

PLATO'S DISAPPOINTMENT WITH HIS PHAEDRAN CHARACTERS AND ITS IMPACT ON HIS THEORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

In the *Phaedrus* scientific psychology is an integral part of Plato's outline of scientific rhetoric. An accomplished rhetorician must know all types of human souls (*ψυχῆς γένη*, 271b1–2), he must know what kind of soul is affected by what kind of speech, and he must be able to apply this theoretical knowledge in front of an audience, so as to achieve the intended persuasion with unfailing certainty. This knowledge is an essential qualification of a philosopher; it enables him to choose a soul of the right type (*λαβὼν ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν*, 276e6) and plant in it words of wisdom. His words, that is the authentic *logos*, acquire new life in the soul of the recipient, who in his turn sows their progeny in other suitable souls (276e5–277a3). In the dialogue, Socrates implants the words of wisdom in the soul of Phaedrus, and wishes that Phaedrus may similarly influence Lysias (257ab).

Socrates' work on Phaedrus permeates the whole dialogue, giving it its dramatic unity, and yet interpreters disagree on it.¹ The late dating of the dialogue, which has been accepted as axiomatic throughout this century, stands in the way of seeing it clearly. Phaedrus in the *Protagoras* and in the *Symposium* does not appear like a man who would appropriate the exalted ideal raised before him in the *Phaedrus*. The majority of modern interpreters therefore cannot see Phaedrus' conversion to philosophy in the *Phaedrus* as anything but ironic. I shall argue that Plato in the dialogue does enact his Phaedran ideal of the authentic communication of philosophy, and that this precludes the ironical reading of the dialogue. What enables me to do so is the ancient dating of the *Phaedrus* as Plato's first dialogue, which I have defended in a series of articles.² In the present article I shall argue that only on this dating can the philosophic import of the dialogue be properly appreciated. I shall attempt to demonstrate that the picture of Phaedrus in the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium* is the result of Plato's disappointment with the historical Phaedrus, and I shall explore the impact of Plato's disappointment with his Phaedran characters on his theory of psychology in his later dialogues.

Let me begin by demonstrating that in the *Phaedrus* Socrates imparts to Phaedrus words of wisdom (*μετ' ἐπιστήμης λόγους*, 276e7), and that Phaedrus undergoes a

¹ Thus, for example, Léon Robin says that Phaedrus is totally incapable of sharing Socrates' thoughts (Platon, *Phèdre*, texte établi et traduit par Léon Robin [1933, repr. 1954], 'Notice', xiii.: 'il [sc. Phaedrus] apparaît . . . totalement incapable . . . de communier avec la pensée de Socrate'). R. Hackforth thinks that Robin goes 'perhaps rather too far' in his verdict on Phaedrus. He thinks that Robin's words 'are true of the early pages of the work', but that 'they become less so later on', for he is 'inclined to think that Phaedrus is converted to philosophy in the end' (R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* [Cambridge 1952, repr. 1972], 'Introduction', 13). C. J. Rowe believes that the signs concerning Socrates' influence on Phaedrus 'are distinctly ambiguous, and meant to be so' (C. J. Rowe, *Plato: Phaedrus* [Warminster, 1988²], 12).

² For my pre-dating of the *Phaedrus* to all other dialogues of Plato, see Julius Tomin, 'Dating of the *Phaedrus* and interpretation of Plato', *Antichthon* 22 (1988), 26–41; id., 'A preliminary to the study of Plato', *Symbolae Osloenses* 67 (1992), 80–8; id., 'Plato's first dialogue', *Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1997), 31–45; id., 'Joining the beginning to the end', *The Republic and the Laws of Plato*, Proceedings of the First Symposium Platonicum Pragense, *OIKOYMENH* (1998), 201–16.

profound change in the course of receiving them. Phaedrus enters the dialogue as an admirer of Lysias both for his rhetorical skills and as a thinker. In the morning he listened to Lysias reading a speech that extolled a homosexual relationship uninhibited by love and guided by prudence, so that both seducer and seduced profit from their intercourse. He spent the rest of the morning imploring Lysias to read it again and again; in the end he took the text of the speech and went for a walk to learn it by heart (227a–228d), and that is where we find him at the beginning of the dialogue, when on his walk he encounters Socrates. Socrates asks him to read the speech, and Phaedrus does so, enraptured in bacchic enthusiasm. He believes that nobody in Greece has ever written a greater speech, and goes so far as to proclaim that nobody could speak better and say anything more valuable on the given subject (234c–235b).

