such as just) and its opposite (such as unjust); and this aim, which consists in making anything resemble anything at all, is not confined to public speaking (261b–e). Consequently, Socrates argues, since rhetoric is the practice of deception, and since deception cannot be successful unless the deceiver knows the truth, the rhetorician must have knowledge.

Socrates draws no attention for the time being to the term *psychagogia*, the key term of his definition. This term is another new element in the definition; Plato did not use the term in any previous discussion of rhetoric. The reason it does not strike the attention of Phaedrus is that it is entirely compatible with the familiar view of rhetoric as the practice of public persuasion. The term suggests beguilement; and by emphasizing the deceptive nature of rhetoric in his discussion, Socrates invites the reader to understand the term in a pejorative sense for now, as the practice of alluring and beguiling others. Later, he will reveal the full meaning of the term and the full novelty of his definition.

The earliest attested meaning of the compound *psychagog-* is that of “conjuring” or “evoking” souls of the dead. From this use, there

evolved the notion of influencing the souls of living people, with the connotation of "alluring" or "beguiling" them.<sup>4</sup> Using the verbal form, Aristophanes combines the two senses and gives his own twist to them in a portrait of Socrates in the *Birds*, produced in 414 B.C. Here the chorus of birds sees a strange sight: Socrates "is conjuring souls" (*ψυχαγωγῶν*, 1555) by a lake among the "Shadow-feet." When the cowardly Peisander comes to this place to get back the spirit (*ψυχή*) that deserted him when still alive, Socrates slays a young camel just as Odysseus had slain sheep: and Chaerephon is drawn to the blood from the world below. In casting Socrates as a conjurer of souls, Aristophanes is parodying Socrates' well-known ethical concern, his care for the soul.

Plato uses the noun, *psychagogia*, only in the *Phaedrus*; but the verbal form occurs in two other dialogues. In the *Laws* (909b), he plays on the basic sense of "conjuring" souls of the dead to add to it the notion of "beguiling" the living; and in the *Timaeus* (71a) he uses the verb to refer to the beguilement of the desiring part of the soul by means of images. His contemporary and rival, Isocrates, uses the verb to describe the effect of poetic devices on the listener. In *Evagoras* (10), he points out that poets can "charm" their listeners with beautiful rhythms and harmonies even though their diction and thoughts may be poor; and in *To Nicocles* (49), he remarks that rhetoricians who wish to "allure" their listeners must use the crowd-pleasing device of myth, just like the poets.

Gorgias did not use the term, as far as we know. But it is well suited to convey his notion that speech has the power to effect "most divine" deeds, as attested by poetry and magical incantations. It fits even more directly his claim that words have the same power with respect to the soul as drugs have with respect to the body; as a result, Gorgias held, a speaker can shape a soul in whatever way he wishes and in particular "drug" and "bewitch" a soul "by an evil persuasion."<sup>5</sup>

The term *psychagogia* in Socrates' definition thus agrees with the familiar notion of rhetoric as a power that works on the soul and may be used to deceive it. But as the argument of the *Phaedrus* proceeds, a new meaning unfolds. Socrates gradually develops the view that genuine rhetoric is an art by which a speaker guides another to the truth by adjusting his words to the other's soul. Rhetoric no longer appears as a pseudo-art of deception, but is shown to be an

<sup>4</sup> Evanhélou Moutsopolos has a brief survey of the uses of *ψυχαγωγία* in *La Musique dans l'oeuvre de Platon* (Paris 1959), pp. 259-60.

<sup>5</sup> *Praise of Helen* 8-14.

art of teaching individuals to discover the truth about themselves. After considerable argument, Socrates is ready to draw attention to the component *psychagogia* in his definition. The new term in fact sums up everything that is new about his view of rhetoric. Reverting to his definition, Socrates claims that "since the function of speech is *psychagogia*" (271c), the rhetorician must know the types of soul, as well as be able to recognize actual occurrences. Socrates now relies on the etymology of the term *psychagogia* to reveal its underlying, true meaning, "guidance of the soul." Only sham rhetoric beguiles others; real rhetoric guides souls to self-knowledge through a knowledge of soul.

The notion of *psychagogia* thus has pivotal importance in the *Phaedrus*. Its importance, moreover, is not confined to the latter part of the dialogue. It serves as a theme for the entire dialogue. Just as in his dialectical discussion Socrates moves from the notion of a sham rhetoric to that of a genuine rhetoric, so the action of the dialogue as a whole moves from a display of pseudo-rhetoric to a revelation of genuine rhetoric; and this is a transition from *psychagogia* as beguilement to *psychagogia* as guidance of the soul. Throughout this progression, Socrates serves as an example of a true rhetorician and true "psychagogue." Against Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates as conjuror of souls, Plato sets a portrait of Socrates as a "psychagogue" who guides souls to the truth by seeking it himself.

This *psychagogia* has four stages. First, Socrates joins Phaedrus in an apparent celebration of Lysias' speech (227a–34c); second, Socrates undertakes to deliver a speech of his own, to rival Lysias' speech (234c–42a); third, Socrates opposes this speech with a mythical recantation that reveals something of the truth (242a–57b); and fourth, Socrates teaches by a dialectical examination, which exemplifies genuine rhetoric, that genuine rhetoric consists in a dialectical search for the truth (257b–79c). Each succeeding stage is built on the preceding stages; and the whole forms a sequence in which each part is complemented by all the others. The remainder of this paper will examine this relationship among the four stages.

