

one and homogeneous by nature or takes many forms, like the shape of bodies, since, as we said, that's what it is to demonstrate the nature of something.

PHAEDRUS Absolutely.

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 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 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, 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 this particular reason, while people of such-and-such another sort are difficult to persuade for those particular reasons.

The orator must learn all this well, then put his theory into practice and develop the ability to discern each kind clearly as it occurs in the actions of real life. Otherwise he won't be any better off than he was when he was still listening to those discussions in school. He will now not only be able to say what kind of person is convinced by what kind of speech; on meeting someone he will be able to discern what he is like and make clear to himself that the person actually standing in front of him is of just this particular sort of character he had learned about in school—to that he must now apply speeches of such-and-such a kind in this particular way in order to secure conviction about such-and-such an issue. When he has learned all this—when, in addition, he has grasped the right occasions for speaking and for holding back; and when he has also understood when the time is right for Speaking Concisely or Appealing to Pity or Exaggeration or for any other of the kinds of speech he has learned and when it is not—then, and only then, will he have finally mastered the art well and completely. But if his speaking, his teaching, or his writing lacks any one of these elements and he still claims to be speaking with art, you'll be better off if you don't believe him.

“Well, Socrates and Phaedrus,” the author of this discourse might say, “do you agree? Could we accept an art of speaking presented in any other terms?”

PHAEDRUS That would be impossible, Socrates. Still, it's evidently rather a major undertaking.

SOCRATES You're right. And that's why we must turn all our argu-

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ments every which way and try to find some easier and shorter route to the art: we don't want to follow a long rough path for no good reason when we can choose a short smooth one instead.

Now, try to remember if you've heard anything helpful from Lysias or anybody else. Speak up.

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.

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 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.

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.

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

          PHAEDRUS   What else?

*c*       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 taken to court because he beat up a strong but cowardly one and stole his cloak or something else, neither one should tell the truth. The coward must say that the spunky man didn’t beat him up all by himself, while the latter must rebut this by saying that only the two of them were there, and fall back on that well-worn plea, “How could a man like me attack a man like him?” The strong man, naturally, will not admit his cowardice, but will try to invent some other lie, and may thus give his opponent the chance to refute him. And in other cases, speaking as the art dictates will take similar forms. Isn’t that so, Phaedrus?

          PHAEDRUS   Of course.

*d*       SOCRATES   Phew! Tisias—or whoever else it was and whatever name he pleases to use for himself<sup>67</sup>—seems to have discovered an art which he has disguised very well! But now, my friend, shall we or shall we not say to him—

          PHAEDRUS   What?

*e*       SOCRATES   This: “Tisias, some time ago, before you came into the picture, we were saying that people get the idea of what is likely through its similarity to the truth. And we just explained that in every case the person who knows the truth knows best how to determine similarities. So, if you have something new to say about the art of speaking, we shall listen. But if you don’t, we shall remain convinced by the explanations we gave just before: No one will ever possess the art of speaking, to the extent that any human being can, unless he acquires the ability to enumerate the sorts of characters to be found in any audience, to divide everything according to its kinds, and to grasp

it around, pasting parts together and taking them apart—wouldn't you be right to call him a poet or a speech writer or an author of laws?

PHAEDRUS Of course.

SOCRATES Tell that, then, to your friend.

PHAEDRUS And what about you? What shall you do? We must surely not forget your own friend.

SOCRATES Whom do you mean?

PHAEDRUS The beautiful Isocrates.<sup>53</sup> 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 nature, my friend, has placed the love of wisdom in his mind.

*b* 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.

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

each single thing firmly by means of one form. And no one can acquire these abilities without great effort—a laborious effort a sensible man will make not in order to speak and act among human beings, but so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible. Wiser people than ourselves, Tisias, say that a reasonable man must put his mind to being pleasant not to his fellow slaves (though this may happen as a side effect) but to his masters, who are wholly good. 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!

*b* SOCRATES Yet surely whatever one must go through on the way to 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?

