ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL WAY OF LIFE IN THE *PHAEDRUS*

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ABSTRACT

This paper develops the theme of philosophy as a way of life by reading the *Phaedrus* utilizing the communicative practices – the forms and media - of the philosophy of communication. It will be shown that the various forms (rhetorical, mythical and dialectical) and media (spoken and written) of communication in the text are intimately interwoven with a certain conception of philosophy as a way of life dedicated to the search for truth. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato teaches us the ideal form of communication for the pursuit of philosophy.
Keywords: Philosophy of communication; rhetoric; myth; dialectic; speech; writing; way of life

PHAIDROS'TA İLETIŞIM VE FELSEFI YAŞAM TARZI ARASINDAKI İLIŞKI ÜZERINE

ÖZET

Bu makale media iletişim biçimleri ve araçları gibi iletişimsel pratiklerden yararlanmak suretiyle ve Phaedrus okuması vasıtasıyla felsefenin konusunu bir yaşam tarzı olarak belirlemektedir. Metinde iletişimin çeşitli biçimlerinin (retorik, mitsel ve diyalektik) ve medyanın (sözlü ve yazılı), hakikati araştırmaya adanmış bir yaşam biçimi olarak felsefenin belli kavramları ile iç içe geçmiş olduğu gösterilecektir. Phaedrus'ta Platon bize, felsefenin peşinde olmak için gerekli ideal iletişim biçimini öğretmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: İletişim felsefesi; rhetorik; mit; diyalektik; konuşma; yazı; yaşam tarzı.

INTRODUCTION

Communicative practices[1] and their role in the journey for those who answer to the call of philosophy are not explicitly referred to in the *Phaedrus*. By communicative practices I mean the forms and media of communication and I hope to show that there is an implicit and essential relationship in the text between communicative practices and the philosophical way of life. In order

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[1] Durham Peters also utilizes the forms of communication as the lens with which to read the text; 'I read the *Phaedrus* as a normative grid of communicative forms. The first half of the *Phaedrus* concerns eros, communication to the one, the second half concerns rhetoric, communication to the many,' (1999, p.50).

to show this, I will examine two closely related issues: (i) the relationship between different forms of communication (rhetorical, mythical and dialectical) and truth; and (ii) the relationship between the spoken and written media of communication. In addition, this study of the *Phaedrus* will also bring out the centrality of the beloved within the communicative practices that characterise philosophy as a 'way of life'. I use the expression 'philosophy as a way of life' in a narrower sense from that of Hadot[2] with whom this term is associated. By philosophy as a way of life I refer to that person who has dedicated his life to the search for absolute truth, as opposed to the person who has dedicated his life to the pursuit of self-interest or pleasure. In a sense, the *Phaedrus* can be read as a meta-philosophical text that implicitly describes those communicative practices that enable one to embark on philosophy as a way of life.

The text is composed of two main parts: the first part consists of three main speeches that focus on the topic of eros; this is followed, in the second part, by a discussion on whether rhetoric can contribute to knowledge and a further discussion on whether the written word is an adequate medium for the transmission of knowledge within an educational setting[3]. Although the relationship between the parts is not entirely straightforward[4], some, like Rabbas consider 'the second part [as] a kind of meta-commentary on the speeches on love in the first part' (2010, p. 28).

The common thread in the three speeches delivered in the *Phaedrus* is that of eros, a word that is usually translated as love. Eros is a broad term that describes a passion for or lusting after something that can be satisfied. When it is used to describe human relationships, it acquires the narrower sense of sexual passion or lust. The question that interests Plato concerns the ultimate goal of eros, a goal that can be articulated in terms of a movement from a lower to a higher model of love. These models are not opposed to each other where the former is inferior to the latter, but rather, the former is a necessary supplement for the latter. From the lower to the higher, there is a

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[2] In 'Philosophy as a Way of Life' Hadot argues aht the practice of philosophy in eh ancient world entailed the improvement of one's character through dialogical engagement others. In this respect, the content was secondary to the primary goal or self-improvement characterised by inner peace, avoiding logical errors and ethical participation in the community. While this ancient ideal was lost with the advent of the University in the Middle Ages, Hadot argues that traces of this way of thinking can be found in philosophers as diverse as Nietzsche and Wittgenstein among others.

[3] Griswold, for example, reads the problem as that 'of the unity of eros and rhetoric.' (1986, p. 5)

[4] The question of the coherence and unity of the text has been a source of much discussion. See Peters 1999, p.38 for some idea of this issue.

progressive movement in the trajectory towards the ultimate (Platonic) metaphysical vision. At a surface level, love is directed towards that which is physically beautiful; it is immediate, sensual and fleeting. But in turn this triggers (or should trigger) the recollection of the Ideal of Beauty which in turn leads to the realisation of the existence of a world beyond the physical, an eternal and unchanging metaphysical world.

