

## Platonic protreptic and the unity of the *Phaedrus*

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**T1** Soc: But I do think you will agree to this, that every discourse must be organised, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole.

(*Phaedrus* 264c, trans Fowler)

Ἀλλὰ τόδε γε οἶμαί σε φάναι ἄν, δεῖν πάντα λόγον ὥσπερ ζῶον συνεστάναι σῶμά τι ἔχοντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ, ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα, πρέποντ' ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ γεγραμμένα.

**T2** Soc: And if in our former discourse Phaedrus and I said anything harsh against thee, blame Lysias, the father of that discourse, make him to cease from such speeches, and turn him, as his brother Polemarchus is turned, toward philosophy, that his lover Phaedrus may no longer hesitate, as he does now, between two ways, but may direct his life with all singleness of purpose toward love and philosophical discourses. (257b)

τῷ πρόσθεν δ' εἴ τι λόγῳ σοι ἀπηνές εἶπομεν Φαῖδρός τε καὶ ἐγώ, Λυσίαν τὸν τοῦ λόγου πατέρα αἰτιώμενος παῦε τῶν τοιούτων λόγων, ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν δέ, ὥσπερ ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ Πολέμαρχος τέτραπται, τρέψον, ἵνα καὶ ὁ ἐραστής ὅδε αὐτοῦ μηκέτι ἐπαμφοτερίζῃ καθάπερ νῦν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς πρὸς Ἔρωτα μετὰ φιλοσόφων λόγων τὸν βίον ποιῆται.

**T3** And in running and leaping and all activities of the body, are not nimble and quick movements accounted honourable, while sluggish and quiet ones are deemed disgraceful?

(*Charmides* 159d). [Compare *Protagoras* 352a (τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἔργων).]

Θεῖν δὲ καὶ ἄλλεσθαι καὶ τὰ τοῦ σώματος ἅπαντα ἔργα, οὐ τὰ μὲν ὀξέως καὶ ταχὺ γιγνόμενα τοῦ καλοῦ ἐστί, τὰ δὲ μόγις τε καὶ ἡσύχια τοῦ αἰσχροῦ;

**T4** So we have made our discourse too long and after all have never made an end of the tale, but our talk, just like a picture of a living creature, seems to have a good enough outline (ἀτεχνῶς ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ζῶον τὴν ἔξωθεν μὲν περιγραφὴν ἔοικεν ἰκανῶς ἔχειν), but not yet to have received the clearness that comes from pigments and the blending of colours.

(*Statesman* 277b-c, trans. Fowler and Lamb)

**T5** Just as in our comparison we made the picture by the art of painting, so now we shall make language by the art of naming, or of rhetoric, or whatever it be (ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ τὸ ζῶον τῇ γραφικῇ, ἐνταῦθα τὸν λόγον τῇ ὀνομαστικῇ ἢ ῥητορικῇ ἢ ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ τέχνη). (*Cratylus* 425a, trans. Fowler)

**T6** Soc. You will find that it is very like the inscription that some say is inscribed on the tomb of Midas the Phrygian.

Phaedrus. What sort of inscription is that, and what is the matter with it?

Soc. This is it:

A bronze maiden am I; and I am placed upon the tomb of Midas.

So long as water runs and tall trees put forth leaves,  
Remaining in this very spot upon a much lamented tomb,  
I shall declare to passers by that Midas is buried here;

and you perceive, I fancy, that it makes no difference whether any line of it is put first or last. (264d)

καὶ εὐρήσεις τοῦ ἐπιγράμματος οὐδὲν διαφέροντα, ὁ Μίδα τῷ Φρυγί φασί τινες ἐπιγεγράφθαι.

ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ. Ποῖον τοῦτο, καὶ τί πεπονθός;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ Ἔστι μὲν τοῦτο τόδε·

χαλκῆ παρθένος εἰμί, Μίδα δ' ἐπὶ σήματι κεῖμαι.

ὄφρ' ἂν ὕδωρ τε νάη καὶ δένδρεα μακρὰ τεθήλη,

αὐτοῦ τῆδε μένουσα πολυκλαύτου ἐπὶ τύμβου,

ἀγγελέω παριοῦσι Μίδας ὅτι τῆδε τέθαιπται.

ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲν διαφέρει αὐτοῦ πρῶτον ἢ ὕστατόν τι λέγεσθαι, ἐννοεῖς που, ὡς ἐγῶμαι.