*c* SOCRATES I can tell you what I've heard the ancients said, though 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<sup>48</sup> in Egypt there was one to whom the bird called the ibis is sacred. The name of that divinity was Theuth,<sup>49</sup> and it was he who 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,<sup>50</sup> who lived in the great city in the upper region that the Greeks call Egyptian Thebes; Thamus they call Ammon.<sup>51</sup> Theuth came to exhibit his arts to him and urged him to disseminate them to all the Egyptians. Thamus asked him about the usefulness of each art, and while Theuth was explaining it, Thamus praised him for whatever he thought was right in his explanations and criticized him for whatever he thought was wrong.

The story goes that Thamus said much to Theuth, both for and against each art, which it would take too long to repeat. But when they came to writing, Theuth said: "O King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and for wisdom."

Thamus, however, replied: "O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they

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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 be called his own legitimate children, first the discourse he may have discovered already within himself and then its sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls insofar as these are worthy; to the rest, he turns his back. Such a man, Phaedrus, would be just what you and I both would pray to become.

PHAEDRUS I wish and pray for things to be just as you say.

SOCRATES Well, then: our playful amusement regarding discourse is complete. Now you go and tell Lysias that we came to the spring which is sacred to the Nymphs and heard words charging us to deliver a message to Lysias and anyone else who composes speeches, as well as to Homer and anyone else who has composed poetry either spoken or sung, and third, to Solon and anyone else who writes political documents that he calls laws: If any one of you has composed these things with a knowledge of the truth, if you can defend your writing when you are challenged, and if you can yourself make the argument that your writing is of little worth, then you must be called by a name derived not from these writings but rather from those things that you are seriously pursuing.

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

SOCRATES To call him wise, Phaedrus, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god. To call him wisdom's lover—a philosopher—or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly.

PHAEDRUS That would be quite appropriate.

SOCRATES On the other hand, if a man has nothing more valuable than what he has composed or written, spending long hours twisting

SOCRATES First, you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself, and, having defined it, you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible. Second, you must understand the nature of the soul, along the same lines; you must determine which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul, prepare 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 between 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-

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will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so."

PHAEDRUS Socrates, you're very good at making up stories from Egypt or wherever else you want!

c SOCRATES But, my friend, the priests of the temple of Zeus at Dodona say that the first prophecies were the words of an oak. Everyone who lived at that time, not being as wise as you young ones are today, found it rewarding enough in their simplicity to listen to an oak or even a stone, so long as it was telling the truth, while it seems to make a difference to you, Phaedrus, who is speaking and where he comes from. Why, though, don't you just consider whether what he says is right or wrong?

d PHAEDRUS I deserved that, Socrates. And I agree that the Theban king was correct about writing.

SOCRATES Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accept them, thinking that writing can yield results that are clear or certain, must be quite naïve and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophetic judgment: otherwise, how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about?

PHAEDRUS Quite right.

SOCRATES You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with

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it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support.

PHAEDRUS You are absolutely right about that, too.

276 SOCRATES Now tell me, can we discern another kind of discourse, 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.

277 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?<sup>32</sup> 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?

278 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 ade-

quately.

PHAEDRUS That wouldn't be likely.

279 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 blooming. And when others turn to different amusements, watering themselves with drinking parties and everything else that goes along with them, he will rather spend his time amusing himself with the things I have just described.

280 e PHAEDRUS Socrates, you are contrasting a vulgar amusement with the very noblest—with the amusement of a man who can while away his time telling stories of justice and the other matters you mentioned.

281 SOCRATES That's just how it is, Phaedrus. But it is much nobler to be serious about these matters, and use the art of dialectic. The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be.

282 PHAEDRUS What you describe is really much nobler still.

283 SOCRATES And now that we have agreed about this, Phaedrus, we are finally able to decide the issue.

284 PHAEDRUS What issue is that?

285 SOCRATES The issue which brought us to this point in the first place: We wanted to examine the attack made on Lysias on account of his writing speeches, and to ask which speeches are written artfully and which not. Now, I think that we have answered that question clearly enough.

286 PHAEDRUS So it seemed; but remind me again how we did it.