Plato associates love with desire and humans desire what they do not have. This fits in neatly with the Platonic conception of love where one looks to the beloved to find that which is lacking in oneself. The beloved is, in effect, the necessary condition for self-knowledge. But not all conceptions of the relationship between love and desire are articulated in this way. As we shall see in the *Phaedrus*, Lysias proposed a conception of love and desire that ran counter to commonplace views. It is with Lysias that rhetorical communication - as a practice that is associated with the persuasion of unconventional views - is challenged by Socrates.

Rhetorical Communication

The rhetorical forms of communication are addressed in the first two speeches of the text, one by Lysias (231a-234c) and the other by Socrates (237b-241d).

The 'dramatic background'[5] to all the speeches is a chance encounter between Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates discovers that Phaedrus is leaving the city walls for a rest after having listened to Lysias' talk. This piques Socrates' interest and he agrees to Phaedrus' invitation to walk outside the city walls. It is unusual for Socrates to leave the city as he maintained that nature had nothing to teach him (230d) but he considers listening to Lysias' speech important enough since he is 'the cleverest speech-writer of today'.[6] As it turns out, the speech is about love.

Lysias' speech is rhetorical because it comes across as crudely manipulative and self-serving. Speeches such as this had given the Sophists – together with their promotion of rhetoric - a bad name. Socrates' follow up speech is not rhetorical per se, but is included within rhetorical communication because he tries to improve on the defects of Lysias' speech and therefore retains the negative thrust of its claims. Socrates realises that

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[5] This is the expression used by Ferrari who argues for the importance of the interplay between the actual physical context and the dialogues: the 'dramatic background'… 'becomes a prominent topic of discussion and a direct cause of the conversational action, rather than as one would expect, at most, an indirect influence on its course' (1987, pp. 3-4)

[6] A reviewer has suggested that perhaps Lysias was a foreigner and therefore his rights to citizenship were questionable; in addition, Socrates did not trust foreigners.

focusing merely upon improving a speech while ignoring its repercussions would constitute a separation between what one says or does and how one lives. This is unacceptable for what is at stake is an ethical relation to the beloved, a betrayal of the ideals of philosophy and an offense to the goddess of Love. It therefore requires a recantation of the claims made in the first two speeches and in the third speech – the palinode – he rejects Lysias' claims outright.

It is interesting here to note that Socrates insists on Phaedrus reading Lysias' text, rather than listening to him presenting the key points. The written text brings the presence of (absent) Lysias to the discussion and, anticipating the later criticisms of writing, shows in practice the inadequacy of writing as a medium for philosophical communication that replaces the presence of the speaker, insofar as Lysias cannot defend himself against any criticisms or possible misinterpretations.

The opening lines of the speech reveal that it is written in the voice of the first person, 'You are aware of my situation…' (231a). The reasons for the use of this literary device can be that it enables what Burke would call 'identification': the reader is persuaded to the speaker's views because he is being addressed directly. The problem with this is that the reader, or the beloved, is placed in a vulnerable position, and therefore susceptible to the lover's demands. Furthermore, this literary device suggests a distance between the narrator and Lysias himself. It is not clear if the speech was intended for a private audience or a public one, but by being written it has moved beyond the context of its reception to another one, and by so doing, acquiring a life of its own.

The speech is structured along the opposition between love and sanity. A person who is in love is 'insane' in the broad sense of acting outrageously, embarrassing himself and others. It is here that the association of love with madness in a negative sense is articulated by Lysias. The person in love 'knows he is deranged but is incapable of self-control.' (231a). The startling claim made by the speaker in the speech is that it is in the interests of the boy to gratify someone who does not love him, rather than someone who does. It is a startling claim because although Athenians accepted and practiced '"unnatural" aberrations' it was still assumed that the relationship was invested emotionally (Taylor 1960, p. 302).

The speaker provides a list of reasons (231a-234c) that justify this claim: (i) a lover is emotionally unstable: he gets jealous, creates scandals and embarrasses the boy; (ii) a non-lover is better suited to take care of the education of the boy. Given these two points, it is clear, for Lysias, that the non-lover offers better prospects for the boy; his reasoning is formulated instrumentally with the relationship structured as an exchange between both

participants. Fairness or justice is the central motivating element in this relationship.