The dialogue begins with a meeting between Phaedrus and Socrates close to the city walls. Phaedrus is enthralled by a speech of Lysias, in which the speaker attempts to seduce "someone beautiful" (227c), whom he does not love, by pleading ingeniously that it is advantageous for a person to yield to a non-lover, not a lover. Phaedrus is so impressed by the speech that he has spent the entire morning memorizing it. But we do not learn this fact from Phaedrus; we learn it in time, and with precise details, from Socrates, who is invited by Phaedrus to join him in a walk outside the city. When Socrates asks

Phaedrus to recite the speech to him, and Phaedrus replies that his memory can't possibly do justice to a speech composed over a long period of time by the cleverest of present writers, Socrates exclaims: "If I don't know Phaedrus, I have forgotten myself" (228a). He then reveals all: that Phaedrus first had Lysias recite the speech repeatedly, then borrowed the manuscript to study it, and finally went outside the city, manuscript in hand, to practice it. Socrates knows Phaedrus well; and as a clinching demonstration of his insight, he makes Phaedrus come up with the manuscript that he has been hiding under his cloak. In exposing Phaedrus, Socrates shows that he recognizes with whom he is dealing. We shall learn later that a knowledge of the other's soul is a prerequisite of the true orator.

The opening scene shows us a Socrates who is no less enthusiastic about getting to know Lysias' speech than Phaedrus is about learning it by heart. Socrates describes himself as a "fellow bacchic reveler" (*συγκορυβαντιῶντα*), who is so passionate a "lover of discourses" as to be "sick" about listening to them (228b-c). Socrates' and Phaedrus' walk into the countryside looks indeed like a bacchic revel, with overtones of comedy, in which the two celebrants lead each other in turn. First Phaedrus invites Socrates to lead on (227c, 228b) and Socrates suggests that they turn away from the road to go along the river-bed in search of a secluded spot (229a). Subsequently Phaedrus picks out a spot and leads Socrates to it. The landscape takes on an air of mystery, as Phaedrus recalls the story of Oreithyia being snatched by Boreas (229b). It is as though the pair of worshippers, too, has been carried off by some supernatural power. This impression is reinforced when the spot, which Phaedrus picked out from a distance, turns out to be a grove sacred to the Nymphs and the river-god Achelous. Socrates duly celebrates the grove with a lyrical description; and he thanks Phaedrus for leading him, like a stranger, to an alien territory (*ἐξενάγηται*, 230c), the countryside. Phaedrus acknowledges that Socrates is indeed like a stranger who has been led (*ξεναγουμένω*). Socrates' explanation for this *xenagogia* is that Phaedrus has found a drug by which to lead him wherever he wishes: this is to dangle "discourses in books" in front of him just as others dangle fruit or branches in front of animals that are hungry (230d-e).

This Bacchic revel and *xenagogia* is also a *psychagogia*. The souls of both men have been conjured to an alien territory by the drug-like power of words. On the surface, Phaedrus has acted as leader in this journey: beguiled by Lysias' speech, he seems to have beguiled Socrates and lured him to a place of estrangement. But in reality, as will become increasingly clear, Socrates has been Phaedrus' leader: guided by a divine power, he has guided Phaedrus to a place of purification,

where both men may be truly at home. Socrates claims he is entranced: in reality he has a perfect grip on himself. There is a glimmer of the true state of affairs when, in response to Phaedrus' question where Oreithyia was carried off, Socrates is able to give an answer ("two or three stades downstream, where we cross to Agra," 229c). The stranger, Socrates, knows the territory better than Phaedrus. Then, in the discussion concerning Oreithyia, Socrates remarks that he is still searching to know himself (229e). Although he seems to have been swept away by Dionysiac enthusiasm, Socrates keeps in mind his life's goal. Acting as a "psychagogue," he associates Phaedrus with himself in a search for self-knowledge, by guiding him to a holy place where Phaedrus may be healed of his evil enchantment.

The topography provides a suitable setting for the *psychagogia*. Not only do the two men journey to an unfamiliar place, but there is a physical boundary that separates their normal abode from the alien territory. In order to reach the sacred grove, they must cross a river. This river serves as a sacred border, like the body of water outside Hades that separates the souls of the living from the souls of the dead. Later Socrates will be prevented by his inner voice from crossing the river until he has performed a ritual expiation (242b-c); and finally both men cross the river after offering a prayer to Pan and the other deities of the place (279b-c). As though conjured by a ritual act, the souls of the two men have been transported to a realm from which they are normally excluded and win their release through ritual purification. The extraordinary setting of the *Phaedrus*, which has surprised and delighted the readers of Plato, introduces the theme of the entire dialogue, rhetoric as *psychagogia*.

After Phaedrus has read aloud Lysias' speech, Socrates confirms that he has engaged in a Bacchic celebration with Phaedrus (*συμβάκχευσα*, 234d). But he now attributes his enchantment, not to the speech itself, but to Phaedrus' excessive delight at the speech. By transferring his enthusiasm from the speech to the hearer, Socrates now assumes the role of lover of Phaedrus.<sup>6</sup> In order to lure Phaedrus away from his admiration of Lysias, he also sets himself up as a rhetorical rival to Lysias. His immediate strategy is to hurl an apparently rash challenge: he claims that "ancient wise men and women" (235b) have spoken and written more copiously on the same

<sup>6</sup> Anne Lebeck notes in "The Central Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*" (*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 13 [1972], 267-90, p. 281) that Socrates is here overcome by the sight of his beloved, Phaedrus, in just the way that Socrates later describes in the recantation (254b). V. Tejera aptly views Phaedrus as the "erotic . . . generator" of both of Socrates' speeches ("Irony and Allegory in the *Phaedrus*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 8 [1975], 71-87, p. 74).

subject treated by Lysias and that he, Socrates, could do better himself. Socrates is careful to attribute his own fullness of invention to some source that he can't name just at present, "perhaps beautiful Sappho or wise Anacreon or even some prose writers (*συγγραφέων*)" (235c). He says that he knows he is ignorant; so it must be that he got his inspiration from elsewhere and that "because of my stupidity I have forgotten this very thing, how and from whom I heard" (235d).

Who, if anyone, is Socrates' source? Malcolm Brown and James Coulter have shown in detail that the organization and content of Socrates' first speech are Isocratean.<sup>7</sup> The most important Isocratean features pointed out by them are: clear organization, based on a clear determination of the subject matter, sometimes by means of a definition; the view that human beings are guided by opinion (*δόξα*) or desire (*ἐπιθυμία*); the praise of "divine philosophy" (239b); and the claim that nothing is more valuable for humans or gods than "the education of the soul" (241c). As Brown and Coulter point out, Plato considered this a debased view of philosophy and of human nature, since it substitutes opinion for knowledge and cold calculation of material advantages for a commitment to truth.