Provoked by Phaedrus' misplaced admiration, Socrates presents him with a rival speech that he gives off the cuff. In this first speech Socrates rejects homosexual love as an irrational desire for pleasure (*ἐπιθυμίας δὴ ἀλόγως ἐλκούσης ἐπὶ ἡδονάς*, 238a1) that aims at mere sexual gratification. He argues that the lover is sick (*νοσοῦντι*, 238e4) and that love harms the property, the body, and most of all the mind (*διάνοιαν*, 239c1) of both the lover and the beloved. With this diatribe against love, Socrates wants to leave the scene; Phaedrus is disappointed, for he had expected that Socrates' rejection of love would be followed by an encomium on sex without love, as in Lysias' speech (241d4–7). This shows that Phaedrus is still under the spell of Lysias. But when he then presses Socrates to stay and discuss the two speeches, he clearly begins to be positively affected by Socrates' words and by his presence. Socrates praises Phaedrus' insistence, which is joined in his mind with the daimonic voice that at this point intervenes and does not allow him to leave. He realizes that in his speech he insulted love, and that he must make amends by presenting a worthy praise of true love. Phaedrus is delighted, and says that nothing Socrates might say could give him greater pleasure (*οὐκ ἔστιν ἄττ' ἂν ἐμοὶ εἶπες ἡδίων*, 243b8–9); his transformation into a genuine lover of philosophy is progressing fast. Embarking on the palinode on love, Socrates further stimulates the change that Phaedrus undergoes by inviting him to play the role of his beloved (*Ποῦ δὴ μοι ὁ παῖς πρὸς ὃν ἔλεγον*, 243e4); Phaedrus confirms his progress by willingly accepting it (*Ὅδτος παρὰ σοι μάλα πλησίον αἰεὶ πάρεστιν*, 243e7).

This sets the stage for philosophic revelations of the greatest importance. Socrates argues that true love is a madness sent to us by the gods for our greatest happiness (*ἐπ' εὐτυχίᾳ τῇ μεγίστῃ*, 245b6–7). He warns Phaedrus that the proof of this (*ἀπόδειξις*, 245c1) will appear incredible to those who are just clever (*δεινοῖς*, 245c2), but will prevail with the wise (*σοφοῖς*, 245c2). Socrates begins the proof by demonstrating that all soul is immortal (245c5–246a2), and then explains the nature of the divine and the human soul by likening both to the winged union of a charioteer with two steeds. The gods' steeds are all wholly good, but those of other souls are of mixed character. The charioteer of the human soul controls a pair of steeds, one of which is noble and good (*καλὸς τε καὶ ἀγαθός*, 246b2–3), while the other is of the opposite character. Both divine and human souls derive the appropriate nourishment for their wings from the supra-celestial Plain of Truth (*τὸ ἀληθείας πεδῖον*, 248b6), which they periodically reach in order to behold true Beings (*τὰ ὄντα ὄντως*, 247e3) such as Justice and Temperance, where Knowledge dwells exempt from all change (247de). This gives intellectual nourishment to the best part of the human soul, and when the unruly element prevents the soul from reaching the plain, the soul loses its wings and enters the earthly body (*σῶμα γήινον*, 246c3). It is at this point that the power of true love comes to the fore. For if a man endowed with good memory falls in love with a

beautiful boy, then the boy's beauty makes the man recollect the sight of Beauty that he saw side by side with Temperance when his soul still had its wings (254b). This recollection gives him the power to curb his sexual appetite and devote himself to the pursuit of philosophy; the benefit that both lover and beloved derive from their chaste, loving relationship is a blessed and harmonious life here on earth, and when they die they make a major step towards regaining their wings (256ab). Socrates ends the palinode with a prayer to Eros that Phaedrus' beloved Lysias may turn to philosophy as Lysias' own brother Polemarchus has done, so that Phaedrus can cease to waver in his love for him and so that they both direct their lives towards love accompanied by philosophic discourse (257b).

Phaedrus joins Socrates in prayer (*Συνευχομαί σοι, Σώκρατες*, 257b7) 'if that be for our good' (*εἴπερ ἄμεινον ταῦθ' ἡμῖν εἶναι*, 257b7–c1); he is still perhaps not completely convinced that this is the best course for him and Lysias to take. Socrates' palinode has nevertheless filled him with wonder and admiration, so that he doubts whether Lysias could ever produce anything as good, and is even afraid that Lysias might be frightened off writing altogether, especially since he was recently scoffed at by a politician for being a 'speech-writer' (257c). This prompts Socrates to intercede in defence of writing. He maintains that writing in itself is not shameful, only speaking and writing shamefully and badly, and suggests examining Lysias and other writers. Phaedrus is delighted; he remarks that only pleasures derived from philosophic discourse are worth living for, and that all bodily pleasures are slavish (*ἀνδραποδώδεις*, 258e5). Clearly, Phaedrus has by now appropriated the main philosophic import of the palinode as his own, and is well prepared for the lesson in dialectic that Socrates is about to give him.