Although it might be claimed (Waterfield 2002, p. xviii) that the speaker – as the non-lover – is conveniently arguing for his own interests, while neglecting or minimizing the interests of the boy, the speaker insists that what he is proposing is beneficial to both parties, so that if it is a question of crude calculation, then the exchange is beneficial for both (234b). By framing the argument in terms of mutual benefit a position outside morality is being suggested. The speech might better be considered as providing a bit of worldly advice with the opposition between the non-lover and the beloved dissolved if it also proves to be beneficial for the latter's future. Given that within Greek culture, the older man was expected to provide for the educational and social advancement of the beloved, would it not be better to have a rational non-lover over an irrational lover as one's educator? From a coldly analytical perspective the answer is a resounding 'yes'. But the problem is that the speech is supposed to be about love and, given the business-like relationship that it is suggesting, one could have just as easily called it by another name. One might easily call the non-lover a friend with whom one exchanged sexual pleasures without the emotional investment usually associated with love. Lysias is thinking along these lines when he states that, when a love affair is over and the emotions have subsided, the lover disappears from the beloved's life while the non-lover – as a friend – remains part of the beloved's life. The manipulative and rhetorical aspect of this speech can be understood here for Lysias is using the name of 'love' to persuade the beloved to accept something that is not love at all.

Phaedrus is delighted with the speech but Socrates raises the suspicion that Lysias was dissatisfied by it (235a) because, apart from the obvious point that an irrational lover is annoying, it shows no creativity; if there is anything of value to the speech it must be found in the arrangement of the material. Phaedrus responds by challenging Socrates to provide a better one. Since Socrates' first speech (237b-241d) falls within the mind-set of Lysias who wanted to persuade without any concern for truth, Socrates adopts the role of a rhetorician to show that even as a piece of rhetorical communication, the first speech has many failings. Interestingly, the deceitful nature of rhetoric is indirectly alluded to by the speaker of this speech who 'was in love with the boy as much as anyone [but] had convinced him that he was not' (237b). In this scenario, the non-lover is not indifferent to the beloved, but only hiding or pretending to be. This

pretending is important because as Peters highlights, 'such a thing as a non-loving lover is not even possible.'[7] (1999, p. 41)

Socrates' next step is to show that even a rhetorician needs to know what he is attempting to understand. And to know something means to be able to define it: Lysias failed to define love, which would make the whole enterprise of persuasion a non-starter. Perhaps indirectly or unconsciously, Socrates is suggesting at this early state that for rhetoricians to succeed there must be a philosophical background to their communicative endeavours. This is why he states that 'we should establish a mutually acceptable definition of love.' (273c-d) Love is now defined broadly as 'a kind of desire' and this desire is then further specified as either a 'desire for pleasure' or 'an acquired mode of thought which arises for what is best.' (237e) On Lysias' account, love is the name of an 'irrational desire' that has the 'upper hand' in its relation towards the other person (238c).

What follows in Socrates' speech is a re-organisation of the speech so that the ideas are ordered in a way that the effects upon the lover are grouped into mind, body and property. The following list of reasons justify why the beloved should not choose someone who loves him, but rather choose someone who doesn't love him (239a-241d). The lover wants the beloved to be inferior (so the beloved looks up to him), without friends (so the beloved would depend on him), without the possibility of studying philosophy (for he would learn to think for himself), physically soft (to be able to please the lover), without possessions (as these might attract the attention of the beloved), a potential embarrassment (in public with his obsessive talk about the beloved), who might in turn, abandon the beloved (when his passion has subsided) and renegade on all his promises. Socrates sums up the mistake of having a lover

> [H]e is bound to be surrendering himself to a man who is untrustworthy, bad-tempered, jealous, unpleasant, and harmful not just to his property and his physical condition but even more so to his mental development, which is in actual fact the most valuable thing there is or ever will be in the eyes of both gods and men. (241c-d)

Socrates' speech is superior to Lysias' in that it introduces a more sophisticated account of desire and human motivation. By distinguishing

