SOCRATES My dear friend, maybe we can see now why Pericles was *e*
in all likelihood the greatest rhetorician of all.

PHAEDRUS How is that?

SOCRATES All the great arts require endless talk and ethereal spec- *270*
ulation about nature: This seems to be what gives them their lofty point of view and universal applicability. That's just what Pericles mastered—besides having natural ability. He came across Anaxagoras, who was just that sort of man, got his full dose of ethereal speculation, and understood the nature of mind and mindlessness—just the subject on which Anaxagoras had the most to say. From this, I think, he drew for the art of rhetoric what was useful to it.

PHAEDRUS What do you mean by that?

SOCRATES Well, isn't the method of medicine in a way the same as *b*
the method of rhetoric?

PHAEDRUS How so?

SOCRATES In both cases we need to determine the nature of something—of the body in medicine, of the soul in rhetoric. Otherwise, all we'll have will be an empirical and artless practice. We won't be able to supply, on the basis of an art, a body with the medicines and diet that will make it healthy and strong, or a soul with the reasons and customary rules for conduct that will impart to it the convictions and virtues we want.

PHAEDRUS That is most likely, Socrates.

SOCRATES Do you think, then, that it is possible to reach a seri- *c*
ous understanding of the nature of the soul without understanding the nature of the world as a whole?

PHAEDRUS Well, if we're to listen to Hippocrates, Asclepius' descendant,[46] we won't even understand the body if we don't follow that method.

SOCRATES He speaks well, my friend. Still, Hippocrates aside, we must consider whether argument supports that view.

SOCRATES Whom do you mean?

PHAEDRUS The beautiful Isocrates.[53] What are you going to tell him, Socrates? What shall we say he is?

279 SOCRATES Isocrates is still young, Phaedrus. But I want to tell you what I foresee for him.

PHAEDRUS What is that?

SOCRATES It seems to me that by his nature he can outdo anything that Lysias has accomplished in his speeches; and he also has a nobler character. So I wouldn't be at all surprised if, as he gets older and continues writing speeches of the sort he is composing now, he makes everyone who has ever attempted to compose a speech seem like a child in comparison. Even more so if such work no longer satisfies him and a higher, divine impulse leads him to more important things. For
b nature, my friend, has placed the love of wisdom in his mind.

That is the message I will carry to my beloved, Isocrates, from the gods of this place; and you have your own message for your Lysias.

PHAEDRUS So it shall be. But let's be off, since the heat has died down a bit.

SOCRATES Shouldn't we offer a prayer to the gods here before we leave?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

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

Do we need anything else, Phaedrus? I believe my prayer is enough for me.

PHAEDRUS Make it a prayer for me as well. Friends have everything in common.

SOCRATES Let's be off.

SOCRATES Second, he will explain how, in virtue of its nature, it acts and is acted upon by certain things.

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES Third, he will classify the kinds of speech and of soul b there are, as well as the various ways in which they are affected, and explain what causes each. He will then coordinate each kind of soul with the kind of speech appropriate to it. And he will give instructions concerning the reasons why one kind of soul is necessarily convinced by one kind of speech while another necessarily remains unconvinced.

PHAEDRUS This, I think, would certainly be the best way.

SOCRATES In fact, my friend, no speech will ever be a product of art, whether it is a model or one actually given, if it is delivered or written in any other way—on this or on any other subject. But those c who now write *Arts of Rhetoric*—we were just discussing them—are cunning people: they hide the fact that they know very well everything about the soul. Well, then, until they begin to speak and write in this way, we mustn't allow ourselves to be convinced that they write on the basis of the art.

PHAEDRUS What way is that?

SOCRATES It's very difficult to speak the actual words, but as to how one should write in order to be as artful as possible—that I am willing to tell you.

PHAEDRUS Please do.

SOCRATES Since the nature of speech is in fact to direct the soul, d whoever intends to be a rhetorician must know how many kinds of soul there are. Their number is so-and-so many; each is of such-and-such a sort; hence some people have such-and-such a character and others have such-and-such. Those distinctions established, there are, in turn, so-and-so many kinds of speech, each of such-and-such a sort. People of such-and-such a character are easy to persuade by speeches of such-and-such a sort in connection with such-and-such an issue for

and arrange your speech accordingly, and offer a complex and elaborate speech to a complex soul and a simple speech to a simple one. Then, and only then, will you be able to use speech artfully, to the extent that its nature allows it to be used that way, either in order to teach or in order to persuade. This is the whole point of the argument we have been making.

PHAEDRUS Absolutely. That is exactly how it seemed to us.

d SOCRATES Now how about whether it's noble or shameful to give or write a speech—when it could be fairly said to be grounds for reproach, and when not? Didn't what we said just a little while ago make it clear—

PHAEDRUS What was that?