Another Isocratean feature, pointed out by R. L. Howland, is the overall purpose of the speech, that of improving on a rival rhetorician by composing a speech on the same theme.<sup>8</sup> Isocrates' *Busiris* is particularly pertinent. Here Isocrates attempts to outdo his rival, Polycrates, by first defining what an encomium is; and he ends by admitting that even though both he and his rival may be speaking falsehoods, his speech is superior because it is properly an encomium.<sup>9</sup>

There are further indications that Socrates is using Isocrates as a model for his first speech. With some emphasis, Socrates draws attention to the rhythmic quality of his speech. Shortly after he has started his speech, he breaks off by saying that he is already close to speaking in dithyrambs (238d); and when he ends, he says that he is no longer talking in dithyrambs but in epic verse (241e). The use of rhythm was a conspicuous feature of Isocrates' style. Well aware that

<sup>7</sup> "The Middle Speech of Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971), 405-23.

<sup>8</sup> "The Attack on Isocrates in the *Phaedrus*," *Classical Quarterly* 31 (1937), 151-59, p. 153. The *Helen* (composed about 370 B.C.) and *Busiris* (about 390 B.C.) are two outstanding examples of this endeavor. Another example is the *Panegyricus* (380 B.C.), where Isocrates tries to outdo the many predecessors who have spoken on the same theme by choosing the right starting-point (15).

<sup>9</sup> *Busiris* 9 and 33. In the *Helen* (14-15), Isocrates likewise proposes to improve upon a rival (Gorgias) by first making clear what an encomium is.

poets charm their listeners by the use of rhythm, Isocrates demanded in his programmatic *Against the Sophists* that the rhetorician must speak "rhythmically and musically" (εὐρύθμως καὶ μουσικῶς).<sup>10</sup> As he claimed in late life, his speeches are akin to poetry, that is, to works composed "with music and rhythms" (μετὰ μουσικῆς καὶ ῥυθμῶν), and have "a rather poetic and elaborate diction";<sup>11</sup> and they tend to be adorned "with beautiful rhythms and elaboration" (εὐρυθμίαις καὶ ποικιλίαις).<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Socrates seems to plant a clue in the very way that he describes the source that, he says, eludes him. Isocrates was a prose writer (συγγραφεύς) who advised his students not to be ignorant of the poets and other "wise persons" (σοφιστῶν) but to cull from them what is best just as bees gather honey from flowers.<sup>13</sup> Socrates has a convenient excuse for his forgetfulness: Isocrates' speeches are a repertory of second-hand ideas; and it is hard to see anything original in his speeches.<sup>14</sup>

The reader knows from other dialogues to be wary of Socrates' confessions of ignorance and forgetfulness. In the *Phaedrus*, there is

<sup>10</sup> *Against the Sophists* 16 (composed about 390 B.C., roughly the time at which Isocrates founded his school). Isocrates demanded poetic rhythm in his *Τέχνη* (Sauppe II 225), μείχθω παντὶ ῥυθμῷ μάλιστα ἰαμβικῷ ἢ τροχαϊκῷ. R. C. Jebb discusses the importance of prose rhythm in Isocrates' rhetoric in his *The Attic Orators*, vol. 2, London 1893, pp. 56–58. For the actual rhythms used by Socrates in his speech, see Karl Mras, "Platos Phaedrus und die Rhetorik," part 2, *Wiener Studien* 37 (1915), 88–117, pp. 96–97.

<sup>11</sup> *Antidosis* 46–47 (dated 354–53 B.C.).

<sup>12</sup> *To Philip* 27 (dated 346 B.C.).

<sup>13</sup> *To Demonicus* 51–52 (dated about 374–72 B.C.); and *To Nicocles* 13 (dated about the same time). In *To Nicocles*, Isocrates also mentions that Hesiod, Theognis, and Phocylides are agreed to be "excellent counsellors for the life of men" (43). Isocrates' praise of the poets is not unmixed; along with much wisdom, he also attributes to them calumnies and lies (for example, at *Busiris* 38). On Isocrates' eclecticism, see also the next note.

<sup>14</sup> There are, I think, other allusions to Isocrates in the way in which Socrates leads up to his speech; but these are difficult to prove and carry weight only in combination. There is, I think, an allusion to Isocrates in the friendly bargaining that goes on between Phaedrus and Socrates prior to Socrates' delivery of the speech. Phaedrus would have Socrates use none of the arguments used by Lysias; and Socrates protests that he should be allowed to use those arguments of Lysias which are inevitable in any treatment of the subject (235e–36a). Isocrates maintains in his famous *Panegyricus* (8) that "one must not avoid those subjects about which others have spoken previously but one must try to speak better than them" (8); and in *To Nicocles* (41) he excuses his lack of originality by saying that in speeches of this type one should look not for novelty, but for the ability to "bring together the greatest number of ideas scattered in the thoughts of others and speak most beautifully about them." Socrates, it seems to me, is imitating Isocrates' eclecticism. It is true that in

special reason to suppose that Socrates is toying with his interlocutor. Socrates has been playing with Phaedrus at uncovering Phaedrus' devotion to Lysias. We saw Phaedrus hiding Lysias' manuscript and protesting that he can't recite his speech; and we saw Socrates uncovering the subterfuge and teasing Phaedrus about it. A similar scene is now being staged, with roles reversed. Socrates now plays the role of the enthusiastic and bashful student of rhetoric, and he gives Phaedrus a chance at uncovering his rhetorical inspiration. After boasting of his rhetorical capacity, Socrates suddenly becomes reluctant: he says that he has been teasing Phaedrus, and that he really can't deliver a more refined speech than Lysias'. Thereupon Phaedrus sees through Socrates, just as Socrates saw through him earlier. Phaedrus says: "If I don't know Socrates, I've forgotten myself"; and he accuses Socrates of playing coy. Phaedrus uncovers Socrates' desire to speak. In time, he also uncovers his source.