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[7] Another possibility is suggested by Taylor: by pretending to be a non-lover 'Socrates [has] a double advantage from even a playful defense of a morally disgraced thesis, and he leaves himself free, if he pleases, to urge subsequently that the apparent reasonability of the speech is only the simulated rationality of a madman, since the client into whose mouth it is put is really inspired all the time by "romantic love"' (1960, p. 303)

between those irrational desires that have pleasure as their goal and those rational desires that have the good as their goal, a measure of philosophical rigour is introduced into the speech. This, at the very least, shifts the direction of the argument towards what is morally good (Taylor 1960, p. 304). But it cannot hide the fact that since Socrates' speech is merely trying to improve upon the stylistic issues that have been raised by Lysias' speech (the importance of definition and the arrangement of material), it still remains framed within a calculative way of thinking. Reason is being misused in that it is not being put into the service of the good but at what can be gained i.e., the beloved. It is not enough to improve something that is inherently wrong. Socrates wants to argue that love is more than rational calculation because it is something that affects the whole being of a person: to be in love is to be passionate about the beloved, and ultimately, it is to want to transform their life by attracting them towards the philosophical way of life. This is the crucial issue for Socrates: philosophy is not just the presentation of logical arguments but a way of life that searches for an absolute truth. This is also Ferrari's view who adds the interesting point that in principle Socrates could not engage or provide a fair assessment of Lysias' speech because both Lysias and Socrates represent different ways of life: '…their exchange is set against two backgrounds which refuse to mesh. Moreover, because these are backgrounds to their way of speaking, nothing that they *say* – in particular, no argument they might make – can of itself compel a shift from one background to the other' (1987, p.56).

Socrates judges both speeches to be 'awful' (242d) and realising that saying such things about love is offensive to the goddess of Love, he decides to deliver a palinode by way of apologising for his mistake (243b). The point this section establishes is that the rhetorical form of communication can never replace the philosophical journey towards the metaphysical truth o

Mythical Communication

There are a number of mythical narratives or allusions to mythical figures in the *Phaedrus,* but there are two myths that form an integral part of the dialogue as a whole. In the palinode, the myth of the soul as a chariot driven by a white and black horse constitutes the background to understanding the conflicts and effort that are required for the soul to attain the vision of truth (253d-e), while the myth on the origin of writing is situated within the discussion on rhetoric (274d- 278d). The latter will be examined in the section on the medium of communication.

The palinode opens with a philosophical elaboration of different kinds of madness by way of countering Lysias' negative view of love as a madness that should be avoided. His analysis exemplifies the

methodological practice of philosophy that I will discuss in the next section. The crucial point here is that the madness of love opens the way to a discussion and understanding of the nature of the soul as well as, fundamentally, its place within the universe. The myth of the soul as a chariot connects Plato's metaphysical vision with the person who embarks (or fails to embark) upon the philosophical way of life with the bridge that connects the self with the true world mediated through the 'mad' love of the beloved.

The first part of the myth (246a-250c) describes the 'character' of the immortal soul and the myth opens with a justification of why myth is needed to help us understand its character in the first place. By admitting to the limitations of 'human powers', it is claimed that the best way of understanding this character is through an analogy of the soul as an 'organic whole made up of a charioteer and his team of horses' (246a). Later, Socrates describes in detail the characteristics of both horses: one is 'white in colour, and dark-eyed' with 'his determination to succeed …tempered by self-control and respect for others' and the other 'black in colour…an ally of excess and affectation…' (253c-d).

The metaphysical version of this myth describes a 'complete' soul, i.e., one that is white and good, and an 'incomplete one' i.e., one that has its wings damaged, and which, as a result, falls until it acquires a body. The metaphor of the wing is appropriate because through flight humans can travel to the gods. The gods also travel in winged chariots and they can travel to the rim of the heavens and where they are granted the vision of reality, the region of 'true being… the province of everything that counts as true knowledge.' (247d). Life for humans is different because of the disharmony between the horses within the chariot. As a result, only some manage to catch a glimpse of reality and others much less so. In addition, they frequently, fall back to earth, forgetting most of what they have seen, but having the possibility of reincarnation. And crucially, to be reincarnated with a human form entails the recognition of truth since only humans can classify their impressions into classes. Since only human beings recognize the truth, then the truth must have been seen before so as to be recognised in the first place; if humans never experience truth they would not know it when it appeared before them (249b).

The philosopher has a crucial advantage over others: the experience of beauty in this world can lead him to recollect the Form or Ideal of Beauty. The benefit of this recollection is that it 'nourishes' his wings, enabling them to grow faster; in addition, there is also the important proviso that his uplifting towards the world of Beauty requires control of the black horse. For the philosopher, the vision of truth that he had experienced in a previous life

leaves its trace upon him in the present life; as a result, he is never satisfied with the incomplete truths of this world.

By virtue of its physical embodiment the soul is subjected to different desires; but as humans learn to control and direct their desires towards the good, they are transformed into philosophers and choose philosophy as a way of life. If the person follows this path for three successive lifetimes, he is free from the cycle of reincarnation and his soul is simple and pure. This elaboration helps Plato articulate why it is that human failings as the result of those desires that hinder the soul's pursuit of the good.