Socrates explains to Phaedrus the method of conceptual analysis and synthesis with which knowledge of truth can be obtained (265d–274a). When he then reveals to him the nature and power of the spoken word of a philosopher, Phaedrus by now understands well what Socrates is talking about: 'You speak of the living word that has soul, the word of a man who has knowledge', he says to Socrates approvingly (276a8). Socrates explains that the man who has knowledge passes this authentic *logos* to others as his progeny, and they in their turn pass it to others (277a, 278ab). Socrates prays that both he himself and Phaedrus become this kind of man, and Phaedrus fully identifies himself with this: 'What you are saying is my most ardent wish and prayer' (*Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν ἔγωγε βούλομαί τε καὶ εὖχομαι ἃ λέγεις*, 278b5–6).

It is at this crucial point, when 'with these words Phaedrus' conversion to philosophy is signalized',³ that Socrates exhorts Phaedrus to pass on to Lysias what he has just learnt (*καὶ σύ τε ἐλθὼν φράζε Λυσία*, 278b8). This task of passing on the living word of philosophy is twice emphasized by Socrates as the duty that Phaedrus must fulfil towards his beloved Lysias (*σοῖς παιδικοῖς*, 279b2–3), and once by Phaedrus concerning Socrates and Socrates' beloved Isocrates (278e–279b). Phaedrus now considers the discussion to be at its end and thinks it is time to leave, but Socrates makes one more appeal to divine assistance. He ends the discussion with a prayer to the local divinities that he may become beautiful within, that he may consider only the wise man rich, and that he may possess only as much gold as a temperate man (*ὁ σώφρων*, 279c3) can carry, leaving it open to Phaedrus whether he is prepared to follow all the way. Phaedrus does not disappoint him, for he asks Socrates to apply the prayer to him too, for 'friends have all things in common' (*κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων*, 279c6–7). Only when complete unity of purpose between Phaedrus and Socrates has

³ See R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge, 1952, repr. 1972), 162, n. 2.

been thus established, Socrates decides that it is time for them to leave; his 'Let us go' ('Τωμεν) ends the dialogue.

As has been seen, Phaedrus is expected to exert influence on his beloved Lysias derived from the influence of Socrates' philosophic discourse on himself. Since Plato in his later dialogues considered philosophy to be completely incompatible with forensic oratory, he could contemplate the possibility of Lysias' turning to philosophy only before Lysias became a professional writer of forensic speeches. (This presumably happened after Lysias lost his property during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants in 404 and after democracy in Athens was restored, that is in 403 or 402 at the latest.)⁴ Otherwise not only would Plato have presented Phaedrus in the dialogue with an impossible task, but he would have knowingly put Socrates himself in the awkward position of being a failure, in so far as it is Socrates who in the dialogue prompts Phaedrus to try and turn Lysias to philosophy; even Socrates' appeal to Eros at the end of the palinode would then be just a mockery. In other words, Plato wrote the dialogue with the intention of presenting its philosophic import in a bad light. Since in the *Phaedrus* there are no signs of such a self-defeating strategy, the dialogue must be dated prior to the events that led to Lysias' becoming a professional writer of forensic oratory.

Taking seriously the ancient dating of the *Phaedrus* as Plato's first dialogue thus seems to be the only option. But instead, interpreters prefer to assume some very heavy irony on Plato's part. It is assumed that neither Phaedrus, nor Lysias, nor even Isocrates, could ever have seemed to Plato to be potential 'philosophers'. The hints that they might one day be redeemed are just a joke at their expense, written for a readership who knew very well that certainly Lysias had never turned to philosophy and that Isocrates' pretensions seemed extremely feeble to Plato's friends. The humour envisaged is pretty clear in intention, but this is not the reason why I cannot accept the reference to Plato's biting irony as the way out of this difficulty. The reason is that the reference to irony defeats the central philosophic import of the dialogue. What distinguishes a philosopher from a rhetorician unskilled in dialectics is his ability to select a soul of the right type and in it plant and sow his words founded on knowledge (276e6-7). If Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* in the belief that Phaedrus, Lysias, and Isocrates could never become philosophers, then his irony was in the first place directed against Socrates and against philosophy itself, which Socrates in the dialogue represents. That is why the dialogue must have been written at the time when Plato could still consider the Phaedran characters as redeemable.