Phaedrus reveals the source to us at the very end of the dialogue when, in response to Socrates' command to tell his friend Lysias about true rhetoric, Phaedrus commands Socrates to tell his friend too. Socrates asks coily who this is, and Phaedrus replies: "The beautiful Isocrates" (278e). Isocrates has not been named at all before this; and his mention at the close of the dialogue may surprise the reader. Isocrates has, however, been very much present throughout the dialogue; and the first allusion to him is in the way Socrates describes the source of his first speech.

Socrates delivers his speech, covered up "in shame," as he says. The pose is appropriate because he is hiding behind Isocrates, whose message is shameful. But Socrates also arranges very carefully that he has nothing, really, to be ashamed of. In the first place, he announces at the very beginning that the speech is addressed to a "boy, or rather youngster (*μειρακίσκος*), very beautiful" (237b) by one

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the *Helen* (15) Isocrates announces that he will leave aside everything that others have said. This has led Howland to suggest that in demanding the right to use some of his rival's arguments Socrates in fact attacks Isocrates, by showing that his straining for novelty is absurd (p. 154 of the article cited in note 8). I suggest that in the *Helen* Isocrates is demonstrating that he can do what he normally chooses not to do. Plato parodies Isocrates by having Phaedrus attempt to impose the conditions of the *Helen* on Socrates, who is imitating Isocrates, and then having Socrates respond, appropriately, with an Isocratean position.

I suspect that there is another allusion to Isocrates, in particular the *Panegyricus* (which was read at the hundredth Olympic festival in 380 B.C.), when Phaedrus accepts Socrates' terms with the extravagant promise that if Socrates can outdo Lysias on these terms he will set up a statue of Socrates at Olympia (236b). Phaedrus here exalts Socrates to the rank of the famous rhetoricians who composed for the Olympic festival, among them Gorgias, Lysias, and—most exalted—Isocrates.

of his many lovers, who cleverly pretends not to be in love with him. The speech is, therefore, an exercise in the professional rhetorician's pseudo-art of deception. Socrates denounces this type of exercise later in the dialectical discussion, when he points out that some rhetoricians maintain that there is no need to know the truth, since arguments from likelihood (*εἰκός*) are more convincing than the truth (272d-74a). But Socrates differs from the ordinary rhetorician in announcing his subterfuge at the outset. By using this stratagem, he not only guards against the charge of deceiving his listener, but also suggests that Lysias' speech is in fact a piece of deception perpetrated by a lover who pretends not to be one.

Socrates invokes the "boy" at the beginning of his speech (237b) and refers to him again later by saying that "we must return to the boy" (238d). The same "boy" is invoked by Socrates at the beginning of his second speech, the recantation. Socrates now asks where the boy is to whom his previous speech was addressed, and Phaedrus answers: "Here he is, next to you, always very close, whenever you want him" (243e). The beautiful boy to whom Socrates addresses both his speeches is none other than Phaedrus. He is listener and addressee at once. Hence Socrates has another, subtler defense against the charge of deception: he cannot be accused of deceiving the "boy" of his first speech, because he is the very person he warns against the deception. As the exchange at the beginning of the recantation tells us, Socrates has succeeded in attracting Phaedrus' love. He has done so in the manner of a genuine rhetorician by adjusting his words to the soul of his listener: he has impressed Phaedrus by constructing a speech which is on the surface no less ingeniously deceptive than that of Lysias, but which is in fact designed to be truthful.

Furthermore, Socrates bases all the arguments of his first speech on a definition of love as an irrational desire for the enjoyment of bodily beauty. In his recantation later on, Socrates shows that the definition is misguided: it defines a left-handed, perverse type of love, as opposed to a right-handed, genuine love. Hence all his arguments showing that a lover is harmful to his beloved are unsound. But to the extent that the definition applies to an attitude commonly called "love," the arguments are sound. Socrates is truthful in arguing: if love is a certain irrational desire, then it is harmful to associate with a lover. Because all of the speech hinges on an explicit definition of love, and this definition corresponds to a certain attitude that passes as "love," even though it does not state the truth about love, Socrates is not in fact deceiving his listener.

Socrates deliberately does not give Phaedrus a chance to applaud

his speech. He stops the speech abruptly at mid-point, after completing his arguments against the lover and before adding any arguments in favor of the non-lover. Socrates explains to the bewildered Phaedrus that if he goes on, he will surely be possessed by the nymphs to whom Phaedrus threw him (241e). He feigns madness of the left-handed kind, as he will make clear later, in order to let himself be swayed subsequently by a prophetic power that exemplifies a right-handed, or divine, kind of madness (242c).

Prevented by his inner voice from crossing the river, Socrates undertakes to purify himself by a speech of recantation. This new speech not only subverts, but also complements the preceding speech. We expected a praise of the non-lover; but Socrates now offers a praise of the genuine lover to balance the previous condemnation of the debased lover. The new speech complements the other by showing that there is a genuine type of love, the love of soul and of truth, as opposed to the fake love that is directed at another's body. The two speeches together show that the latter type of love is to be shunned, the former to be pursued. The speeches thus form a carefully constructed progression, in which the first speech turns out to be a fragment that is completed and given new meaning by the second.

In his recantation, Socrates continues to aim his remarks at Phaedrus, invoking him at intervals as "beautiful boy" or "boy" (243e, 252b, 256e). Again he adjusts both content and style to Phaedrus. He now uses myth to turn Phaedrus from falsehood to truth; and he acknowledges his rhetorical strategy ironically at the end by excusing himself to Eros for the "poetic expressions" which Phaedrus forced on him (257a). The use of myth is intended to lift Phaedrus' awareness from the narrow focus on human selfishness in the Isocratean speech to a new cosmic vision, in which humans aim to recover a divine condition of knowledge through love of another. Socrates now shows Phaedrus that reason is the guiding faculty of the human soul and that genuine philosophy is a search for divine enlightenment.

