A rhetorical analysis of Plato's Phaedrus

Kathryn King Barber

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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PLATO'S PHAEDRUS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Kathryn King Barber
December 1994
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Chapter One: The Climb
Section one

The *Phaedrus* is a deeply enigmatic work, mixing the solid logic of the dialectic with the dreamlike, magical power inherent in figurative language. Plato refracts the light of truth through a prism of metaphor, sending breath-taking fragments of meaning shimmering across the wall of the mind. These beautiful images enlighten the reader as they entice her farther into the quest for Platonic absolutes. With the help of metaphor, he shatters an abstract concept into its shimmering, elusive, component parts, finally selectively reassembling the pieces to produce for the reader a clearer understanding of both parts and whole. This towering work by Plato retains its seductive power through the millennia because successive generations of readers never feel quite finished explaining it. Not only is the subject open to wide interpretation, but the structure, style, and mode of presentation are equally difficult to pin down. What amazes one about this work is that there is always something seemingly fresh for a new reader to look at. Plato's stunning literary achievement retains its original vitality and, if anything, grows more wonderful with each successive interpretation.

The *Phaedrus*, despite its elusive qualities, stands today as one of the definitive examples left by the ancient Greeks of the highly-regarded teaching (and learning) style utilizing unbiased intellectual inquiry and known as the dialectic. This teaching style stands on a foundation of personal humility. We are all—teachers as well as students--still seeking answers to questions about the meaning of life and how to best live out the individual portions allotted to us. Plato's *Phaedrus* continues to fascinate me as it grapples with these problems and how they affect the basic communication skills of oral and written rhetoric.

I have in mind many questions concerning the construction of the *Phaedrus*. What rhetorical techniques does Plato have Socrates employ? With what frequency are they used and to what effect? First, however, to gain the foothold I seek in order to be
able to explore various features of the rocky, vertical face of the *Phaedrus*, I plan to construct a scaffold out of the work of several authors who deal in various ways with the rhetorical implications of the use of metaphor and metonymy in a text. I am convinced that metaphor and metonymy can be demonstrated to be the fertile soil from which all rhetorical figures grow; but combining the two, as Plato does with great gusto, can be as tricky and dangerous as mixing water with acid. These two tropes, therefore, must receive my primary attention. Elevated by this scaffold, I will be able to climb toward the features in the *Phaedrus* that I wish to examine more closely.

My scaffolding begins with Roman Jakobson who, says David Lodge, editor of *Modern Criticism and Theory*, "was one of the most powerful minds in twentieth century intellectual history" (31). One of Jakobson's major contributions to modern literary theory, according to Lodge, is the refinement and expansion of a basic principle of Saussurian linguistics, "that language, like all systems of signs, has a twofold character, involving two distinct operations, selection and combination" (57). Jakobson confirms Saussure's theory by looking at these two processes, selection and combination, and how they work, or fail to work in people suffering from all types of aphasia. "In aphasia," according to Jakobson, "one or the other of these two processes is restricted or totally blocked--an effect which makes the study of aphasia particularly illuminating for the linguist" (58). He goes on to make solid connections between selection and metaphor and between combination and metonymy. These connections are critical to his own unfolding theory.

Every form of aphasic disturbance consists in some impairment, more or less severe, either of the faculty for selection and substitution or for combination and contexture. The former affliction involves a deterioration of metalinguistic operations, while the latter damages the capacity for maintaining the hierarchy of linguistic units. The relation of similarity is
suppressed in the former, the relation of contiguity in the latter type of aphasia. Metaphor is alien to the similarity disorder, and metonymy to the contiguity disorder. (57)

From here, Jakobson takes his theory one step further by deeming these two ways of advancing discourse to be polar opposites, because he believes they are at opposite ends of the communication spectrum. He gives compelling reinforcement to his polar theory by illustrations dealing with the two extreme types of aphasia and how they affect the processes of metaphor and metonymy in the individual.

In one type, the mental faculty for selection and substitution is impaired, in which case we see the sufferer relying almost exclusively on metonymical thinking to facilitate communication. People with this type of aphasia are heavily dependent on contiguity to advance their communication because, as Jakobson says, their metalinguistic operations no longer work and they aren't able to select the word they wish to use. He gives the example of a patient who, when asked to repeat the word "no," replied, "No, I can't do it." Lodge explains that "context enabled him to use the word that he could not consciously 'select' from an abstract paradigm" (Lodge 78).

In the opposite type of aphasia, the faculty for combination and contexture is affected by the disease, and the sufferer builds communication totally on metaphoric principles. Communication from a patient with this type of aphasia is characterized by chaotic word order and what Jakobson calls quasi-metaphoric expressions because the patients select inappropriate words (the wrong word from the right category) with no deliberate intention to effect a transfer of meaning as do people using metaphors rhetorically (78).

In each case, the lack of command over one of the polar processes of discourse advancement catapults the aphasic patient toward the other pole, leaving us with
convincing evidence to support Jakobson's theory that all human communication processes are forwarded along one of these two lines, metaphor or metonymy, and that they are, indeed, located at opposite ends of a spectrum.

By synthesizing the Saussurian principle and his studies of aphasia, Jakobson is able to support convincingly his theory. "One topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively" (58). If we think about this claim and about how metaphor and metonymy work, we can see that contiguity is a linear process, but similarity is not. This insight will have important consequences when we look at Plato's *Phaedrus.*

Jakobson goes on to argue that this polar configuration of metaphor and metonymy seems to influence not only all verbal behavior, but all human behavior. "A competition between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process, be it interpersonal or social" (60). Finally, he discusses the implications for art and psychology and shows us in depth how the dichotomy affects literature. "Romanticism," he believes, "is closely linked with metaphor, whereas the equally intimate ties of realism with metonymy usually remain unnoticed" (60).

The bottom level of my theoretical scaffolding is now in place thanks to Jakobson. Lines of similarity (exemplified by metaphor) and lines of contiguity (exemplified by metonymy) are seen to be the two fundamental methods which can be used to advance human communication from one topic to another, and Jakobson has demonstrated, as well, that they are polar opposites. However, as I add my next level of scaffolding aided by David Lodge, we will find that, as with other dichotomies, the lines between metaphor and metonymy are sometimes blurry.
Section Two

David Lodge devotes several chapters of *The Modes of Modern Writing* to explanation and clarification of Jakobson's polar theory of metaphor and metonymy. Lodge also begins with Saussure's idea that language, like other symbolic systems, has two essential steps: selection and combination. Then, in order to further our understanding of this concept, he introduces Roland Barthes' explanation of how these two steps work. Barthes draws a parallel between dressing and writing, showing us that we must first select an array of garments, one from each of several categories. We need one skirt, one shirt, one pair of shoes and socks, etc... This corresponds to our selection of individual words from the categories containing their synonyms. We then combine the selected pieces into a predetermined "look," or fashion statement just as we combine the selected words into a coherent sentence.

"Selection," says Lodge, "involves the perception of similarity and it implies the possibility of substitution" (75). This, of course, makes it look exactly like metaphor. John R. Searle, in his book, *Expression and Meaning*, examines metaphor from the closely-reasoned point of view of a linguistic philosopher. He discusses the whole range of similarity found in different metaphors from the simple tenor is vehicle ("S is P") variety to the more complex types that imply that S and P share a certain range of R values and shows us that in every case, some degree of similarity is crucial to the success of metaphor (103). Plato, as a master of metaphor, makes use of the whole spectrum of metaphor, simply adding supplemental explanation by complicating or extending his metaphor when the tenor gets too far from the vehicle to be readily understood.

Lodge also shows us that combination involves the perception of contiguity and
implies the possibility of deletion. Here, we have metonymy. Deletion functions as a means of selective compression. By carefully deleting the words we find extraneous or inappropriate to the effect we have chosen to convey, we tighten the control over our discourse and give our metonymical writing more power through exact expression. Consider again Barthes' clothing metaphor. If a woman who usually wears a three-strand necklace of pearls decides to select her clothes to conform with the grunge look, she must either delete the necklace or send a mixed-up message in her total fashion statement. Therefore, we can see that the skills of selecting (metaphor) and combining (metonymy) are, indeed, settling into Jakobson's categories of polar opposites.

Without Barthes' metaphoric illustration comparing dressing to communicating, it is difficult to keep the concepts of metaphor and metonymy from mingling in our minds. Lodge says, "Superficially, they seem to be the same sort of thing--figurative transformations of literal statements. Metonymy...seem[s] to involve, like metaphor, the substitution of one term for another" (76). He points out, however, that Jakobson "argues that they are opposed, because generated according to opposite principles" (76). Barthes' illustration demonstrates, I think, the opposition of the principles of generation and, therefore, of the two figures as well.