Plato's *Apology* provides a strong argument for the dating of the *Phaedrus* earlier than Socrates' trial and death. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates outlined a scientific rhetoric based on knowledge of truth (260e) and claimed that scientifically founded rhetoric would achieve persuasion without failure (271d-272b, 273d-274a). In the *Apology* Socrates proclaimed that he would tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and that if

⁴ Lysias' earliest documented forensic speech was written in 403, or 402 at the latest, as can be seen from the following. Among the fragments of his lost forensic speeches there are the titles *For Euthynus* (fr. 38) and *Against Nicias on the Deposit* (fr. 70), which belong to one and the same speech as becomes clear from Isocrates' first forensic speech *Against Euthynus*. In *Against Euthynus* we learn that Nicias, the plaintiff, deposited three talents with Euthynus during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants, in 404. When he wanted his money back, still during the reign of the oligarchs, fearing for his safety and wanting to leave Athens, Euthynus returned only two talents. Nicias sued him for the remaining deposit after the restoration of democracy. Comparing Isocrates' *Against Euthynus* with frs 38 and 70 of Lysias, it can be deduced that both Isocrates and Lysias turned to writing forensic speeches as their means of sustenance soon after the restoration of democracy, some four years before the death of Socrates.

this were the mark of a formidable rhetorician, then he would be one (17b); yet he failed to persuade the jury. How could Plato produce his *Phaedran* outline of scientific rhetoric after the failure of Socrates' defence? It may be observed that in the *Phaedrus* forensic oratory is part of the project of philosophic rhetoric,⁵ whereas from then on forensic oratory becomes an anathema for Plato. In the *Gorgias* Socrates argues that forensic oratory protects a malefactor from just punishment, harming thereby the wrongdoer himself; vice is the disease of the soul and forensic oratory deprives the soul of its cure (476a–527e). While the *Gorgias* focuses attention on the harm forensic oratory does to those whom it professes to protect, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates concentrates on those who professionally practice forensic oratory; he argues that its practice makes their souls small and crooked (σμικροὶ δὲ καὶ οὐκ ὀρθοὶ τὰς ψυχάς, 173a3). There is no place for forensic oratory in the *Republic*, for the purpose of forensic oratory is to win over the jury and twist the truth as needed for that purpose, yet any attempt to mislead the judges is outlawed on principle in the ideal state (382ab, 389b7–9, 409a–410a, 459c8–d2). Finally, in the *Laws*, Plato states that a resident alien operating as a forensic orator must be expelled from the city, and if a citizen were to be found performing such an activity, he must be sentenced to death (937d–938c). Clearly, there is no place for the *Phaedrus* among the dialogues that follow the *Gorgias*. Since in the *Phaedrus* Plato includes forensic rhetoric in his programme without question, something must have happened to change his mind, and I believe this 'something' to have been the very fact that Lysias and Isocrates turned to forensic oratory instead of to philosophy.

Lysias' name reappears in two dialogues, the *Cleitophon* and the *Republic*, in neither of which he is given an opportunity to speak. In the *Cleitophon* he is reported to have spread rumours that Cleitophon was disparaging Socrates' pursuit of philosophy (406a1–4). The rumour Lysias spreads is a half-truth, for we learn that Cleitophon highly appreciates Socrates' ability to interest people in philosophy and is critical only of his unwillingness or inability to say how to reach the goal to which philosophy points, that is to define clearly what virtue is and how it can be attained (406a5–410d5). Cleitophon assures Socrates that if he shows him the road to happiness promised by philosophy, he will cease to be of two minds concerning him, praising him when talking to Lysias and to others, yet at the same time somewhat criticizing him (τὰ μὲν ἐπαινῶ σε πρὸς Λυσίαν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους, τὰ δέ τι καὶ ψέγω, 410e4–5), but instead will praise him unreservedly as the most valuable companion. This shows that when Plato wrote the *Cleitophon* he regarded Lysias as a malicious gossip-monger.

A comparison of the *Cleitophon* with the first book of the *Republic* would in itself explain Lysias' presence in the latter, for in it Socrates' philosophic supremacy, impugned in the former, is vindicated.⁶ But the full significance of Lysias' presence in

⁵ See especially Socrates' definition of rhetoric at 261a7–9: 'Must not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words, not only in courts of law and other public gatherings, but in private places also?' (trans. Hackforth). The addition 'in private places also' is Plato's addition to the commonly accepted view of rhetoric, by which he opens the door to his introduction of dialectic as the only foundation upon which scientific rhetoric can be built. Plato emphasizes the importance of this addition. For when Socrates asks Phaedrus whether he ever heard rhetoric defined in this manner, Phaedrus answers: 'No indeed, not exactly that: it is principally, I should say, to lawsuits that an art of speaking and writing is applied—and of course to public harangues also. I know of no wider application' (261b3–5, trans. Hackforth). Socrates then goes on to prove to Phaedrus that the inclusion of private discourse within the domain of rhetoric is essential, if it is to become science.