In this praise of love, which turns out to be a praise of the love of wisdom, philosophy, Socrates not only practices genuine rhetorical *psychagogia*, but also makes *psychagogia* the subject of his discourse. He shows that the lover guides the soul of another toward its former divine condition and thereby guides and finds himself. The genuine rhetorician, we will learn later, has the same aim as the lover; and ultimately genuine rhetoric and genuine love will appear as one.

Socrates later describes his speech as a playful "mythic hymn" which "perhaps" touches upon the truth and is not "altogether unconvincing," and which honors "with measure and pious speech

(μετρίως τε καὶ εὐφήμως) my master and yours, o Phaedrus, Eros, the guardian of beautiful boys" (265b–c). Not only is the content of the myth clearly anti-Isocratean, but Socrates sums up the difference between his and Isocrates' rhetoric by the phrase "with measure and pious speech." As we saw earlier, Isocrates demanded in *Against the Sophists* that the rhetorician speak "rhythmically and musically" (εὐρύθμως καὶ μουσικῶς), and he took pride in his use of poetic rhythms. In his previous parody of Isocrates, Socrates drew attention to the use of poetic measures. In his new speech, Socrates replaces the measures of poetry with genuine measure—the measure of truth and piety. The phrase μετρίως τε καὶ εὐφήμως serves as a signal that Socrates is replacing Isocratean rhetoric with a rhetoric of truth. As Socrates later states explicitly, this new rhetoric aims at pleasing the gods, not humans (273e).

The succession of three speeches thus constitutes a transition from Lysianic to Isocratean rhetoric and then to a new rhetoric that repudiates both of these kinds. When Socrates finishes his recantation, he has won over Phaedrus to the new rhetoric. Phaedrus joins enthusiastically in Socrates' prayer that Lysias should abandon his kind of rhetoric and turn to philosophy and that he, Phaedrus, should devote himself entirely to the love that is accompanied by philosophy; and he abandons Lysias as vulgar (ταπεινός, 257c). But Phaedrus has little understanding of what the new love entails. Nor indeed is Socrates' unfolding of a new rhetoric complete at this point. Socrates' speech of recantation is itself a fragment: it must be followed by dialectical discussion if it is to count as a contribution to genuine rhetoric. Myth is but a step toward understanding: it needs to be complemented by rational, dialectical examination if it is to be part of a genuine philosophical search.

Socrates therefore detains Phaedrus in the sacred grove while he teaches him by example and precept at once what genuine rhetoric is. The issue raised by Lysias' manuscript at the beginning of the dialogue is: how does one write well? Socrates tackles it by asking the prior question: how does one speak well? As a prelude to the discussion, Socrates invokes certain "noble creatures"—arguments—to come "and persuade the beautiful boy Phaedrus (καλλίπαιδά τε Φαῖδρον πείθετε) that unless he philosophizes adequately, he will never be an adequate speaker about anything" (261a). In his reference to Phaedrus, Socrates makes clear that the new section of discourse, like his preceding two speeches, is aimed directly at Phaedrus. Moreover, the juxtaposition of "beautiful boy" and "Phaedrus," with the pun παιδ- . . . Φαῖδ-, indicates that Phaedrus is identical with the beautiful "boy" who has kept reappearing throughout the dialogue.

The name "Phaedrus" signifies "bright" and "boy": Phaedrus is the bright boy, the beautiful boy, who has attracted Socrates all along and who, we may assume, attracted Lysias.<sup>15</sup> The beautiful boy appears for a final time at the very end of the dialogue. Here Socrates prays that he may become beautiful inside, and Phaedrus joins in this prayer. The beautiful boy Phaedrus is to become beautiful in soul, along with his dialectical associate and teacher, the lover of his soul and of wisdom in general, Socrates.

We have already touched on some of the arguments of the dialectical section. Appropriately, Socrates begins his argument with a definition

<sup>15</sup> The same pun, with the same identification of "beautiful boy" with "Phaedrus," occurs again at 265c: . . . Ἐρωτα, ὦ Φαῖδρε, καλῶν παίδων ἔφορον. Paul Plass rightly notes that καλλίπαις echoes the vocatives of καλῶς παῖς of Socrates' recantation (p. 37 of the article cited in note 1); in my view, the term echoes all references to "beautiful boy" throughout the *Phaedrus*.

Some scholars have held that Phaedrus was too old at the dramatic date of the dialogue to qualify as the "boy" of Socrates' two speeches. L. Parmentier argued that since Phaedrus, who appears in the *Protagoras* (315c) as a disciple of Hippias, must already have been about eighteen in 432 B.C., the dramatic date of the *Protagoras*, and since the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* is about 410 B.C., Phaedrus could no longer have been young in the *Phaedrus* ("L'Age de Phèdre dans le dialogue de Platon," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 10 (1926), 8–21). G. J. de Vries agrees with Parmentier that Phaedrus was not a young man in the *Phaedrus*, although he thinks Plato had no precise dramatic date in mind (*A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato*, Amsterdam 1969, pp. 6–7). R. Hackforth, who suggests a dramatic date early in the period 411–404 B.C., thinks that Phaedrus would be about forty (*Plato's Phaedrus*, translation and commentary, Cambridge 1952, p. 8). De Vries and Hackforth agree that such a mature age would not prevent Socrates from addressing Phaedrus as "boy" (παῖ, 267c) and "young man" (νεανία, 257c); and they explain Phaedrus' response to Socrates at 243e as a "fiction" (de Vries, p. 113) and as something "playful" (Hackforth, p. 53, n. 1). They also assign to καλλίπαιδα (261a) the implausible sense of "begetter of beautiful discourses" (De Vries, p. 202; Hackforth, p. 121). This sense was suggested by the Neoplatonist Hermeias as an alternative to the straightforward meaning "beautiful boy" (p. 223 of the edition cited in note 1).