Lodge further clarifies the distinction between metaphor and metonymy by giving us an example of how metonymy, the more elusive pole, functions. He begins with a sentence, "The keels of the ships crossed the deep ocean" (75). He then shortens it to "Keels crossed the deep," explaining that here we see the combination and deletion process at work. The word 'keels' is chosen to function as the subject not because it is similar to ship, but because it is a representative part of the ship (technically this substitution is a synecdoche, but Jakobson and others make no distinction because it functions in the same way metonymy does, through combination and contexture). The
The word 'deep' is chosen not because it is a synonym for ocean, but because it is one of the properties of an ocean (76). Therefore, it is clear that 'keel' and 'deep' are chosen to be kept and not deleted for reasons other than properties of similarity. They are actually related or connected to the parent words 'ship' and 'ocean' in an entirely different (and contiguous) way than are the metaphorical building blocks of tenor and vehicle. Lodge's illustration helps us to better grasp the delicate difference between the functioning of metaphor and metonymy.

Lodge now begins to demonstrate the metonymic overtones found in several forms of expression such as prose (especially realistic prose), film, and naturalistic drama. Since I wish to argue that Plato's Phaedrus is constructed on a metonymic framework, I will pursue Lodge's line of reasoning using naturalistic drama as one example. In fact, the Phaedrus might even be called a kind of naturalistic drama using Lodge's criteria. Lodge says, "In naturalistic drama, every action is realistically motivated, dramatic time is almost indistinguishable from real time...and the characters are set in a contextual space bounded and filled with real objects" (82). Also, Lodge puts film in the same category even though it is capable of employing metaphoric devices. "This verisimilitude can be explained as a function of the metonymic character of the film medium. We move through time and space literally and our sensory experience is a succession of contiguities" (84). Lodge emphasizes and re-emphasizes the fact that realism is forwarded by contiguity and is therefore metonymic. If we look at the Phaedrus we can see immediately the realistic, metonymic framework.

The text moves forward by means of a contiguous storyline involving the encounter of Phaedrus and Socrates one hot summer morning outside the city walls. They turn off the road and walk along the Ilissus, a small stream, sometimes wading in the cool water since they are both barefoot. They talk as they walk along the brook stopping in the
shade of a large plane tree where they sit, relax, and continue their discussion. Socrates describes the setting minutely and sensually. The plane tree, under which they sit, is lofty and spreading, and there is a tall willow nearby which is in full bloom, filling the air with its fragrance. The brook is pleasing to the eye as it flows by, and the water is cool to the bare foot. There is a light breeze, and the cicadas are chirping, but, best of all, the grass is thick and inviting to sit or lie on. There are also figurines and statues placed about, leading Socrates to speculate that they have chosen to sit in a place that is sacred to some nymphs.

The description of the setting is vivid and realistic enough to meet the strictest of metonymic requirements as Lodge sets them forth. The actions of both men are realistically motivated, and the characters are moving through a believable landscape filled with familiar objects. Also, the time frame is realistic since all of the dialogue takes place in the space of one day, stretching, I calculate, from late morning to mid-afternoon. So, although there are frequent and lengthy breaks in the action of the Phaedrus because Plato's copious use of rhetorical devices such as myth and metaphor retard the flow of the realistic portions of the text, I still feel justified in arguing that Plato's Phaedrus has a metonymic framework.

The rhetorical breaks are potentially troublesome, however. Lodge warns that in realistic literature, effective metaphor is subject to strictures unique to a clearly metonymical genre. In an environment where metaphor is comfortable, like poetry, the greater the distance between tenor and vehicle, the more creative fizz is produced. However, the distance which works so effectively in metaphorical genres tends to undermine metonymical works by disrupting the contiguity in direct proportion to the distance between tenor and vehicle (112). He says that "We would expect the writer who is working in the metonymic mode to use metaphorical devices sparingly" (113), and he even suggests that similes, which have less distance between tenor and vehicle, may be a
more prudent choice of figure for the metonymical writer.

Clearly, Plato flagrantly disregards this piece of advice that comes 2,500 years too late. He nails weighty metaphorical devices showing great distance between tenor and vehicle all over his slender metonymical framework in the Phaedrus, and I shall offer some possible reasons for Plato's ability to make this departure from the norm a viable strategy. One reason may lie in the peculiar attraction that these two polar opposites have for each other. They do not always seem to repel each other, and they are not always mutually exclusive. When they enter each other's magnetic fields, they can work together to form one of the most sophisticated figures of speech, the symbol, which Lodge describes as "a kind of metaphorical metonymy" (100). Plato makes heavy use of symbols in the Phaedrus, thus uniting Jakobson's polar opposites. Take, for example, the famous myth of the soul in Socrates' second speech. In it, Socrates likens falling in love to growing feathers on the soul. This makes little sense until we remember Socrates' description earlier in the same speech of souls striving to fly higher and higher in an attempt to catch a glimpse of truth or reality. Socrates gives Phaedrus a lengthy description of the growth of feathers on the soul of the lover. To me, the feathers seem to be a clearly contiguous metonymical image used to indicate wings, which, in turn, are used to indicate the ability to fly, which is metaphorically like the improvement the soul undergoes when falling in love. Thus, we can see that there is a remarkable power of expression in the intertwining of the polar opposites, and Plato takes full advantage of this power.

Lodge also does a nice piece of analysis concerning the literary uses and effectiveness of these strangely intertwined polar opposites, metaphor and metonymy.

No message that is decoded without effort is likely to be valued, and the metaphoric mode has its own way of making interpretation fruitfully difficult: though it offers itself eagerly for interpretation, it bewilders us
with a plethora of possible meanings. The metonymic text, in contrast, deluges us with a plethora of data, which we seek to unite into one meaning. Furthermore, it must always be remembered that we are not discussing a distinction between two mutually exclusive types of discourse, but a distinction based on dominance. The metaphoric work cannot totally neglect metonymic continuity if it is to be intelligible at all. Correspondingly, the metonymic text cannot eliminate all signs that it is available for metaphorical interpretation. (111)

Clearly, Jakobson's polar opposites of metaphor and metonymy are not entirely incompatible. They can provide each other with a needed balance. When judiciously combined, one provides the dominant flavor and the other adds subtle zest as a seasoning. With these considerations in mind, I think we can see that Plato has good reason to include metaphorical techniques in his metonymical text. The problem lies only in the number and length of these interruptions. What does Plato stand to gain by using metaphorical devices so frequently? Do the benefits outweigh the risk of fragmenting the metonymical framework? We will soon find out.

Section Three

Now we move on to the third and final level of scaffolding with the work of Northrop Frye who, in The Great Code, discusses and extends an intriguing idea first advanced by Giambattista Vico.

According to Vico, Frye writes, there are three ages in a cycle of history: a mythical age, or age of gods; a heroic age, or age of an aristocracy; and an age of the people, after which comes the ricorso or return that starts the
whole process over again. Each age produces its own kind of langage, giving us three types of verbal expression that Vico calls, respectively, the poetic, the heroic or noble, and the vulgar, and which I shall call the hieroglyphic, the hieratic, and the demotic. These terms refer primarily to three modes of writing. (5)

Frye later enlarges on these three eras, eventually calling the first, second and third ages metaphoric, metonymic and descriptive, which is why his work is crucial to my preliminary scaffolding.

Frye emphasizes that these ages are not a progression moving from lower to higher forms. Each form has its advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, humanity ultimately ends up, albeit modified, where they started since the process is circular. Vico describes the hieroglyphic/metaphoric stage as characterized by a poetic use of language. Frye explains, "In this period there is relatively little emphasis on a clear separation of subject and object: the emphasis falls rather on the feeling that subject and object are linked by a common power or energy" (6). This common energy linking the subject and object describes, of course, the essence of metaphor, and it seems only natural that this phase should come first in human history at a time when the very concept of words standing for things must have been stunning and magical. Indeed, Frye says that "A corollary of this principle is that there may be a potential magic in any use of words. Words in such a context are words of power or dynamic forces" (6).

Plato intimates through his pharmakon metaphor in the Phaedrus that such a mysterious power does exist and must be used with care. Jacqueline de Romilly, in Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece, is fascinated with this concept of magic in words which was so potent at the dawn of the metonymic age and still often seems real to me. She tightens the focus to the magic of formal rhetoric. "But I am sure the problem of the
relationship between magic and rhetoric in ancient Greece exists and has a meaning" (3). She goes on to acknowledge that magic and rhetoric have the same kind of metaphorical relationship as pharmakon and rhetoric. As any good witch doctor knows, magic and medicine have similar, mysterious powers to do either great harm or great good, and a practiced user of words recognizes this same weird power in rhetoric. Plato makes extensive use of the drug/rhetoric metaphor throughout the *Phaedrus*. In fact, Jacques Derrida, in *Dissemination*, argues that the dominating figure of speech throughout the *Phaedrus* is the pharmakon metaphor (65). Gorgias also, according to Romilly, made use of both magic and pharmakon metaphors to describe rhetoric in the *Helen* (20). Magic seems to have the same great potential both for good and evil that we find in drugs. Drugs are more concrete and less elusive than magic, but the element of mysterious and frightening power is the same in both, and each provides a vivid metaphor when compared with rhetoric. Furthermore, I believe that the science of medicine has close ties with magic in that they both work partially through the power of suggestion. The relationship of medicine and magic to rhetoric, especially close in ancient times, is still obvious to me.