⁶ In the *Republic* Socrates does show to his friends the road to virtue and happiness in the

the *Republic* becomes clear only when we compare the performance in it of his brother Polemarchus with the high regard expressed for him in the *Phaedrus*. Although Polemarchus figures in the *Phaedrus* only at the end of Socrates' second speech on love, when Socrates prays to Eros that Lysias may turn to philosophy, as his brother Polemarchus has, the philosophic status thus attributed to him is as high as can be, for if Lysias were to do so, Phaedrus could then love him unreservedly, their life being fully devoted to philosophy (257b1–6). Polemarchus is here represented as someone who has fully appropriated Socrates' views on love as expressed in the palinode. Since in this century the view has prevailed that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* after the *Republic*, most readers probably hold that the compliment to Polemarchus in the *Phaedrus* is a self-reference by Plato to the *Republic*, where Polemarchus at least *tries* to be a philosopher. On a closer look, Polemarchus' performance in the *Republic* makes such an interpretation untenable. Although the entire dialogue takes place in his house, he enters the discussion only briefly in the first book. He is unable even to keep track of his own answers to Socrates' questioning, let alone to defend his proposed definition of justice. 'I don't know any more what I have said', he complains (334b7). His performance in the *Republic* can be judged according to the criterion laid down in the *Phaedrus*: a philosopher is a master of dialectic and can therefore always defend his knowledge with valid arguments (*Phaedrus* 276e–277a).

Polemarchus defines justice as 'giving every man his due' (*Republic*, 331e3–4), which he understands as doing 'good to a friend' and 'evil to an enemy' (332ab). Socrates rejects this notion of justice. He argues that it is unjust to harm anybody under any circumstances (οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ δίκαιον οὐδένα ἡμῖν ἐφάνη ὃν βλάπτειν, 335e5). Although Polemarchus renounces his thesis and appears to embrace Socrates' view wholeheartedly, Socrates does not leave it at that but points out that Polemarchus' definition of justice befits either a tyrant, or 'a rich man who thinks he has great power' (ἢ τινος ἄλλου μέγα οἰομένου δύνασθαι πλουσίου ἀνδρός, 336a6–7). This sharp rebuke requires an explanation for which we must turn to Lysias' speech *Against Eratosthenes*, directed against one of the Thirty Tyrants who was responsible for Polemarchus' imprisonment and death, and written shortly after the restoration of democracy, presumably in 403. Lysias says in the speech that the riches found and confiscated in Polemarchus' house by the Thirty far surpassed all expectations of the tyrants (19–20).

Lysias' speech provided Plato with material which he could use in presenting to Lysias his brother Polemarchus as a model, however far removed from the model he represented in the *Phaedrus*. For Lysias says concerning Eratosthenes: 'Even to discuss this man with another I consider to be an impiety, if it were to benefit him [ἐπὶ μὲν τούτου ὠφελίᾳ, 12.24]. But I consider it as a holy and pious action to address this man

presence of both Cleitophon and Lysias. The link between the *Cleitophon* and the first book of the *Republic* is emphasized by the following: Lysias in the former is reported as saying that Cleitophon speaks of Thrasymachus' wisdom in superlatives, while in the latter a philosophic contest between Socrates and Thrasymachus takes place from which Socrates emerges as an uncontestable victor. In the *Republic* Thrasymachus denigrates justice as a weakness of character that suits only simple-minded fools, and extols consummate injustice as the real virtue, which he finds embodied in a successful tyrant (336b–344c). In accordance with his admiration of Thrasymachus on which Socrates remarked in the *Cleitophon*, Cleitophon in the *Republic* attempts to assist Thrasymachus, when Socrates shows inconsistencies in Thrasymachus' account (340ab). Thrasymachus rejects Cleitophon's attempt to assist him (340c6–7), but this does not help him much for he gets entangled in deeper and deeper contradictions, until he is forced to give in to Socrates' arguments.

himself, *when it is to harm him* [ἐπὶ δὲ τῇ τούτου βλάβῃ, 12.24].⁷ Lysias acts here according to the principle which Plato puts into the mouth of Polemarchus in the *Republic*. Plato emphasizes the correspondence by echoing Lysias' words when Socrates quotes Polemarchus' definition back at him as 'benefiting friends' (ἐπ' ὠφελίᾳ τῶν φίλων) and 'harming enemies' (ἐπὶ βλάβῃ τῶν ἐχθρῶν, 334b5). By presenting Polemarchus in the *Republic* as a man who under the pressure of Socrates' questioning renounced the conception of justice adopted by Lysias, Plato gave retrospectively at least some positive meaning to the end of the Phaedran palinode, where Socrates prays to Eros that Lysias may follow Polemarchus' example.