As for the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus*, K. J. Dover has argued persuasively for the period 418–16 B.C. (*Lysias and the Corpus Lysiacum*, Berkeley 1968, pp. 41–43). This brings the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* close to that of the *Symposium*, about 416 B.C. In this dialogue Agathon is depicted as a beautiful young man (ἴεον at 175e, μερακίῳ at 223a), whose charms are irresistible to Socrates and Alcibiades. The same Agathon is presented in the *Protagoras* as "still a young lad" (ἴεον τι ἐτι μεράκιον) and beautiful (315d). E. Zeller pointed out that there is a slight anachronism between the description of Agathon in the *Protagoras* (about 432 B.C.) as still young and the description of him in the *Symposium* as young (*Über die Anachronismen in den platonischen Gesprächen*, Berlin 1873, p. 86). There is an analogous anachronism, I suggest, concerning Phaedrus. Since Socrates calls him "boy" (267c), "young man" (257c), and "beautiful boy" (261a), we must suppose that he is a young person in the *Phaedrus*. Phaedrus is also a young person in the *Protagoras*: his youth, it appears, is just as lasting as the beautiful Agathon's.

of rhetoric. He will specify later that any discussion that is to be orderly must begin with a definition. As previously discussed, Socrates offers a new definition of rhetoric as a “*psychagogia* in words” that occurs both in public and in private (261a–b). The shift from public to private rhetoric, we now recognize, reflects a new concern with Isocratean rhetoric, whose primary aim is not to influence the public, but to educate individuals through private communication. The threat perceived by Plato is no longer Gorgianic demagoguery, but Isocratean “philosophy.” That is why Socrates undertakes to show Phaedrus how one must practice genuine philosophy.

Although Plato does not mention Isocrates by name until the very end of the dialogue, all of the demands stated by him in the dialectical section imply a reform of Isocratean rhetoric. In the first place, Socrates argues that since a rhetorician must know the truth in order to be skillful at leading a person from one belief to its opposite, the person who “hunts out opinions” (262c) will not possess a genuine art of rhetoric. Isocrates maintained that the rhetorician requires appropriate opinions, not knowledge; and Socrates previously exemplified this point of view in his first speech.<sup>16</sup> Socrates now responds directly to Isocrates: given that the skilled rhetorician is able to make the listener believe anything at all, the rhetorician must know the truth, and not be content with plausible opinions.

Next, Socrates takes Isocrates’ demand for an initial definition of the subject matter and transforms it into a demand for dialectical knowledge.<sup>17</sup> The rhetorician, it now turns out, must have the dialectical ability both to gather instances into a single form (*ιδέα*)

<sup>16</sup> See especially *Against the Sophists* 8, where Isocrates claims that those who rely on “opinions” are more successful than those who profess to have “knowledge,” and *Helen* 5, where he claims that “it is much better to have suitable opinions about what is useful than to have accurate knowledge about what is useless.”

<sup>17</sup> There is a strong verbal similarity between the way in which Socrates sets out the requirement for definition in the *Phaedrus* and the way Isocrates proposes to define the function of a king in *To Nicocles* (dated about 374–72 B.C.). Isocrates writes: “First we must investigate what is the function of kings; for if we encompass (*περιλάβωμεν*) the force (*δύναμιν*) of the whole matter in a summary, we shall speak better about the parts by looking toward (*ἀποβλέποντες*) this. I think that all men would agree (*ὁμολογήσαι*) . . .” (*To Nicocles* 9; cf. 2, where the term *ὄρισαι* is used). Similarly Socrates uses the expressions *δύναμιν*, *ὁμολογία* *θέμενοι* *δρον*, and *ἀποβλέποντες* in defining love in his first speech (237c–d) and later uses *περιλαμβάνωμεν* (273e). Late in his life, Isocrates again uses the terms *ἀποβλέποντες* (*On the Peace* 18) and *περιλάβωμεν* (*Antidosis* 217) with reference to initial definition. This similarity, together with other similarities between the *Phaedrus* and *To Nicocles* (see notes 13 and 14), suggests that Plato had in mind *To Nicocles* (along with earlier speeches) when composing the *Phaedrus*. This view is in accord with the date now generally assigned to the composition of the *Phaedrus*. Whereas most scholars of the nineteenth century assumed

and to divide forms into types (262c–66d). Socrates illustrates this transformation in his sequence of two speeches. In his first speech, he uses Isocratean definition to delineate a perverse type of love and to construct an example of perverse rhetoric. In the recantation, Socrates uses dialectical skill to propose that genuine love is a type of divine madness and to suggest that genuine rhetoric is a search for truth. As Socrates himself points out (265c), it was dialectical skill (for which he disclaims credit) that enabled Socrates to pass from a condemnation to a praise of love. Like the pseudo-rhetorician, Socrates moves from one position to its opposite; but unlike the pseudo-rhetorician, he guides the listener from falsehood to truth.

The third main departure from Isocratean rhetoric consists in Socrates' demand that the rhetorician must have a knowledge of soul in general and of the soul of the listener in particular. This departure is an added precision, based on the preceding two reforms. Here, the initial Isocratean position is unmistakable. In *Against the Sophists* Isocrates criticized his fellow rhetoricians for thinking that the whole of rhetoric consists in a knowledge of its components, the types of discourse, without there being any need for the ability to combine them. Isocrates claims that "it is not very difficult to know the forms (ἰδεῶν) out of which we make and compose all speeches" (16). Then he sums up his teaching about rhetoric:

But it requires much care and is the job of a manly soul that has opinions (ψυχῆς ἀνδρικήs καὶ δοξαστικήs) to choose the forms that are necessary for each subject and to mix them with one another and to arrange them properly, and, further, not to miss the right opportunities (καιρῶν) but to elaborate the whole speech fittingly (πρεπόντως) with thoughts and to speak rhythmically and musically (εὐρύθμως καὶ μουσικῶs) in the choice of words (16–17).