While Vico confined his original theory to types of writing, Frye implies that it has a potential for much broader application. After all, interpretation of the subject and object as being intimately and mysteriously linked is a mindset, a way of viewing the whole world as being magically and intimately interconnected. Although this way of seeing things seems rather primitive to us from our vantage point in the starkly scientific "descriptive phase" of the cycle, there is yet something appealing about it. Perhaps we are not the purely rational, empirical scientists studying the causes and effect of all other forms of matter. Maybe we are not the masters who control it all, but only interconnected insignificant specks in the midst of this vast panorama. The lure of metaphorical thinking may be moving us around the circle since Frye believes that we may be entering another
metaphorical cycle right now.

After the age of metaphor, says Frye, came the age of metonymy, and he places Plato squarely at the dawn of the new era. If Homer, with his deeply poetic and metaphorical epics stands as a figurehead in the first era, then Plato, with his carefully reasoned dialectic occupies that position in the second, or metonymical era.

Frye thinks that there are three main meanings for the word metonymic. "First, it is a figure of speech in which a word is 'put for' another image." This, he thinks, is a species of metaphor, but I disagree with him here because of what Jakobson and Lodge have shown about how the process of making metaphors is based on similarity and the process of making metonyms is based on contiguity. Frye's second meaning is "a mode of analogical thinking and writing in which the verbal expression is 'put for' something that by definition transcends adequate verbal expression." This definition figures deeply in the works of Plato, almost in a sense defining them and justifying his place as the figurehead or spokesman for the metonymic era. The third meaning is "a mode of thought and speech in which the word is 'put for' the object it describes" (15). This is the flatly descriptive language of the scientist, utilizing no colorful figures of speech.

Although Plato uses metonymic language in all three ways, he makes very heavy use of the second, or analogical method in the Phaedrus in order to explain what he means by "truth." Therefore I contend that the Phaedrus is not only built on a metonymical linear framework as Lodge says is true of most works of realism, but is also buttressed by analogical metonymy and trimmed with the two types of 'put for' metonymy. However, as solidly metonymical as the Phaedrus now seems, it is shot through with show-stopping metaphorical devices which we will soon begin to examine. My question remains as to why Plato would use these devices so liberally, ignoring their potential to interfere with the inertia or forward momentum established by the metonymical
framework.

Frye believes that if the metaphorical age is characterized by little separation between subject and object, "In this second phase language is more individualized and words become primarily the outward expression of inner thoughts or ideas. Subject and object are becoming more consistently separated and 'reflection,' with its overtones of looking into a mirror, moves into the verbal foreground" (7). Plato advocates one activity above all else; it is this reflection, this meditation, this looking inward in pursuit of truth. Although he has Socrates espouse these ideas with measured tact and delicacy in the Phaedrus, there remains the slight odor of fanaticism in the text. For a man who humbly professes to know nothing, Socrates holds surprisingly dogmatic views on the subject of truth, and this, I think, comes from Plato's historical situation on the cusp between the metaphorical and metonymical eras.

Frye says that "What Homeric heroes revolve in their bosoms is an inseparable mixture of thought and feeling; what Socrates demonstrates, more especially in his death, is the superior penetration of thought when it is in command of feeling" (7). Being controlled by emotion gives one the feeling of being swept away, of actually being out of control or being controlled by outside forces. This is what happens when normally rational individuals spontaneously bond into a mob and run amuck. If, however, thoughts are in control, one's actions will be more deliberate and planned, more autonomous, and hopefully, they will be wiser. Humans are not born knowing how to think critically and reason independently; and indeed, most of us are controlled by our emotions to a much greater degree than we care to admit. But the works of Plato, written at the very dawn of the metonymic era when humans were beginning to use language in a way that suggested they were learning to think of themselves as individuals with a measure of free will, still stand as one of the best guides for anyone wishing to travel further down the path of self-
Frye may be right in saying that there is no qualitative difference among Vico's ages when they are looked at exclusively as ways of writing, but if we look at the types of lifestyles that these metaphorical and metonymical mindsets foster, then I have to agree with Plato that there is a huge qualitative difference. People who mix up their thoughts and feelings, as did the Homeric heroes in the metaphorical era, have a lower degree of differentiation, or individuation. They see themselves as having fewer choices, less chance to exert some kind of personal control over their lives. Plato believed strongly that the more highly differentiated people are, the more they assume responsibility for their life choices, the more of a credit they will be to themselves and to their societies. Plato lived in an age when most people were poorly differentiated (as, frankly, we still are today), and he was a positively evangelical advocate of differentiation or autonomy which is largely gained through introspection. Dialectic, he thought, stimulated thoughts that led people in the direction of differentiation, but both rhetoric and writing, which were extremely powerful persuaders and could pull people in either direction, were not altogether trustworthy. In the souls swayed by them, they were capable of producing either great good or irreparable harm depending on whether their appeal was based on truth and reality or on supposition and popular opinion.

And here we are at the top of our scaffolding and ready to examine the Phaedrus. We have looked at metaphor and metonymy in ever widening definitions and, hopefully, have gotten an understanding of how they function as polar opposites and yet eerily intertwine to form the most magical of all figures, symbols. We have seen how they stand as twin sentinels of human communication, marking the end-points of the spectrum, and how they can logically be used to name and describe two successive historical eras. We have examined Plato's commitment to the search for self-knowledge which fuels his
dialectic with the faltering Phaedrus and makes it necessary for him to dazzle us with a
masterful array of rhetorical weapons with which he fights his war for truth. From this
height it will be easy to reach the promontory of the Phaedrus and at last begin our
rhetorical analysis. Throughout my thesis, unless otherwise specified, I shall be referring to
the translation of the Phaedrus found in The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from
Classical Times to the Present.
Chapter Two: The Analysis

Section One

Given what we now know about metaphor and metonymy, we can ask ourselves with a certain degree of conviction why Plato chose to cut across his metonymic text and interrupt its flow so often and so deeply, by employing the closely related figurative devices of metaphor and myth. His overall strategy is metonymic. The *Phaedrus* is framed and advanced by a more or less realistic account of an encounter between two friends, one naive and self-indulgent, the other rich in wisdom and self-knowledge, yet Plato deviates often and sweepingly from the metonymic format by breaking the continuity of the realistic storyline with myths, speeches, prayers and extended metaphors. The storyline itself derives its metonymical flow from description and a rich, smooth mix of dialogue. What did Plato accomplish by not choosing to stay with the elegance of contiguous advancement built upon the firm foundation of his metonymical frame? What did such repeated and jarring deviation from the norm that he, himself had established achieve?

If the overall framework of the *Phaedrus* can be said to be metonymical, then the overall strategy can be defined as dialectical. The dialectic is an intensive, arduous and sometimes painful teaching strategy developed by Plato. It "requires of its readers [or listeners] a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by," says Stanley Fish in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (1), and results ideally in "nothing less than a conversion" (2). Fish points out that the relationship established in a dialectic is "less one of speaker to hearer, or author to reader than of physician to patient, and it is as the 'good physician' that the dialectician is traditionally known" (2). It makes good sense for a dialectician/physician to use repeatedly a medical metaphor, as Plato does. The pharmakon metaphor is repeated throughout the text in many different guises to produce the
understanding that writing, like a powerful drug, is capable of producing either beneficial or harmful results. However, "physician" comes close to being too strong a word to make a good comparison with dialectician, implying, as it does, a person with great knowledge imparting healing to a person who is suffering from an illness.

In _Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus_, Charles L. Griswold Jr. emphasizes the dialectic teacher's search for self-knowledge. In an ideal dialectic, the student isn't the only one to gain in understanding. The teacher is also a seeker of knowledge (28). Although the dialectical physicians are more advanced than the patients along the path toward truth, they retain the humility of philosophers because they see how much they do not know. This often happens to people pursuing higher education. The more we learn, the greater becomes our understanding of the vast fields of knowledge that we have not yet reached. Ironically, this understanding means that the most learned people are usually the most humble, as well as being the most hungry for new enlightenment. In the dialectic mode of inquiry, the teachers are not just teaching, but actively exploring and seeking deeper understanding for their own benefit as well as the students'.

At the beginning of the dialogue, Phaedrus is a man being drawn into a web of self-deceit through the rhetorical powers of Lysias and his kind. His soul is sick because of the trickery and falsehood which forms the underpinnings of the popular rhetoric purveyed by Lysias. His illness demands a healer if he is to be saved, and Plato casts Socrates in the role of the wise physician who has the power to save Phaedrus. Socrates, by exploring his own ideas in the light of the stated opinions and beliefs of Phaedrus, will also gain a greater degree of enlightenment and satisfaction as do physicians when they successfully treat a stubborn illness. Both doctor and patient are helped, each on a different level of awareness.