Polemarchus re-enters the discussion in the fifth book of the *Republic*. He grabs the garment of Adeimantus and whispers to him 'Shall we let him [i.e. Socrates] off, or what shall we do?' (449b6) What he wants from Socrates is reserved for Adeimantus to explain, for he is given no opportunity to re-enter the discussion directly. This in itself is significant, since Plato says in the third book of the *Republic* that a just and decent man would not willingly introduce into his narrative an unworthy person, except only briefly when the latter performs something good (396cd). But there is more to it. In the fifth book the principle of sharing of property is presented as a test by which a man's fitness for philosophy is judged; philosophers will not tear the city to pieces by differing about 'mine' and 'not mine', each man dragging his acquisitions into a separate house of his own (464cd). Only those who pass this test may be allowed to touch philosophy (ἄπτεσθαι φιλοσοφίας, 474c1), while those who are not suited may not be allowed even to touch it (μῆτε ἄπτεσθαι, 474c2). Polemarchus could not fulfil this criterion. Since Plato in the *Republic* formulates the criteria of a philosopher in connection with Polemarchus in a manner that excluded Polemarchus from that vocation, and since all the relevant data concerning him presumably became known to Plato at the point of Polemarchus' imprisonment and death, the *Phaedrus* had to be written prior to that event, which happened in 404. The disappointment with Polemarchus and Lysias, those two aliens, rankled even after Plato exorcized it in the *Republic*; in the *Laws* he stipulates that any alien found to possess more property than that which is allowed to third-class citizens has to leave the city within thirty days, and if he does not, his property is to be confiscated and he himself sentenced to death (915bc); it is difficult to believe that when Plato conceived of this law, he refrained from thinking of Polemarchus and Lysias.⁷

It may be asked, why did Plato locate his best and most ambitious work in the house of Polemarchus, if he detested him and his brother Lysias? To answer this question, Plato's *Seventh Letter* must be consulted together with the *Republic*. In the fifth book of the *Republic* Plato states that unless philosophers become rulers, or rulers philosophers, there will be no end to political evils (473cd). In the *Seventh Letter* he informs us that he reached this insight as a result of his disenchantment with Athenian politics and that the first great blow to his political aspirations was his disappointment with the aristocratic rule of the Thirty (324b–326b). Polemarchus' fate was inextricably linked with the moral and political decline of the Thirty, Lysias' fate with the restoration of democracy that killed Socrates. In Plato's view, Polemarchus' house symbolized everything that was wrong with Athens; it was the right place for negating it radically.

⁷ E. B. England in his commentary *The Laws of Plato* (Manchester, 1921) says aptly ad loc.: 'This restriction of the property of ξένοι and freedmen seems to have been Plato's own [as opposed to other laws that Plato in England's view derived from Athenian law]. He apparently disapproved of the generous treatment accorded to μέτοικοι by the Athenians. In this his relatives Critias and Charmides would have agreed with him.'

Plato's revised view of Lysias and Polemarchus appears to have been accompanied by his reappraisal of Phaedrus, as can be seen in the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium*. The dramatic date of the *Protagoras* is about 433,⁸ that of the *Symposium* is 416,⁹ while that of the *Phaedrus* lies somewhere in between these two.¹⁰ In the *Protagoras* we find Phaedrus among the admirers of Hippias (315c). The significance of this becomes clear if we examine the *Hippias Major*, which is concerned with beauty, the concept central to the *Phaedrus*; Hippias is incapable even of grasping the concept of the universal. By putting Phaedrus among the admirers of Hippias in the *Protagoras*, and by projecting the *Protagoras* dramatically before the *Phaedrus*, Plato sets the stage for the correction of the Phaedran picture of Phaedrus; this correction he then accomplishes in the *Symposium*.