After summarizing the duties of both student and teacher, Isocrates concludes:

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an early date (relying in part on Diogenes Laertius' report of a tradition that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue, 3. 38; and on the view of Olympiodorus, in the sixth century A.D., that it was first, *Vita Platonis* 3), Léon Robin (*La Théorie platonicienne de l'Amour*, Paris 1908) and Hans von Arnim (*Platos Jugenddialoge und die Entstehungszeit des Phaidros*, Leipzig 1914) showed that its date of composition must be later than the *Republic*. Hackforth dates the *Phaedrus* close to the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*, with the conjecture that it was composed about 370 B.C. (pp. 4–7 of the edition cited in note 15); and de Vries dates it a few years later, also close to the *Theaetetus* (pp. 7–11 of the commentary cited in note 15). I am inclined to agree with W. K. C. Guthrie that it is "much more in the spirit of the middle group than of the *Sophist*" (*A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 4, Cambridge 1975, p. 397); a date of about 374–370 B.C. seems to me appropriate.

When all these requirements coincide, those who practice philosophy will attain perfection. But to the extent that they fall short of anything that has been said, those who approach it will be inferior.<sup>18</sup>

It is not enough for a rhetorician, according to Isocrates, to know the types of discourse. Instead, the essential features of good rhetoric are: an orderly arrangement of types of speech; a recognition of the right opportunity; fitting opinions; and harmonious expression.

Similarly to Isocrates, Socrates criticizes the writers of rhetorical hand-books for teaching only the “preliminaries” of the art in teaching just the components (268a–69c). He then goes on to draw out the implication, which Isocrates never contemplated, that the genuine rhetorician must know the various types of soul, as well as recognize particular souls, in order to be able to know what type of speech is suitable for a particular person (269d–72b). He sums up his teaching about rhetoric as follows. Since the function of speech is *psychagogia* (271c), the speaker must first know the types of soul and the corresponding types of discourse, then observe both souls and speeches and learn to recognize particular souls as requiring particular types of discourse. When one has learned all this, and in addition recognizes the right occasions (*καιρούς*) for speaking and keeping silent, then

the art is beautifully and completely perfected, but not before. But if anyone falls short of any of this in speaking or teaching or writing, though claiming to speak with art, the person who is not persuaded is the winner.<sup>19</sup>

This summary, which hinges on the definition of rhetoric as *psychagogia*, is a counterproposal to Isocrates’ statement in *Against the Sophists*. Plato knew this statement well. He first parodied it in the *Gorgias*, when Socrates claims that contemporary rhetoric is not an art (*τέχνη*), but flattery practiced by a “conjecturing and manly soul” (*ψυχῆς . . . στοχαστικῆς καὶ ἀνδρείας*, 463a).<sup>20</sup> In the *Phaedrus* Plato

<sup>18</sup> *Against the Sophists* 16–18: τὸ δὲ τούτων ἐφ’ ἐκάστῳ τῶν πραγμάτων ἄς δέ προελέσθαι καὶ μῆξι πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ τάξει κατὰ τρόπον, ἐτι δὲ τῶν καιρῶν μὴ διαμαρτεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασι πρεπόντως ἴλον τὸν λόγον καταποικίλαι καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι εὐρύθμως καὶ μουσικῶς εἰπεῖν, ταῦτα δὲ πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας δεῖσθαι καὶ ψυχῆς ἀνδρικήας καὶ δοξαστικῆς ἔργον εἶναι. . . . καὶ τούτων μὲν ἰσχυρῶν συμπεσόντων τελείως ἔξουσιν οἱ φιλοσοφούντες· καθ’ ὃ δ’ ἂν ἐλλειφθῆ τι τῶν εἰρημένων, ἀνάγκη ταύτην χεῖρον διακείσθαι τοὺς πλησιάζοντας. Isocrates offers a brief summary of his main requirements at *Panegyricus* 9. He also stresses the importance of right combination and right occasion at *Helen* 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Phaedrus* 272b: . . . καλῶς τε καὶ τελῶς ἐστὶν ἡ τέχνη ἀπεργασμένη, πρότερον δ’ οὐ. ἀλλ’ ὅ τι ἂν αὐτῶν τις ἐλλείπη λέγων ἢ διδάσκων ἢ γράφων, φῆ δὲ τέχνη λέγειν, ὃ μὴ πειθόμενος κρατεῖ.

<sup>20</sup> W. H. Thompson points out this parody in his edition, *The Phaedrus of Plato*, London 1868, reprinted New York 1973, p. 174.

responds to Isocrates' statement in detail. In place of Isocrates' *ἐνρυθμῶς καὶ μουσικῶς*, he puts *μετρίως τε καὶ εὐφήμως*, as we have seen. In place of opinions, he puts knowledge. He transforms the requirement for orderliness and combinatorial skill into a requirement for dialectical analysis and a knowledge of soul. A "fitting" speech thus becomes a discourse adapted to teaching another the truth. Socrates pointedly keeps the important Isocratean requirement for "right occasion," *καιρός*, but transforms it into a requirement for knowing when to use words of a particular sort to a particular person. Finally, Socrates takes direct aim at Isocrates in his concluding statement. Isocrates made the tautological claim that deficient rhetoricians are inferior. Using words that carefully balance Isocrates' wording, Socrates responds with the pointedly meaningful remark that the pseudo-rhetorician's opponent is superior. Socrates here denies that Isocrates has a genuine art of rhetoric and claims the superiority of his demands to those of Isocrates.<sup>21</sup>

Socrates has been shown throughout the dialogue as striving for a "perfect" rhetoric that is opposed to Isocrates'. From the beginning, he has demonstrated an insight into Phaedrus' soul. Moreover, he is clearly engaged in a search for knowledge of the soul in general and, most importantly, of his own soul. In his recantation, he presents a general theory of soul in mythic form; and he announces right at the beginning of the dialogue that he is still searching to know himself, as he investigates whether or not he is a beast "more complex than Typhon" (230a). As for knowing when to speak and when to be silent, surely Socrates has shown this ability all along.

After setting out his requirements for a genuine rhetoric, Socrates returns to the problem with which the discussion began: how does one write well (274b)? He argues that the real value of writing lies in words "written" in the soul for the sake of instruction (278a). These are words of truth planted in the soul like seeds, which are to bear fruit and sow seeds in turn in other souls (276e-77a). Socrates condemns writing that is used to freeze a discourse into an object of unthinking memorization.