Plato's choice of the dialectic teaching strategy, set like a gem in the larger prose
dialogue of the *Phaedrus*, also explains in part why he feels it necessary to sacrifice the smooth continuity of his metonymical text to the impetuous, interruptive pace of metaphor and myth. In describing a successful dialectical investigation, Fish says that "it will be unpredictable and to some degree haphazard, since the turns of the argument, its advances and backslidings, will vary according to the degree to which the minds involved are in bondage to the realm of sensibles" (7). Plato has Socrates, the 'good physician,' fashion the pharmakon of rhetoric into a beneficial type of drug, the dialectic. As he suits the prescription to the degree of readiness in *Phaedrus*, the metonymic form must often be sacrificed in order to slip a metaphoric pill between the lips of the patient. Derrida, in "White Mythology," says, "Whoever studies [Plato's metaphors] quickly perceives that they are not simply ornaments, but are all destined to express ideas more aptly than would a long elaboration" (221)—and, I would say, more subtly, concisely and interestingly, making them the perfect example of a beneficial pharmakon.

Plato, using Socrates as his agent, pursues a hidden agenda in this text, which is no less than attempting to heal his patient who is sick from trivial discourse of half-truths by the timely administration of an antidote in the form of a dialectical search for truth. Jack Goody and Ian Watt, in *The Consequences of Literacy*, mention that "Plato is essentially an heir of the long Greek enterprise of trying to sort out truth, *episteme*, from current opinion, *doxa*" (53). This concept of current opinion, later defined as "probability," is defended by the sophists on the grounds that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Our quest, if we have one, should be a search for expediency, not universal truth. The enshrining of popular opinion—in opposition to Plato's concept of absolute truth—seems to spring from the oral tradition which is rooted in the metaphorical era; whereas Socrates' formulation of truth, dealing, as it does with investigation of an abstract concept, is definitely a metonymical construct. Plato was highly suspicious of the old ways, the
poetic, metaphoric ways of conceptualization because he thought they led people to accept opinion and half-truth as the highest moral authority rather than to honestly look inside themselves and try to formulate ultimate reality or truth as their guidelines for living.

In Preface to Plato, Eric Havelock says that "We can realize how this inherited state of mind was for Plato the enemy, and how he would wish to frame his own doctrine in language which met it head on, and confronted it, and destroyed it" (266). So, we might even call this dialogue with Phaedrus more of an exorcism than just an attempt at curing the young man. He must be wrenched from the grip of the magical, seductive half-truths of Lysias' rhetoric, and only Socrates' equally potent dialectical magic can rescue him. Romilly compares the two types of magical powers to be found in ancient rhetoric. "Whereas the magic of the sophists aimed at producing illusion, Socrates' magic rests on the obstinate destruction of all illusions. It is the magic of implacable truth" (36). In order to accomplish this healing/exorcism, Plato will arm his character, Socrates, with every drug in the rhetorical pharmacy, the most powerful of which may be the ones like metaphor which act by momentarily stopping the flow of the text.

Initially, the Phaedrus we see is an impetuous, unreflective youth in need of the subtle guidance at which Socrates excels. Phaedrus encounters Socrates near the city wall after spending the morning listening to Lysias, a well-known Attic orator. He comes from the city simply bubbling over with blind enthusiasm for a speech written and delivered by Lysias. When he encounters Socrates, he is on his way to walk outside the city wall and to memorize Lysias' clever, facile speech. Socrates joins him, professing with subtle irony equal enthusiasm and eagerness to hear about Lysias' speech. Socrates immediately launches the pharmakon metaphor by declaring himself to be "the man who is sick with the love of discourse" (113). Irony and metaphor, therefore, are the first rhetorical devices
Plato has Socrates use in the *Phaedrus*, thereby setting the tone for the rest of the text.

Irony and metaphor, as well as other rhetorical devices which break the metonymic contiguity, can be grouped under the broad heading of conversational implicature. Georgia M. Green, in "Some Remarks on Why there is Implicature," counts as conversational implicature "any intentional, non-conventional use of language with a reasonably determinable specific intended import" (26). Paul Grice sheds a brighter light on conversational implicature by formulating what he calls the Cooperative Principle.

Grice's principle, from his book, *Studies in the Way of Words*, sets forth the intuitive rules on which conversation, and indeed, every form of communication is based and shows what happens if these rules are broken. There are three groups of rules pertaining to what is said, and one group dealing with how it is said.

**Cooperative Principle**

**Quantity:**

1. Make your conversational contribution as informative as required.
2. Do not make it more informative than required.

**Quality:**

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

**Relation:**

1. Be relevant.

**Manner:**

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief.
4. Be orderly (16).
When a sentence is flawed by the breaking of any of these rules, the listener must assume that the speaker does not mean to have the sentence taken literally and must try to discover what the speaker does mean. Since irony and metaphor are not literal uses of language, they do not conform to Grice's first rule of quality, "Do not say what you believe to be false." They may also appear to break the relation rule as well as the first two manner rules. Therefore, the contiguity of the communication must be temporarily suspended while the listener stops and interprets the ironic or metaphorical statements. But how is it possible to interpret communication concealing a non-literal meaning behind a figure of speech with reasonable speed and accuracy so as not to jarringly disrupt the textual contiguity?

Rong Chen, in his article "Conversational Implicature and Poetic Metaphor," shows us a missing link when he interprets Grice's rules in light of a broad field of shared knowledge held by both the speaker and the listener and assumed to be common knowledge by both parties. Chen's shared-knowledge concept makes Grice's theory work well to show us what hidden mechanisms make it possible for us to effectively translate metaphors and related rhetorical devices which work by stopping the metonymic flow of realistic or descriptive prose. Clearly, if this vast pool of shared knowledge wasn't known by both listener and speaker, we would be helpless to explain how metaphors communicate successfully in the face of a deliberately broken rule of the cooperative principle. With this shared knowledge, the listener can usually interpret the metaphor without undue delay.

But, violating the rules of the Cooperative Principle does put an obstruction in front of the listener and stops the linear contiguity in a metonymic text. What does Plato accomplish by doing this? Searle discusses two possible reasons when he tries to account for the magic that the metaphorical figure of speech nearly always has, and these reinforce
what has already been said by Lodge concerning reasons for using both metaphor and metonymy. First, says Searle, the listener has to work harder to decode the utterance when it is metaphorical than when it is literal. This is like working to solve a puzzle, and success brings to the listener a feeling of gratification. Second, the listener must solve the puzzle by going through a set of semantic contents (Chen's "shared knowledge") not included in the literal utterance (116). These things bring a feeling of accomplishment to the listener, the feeling of a job well done, and refresh and reinforce the listener's interest in the speaker's words. Therefore, metaphor may be the perfect medicine for what ails Phaedrus.

It is certainly Plato's intention to portray Phaedrus as a man who needs someone to balance his views, ask questions and ultimately bring him to a more realistic opinion of Lysias' speech. Initially however, he is depicted as being so uncritically enthusiastic that Socrates knows Phaedrus first needs someone simply to share his happiness. Socrates carefully keeps his enthusiasm on a general level at first, not including Lysias, specifically, but Phaedrus is satisfied, and so they arrange to spend the afternoon enjoying Lysias' speech in the country.

Up to this point, the text advances through the temporal and spatial contiguity of a realistic story line; just what we expect from a metonymic work. The initial use of irony and metaphor are light enough not to act as a drag on the momentum of the story. Here, however, we encounter the first myth of the Phaedrus, and, as it cuts across the smooth fabric of metonymy, with it comes a hint of Plato's reasons for mixing metaphor and metonymy. It is Phaedrus, fittingly enough, who first introduces the topic of myth, asking Socrates if the place beside the river where they are walking is not the same place where "Boreas is said to have carried off Oreithyia" (114). Phaedrus treats the myth on a casual, superficial level, much like rumor or gossip. With these less than honorable species of communication, after the first gasp of scandalized delight, the listener typically asks, "Do
you really think this is true?"

Phaedrus slyly brings up the myth by questioning Socrates about the location of the purported incident. Socrates tells the exact location where the event memorialized by the myth took place, but clearly this is not what interests Phaedrus. He nearly brushes off the answer to his first question in his haste to ask the second. "But, for Heaven's sake, Socrates, tell me; do you believe this tale is true?" (114) Phaedrus is interested only in the salacious aspect of the myth: was the girl carried off and ravished by the north wind?