In the *Symposium* Phaedrus ostensibly plays an important role. It is his complaint that no one has praised Eros worthily that provides the dialogue with its theme. But of all the participants at the banquet, Phaedrus gives an encomium on Eros that is the furthest removed from Platonic love. He does not even distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome love. Phaedrus is the first to speak, and the next speaker points out to him that he praised Eros without discrimination, as if love had a single nature and all of it were praiseworthy (180c–181a). Phaedrus re-enters the scene later in the dialogue only to interrupt a discussion between Socrates and Agathon that is developing into a serious moral *elenchus*; Phaedrus professes himself to be very fond of hearing Socrates talk, but now he is interested only in a praise of Eros (194a–d). What Phaedrus' interest in praising Eros amounts to is exposed by Socrates: Phaedrus is not interested in Love's true nature, he only wants a beautifully sounding praise, true or false. In other words, he is satisfied with the mere appearance of praise instead of real praise (198de). From the point of view of Platonic philosophy, this is as harsh a condemnation as Plato can make.¹¹ Since Phaedrus left Athens in 415, it does not seem possible that he can have returned until the recall of the exiles which followed upon the imposition of Spartan peace terms in 404, as Dover points out.¹² This virtually rules

⁸ Cf. J. C. Morrison, 'The place of Protagoras in Athenian public life', *CQ*, 35 (1941), 2–3.

⁹ See K. J. Dover, *Plato's Symposium* (Cambridge, 1980), 9 (introduction).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ It should be noted that modern interpreters have deduced from Plato's *Symposium* an argument for dating its composition prior to the *Phaedrus*. Hackforth argues that Plato would not have made Phaedrus complain in the *Symposium* that 'nobody to this day has had the courage to praise Eros in such terms as he deserves' (177c), if he had already composed the *Phaedrus* in which he makes Socrates, in the hearing of Phaedrus, glorify Eros as he does: 'Thus then dear God of Love, I have offered the fairest recantation and fullest atonement that my powers could compass' (257a) (Hackforth [n. 1], 7, n. 14). This argument presupposes that the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* is set by Plato at a later date than that of the *Symposium*. Robin says: 'perhaps it is not necessary to date the scene of the *Phaedrus*; is it not enough that we . . . say that Plato wished that we consider the scene of the *Phaedrus* to be later than that of the *Symposium*?' Since the scene of the *Symposium* is dated at 416, and Lysias is supposed to have returned to Athens from Italy in 412, Robin would date the scene of the *Phaedrus* shortly after that (L. Robin, *Notice to Phèdre* [1954], ed. Budé, ix, x). It is this point which proved fatal to Robin's argument already at the time that Hackforth espoused it. For in 1939 Meritt published an ancient stone inscription excavated on the Agora which records the sale of property of Phaedrus, the son of Pythocles, from the deme of Myrrinous (B. D. Meritt, 'Greek inscriptions', *Hesperia* 8 [1939], 76). In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Phaedrus is addressed with these same names. This further enables us to identify the Phaedrus of the inscription and of Plato's dialogues with Phaedrus of Myrrinous about whom Lysias says 'that he was reduced to poverty by no misdemeanor' (19.15), and with Phaedrus whom Andocides names among those who were denounced for taking part in the defamation of the Mysteries and fled from Athens in 415.

¹² Dover (n. 9), 32.

out a dramatic date for the *Phaedrus* which would follow that of the *Symposium*. It might still be argued that Plato could have dramatically set the *Phaedrus* in the short interval that separated the scene of the *Symposium* from Phaedrus' exile. But if that were the case, how could Plato present the reader with a Phaedrus uncritically admiring Lysias' *Eroticus* after having been quite recently exposed to so many fine speeches on Love in the *Symposium*?

Since Plato's contemporaries knew that the *Phaedrus* was his early work, by surrounding it dramatically with two corrective pictures of Phaedrus, Plato clearly indicated that he revised his view of Phaedrus' worth.

As well as Polemarchus, Lysias, and Phaedrus, Plato had to revise his opinion on Isocrates, whose natural talent for philosophy is praised towards the end of the *Phaedrus* (φύσει . . . ἐνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς διανοίᾳ, 279a9-b1). Isocrates became impoverished as a result of the Peloponnesian war and turned to forensic oratory as the means of earning his living at about the same time as Lysias. This alone would have presumably sufficed for Plato to change his mind concerning Isocrates' fitness for philosophy, but there were additional reasons for Plato's rejection of Isocrates. For Isocrates was bent on making true the Phaedran prophecy concerning the great things that were to be expected from him if he turned to philosophy; not only did he style his teaching and his epideictic rhetoric as philosophy, he even proclaimed it to be the only true and worthwhile philosophy. Plato had no choice but to go into combat; without allowing Isocrates' name ever to re-enter his writings, he fights Isocrates' views in a number of dialogues, notably the *Gorgias*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Republic*, and the *Theaetetus*.¹³