The second part of the myth complements the first part by focusing on the interpersonal relationship between the lover and the figure of the beloved that is central to the philosophical way of life. Beauty is central to this relationship and the difference between the effect of beauty on the lover and Lysias' non-lover is that while both are attracted to the beauty of the beloved, Lysias' non-lover is solely attracted to the physical dimension of the relationship and the satisfaction of his sexual desire. This is very different from the Platonic lover who considers physical beauty as the stimulation towards the superior world of Ideal Beauty (254c). The second type of lover is the philosopher.

For Brook (2010), the scenario in which the philosopher is excited by the beauty of the beloved represents an objectification of the beloved. Since there is no sexual contact between the philosopher and the beloved, the body of the beloved 'becomes an entity for examination' (266). It is something that is spoken about and recuperated within the discourse of beauty where the beauty of the boy is merely there to instantiate the recollection of absolute Beauty. The boy is 'used' as a stimulus for the philosopher: 'the young man truly has nothing to offer in himself, only in the way beauty of his body points away from the body to a disembodied universal Truth.' (267) However, I find this characterisation of the relationship between the philosopher-lover and the beloved to be somewhat one-sided for it does not take into account the obligations of the philosopher-lover towards for the beloved and neither does it take into consideration the perspective of the beloved, who is also looking after his interests in the relationship.

The question is raised as to who the ideal match is for the philosopher: what type of boy is he looking for? Socrates invokes the hierarchy of the gods in his answer to this question (252c-253a) claiming that the choice of the beloved is a projection of the god a philosopher identifies with. Just as he directs his behaviour towards 'honouring and imitating' this god, the choice of beloved is determined the same qualities

being possessed by the beloved. In the case of philosophers, the god is Zeus, and

> …[they]want someone with a Zeus-like soul as their beloved. They look for someone with the potential to be a philosopher and a leader, and when they find him and have fallen in love with him, they do all they can to develop this potential in him.

The relationship between the philosopher-lover and the beloved is not one-sided. The philosopher as lover feels a sense of obligation towards the beloved for it is he who has brought them closer to their god (253a). He feels that the blessed madness of love that he has received should be reciprocated and he 'feel[s] even more affection' for the beloved. The boy is not merely there to satisfy the longings of the philosopher but is an essential part of the relationship and this is why the philosopher strives to bring out the philosopher in the boy.

From the perspective of the beloved something else is taking place. The beloved 'experience[s] from close at hand …the lover's good will' (255b) and realises that all the friendships in the world will not amount to the love bestowed upon him by the philosopher inspired as he is, 'by a god'. The beloved is new to the experience of love and does not know what is happening to him (255d) but upon recognising the goodness of the older man falls in love with him (255a). He is unsure about how to respond appropriately to the feelings he has towards him. Internally he is conflicted (256a-b) but learns that it is not the sexual dimension that is the source of the attraction he feels but something greater. Through the practice of self-control and restraint he has been inducted into the lifestyle of this philosopher-lover and his initiation into the philosophical way of life has commenced. The reciprocal direction of love has led Peters to claim that

> Socrates' innovation was to forward a vision of symmetry as a criterion of genuine love…. [he] treats interpersonal communication as not only a happy mode of message exchange but, at its finest, the mutual salvation of souls in each other's love beneath the blessings of heaven. (1999, pp. 44-45)

It is clear, therefore, that the beloved is the other of the philosopher and he constitutes an essential feature of the philosophical way of life. The philosopher also wants the beloved to participate in the philosophical quest for the truth of the real and his goal is to motivate the beloved towards that which is truly important. Thus, while it might seem that the quest of the philosopher as lover is given priority, the figure of the beloved remains the necessary supplement for the initiation into the Platonic way of life towards philosophy and truth.

It might be asked whether there are other qualities in the beloved (kindness, humility) that might be better to develop rather than the qualities acquired through philosophy (truth, knowledge). Although Plato would argue that in the long term the benefits of having a philosophical education will be apparent, there is an obvious bias here. So too, a person is made up of a number of qualities, some of which, might not fit in well with the qualities required of a philosopher. This raises the problem of the singularity of the beloved who might also desire the path of philosophy but not have the patience for it, or might be too ambitious as a person.