Socrates recognizes Phaedrus' uncritical enjoyment of myths as well as speeches, and in true dialectic form, he begins subtly to take advantage of Phaedrus' enthusiasm by hinting at a higher purpose for myth. He gives two versions of the events, the mythic one where Oreithyia was carried off and raped by Boreas, the north wind, and the realistic one subscribed to by "the wise men" (114) in which a blast of north wind blew Oreithyia off the rocks as she was playing with her friend, Pharmacea. Socrates downplays the relative truth or falsity of both versions of the myth, saying simply that since he doesn't yet even know himself, as the Delphic inscription advises, he hasn't time "to investigate irrelevant things" (114).

Socrates, by consciously contemplating the meaning of the myth in personal terms and looking for grains of its truth to apply to himself, is making very sophisticated and modern use of the ancient mythical structure. He deliberately uses myth as a sort of psychological mirror reflecting himself. He applies the universal human truths found in myths to his own personal situation to see if they help him gain insight into his individual character. Phaedrus, on the other hand, sees the myth as an exciting story that has nothing to do with him. If he gains anything of value from the myth, it will be an unconscious gain, not one requiring the kind of effort that Socrates puts forth.

"Know Thyself," says the Delphic Oracle. What an amazing command. Even for
those of us who live at the end of the twentieth century it is still the most difficult task of all. Friedrich Nietzsche, in his essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," says that "Man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived" (895). As easy as I find it to allow myself to be deceived by others, it is a thousand times easier to deceive myself. It is so much pleasanter for me to construct, for instance, a personal identity that flatters my conception of myself than to unflinchingly stare at and accept my own shortcomings and puny strengths. How vastly more difficult it must have been for people at the dawn of the metonymic period who had only just realized that there was an individual self to know, and who probably often lacked training in the use of the newly-invented linguistic tools necessary to express what they were trying to explain.

Socrates has a monumental task before him if he wishes to start this frivolous young man, Phaedrus, down the rocky road to self-knowledge. He begins his labor as, with the greatest delicacy, he lifts the myth from its inglorious place beside gossip and tries to show Phaedrus that the value of the myth lies not in determining its truth or falsity, but in using it to gain increased self-knowledge. Since self-knowledge is the most desirable, as well as the most elusive goal of all, this is the struggle on which he chooses to spend his energy.

The search for self-knowledge is a courageous struggle toward truth, no matter how unpalatable the final revelation of it may be. Socrates is content to leave the myths unexamined, concerning their properties of truth or falsehood. Instead, he uses them to further his own quest for self-knowledge. "I investigate not these things, but myself, to know whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature" (114). Seeking greater self-understanding, Socrates sees the value of the myth, whether true or false, as holding up a mirror for self-reflection. Are we monsters or are we gentle, simple
creatures? Or might we be both? If we get tangled up in a search only for the historical truth, we will never come close to finding this answer. The search for historical veracity causes us to overlook the general human truth of this or any myth.

What do we mean when we use the magical, mysterious word, myth? Frye thinks that "A myth is designed not to describe a specific situation but to contain it in a way that does not restrict its significance to that one situation. Its truth is inside its structure, not outside" (46). So when Socrates advocates using a myth to better know himself, he is taking it out of context without sacrificing the kernel of truth which is embedded in the structure. Myths seem to be strange, two-headed animals capable of functioning on conflicting levels: the superficial story level and the higher level of a signpost pointing toward universal truth. Frye thinks that the word myth has come to have two opposing definitions. First, myth is popularly understood to mean that which is "not really true." However, there is also a deeper meaning. "Mythical, in this secondary sense, therefore means the opposite of 'not really true': it means being charged with a special seriousness and importance" (33). Philip Wheelwright, in his entry on "myth" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* also emphasizes the two meanings of myth, using the term "narrative," or story, (539) in the first meaning and enlarging on the second and deeper meaning as follows. "Myth may be defined as a story or a complex of story elements taken as expressing, and therefore as implicitly symbolizing, certain deep-lying aspects of human and transhuman existence" (538). Therefore, the symbol (produced by the conjunction of the polar opposites of metaphor and metonymy) is the magic ingredient which illustrates and gives meaning to the mythical form.

Symbols give us the best of both worlds: the metaphorical magic of unseparated subject and object as well as the sturdy analogical structure of metonymy that can be used to clarify abstract concepts. And so it is the union of the polar opposites of communication
which strikes the spark and makes symbolic language, and, by extension, myths, so meaningful. The powerful symbol of the soul growing feathers, which I earlier explained in terms of metaphor and metonymy, was used by Plato to intensify the impact of a myth recounted in Socrates' second speech to Phaedrus. Since myths deal mainly with the job of making abstract concepts understandable to everyone, symbolic language is necessarily a part of myth.

Plato, then, had some sound reasons, indeed, for constantly mixing the seemingly incompatible elements of metaphor and metonymy. Like an ancient alchemist, he created something precious by combining and recombining in ever varying configurations his dichotomous ingredients.

At this point in the argument, I think we have found several parts of our answer to the question of what Plato accomplishes by using so many myths and metaphors in his text. Plato allows Socrates to fit the medicine to the need, and, plainly, at the beginning of this dialogue, Phaedrus is in no mood to listen to constructive criticism concerning his hero of the moment, Lysias. He does, however, demonstrate a fondness for the pretty stories of myth and metaphor, as well as for formal speeches, and Plato's Socrates sees how these rhetorical devices can be used to further the education of Phaedrus. Also, according to Goody and Watt, "Plato was torn between his interest and understanding of the prosaic, analytic and critical procedures of the new literate thoughtways on the one hand, and his occasional nostalgia for the 'unwritten customs and laws of our ancestors,' along with the poetic myths in which they were enshrined" (52). Plato makes a perfectly logical decision to have Socrates use myths in the dialectic because of their beneficial effect on Phaedrus as well as their nostalgic attraction, as Goody and Watt say, for himself.

Plato also introduces in this first myth of the Phaedrus the dominant metaphor of
the entire text in his choice of name for the little girl's companion, Pharmacea. Derrida recognizes the recurring pharmakon metaphor but believes that throughout the text, it refers to writing because writing is compared throughout the *Phaedrus* to a drug with all of the potential dangers and benefits associated with pharmakon. I agree with the dominance of the pharmakon metaphor, but I think that Plato uses it to refer to both major forms of expression: speaking and writing. Both of these modes of communication, as we shall see later, are, indeed, strong medicines with vast power to cure or kill the patient depending on how they are administered. If persuasion is combined with truth, or reality, in the drug of rhetoric, it can lead a person toward self-knowledge. If popular opinion replaces truth as the second ingredient, the drug turns dangerous, and any self-knowledge can be suppressed, resulting in the virtual loss of the higher self.

Metaphorically and mythically, Plato uses the north wind to symbolize popular opinion. Popular opinion, like the wind, can often be an endless, meaningless drone that is just as compelling as the wind which gives an actual physical push to everything in its path. This push can range all the way from gentle to overpowering, devastating, and vastly destructive. In Plato's opinion, both Sophistic rhetoric, as well as unreflective writing, can at times have the same dangerous effect on the mind that wind sometimes has on physical objects. Things are not so different in our own modern culture. We are encouraged through mass marketing to value money and what money buys above everything. We are lured by easy credit to spend more than we make, living our lives in debt. If we believe modern popular opinion, then money does buy happiness. If, on the other hand, we are armed with the Platonic tools for critical thinking, we can easily detect flaws in the popular opinions disseminated by the mass media. Plato's first myth of the *Phaedrus*, still relevant today, is crucial to his developing dialogue.

Thus we see that by interrupting his metonymic flow with a myth, Plato has moved
his two principal players into an interesting position early in the text. Phaedrus has shown
his shallowness as well as his willingness to be guided (by his reaction to the myth), and
Socrates is now in position to take full advantage of these characteristics to attempt to
lead Phaedrus toward higher ground. The great teacher/physician will administer Phaedrus'
medicine with a sugar coating of myth, metaphor, formal speeches and prayers, that it will
be more readily swallowed by the patient.

The next bit of action in the story's metonymic flow has Phaedrus reading Lysias'
speech to Socrates. It is, as we expected, light, tempting and trivial, and Phaedrus is
ecstatic with praise for it. Socrates' serious work now begins when he sees how deeply
Phaedrus is entangled by Lysias' rhetoric. The interval of dialogue between Lysias' speech
and Socrates' competing speech is very interesting and enlightening. Plato demonstrates
his genius by having Socrates rescue Phaedrus when it is almost too late. Phaedrus is
nearly overcome by the enemy. The job is huge, but Plato prepares Socrates with a
veritable arsenal of rhetorical weapons. The main one he uses at this point is irony. Irony,
one of the four "master tropes" in Kenneth Burke's opinion (the other three being
metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche) (On Symbols and Society 247) is a powerful
device for the rhetorician and is especially useful for the dialectician. It works in a manner
similar to metaphor by stopping the flow of the metonymic contiguity.