Thus the dialogue as a whole has (at least) two distinct themes [love and rhetoric]; the sole—and sufficient—reason for their being brought together, I shall argue, lies in the person of Phaedrus himself. ... The appropriate structure of philosophical discussion is: whatever an ideally skilled teacher (Socrates) would say to such-and-such a person in order to instil virtue or promote understanding, as and how he would say it. The teacher takes some individual, with his particular preoccupations and needs, and works with those preoccupations and needs in order to point him towards or further into philosophy. If the individual's preoccupations and needs, the influences which tend to inhibit or can be used to promote his growth towards philosophical maturity, are diverse then necessarily the discussion with him will itself be thematically diverse. (Heath 1989b, 14 and 26-7)

My first response is to say that it is naive to ground the structure of Platonic dialogues in assumed "real-life" characteristics of the interlocutors. As soon as the "real," historical Phaedrus entered the dialogue, he became as shapeable and usable as any element of fiction. Plato could summon from his character what he liked and repress what he didn't as easily as he could produce a plane tree or the sound of cicadas. An equally important objection to this definition of the goal of the dialogue is that the *Phaedrus* is certainly not written for Phaedrus alone, but for its readers. As the dialogue is at pains to point out in its final section, the mere fact of its being written condemns it to be bandied about among all kinds of persons, even those who may have ideas and interests very different from those of Phaedrus. Slavishly following the whims of some real Phaedrus would never produce a text suited to meet this eventuality. (Ford 1991, 135-6.)

**T7** And so I dismiss these matters and accepting the customary belief about them, as I was saying just now, I investigate not these things, but myself, to see whether I am a more devious and fervent beast than Typhon, or a gentler and more straightforward animal, naturally sharing in a divine and unpretentious lot. (*Phaedrus* 230a, trans. Fowler with modifications)  
 ὅθεν δὴ χαίρειν ἔασας ταῦτα, πειθόμενος δὲ τῷ νομιζομένῳ περὶ αὐτῶν, ὁ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, σκοπῶ οὐ ταῦτα ἀλλὰ ἑμαυτόν, εἴτε τι θηρίον τυγχάνω Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεθυμμένον, εἴτε ἡμερώτερόν τε καὶ ἀπλούστερον ζῶον, θείας τινὸς καὶ ἀτύφου μοίρας φύσει μετέχον.

**T8** Socrates: Have you read only the *Arts* on speeches by Nestor and Odysseus, which they wrote in Troy in moments of leisure, and ended up ignorant of Palamedes' *Arts*?

Phaedrus: I've certainly never read Nestor's, unless you're making Gorgias out to be a Nestor, or Thrasymachus and Theodorus Odysseus.

Socrates: Perhaps. (261c)

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ἄλλ' ἢ τὰς Νέστορος καὶ Ὀδυσσεῶς τέχνας μόνον περι λόγων ἀκήκοας, ἃς ἐν Ἰλίῳ σχολάζοντες συνεγραψάτην, τῶν δὲ Παλαμήδους ἀνήκοος γέγονας;

ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ. Καὶ ναὶ μὰ Δία ἔγωγε τῶν Νέστορος, εἰ μὴ Γοργίαν Νέστορά τινα κατασκευάζεις, ἢ τινα Θρασύμαχόν τε καὶ Θεόδωρον Ὀδυσσεά.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ἴσως.

**T9** Socrates. But the man who thinks that in the written word there is necessarily much that is playful, and that no written discourse, whether in metre or in prose, deserves to be treated very seriously (and this applies also to the recitations of the rhapsodes, delivered to sway people's minds, without opportunity for questioning and teaching), but that the best of them really serve only to remind us of what we know; and who thinks that only in words about justice and beauty and goodness spoken by teachers for the sake of instruction and really written in a soul is clearness and perfection and serious value, that such words should be considered the speaker's own legitimate offspring, first the word within himself, if it be found there, and secondly its descendants or brothers which may have sprung up in worthy manner in the souls of others, and who pays no attention to the other words,—that man, Phaedrus, is likely to be such as you and I might pray that we ourselves may become.

Phaedrus. By all means that is what I wish and pray for. (278a-b)