There is clearly a sharp distinction between the madness of love that attracts the philosopher and the madness of love that Lysias is critical of. And in a final rebuke of Lysias, Socrates comments on the privileges of having a lover, '[a]ll these are the divine gifts you will gain from the friendship of a lover, young man. But since the companionship of a non-lover is tempered by human sanity, it delivers meagre and mortal rewards.' (257a)

From the perspective of the form of communication that underlies this study, how do mythical forms of communication contribute to the philosophical way of life that Plato is advocating? The *Phaedrus* is not the only text within the Platonic corpus in which we find mythical narratives and Plato uses them when he wants to communicate an idea that cannot be argued for rationally.[8] As a form of communication, mythical narratives enjoin its readers to either accept or reject them, and Socrates alludes to this quality of myths when he states, 'You can believe this or not, as you wish' (252c). This, however, does not imply that they should not be taken seriously. These myths tell us stories about the beginnings and ends of the universe, life and so on. They help us understand our place in the universe. Such myths, frequently called 'protomyths'[9], are universal in their concerns despite obvious cultural inflections. The Platonic myths concerning the soul and its place in the universe can be considered as such. Mythical truth is not opposed to the truths of the dialectic, but compliments it: the truths of mythical narratives can be considered as disclosive, but not compelling in their force. This is why communication that utilises the form of the dialectic is important for the philosophical way of life. The dialectic is compelling in

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[8] It could be argued that mythical narratives are utilised by Plato as protreptic devices rather than my claim (at least of the *Phaedrus*) that they are a non-rational and non-argumentative form of communication that discloses certain truths. Perhaps, if a protreptic device is intended to instruct or persuade, then this is also what Plato is attempting: he wants to instruct or persuade his readers that mythical communication is 'good' but not as 'good' as the dialectical form of communication.

[9] See Serracino Inglott (1987) for an elaboration of this view.

its force because its truths have been subjected to the rigours of logical analysis.

Dialectical communication

The discussion of the dialectic as the communicative form best suited to the philosophical way of life is framed in opposition to other forms of educative practices available to the student within Greek culture such as 'dramatic and epic verse, the study of sophistry as well as rhetoric.' (Waterfield 2002, p.xxxiii). Plato's concern with rhetoric is well known from the *Gorgias*, and in the *Phaedrus*, he returns to the challenge posed by rhetoric as a viable form of education. In relation to the issues raised in the rest of the text, the return to the problem of rhetoric might seem out of place. But given the scope of rhetoric within Greek culture – it can be spoken or written, in private and in public[10] - Plato is determined to reveal it for what it is.

Given rhetoric's challenge to the dialectic, one might legitimately ask: is there such a thing as 'good' rhetoric? Must rhetoric always be associated with manipulation? And how can one persuade others about the truth of something*?* Perhaps, Socrates thinks, the answer to these questions lies in understanding what is entailed by being an expert in any particular field. Expertise of a subject means having the knowledge of that subject and the acquisition of knowledge can only be obtained by using a method.

Socrates outlines the method (265a-266c) with which one acquires knowledge and truth. He calls it the method of 'collection and division': by collection he means the grouping under one class of a number of things so that they can be defined and, while the definition might be debatable, this procedure will have the merit of producing 'clarity and internal consistency'. The process of division entails specifying the differences within the classification. Socrates demonstrates the method (244a-245c) through an analysis of love that is defined as madness. However, madness itself is a generic term that can be further specified. While the first speech described the madness of love negatively, as something to be avoided, the palinode identifies different kinds of madness: the madness of the seers of the future; the ritualised madness of those who purify, initiate and found religions; the inspired madness of the poet and finally the divine madness of love.

Socrates reveals that the method of 'collection and division' is another name for the 'dialectic' and more importantly, it is the only method that enables one to acquire knowledge and truth in any subject. In other words, it is not restricted to philosophers, but is the appropriate method for anyone who claims to be an expert on something.

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[10] See 257c-258c, 261a, and 261 d-e

The question remains as to what the experts of rhetoric consider essential to their discipline. Socrates presents a long list of 'rhetorical refinements' (266d-267d), but while admitting that these are useful in 'mass meetings', he further adds that something crucial is missing. To be able to claim that one is an expert in a subject - and Socrates cites medicine, tragedy and music as examples – requires the thorough knowledge of the nature of these disciplines not the 'rhetorical refinements' which are only 'preliminaries'. As he clearly states

> In both [medicine and rhetoric] cases you have to determine the nature of something – the body in medicine and the soul in rhetoric – if you're going to be an expert practitioner, rather than relying merely on an experiential knack. In the one you employ drugs and diet to give the body health and strength, and in the other case you employ speeches to give the soul whatever convictions you want, and lawful practise to make it virtuous.' (269b)

The upshot is clear: rhetoricians are concerned with superficialities but manage to pass themselves off as knowledgeable. Philosophers, on the other hand, are interested in knowing the truth of the object of their understanding. And this truth can only be derived by adopting the dialectical method of question and answer.