SOCRATES That if Lysias or anybody else ever did or ever does write—privately or for the public, in the course of proposing some law—a political document which he believes to embody clear knowledge of lasting importance, then this writer deserves reproach, whether anyone says so or not. For to be unaware of the difference be-
e tween a dream-image and the reality of what is just and unjust, good and bad, must truly be grounds for reproach even if the crowd praises it with one voice.

PHAEDRUS It certainly must be.

SOCRATES On the other hand, take a man who thinks that a written discourse on any subject can only be a great amusement, that no discourse worth serious attention has ever been written in verse or prose, and that those that are recited in public without questioning and ex-
278 planation, in the manner of the rhapsodes, are given only in order to produce conviction. He believes that at their very best these can only serve as reminders to those who already know. And he also thinks that only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention: Such discourses should

PHAEDRUS It's not for lack of trying, but nothing comes to mind right now.

SOCRATES Well, then, shall I tell you something I've heard people say who care about this topic?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES We do claim, after all, Phaedrus, that it is fair to give the wolf's side of the story as well.

PHAEDRUS That's just what you should do. *d*

SOCRATES Well, these people say that there is no need to be so solemn about all this and stretch it out to such lengths. For the fact is, as we said ourselves at the beginning of this discussion, that one who intends to be an able rhetorician has no need to know the truth about the things that are just or good or yet about the people who are such either by nature or upbringing. No one in a lawcourt, you see, cares at all about the truth of such matters. They only care about what is convincing. This is called "the likely," and that is what a man who intends *e* to speak according to art should concentrate on. Sometimes, in fact, whether you are prosecuting or defending a case, you must not even say what actually happened, if it was not likely to have happened—you must say something that is likely instead. Whatever you say, you should pursue what is likely and leave the truth aside: the whole art consists in cleaving to that throughout your speech. *273*

PHAEDRUS That's an excellent presentation of what people say who profess to be expert in speeches, Socrates. I recall that we raised this issue briefly earlier on, but it seems to be their single most important point.

SOCRATES No doubt you've churned through Tisias' book quite carefully. Then let Tisias tell us this also: By "the likely" does he mean *b* anything but what is accepted by the crowd?

PHAEDRUS What else?

SOCRATES And it's likely it was when he discovered this clever and artful technique that Tisias wrote that if a weak but spunky man is

a legitimate brother of this one? Can we say how it comes about, and how it is by nature better and more capable?

PHAEDRUS Which one is that? How do you think it comes about?

SOCRATES It is a discourse that is written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent.

PHAEDRUS You mean the living, breathing discourse of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image.

b SOCRATES Absolutely right. And tell me this. Would a sensible farmer, who cared about his seeds and wanted them to yield fruit, plant them in all seriousness in the gardens of Adonis in the middle of the summer and enjoy watching them bear fruit within seven days? Or would he do this as an amusement and in honor of the holiday, if he did it at all?[52] Wouldn't he use his knowledge of farming to plant the seeds he cared for when it was appropriate and be content if they bore fruit seven months later?

c PHAEDRUS That's how he would handle those he was serious about, Socrates, quite differently from the others, as you say.

SOCRATES Now what about the man who knows what is just, noble, and good? Shall we say that he is less sensible with his seeds than the farmer is with his?

PHAEDRUS Certainly not.

SOCRATES Therefore, he won't be serious about writing them in ink, sowing them, through a pen, with words that are as incapable of speaking in their own defense as they are of teaching the truth adequately.

PHAEDRUS That wouldn't be likely.

d SOCRATES Certainly not. When he writes, it's likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself "when he reaches forgetful old age" and for everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps, and will enjoy seeing them sweetly

may happen as a side effect) but to his masters, who are wholly good. *274*
So, if the way round is long, don't be astonished: we must make this detour for the sake of things that are very important, not for what you have in mind. Still, as our argument asserts, if that is what you want, you'll get it best as a result of pursuing our own goal.

PHAEDRUS What you've said is wonderful, Socrates—if only it could be done!

SOCRATES Yet surely whatever one must go through on the way to *b*
an honorable goal is itself honorable.

PHAEDRUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Well, then, that's enough about artfulness and artlessness in connection with speaking.

PHAEDRUS Quite.

SOCRATES What's left, then, is aptness and ineptness in connection with writing: What feature makes writing good, and what inept? Right?

PHAEDRUS Yes.

SOCRATES Well, do you know how best to please god when you either use words or discuss them in general?

PHAEDRUS Not at all. Do you?

SOCRATES I can tell you what I've heard the ancients said, though *c*
they alone know the truth. However, if we could discover that ourselves, would we still care about the speculations of other people?

PHAEDRUS That's a silly question. Still, tell me what you say you've heard.

SOCRATES Well, this is what I've heard. Among the ancient gods of Naucratis[48] in Egypt there was one to whom the bird called the ibis is sacred. The name of that divinity was Theuth,[49] and it was he who *d*
first discovered number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing.

Now the king of all Egypt at that time was Thamus,[50] who lived in