Irony has its roots in dissimulation. M. H. Abrams, in A Glossary of Literary
Terms, tells of a stock character in Greek comedy called the eiron who pretended to be
less intelligent than he really was in order to triumph over a rival. "In most of the modern
critical uses of the term 'irony,'" he says, "there remains the root sense of dissembling or
hiding what is actually the case; not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special
rhetorical or artistic effects" (97). Socrates' use of irony seems to me to accomplish both
goals. Sometimes he seems to deliberately deceive Phaedrus by pretending to be naive or
simple, and sometimes he is after a special rhetorical effect. William Van O'Connor, in his entry on "irony" in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics says that "Irony functions as an agent of qualification and refinement," (408) and we certainly see Socrates always aiming for that end in this dialectic. It is helpful, I find, to look at Socrates' use of irony in the light of Grice's Cooperative Principle (thesis 18).

After Phaedrus reads Lysias' speech to Socrates, he asks for an opinion. "What do you think of the discourse, Socrates? Is it not wonderful, especially in the diction?" Socrates answers, "More than that, it is miraculous, my friend, I am quite overcome by it" (117). While seeming to agree with Phaedrus, Socrates has violated several maxims in the Cooperative Principle. Socrates' answer is carefully ambiguous, thus flouting the maxim of manner which says to avoid ambiguity. He also uses hyperbole when he calls the speech miraculous, thereby exploiting the truth maxim. The combination of hyperbole (violation of truth) and ambiguity (violation of straightforward manner) give an ironic flavor to Socrates' words.

Phaedrus then recognizes Socrates' irony, becomes serious, and asks Socrates not to jest, but to give a straight answer about Lysias' speech. Using conversational implicature, Socrates dodges once again. He admits that he is not as thrilled with the speech as Phaedrus but blames this on his own stupidity. This is a flagrant violation of the truth maxim of the Cooperative Principle because Socrates is stating something which he believes obviously to be false. Regardless of how much humility Socrates has, he can not truthfully call himself stupid. Socrates' use of irony follows the classic sense of Abrams' eiron, the Greek comedic figure pretending to be less intelligent than he really is in order to gain his own ends.

However, irony slows the pace of the metonymic text just as metaphor does and for the same reasons. The listener, realizing that a maxim of the Cooperative Principle has
been violated, must search for and discover the implied meaning before going forward. Usually this process is done on an unconscious level and concludes rapidly and successfully thanks to Chen's "shared knowledge," but there is an unavoidable break in the contiguity whenever the message is not literal and has to be translated.

After much banter in which Socrates attempts to get Phaedrus to see some of the glaring weaknesses in Lysias' speech, Socrates gives up the direct line of approach and re-ignites Phaedrus' interest by saying that he feels a competing speech coming on.

Then Socrates demurs, teasing Phaedrus by making him think that he is afraid to compete with Lysias' speech. Phaedrus is whipped into a fine frenzy by Socrates' bantering threat to withhold his speech, so Socrates relents finally, having gained two advantages. First, by telling Phaedrus what it is he feels afraid or unworthy to do, he has spelled out precisely what he intends to do. "Do you really suppose I am going to try to surpass the rhetoric of Lysias and make a speech more ingenious than his?" (118), asks Socrates, making sure that Phaedrus is aware of his explicit intentions. Second, by tantalizing Phaedrus and figuratively holding the speech just out of reach, Socrates has increased Phaedrus' desire while riveting his attention on the upcoming speech.

These rhetorical strategies and the ensuing dialogue between the two men also serve to strengthen the realistic story line and hence, the text's metonymic framework. Finally, we gain a better picture of the two men's characters and positions relative to each other. We can see more clearly what their personal relationship is like.

Eventually, Socrates relents, and Phaedrus is again ecstatic to find that he is going to hear another speech. Here, after a relatively long metonymic interlude, Plato interrupts his realistic storyline again, first with a prayer to the Muses and then with the speech.

The prayers in this text function, I believe, as rhetorical tours de force that Socrates uses to impress Phaedrus. They function in the same general way as metaphor
and myth, by cutting across the contiguous fabric of metonymy and disrupting the flow of the work. Also, as with metaphor and myth, their message may be accepted as meaningful by Phaedrus or ignored, because it is seemingly directed only to the deity. Socrates uses this ambiguity of purpose as he does that of metaphor and myth to further his dialectical teaching by allowing Phaedrus to be the judge of his own readiness to receive instruction.

It is obvious that Socrates is a deeply spiritual man. Therefore, prayer, or contact with the gods, would be a natural means of expression for him. However, in admitting this, it is not necessary to naively overlook the psychological influence of Socrates' prayers on Phaedrus. Whenever somebody suggests that a prayer should be said outside of a formal religious setting, different emotions may be felt by the listeners. First, they may feel both intimidated and impressed because someone who expresses a wish to pray seems to be good friends with the deities. This person must be quite important to have such important friends, and if the deities are willing to help him in some way, such as inspiring him with a speech, the speech should be very fine, indeed. Second, if the prayer contains some personal reference to the listeners, whether a plea for their welfare or even for their improvement, their interest will certainly be snagged, just as it would be if they had overheard two people talking about them. And third, they may feel cowed and slightly guilty, as though they should have thought of praying too, but didn't. These feelings may be fleeting, and soon overcome by common sense, but initially they do prick the listener.

Also, it is well to keep in mind that although a prayer is addressed to a deity, a spoken prayer is also the expression of a personal opinion or plea by the orator. It is a chance for the speaker to lay before not only the deity, but the hushed listeners as well, an uncontested line of reasoning. One person can't really quibble with another's prayers, because one is ostensibly in the role of observer of a transaction between two others, the suppliant and the deity. Therefore, the praying individual gains a psychological advantage
over all but the most stubbornly independent of listeners.

Phaedrus is easily manipulated by many strategies, and this one, too, has its desired effect. In the prayer to the Muses before his first speech, Socrates asks for "aid in the tale this most excellent man compels me to relate, that his friend whom he has hitherto considered wise, may seem to him wiser still" (118). The prayer is, of course, simply dripping with Socrates' famous irony, but it has the effect of lulling Phaedrus into a false sense of trust. One of Socrates' dialectic strategies seems to be to keep Phaedrus off balance. First he praises Lysias' speech effusively, then he criticizes it harshly, and now he is seemingly smoothing things over again through his use of irony.

Socrates' prayer to the Muses is a classic strategy harking back to the metaphoric period, according to Wheelwright. "The epic poet's invocation of the Muse would represent, in one aspect, the poet's desire to free himself from the 'personal-infantile' type of thinking through being borne along by the more deeply expressive power of archetypal thought patterns" (540). It's not for nothing that the Muses are the daughters of Lovely-haired Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. Later, in discussing the Myth of Theuth, we will see even more clearly the supreme value that Socrates places on the deep and creative wellsprings of memory hidden in each of us.

Socrates' invocation of the Muses, however, is a double-edged sword. Hesiod tells us in the Theogony about the Muses who once taught him "beautiful song as he was pasturing his flock in the foothills of holy Mount Helicon." They appeared to him and told him, "We know how to tell numerous lies which seem to be truthful, but whenever we wish we know how to utter the full truth" (24). Although the Muses were companions of Apollo, the god of truth, they were capable also of backsliding. And, in fact, the Muses themselves, with their good and bad powers, can serve as another metaphor illustrating the same dichotomy in oral and written rhetoric that we find revealed in the dominant
metaphor of this text, the pharmakon metaphor. In the various manifestations of this metaphor, we come to see oral and written rhetoric as powerful drugs which can either poison or cure. In the same way, the Muses are powerful creative forces, here called upon to represent speaking and writing, which exhibit the same ambiguity of purpose. They can pollute minds with false things made to seem true or elevate souls with truth.

Socrates summons the Muses and proceeds to entertain Phaedrus with a lively, attractive speech full of half-truths and unexamined assertions, much like Lysias' speech only better crafted. In both cases, the orators were showing off, dazzling the audience with quickness and wit, whipping up a sweet, addictive confection with no substance. These two speeches illustrate the dangerous side of the Muses contribution to life, illustrate the poisoned drug rather than the miracle cure.

Socrates' speech is yet another heavy, interruptive weight on the rather spindly metonymic framework of Plato's text. Jane Curran in "The Rhetorical Techniques of Plato's Phaedrus," says that his "...first speech pursues the same line as Lysias' did, but argues in an organized and more logical way" (68). Why would Plato include such a speech in this work? What value does a flawed speech by the master have in forwarding the progress of Socrates' dialectic? I believe there is a compelling reason which makes it worth the risk to Plato of possibly overloading the metonymic framework and fragmenting the whole text with another extended interruption.