The Media of Communication: the spoken and the written word

During the discussion on the value of rhetoric, Socrates raises the question of the value of the written word since it was customary for rhetoricians to teach their students how to write speeches. Once again, Socrates resorts to a mythical account to frame his rejection of the written word with the myth of Theuth and Thamus. The myth, coming towards the end of the *Phaedrus*, has been the source of many conflicting views among scholars. Derrida has pointed out that its sudden appearance without any connection to the themes that dominate the rest of the text have led some to consider it the work of Plato's youthful thinking; for others, ironically, it is the work of his aging mind and its place in the text should be considered as an error of judgement that we should not take too seriously. The line of argument this paper has been following echoes that of Peters who claims that the critique of writing is not 'out of place' but 'a logical outgrowth of the argument that good and just relations among people requires a knowledge of care for souls.' (1999, p. 47)

Socrates begins the narration of the myth with the lines 'the story I heard…' (274a). He is pointing out to its status as a narrative that has been passed on from others, the implication being that the myth is transmitted and accepted as part of a tradition. The myth of Theuth-Thamus describes the

'gift' of writing and its subsequent rejection. Thamus, the king of Egypt is given a number of gifts by the god Theuth, gifts that are intended to help humanity. Among these gifts we find, 'arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, of games involving draughts and dice---and especially of writing.' (274d-275b).

Of all these gifts, Theuth considered writing to be the most valuable, but Thamus rejects it while accepting the rest. Thamus' response, interestingly, is that while Theuth deserved the credit for inventing writing, it frequently happens that those who invent something are in no position to judge the consequences of their invention. This is the situation with Theuth who does not realise the effects that the introduction of this new medium will bring about. In an inversion of authoritative hierarchy, it turns out that the king is wiser than the god. The problem with writing is that (i) it ruins the memory of people, for instead of learning to remember on their own, they are relying on texts written by others; mental laziness is the immediate result[11]; (ii) students will read several texts and believe that they have acquired knowledge. Because it is read alone, perhaps repeatedly blindly, it has the appearance of knowledge[12], but this is not true knowledge for this requires that it is critically engaged in the communicative dialectic.[13]

After Phaedrus concedes that Thamus is correct in his objections to writing, Socrates raises four more objections to writing. He claims that (i) texts are written in the belief by their authors that their expertise will survive them after their death and that (ii) texts are read by 'anyone who inherits' them on the assumption that what they are reading is 'clear and reliable' (275c-d). Furthermore, Socrates adds (275d-e) (iii) that like a painting, writing is mute: if you ask a written text what a passage means, you will only find the same words; a written text cannot explain, but only repeat, (iv) once written, a text has a life of its own: it can reach the wrong or 'inappropriate' audience and they can interpret it in whatever way they like.

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[11] Lentz raises the interesting point that paradoxically, Plato attacks memory in the *Republic* since it is associated with the oral tradition, while in the *Phaedrus,* it constitutes the basis of his epistemological attack on writing (1983, p. 291).

[12] In part, Plato's critique of writing is a also a critique of the rhetoricians and the Sophists who were associated with writing (See, for example, Couthard and Keller 2012, Rabbas 2010).

[13] Rabbas gives an excellent example of the lack of understanding that writing promotes: 'if I utter the formula 'E = mc2, I can only do this meaningfully if I know what I am talking about, i.e., if I know physics. If I don't, my utterance will be mere words. In that case the statement that E = mc2 won't be *my* statement, really – it will be a statement belonging to others: to Einstein, to physicists. Relative to me, this statement is "external and depends on signs that belong to others" (275a3-4). I have no authority over it.' (2010, p. 40)

The text is without the presence of its author who is unable to defend himself against any possible misinterpretations or accusations made against him.

Socrates' use of figurative language to describe the relationship between writing and legitimacy operates within the framework of parental authority. Much like the relationship of painting to the object in the sensual world with this in turn depending upon the real and Ideal world, a tripartite hierarchy is being proposed with the father as the source of linguistic and legitimate authority, with the spoken word as the 'legitimate' son and the written word as the 'illegitimate' son.[14]

It is clear that the spoken word is the privileged medium with which knowledge is acquired and Phaedrus confirms this relationship: 'You're talking about the living, ensouled speech of a man of knowledge. We'd be right to describe the written word as a mere image of this.' (276c) The spoken interaction between the lover and the beloved is framed as a process of question and answer that requires a slow pace where ideas are reflected upon, challenged and maybe re-considered. When the dialectical process is successful, 'it is alive and it transfers its life to the interlocutor whose soul is transformed by the communication.' (Rabbas 2010, p. 37)