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ὁ δὲ γε ἐν μὲν τῷ γεγραμμένῳ λόγῳ περι ἐκάστου παιδιάν τε ἡγούμενος πολλὴν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι, καὶ οὐδένα πώποτε λόγον ἐν μέτρῳ οὐδ' ἄνευ μέτρου μεγάλης ἄξιον σπουδῆς γραφῆναι, οὐδὲ λεχθῆναι ὡς οἱ ῥαψωδοῦμενοι ἄνευ ἀνακρίσεως καὶ διδαχῆς πειθοῦς ἔνεκα ἐλέχθησαν, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι αὐτῶν τοὺς βελτίστους εἰδόντων ὑπόμνησιν γεγονέναι, ἐν δὲ τοῖς διδασκομένοις καὶ μαθήσεως χάριν λεγομένοις καὶ τῷ ὄντι γραφομένοις ἐν ψυχῇ περι δικαίων τε καὶ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν μόνοις τό τε ἐναργὲς εἶναι καὶ τέλος καὶ ἄξιον σπουδῆς· δεῖν δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους λόγους αὐτοῦ λέγεσθαι οἷον υἱεῖς γνησίους εἶναι, πρῶτον μὲν τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐὰν εὐρεθῆς ἐνῆ, ἔπειτα εἰ τινες τούτου ἔκγονοί τε καὶ ἀδελφοὶ ἅμα ἐν ἄλλαισιν ἄλλων ψυχαῖς κατ' ἀξίαν ἐνέφυσαν· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους χαίρειν ἐῶν—οὗτος δὲ ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀνὴρ κινδυνεύει, ὦ Φαῖδρε, εἶναι οἷον ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ εὐξαιμέθ' ἂν σέ τε καὶ ἐμὲ γενέσθαι.

ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν ἔγωγε βούλομαί τε καὶ εὐχομαι ἃ λέγεις.

**T10** Socrates. We have plenty of time, apparently; and besides, the locusts seem to be looking down upon us as they sing and talk with each other in the heat. Now if they should see us not conversing at mid-day, but, like most people, dozing, lulled to sleep by their song because of our mental indolence, they would quite justly laugh at us, thinking that some slaves had come to their resort and were slumbering about the fountain at noon like sheep. But if they see us conversing and sailing past them unmoved by the charm of their Siren voices, perhaps they will be pleased and give us the gift which the gods bestowed on them to give to men.

Phaedrus. What is this gift? I don't seem to have heard of it.

Socrates. It is quite improper for a lover of the Muses never to have heard of such things. The story goes that these locusts were once men, before the birth of the Muses, and when the Muses were born and song appeared, some of the men were so overcome with delight that they sang and sang, forgetting food and drink, until at last unconsciously they died. From

them the locust tribe afterwards arose, and they have this gift from the Muses, that from the time of their birth they need no sustenance, but sing continually, without food or drink, until they die, when they go to the Muses and report who honours each of them on earth. They tell Terpsichore of those who have honoured her in dances, and make them dearer to her; they gain the favour of Erato for the poets of love, and that of the other Muses for their votaries, according to their various ways of honouring them; and to Calliope, the eldest of the Muses, and to Urania who is next to her, they make report of those who pass their lives in philosophy and who worship these Muses who are most concerned with heaven and with thought divine and human and whose music is the sweetest. (τῆ δὲ πρεσβυτάτῃ Καλλιόπῃ καὶ τῇ μετ' αὐτὴν Οὐρανίᾳ τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διάγοντάς τε καὶ τιμῶντας τὴν ἐκείνων μουσικὴν ἀγγέλλουσιν, αἱ δὴ μάλιστα τῶν Μουσῶν περὶ τε οὐρανὸν καὶ λόγους οὔσαι θεῖους τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνους ἰᾶσι καλλίστην φωνήν) So for many reasons we ought to talk and not sleep in the noontime. (258e-259d)

**T11** O beloved Pan and all ye other gods of this place, grant to me that I be made beautiful in my soul within, and that all external possessions be in harmony with my inner man. May I consider the wise man rich; and may I have such wealth as only the self-restrained man can bear or endure.

Do we need anything more, Phaedrus? For me that prayer is enough.

Phaedrus. Let me also share in this prayer; for friends have all things in common.

Socrates. Let us go. (279b-c)

Ὡ φίλε Πάν τε καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῆδε θεοί, δοίητέ μοι καλῶ γενέσθαι τᾶνδοθεν· ἔξωθεν δὲ ὅσα ἔχω, τοῖς ἐντὸς εἶναι μοι φίλια. πλούσιον δὲ νομίζοιμι τὸν σοφόν· τὸ δὲ χρυσοῦ πλήθος εἶη μοι ὅσον μήτε φέρειν μήτε ἄγειν δύναται· ἄλλος ἢ ὁ σώφρων.—Ἔτ' ἄλλου του δεόμεθα, ὦ Φαῖδρε; ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ μετρίως ἤκται.

ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ. Καὶ ἐμοὶ ταῦτα συνεύχου· κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ἴωμεν.

Speusippus and Xenocrates' *On Philosophy*; Speusippus' *Philosopher* (Diogenes Laertius 4.4, 4.13); authorship of dialogues by Speusippus, Heraclides and other members of the early Academy (4.4, 5.86, 89, Jażdżewska 2022).

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