Socrates has made a clever speech more or less imitating Lysias', and from now on, he can freely criticize Lysias' ideas under the guise of criticizing his own work, thereby avoiding the danger of offending or alienating Phaedrus by directly attacking his hero, Lysias. If we look at Socrates' situation after delivering his first speech and see how well-armed he is now to take aim at and demolish Lysias' poor speech, we cannot but wonder if Socrates' second-rate speech was part of his dialectic plan. By criticizing his own first
speech, Socrates can freely and harshly criticize Lysias' speech because the two speeches express the same overall opinion that non-lovers are preferable to lovers. In fact, Socrates has already obliquely criticized Lysias' speech by making much out of the fact that his own first speech is more carefully organized and the major terms are defined before being used. Phaedrus, as usual, is ecstatic over the speech, but Socrates has a twinge of conscience. He is uncomfortable with his trivial speech's powerful effect on Phaedrus, and proposes consequently to undo the damage with yet another speech, this one to be a palinode to satisfy both the god of love and Socrates' conscience.

The metonymic interlude between Socrates' two speeches forms a bridge of commentary connecting them. Frye says

> Continuous prose [is] the main instrument of thought in the metonymic period. In continuous prose, if A and B seem to be inconsistent, one can always insert intermediary verbal formulas, or rephrase them in a commentary, in a way that will "reconcile" them...Commentary thus becomes one of the leading metonymic genres, and the traditional metaphorical images are used as illustrations of a conceptual argument. (10)

Plato has Socrates make extensive use of commentary in order to coax Phaedrus to take one unsteady step at a time toward truth. As for metaphorical images, we are positively awash in them throughout the *Phaedrus* -- all, as Frye says, copiously illustrating Socrates' conceptual argument. So, although Plato preaches individuality and introspection reinforced by his use of metonymy, as a man situated historically with one foot in each camp, he still relies heavily on metaphorical devices to drive home his points of argument.

Plato also uses the interval between Socrates' two speeches to develop an air of
spontaneity about Socrates' actions. First, he delivers a speech which, by his own admission, is "dreadful...foolish, and somewhat impious" (121). Then, as he is about to leave Phaedrus and return to the city, he feels compelled to recant and offer a palinode. However, as I have said, I am skeptical of Socrates' purported innocence and spontaneity. Poor gullible Phaedrus has been backed gently into a corner and made to understand (albeit for his own good) that dreadful and foolish as Socrates' first speech was, it was still better than Lysias' speech.

Socrates leads into his second speech with another sugar-coated pill in the form of a metaphorical tale about Stesichorus, a man struck blind by the gods for speaking untruths about Helen. Hence, Socrates is slowly building up a case whereby careful attention to learning and speaking the truth results in seeing, while deviating from the truth results in blindness. The only way to reach the truth, accordingly, is through relentless reflection and self-examination. The uncritical mind is likely to accept the much more palatable, though less nourishing, substitute of public opinion, often spread through the populace by shallow but glamorous sophist speeches. Stesichorus regains his sight by recanting and offering a palinode to the god of love. Socrates, too, recants his previously stated views about love and therefore retains his clear-sightedness literally and metaphorically.

In Socrates' second speech, Plato expresses the heart of his philosophy concerning absolute truth. Here we encounter a comparison of the soul to a charioteer trying to control two horses, one good and one bad. The soul yearns to drive in the upper regions of truth along with the gods, but the unruly black horse constantly pulls in a downward direction. Naturally, this makes driving difficult, so that the charioteer encounters all manner of trouble. The charioteer strives to drive higher in order to catch sight of truth, or reality; but, says Socrates, "...after much toil they all go away without gaining a view of reality, and when they have gone away they feed upon opinion" (124). Opinion makes but
a poor meal for the charioteer who started out hungering for truth, or reality. Here again, as in preceding myths, we see the opposition that Plato sets up between his definition of truth and opinion. This dichotomy between truth and opinion, I maintain, is the primary difference between the psychological darkness of the metaphoric period when people did not see themselves as discrete individuals and the newly risen sun of individuality which appears in the metonymic era. Plato, while lavish in his use of metaphors to shed light on difficult subjects, is careful to keep his work, the Phaedrus, solidly grounded in metonymical realism.

At this point, we have heard three speeches, one written by Lysias and two delivered extemporaneously by Socrates. Obviously, Socrates appreciates the oration as a potential teaching tool if he uses two of them in his dialectical encounter with Phaedrus. One effect he may have gained from his speeches is to spell out the difference between logos and emotion. Lysias' speech was written and delivered possibly to seduce Phaedrus and other attractive young men who heard it. It pretends to evolve into a call to logos, but, as Socrates repeatedly points out, it is not built on a foundation of truth as logos must be. Lysias seems to desire to have Phaedrus, for one, as a lover, and he plots to win him regardless of whether it is in the best interests of Phaedrus, or even Lysias himself that this should come about. Lysias is governed definitely by his black horse while writing his speech. Marline Anderson, in her thesis, A Deconstructive Analysis of Plato's Phaedrus, agrees when she defines sophistic rhetoric as "persuasion without conscience" (20).

Socrates then gives two speeches, the first demolishes Lysias' credibility and serves as a warning about the dangers of rhetoric founded on half-truths and the second shows Phaedrus that the persuasive powers of rhetoric can be put to a noble use when close reasoning takes the place of sweeping statements.

Socrates' second speech ends with another prayer, this one addressed to the god of
love. In it, he lashes out at Lysias as being the immediate cause of this troublesome confusion between truth and opinion because he was the father of the first speech which was basely persuasive without being grounded in truth. Socrates prays that Lysias will see the light and turn from sophistic rhetoric to dialectic and philosophy. He ends with a plea that through Lysias' conversion, "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" (129). This prayer, clearly meant to function as a piece of persuasive rhetoric directed at Phaedrus, has its intended effect.

Phaedrus ingenuously joins Socrates in his prayer, signaling a major change in his readiness for instruction. He reveals that all through Socrates' second speech, he has worried that Lysias could not possibly do as well if he were to give a competing speech. Phaedrus' idol has been shown to have feet of clay by Socrates' clever ploy of first giving a speech comparable in many ways with Lysias', then showing the glaring weaknesses of both speeches by harshly criticizing his own, and finally, giving a second, far superior, philosophically grounded speech.

The second prayer turns out to be icing on the cake, and Phaedrus' enthusiastic response shows Socrates that the path has been cleared for further advances through dialectic. The patient has responded well to the various types of rhetorical drugs which have been used on him, and he is beginning to recover some memory of what is real. However, as any good physician knows, one can't hurry a patient's recovery overly fast without risking a recurrence of the illness.

Plato's metaphors, exemplified by the central one in the second speech comparing the soul to a charioteer, are so vivid and extended that it is hard to tell just where the river of metaphor flows into the sea of myth. But, myth or metaphor, we have many interruptions to the metonymic continuity of the text. However, it is becoming more and
more obvious that Plato, the great rhetorical strategist, has carefully calculated the effect of each metaphorical interruption and is still in complete control of the total work.

Section Two

Phaedrus, judging by his response to Socrates' prayer to Eros after his second speech, now seems to be genuinely interested in learning the means of judging the quality of speaking and writing. He is developing some critical-thinking skills through Socrates' judicious application of the pharmakon. He is well on his way to being saved and converted.

Phaedrus, by now, is worried about the basic value of discourse. Do oral and written rhetoric have any redeeming qualities at all? Socrates admits that they do, but carefully points out to Phaedrus the negative as well as positive potential, the pharmakon effect, of these two forms of discourse. "Then that is clear to all, that writing speeches is not in itself a disgrace...But the disgrace, I fancy, consists in speaking or writing not well, but disgracefully and badly" (130). Socrates goes on to defend writing and speaking but makes a careful distinction between the Muses' two talents: to persuade basely by means of falsehood or to persuade nobly through truth.

In this lengthy section of dialogue, Plato is playing out the metonymic, realistic plot line to show us how a good dialectic advances, but just as Phaedrus asks a critical question about how to judge the quality of writing, we are again plunged headlong into a myth interjected by Socrates. Obviously, the patient is not yet altogether ready for the strong medicine of direct discourse. Frye observes that "After the rise of metonymic language, stories are frequently used as concrete illustrations of abstract arguments, in other words as allegories. This is close to the role that myths have in Plato" (33). True enough. Again at this point, Plato chooses to dramatize his argument with a myth. He has
found this to be a good strategy to hold Phaedrus' interest, and it seems to be just the sort of effective strategy one would expect to see used in a metonymic text written at a point in history when the metaphoric period had just drawn to a close.

The central metaphor in the myth of the locusts advances us a step farther than the metaphor of the undifferentiated wind with its monotonous, meaningless noise and physical impetus which we saw in the myth of Boreas. This time we see a species of creatures who, though separate individuals, nevertheless speak and act as one. Their song is really no song at all, but another form of monotonous drone—communal, this time, but still meaningless. Yet, the locusts are so entranced by their own singing that they forget everything else in the ecstasy of chanting their communal song.