<sup>21</sup> Howland points out the correspondence between Isocrates' and Socrates' conclusions at p. 158 of the article cited in note 8. He also points out the similarity between Isocrates' requirements for the student and Socrates' demands at 269d. Hartmut Erbse discusses this latter correspondence in pp. 330-36 of "Platons Urteil über Isokrates" (*Hermes* 99 [1971], 183-97), reprinted in *Isokrates*, edited by F. Seck, Darmstadt 1976, pp. 329-52. Plato also appears to subvert Isocrates' notion of "fitting" in the *Euthydemus*, where Socrates criticizes at length a rhetorician whom he does not name, but who cannot be anyone but Isocrates. Socrates here attributes to his opponent "*εὐπρέπειαν* rather than truth" (305e).

This final discussion balances the initial scene of the dialogue, where we saw Phaedrus mindlessly and laboriously memorizing a written speech by Lysias. But more than that, it serves as a final condemnation of Isocrates. More than any other rhetorician, Isocrates relied on written discourse. He was notorious for not speaking in public, but writing discourses to be read in public; and he instructed his pupils by having them memorize and imitate his written compositions. In clear contrast with Isocratean teaching, Socrates has been instructing his pupil, Phaedrus, by involving him in discussion. He ends the discussion, moreover, with a final example of proper teaching: he asks Phaedrus to convey what he has heard to Lysias (278e). Phaedrus is to foster the seeds of truth planted in him by planting similar seeds in another soul.

We might expect the dialogue to end here; but there is unfinished business. So far, Socrates has overtly opposed only Lysias in particular and contemporary rhetoricians in general. There has been no mention of Isocrates, who, it has been argued, is the primary target of Socrates' criticism. Plato has put a puzzle to the reader, sowing clues throughout the dialogue. It is now time to reveal the mystery. The astute Phaedrus has figured it out. He divulges his discovery at last, when Socrates asks him to inform Lysias about genuine rhetoric. Putting his discovery as a puzzle in turn, he asks Socrates to inform his friend too. Socrates continues the game by asking "who?"; and Phaedrus tells: "The beautiful Isocrates."

Socrates' ensuing comparison between Lysias and Isocrates has provoked much controversy. Some consider his remarks about Isocrates a bitterly sarcastic denunciation of the rhetorician; others regard it as high praise, or at least as praise tinged with regret.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Erbse argues (in the article cited in the preceding note) that although there are similarities between Plato's and Isocrates' views of rhetoric (including a similarity in their demands for the correct combination of types of discourse), Plato's requirements are basically different; hence Plato does not praise Isocrates without qualification, as many have thought. He suggests instead that Plato has sincere praise for Isocrates as genuinely superior to other rhetoricians, and that Plato honestly regrets that Isocrates did not rise to greater heights. By contrast, Howland, who considers the "whole dialogue . . . primarily . . . a direct and comprehensive attack on the educational system of Isocrates," takes Plato's evaluation as expressing "the most comprehensive damnation with the faintest possible praise" (pp. 152 and 159 of article cited in note 8). De Vries takes Plato's evaluation as a "bitter taunt" and "mordant sarcasm" (pp. 18 and 264 of his commentary, cited in note 15; see also his reply to Erbse, "Isocrates in the *Phaedrus*: a reply," *Mnemosyne* 24 [1971], 387-90). Similarly, James Coulter considers the remarks an insult showing "outrageous condescension" ("*Phaedrus* 279A: The Praise of Isocrates," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8 [1967], 225-36, p. 233).

Socrates notes that Isocrates is "still young," but that he will venture a prophecy. Since Isocrates has a "nobler nature" than Lysias, Socrates says, he would not be surprised if Isocrates would with advancing years far surpass all other rhetoricians in the type of discourse that he is attempting "now"; and "if this is not sufficient for him, [he would not be surprised if] some more divine impulse (*ὄρμηθ̄ θειοτέρα*) were to lead him to greater things, for by nature there is a certain philosophy in the disposition of the man."<sup>23</sup>

What is the distinction between the speeches that Isocrates is "now" attempting and the "greater" things that he might accomplish? I suggest that the distinction lies within the dialogue, not in any external historical circumstances. "Now" is the present, fictional time of the dialogue; and the type of speech that Isocrates is attempting "now" is the kind of *psychagogia* that Socrates practices (on the surface) in his first speech. Socrates praises "divine philosophy" (*θεία φιλοσοφία*, 239b) in this speech. But this "divine" philosophy, we learn in the recantation, has nothing divine about it. In the recantation and dialectical examination Socrates shows what a truly "divine" impulse is, and what truly "divine" philosophy is. The "more divine impulse" that Socrates hypothesizes is precisely the leap from the vulgar "philosophy" of his first speech to the genuine philosophy of the recantation and dialectical discussion.

Socrates leaves it open whether the "young" Isocrates will take this leap. But the reader knows that Isocrates has not taken it, since Plato composed the dialogue when Isocrates was over sixty years old.<sup>24</sup> Plato, I suggest, judged Isocrates superior to Lysias in precisely the way that the second speech of the dialogue is superior to the first. But this superiority, Plato indicates, is worth nothing. Indeed it is a liability. Despite its greater orderliness and smoother rhythms, Isocratean rhetoric is still a pseudo-rhetoric, dealing in deception; and because it is more effective, it can do more harm. Isocratean rhetoric holds out a promise of better things. But the promise unfulfilled is a far greater danger than Lysianic rhetoric ever was.

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<sup>23</sup> *Phaedrus* 279a-b: . . . ἔτι τε εἰ αὐτῷ μὴ ἀποχρήσαι ταῦτα, ἐπὶ μείζω δέ τις αὐτὸν ἄγοι ὄρμηθ̄ θειοτέρα: φύσει γάρ, ὦ φίλε, ἐνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς διανοίᾳ.

<sup>24</sup> See note 17 for the date of composition. In 370 B.C. Isocrates would have been sixty-six.