On this account, an interesting point is raised by Derrida who questions Socrates' analogy of speaking as a writing on the soul (276a, 278a): given his insistence on the negative features of writing as the medium to pursue knowledge and truth, why does he use such an analogy? Doesn't this subvert all his own efforts at delineating a specific method for philosophical investigation? Is he being ironic?[15] Should he not be taken seriously? Or, perhaps, is he trying to warn us about the relationship between writing and the philosophical way of life? There is clearly a distinction between those who Socrates considers 'lovers of wisdom' since they rely on the spoken word for the discovery and transmission of knowledge and those who rely on the written text and who have the titles of poets, speech-writers and law-writers bestowed upon them. (278d-e)

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[14] Again, a reviewer suggested that perhaps there is a correspondence between the tripartite division in the chariot myth and the tripartite division mentioned here. The parallels could be as follows: Just as the father has the legitimate authority to command, the same would apply to the charioteer; and just as there the father has two sons, one legitimate and the other illegitimate, likewise the chariot is moved by two desires, one diligent and seeking what is the ultimate good, the other unruly and seeking what is immediately good. This should only be considered a tentative characterisation; as with analogies it is at times difficult to see how far one can stretch an analogy.

[15] Lentz points out that this paradox has led some such as Burger to think that Plato 'really' didn't mean to attack writing and that this should be taken as an example of Socratic irony (1983, p.296).

Despite the bias towards the spoken word, the condemnation of writing is not wholesale. As Derrida points out 'The conclusion of the *Phaedrus* is less a condemnation of writing in the name of present speech than a preference for one sort of writing over another…' (1981, p.149) This can be seen in Socrates' claim that written texts can be justified if they serve for 'amusement' or if they function as reminders for when human memory starts to fail as we get older. Phaedrus comments that this use of writing is still a better way of passing one's time, rather than the 'trivial pastimes' that others pursue in their lives. However, Socrates is quick to remind him that amusement is one thing, but certain issues – such as those of justice – are too important to be dealt with adequately in written texts. Such issues should be the exclusive domain of the 'expert dialectician' who communicates his knowledge to others (276d-277a).

Waterfield introduces an interesting way of moving beyond the paradox of writing in the Platonic corpus. He argues that while it is possible to say that Plato included his own writings in the critique of writing, it can also be argued that Plato, having pointed out its limitations, feels that he can go beyond this limitation. In other words, having alerted us to the issues of writing to his satisfaction it is now possible to continue with the philosophical way of life. This way of life is possible through the use of the dialogical form of writing which, as opposed to other forms of writing, is the closest one can get to real life philosophical conversation. This explains why the Platonic dialogues are modelled as a process of asking and answering questions. The philosopher-teacher wants to educate his student in the art of questioning in order to become a philosopher – as opposed to one who merely repeats - like written texts, what they have heard. The specific qualities of the Platonic dialogue show that it cannot be classified with other forms of writing such as speech-making, legal writing or poetry; it is literally a class of its own.

This explanation provides, I think, an adequate response to the paradox of writing mentioned above. The Platonic text is not there to deliver a definitive content, to tell us what to think. Rather it is there to teach us how to think by introducing the reader to the practice of philosophical questioning. Through reading Plato one learns how to do philosophy and if philosophy is to transform the person by inducing him to the search for truth, then the written texts – despite their limitations – can serve as inspirations on how to pursue such a way of life.

If this argument is accepted, it might be further claimed that the text can also provoke its readers into critically engaging with it. In other words, despite the absence of the author (for example, despite the absence of Plato) the text of the *Phaedrus* can be read in a philosophically productive manner that simulates real world philosophical discussion. It is possible to enlist the

hermeneutics of H.G. Gadamer whose concept of the fusion of horizons would demonstrate the way a philosophical dialogue with a text can be re-enacted (2003, pp. 306-7, 374-5). It is perhaps no coincidence that Gadamer utilises the logic of question and answer as a way of engaging philosophical texts. Returning to the question of writing in the *Phaedrus*, it can be claimed that while the primary mode of philosophizing is conducted through face to face interaction, the relationship between the text and its reader provides a secondary model that should not be discarded out of hand.

There are several ways to read the *Phaedrus* or, for that matter, any text. In this paper, I have focused on what I have called 'communicative practices' to produce a reading that takes into account the possibilities inherent within the text; it is the text that makes possible its interpretation from the perspective of the forms and media of communication. By using this perspective, I hope to have shown that the *Phaedrus* teaches us the most appropriate form and medium of communication that enables a person to pursue the search for truth, or more appropriately, with falling in love with the philosophical way of life.

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