The figure of Socrates himself could not remain unaffected by Plato's disappointment in real life with the other Phaedran characters. For in the *Phaedrus* it is Socrates who ascribes to philosophers knowledge of the souls of others, while regarding Phaedrus as an appropriate candidate for philosophy, considering Polemarchus a man well turned to philosophy, allowing for the possibility that Lysias might still be turned to it, and attributing to Isocrates a natural talent for philosophy. Yet Socrates remained the central figure of most of Plato's subsequent dialogues, which testifies to the depth of Socrates' philosophic impact on Plato. Plato could neither drop Socrates, as he did with most of the others after indicating his changed views of them, nor reject him without even naming him, as he did with Isocrates. In fact, all that was needed to correct the Phaedran picture of Socrates was to make him more true to the historical Socrates, that is more true to his self-professed philosophic ignorance. Plato's initial corrective reaction, or rather over-reaction, can be observed in the *Lysis*, a dialogue that the ancient Lives of Plato ascribe to the time that preceded Socrates' death, and which was presumably written when the disappointment with the Phaedran characters struck Plato for the first time with all its force. For Socrates emphasizes his philosophic ignorance throughout the *Lysis*, concluding that he and his young interlocutors are unable even to find out what a friend is (οὐπω δὲ ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος οἰοί τε ἐγενόμεθα ἐξευρεῖν, *Lysis* 223b7-8); the ancient tradition has it that Socrates was not very pleased with the picture that Plato painted of him in this dialogue.¹⁴

These reassessments of the Phaedran characters went hand in hand with a profound

¹³ The pre-dating of the *Phaedrus* to all other works of Plato has a profound impact on our view of the life-long rivalry between Isocrates and Plato, which can be mentioned here only in passing. I have devoted to this problem a paper 'Isocrates versus Plato' for which I am seeking a publisher.

¹⁴ Cf. Diog. Laert. 3.35.

revision of Plato's views on the knowability of the individual soul. He could no longer sustain his Phaedran view that the philosopher had knowledge of other people. In the *Phaedrus* knowledge of individual souls was an integral part of the project of scientific rhetoric. In the *Gorgias*, where Plato rejects on moral, psychological, and ontological grounds any pretensions of rhetoric to be a science, the very possibility of adequate knowledge of individual souls is rejected, for the body both of the perceiver and of the person perceived presents an insurmountable barrier to such knowledge (523c–d).

In the *Gorgias* Plato is most radical in his scepticism concerning the knowability of individual souls; he appears to have written it at the time when he had given up his aspirations concerning a political career in Athens, but had not yet conceived of his ideal state. When he then began to work out the ideal social, economic, and political structures as portrayed in the *Republic*, the problem of the knowability of the souls of individual citizens again became an acute problem for him. He discusses the matter when he tackles the problem of judges in the *Republic*, for they must be able to obtain knowledge of the souls of malefactors in order to pass correct judgement on them, so that they can either cure them or relieve society of their existence. Plato says that a young man of noble character is totally unfit for this task, for he has no paradigms of vices in his soul. Since a judge cannot be recruited from people of corrupt characters, 'he cannot be young but must be quite old' (οὐ νέον ἀλλὰ γέροντα δεῖ τὸν ἀγαθὸν δικαστὴν εἶναι, *Rep.* 409b4–5), for only from very long observations of evil persons can the nature of evil be perceived (ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ διαισθάνεσθαι οἶον πέφυκε κακόν, *Rep.* 409b7–8). The knowledge of other people's souls here envisaged is a far cry from Plato's Phaedran optimism.

Plato's awareness of the difficulties involved in knowing the souls of others comes to the fore again strongly in the *Laws*, the work of his old age. In this dialogue Plato introduces well-regulated symposia into his state, which are supervised by old and wise guardians, and in which participants are encouraged to drink alcohol (νήφοντά τε καὶ σοφὸν ἄρχοντα μεθύοντων δεῖ καθιστάναι, 640d4–5). This gives the guardians the opportunity to observe the nature and qualities of the souls of the supervised symposiasts, which is most useful for the sake of the political science preoccupied with these matters, as Plato explains (650b6–9). In the *Phaedrus* neither the philosopher, nor indeed the rhetorician, are in need of any such expedients, which puts into strong relief the contrast between Plato's first and his last dialogue concerning his views on the knowability of individual souls.¹⁵

Prague

JULIUS TOMIN

¹⁵ I should like to thank Doina Cornell for all her invaluable help in preparing this text.