This, I think, can be another metaphor illustrating the unreflective acceptance of popular opinion as truth. Both the locusts in the second myth and the wind in the Phaedrus' first myth seem to be emphasizing the potential danger of rhetoric in the form of speech-making. In both cases, meaningless noises cause grave harm. These noises function as metaphors for oral transmission of something inferior to truth—popular opinion. Further on, we will see that the myth of Theuth gives a parallel warning about silent, or written, dissemination of half-truths. In each case, Phaedrus can understand the deeper meaning of the myth if he is able, or enjoy it as a story if he has not yet developed the necessary critical-thinking skills to interpret it on a deeper level.

In the myth of Boreas, Oreithyia is raped by the meaningless noise (Typhon) and robbed of her sense of autonomous self. In the myth of the locusts, these creatures forget everything in the ecstasy of the communal chant, symbolizing both their uncritical embracing of popular opinion and their forgetfulness of truth, which result in physical death. In Socrates' second speech we learned that forgetting truth has dire consequences for the immortal soul, also. The soul will have different kinds of human incarnation, some
good and some bad, depending on how strong a memory it retains of its glimpses of truth or reality. The souls governed mostly by the good horse will be reborn at the high end of the spectrum as philosophers, while the souls whose bad horse pulled them down will give up looking for truth, settle for opinion, and be reborn as mere poets.

Since this is Plato's text, it comes as no surprise that philosophers are the only beings who remember enough to stay "...in communion through memory with those things the communion with which causes God to be divine" (125). Philosophers are lovers of wisdom who yearn for and strive to remember the beauty of absolute truth while at the same time realizing that the goal will never be reached. Only God can be in communion with truth. For humans, the quest becomes the shimmering, ephemeral goal, and the bits of recovered memory, strenuously and painfully produced through rigorous self-examination, reflect the dazzling, tantalizing beauty that encourages advancement to higher levels of understanding. They are the sparkling gifts from Mnemosyne to the seeker of truth, the philosopher.

As Frye describes it, the metaphoric era of history emphasized community. People felt that unity was of the highest importance, and independent thinking was simply unheard of. As the metonymic era dawned and the alphabet was invented, things began to change. The development of the written word enabled people to form the perception of private thought, and individuation began to appear in the human species. Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, in ABC *The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind*, maintain that "The self is as much an alphabetic construct as word and memory, thought and history, lie and narration" (71). The written alphabet, then, is the cornerstone supporting Plato's idea of the independent pursuit of self-knowledge. Yet, the sophists were ready to use this new tool, writing, as well as the dependable old rhetorical methods of public speaking to persuade human beings to turn back toward the era of undifferentiation, of communal thought, to
turn back toward popular opinion as a measure of right and wrong. They saw no benefit commensurate with the struggle in the effort to reach truth, so they were willing to settle for probability as voiced by opinion.

If one listens to the siren song of the mob and fails to think critically about what the mob says, then the feathered soul falls downward from the heights of truth into a lower level of individual consciousness or differentiation, into the realm of popular opinion. Plato's myth of the locusts shows us what happens if we move backwards toward a mass-minded merging with any group advocating whatever popular opinion.

The search for truth is largely a lonely, solitary pursuit where the seeker becomes alienated from friends, relatives and countrymen who have chosen to be content with probability. Much later in human history, St. Augustine explores this concept in a wonderfully insightful passage in his *Confessions*.

But why is it that "truth gives birth to hatred"? It is because truth is loved in such a way that those who love something else would like to believe that what they love is the truth, and because they would not like to be deceived, they object to being shown that in fact they are deceived. And so they hate truth for the sake of whatever it is they love instead of truth. They love the light of truth, but hate it when it shows them up as wrong. (233)

One reason why Phaedrus must be led to the truth so slowly is because Socrates can't afford to humiliate or embarrass Phaedrus by revealing that he is deceived and thereby making him look foolish. A clumsy haste on the part of Socrates might "give birth to hatred" in Phaedrus, thereby closing his mind to further investigation. In order to accomplish his delicate work, Socrates needs every rhetorical device that Plato can furnish. Phaedrus has to be delicately turned right around in his thinking before he can appreciate Socrates' search for truth and self-knowledge.
Embracing unexamined popular opinion, on the other hand, means that there is no need for the difficult job of reflection and meditation. One can simply accept what others believe, put all doubts about those beliefs out of one's mind, and avoid the struggle toward truth. This is the lure of Lysias, the lure of the easy path, which Socrates was willing to fight with every rhetorical drug at his disposal in order to inoculate his patient against half-truths and falsehoods.

The lessons of the dialectic are accumulating, mostly in the form of attractive examples of myth, metaphor, speech and prayer, and Phaedrus, the shallow youth is well on his way to a complete "conversion," as Fish would say:

For the end of a dialectical experience is (or should be) nothing less than a conversion, not only a changing, but an exchanging of minds. It is necessarily a painful process (like sloughing off a second skin) in the course of which both parties forfeit a great deal; on the one side the applause of a pleased audience, and on the other, the satisfaction of listening to the public affirmation of our values and prejudices. (2)

Phaedrus now begins to see the value of looking beyond the easy, glitzy surface of Lysias' speech and questioning the facile, lazily-reasoned arguments of the sophist. At last, he seems ready for some straight metonymical discussion about speaking and writing.

After the locust myth, Socrates and Phaedrus agree to "discuss the theory of good (or bad) speaking and writing" (131). Socrates begins with what he thinks is a sound premise: that in order to produce a good speech, the mind of the speaker must know the truth about the matters he will speak of. But Phaedrus immediately objects on the grounds that he has heard it said that "persuasion comes from what seems to be true, not from the truth" (131). Here we are again face to face with the poison pill, the misleading side of the Muses, and it is clear to Socrates that his patient is far from cured.
Then, in several pages of lively dialogue, Socrates demonstrates the usefulness of dialectic as a teaching tool. This section of dialogue brings us back to the metonymic structure of the overall work and gives it some needed reinforcement. The reader awakens from the magic spell of myth and metaphor, once again becoming aware of a realistic scene where Socrates and Phaedrus sit talking beside a brook under a plane tree on a hot afternoon. Even this section of the *Phaedrus* contains some metaphors, but they are brief and don't interrupt the metonymic flow.

Socrates, in this section, continues his lyrical approach to dialectic by anthropomorphizing rhetoric, as well as the arguments he uses to persuade Phaedrus that knowledge of truth is an essential ingredient in responsible rhetoric and writing. Indeed, he almost deifies them. Socrates pretends to quote lady rhetoric and summons his own arguments with a formal prayer that the "noble creatures [will] persuade the fair young Phaedrus that unless he pay proper attention to philosophy he will never be able to speak properly about anything" (132).

The personification of rhetoric and argument is very interesting when viewed in the light of Havelock's discussion of metaphor and how it was used in the Homeric era. "The psychology of oral memorisation and oral record required the content of what is to be memorized to be a set of doings. This in turn presupposes actors or agents" (171). In other words, personification was the only way to deal with abstract concepts in a pre-literate society, and thus, abstractions had to be treated metaphorically. The most common way of doing this was to make the abstract concept an attribute of one or another of the gods. The god then acted out the concept in stories or myths. So each god in the pantheon becomes a vehicle carrying certain groups of related abstract concepts. Havelock describes this as "a basic principle underlying the metaphors of the saga" (168). Accordingly, "Phenomena other than persons can be described, but only as they are imagined to be
behaving as persons would. The environment becomes a great society and the phenomena are represented as members of this society who interact upon each other as they play their assigned roles" (168).

Therefore, when Plato has Socrates personify rhetoric and argument, he is reaching back in time in order to utilize an ancient technique that was integral to the metaphoric era. This makes the arguments more vivid to Phaedrus, but his use of this peculiar technique also emphasizes the placement of Socrates' and Plato's historical position on the cusp of the two eras, metaphoric and metonymic. The tone of Socrates' prayer to his arguments is still light and playful despite its serious under-currents, and Phaedrus is thereby entertained as well as instructed.

Finally, Socrates leads the dialectic to the point where he can state that "he who knows not the truth, but pursues opinions, will, it seems, attain an art of speech which is ridiculous, and not an art at all"(133). Phaedrus indicates mild agreement--"Probably"--and Socrates decides that at last it is safe to dismember Lysias' speech without alienating, and therefore losing, Phaedrus. This he does with the consummate skill of a surgeon amputating first this piece of the speech, then that one, examining them all, and finding each one to be infected, contaminated, gangrenous. Interestingly enough, Socrates, the good physician, at this point uses two variations of the pharmakon metaphor. First, he demonstrates how the dangers of trusting an inept and improperly trained physician are comparable to trusting an orator who lazily and sloppily uses opinion rather than truth to support his arguments. Second, he compares the methods used in the arts of healing and rhetoric.

As the dialogue progresses, Socrates solidifies his position as to the importance of speaking and writing on a foundation of truth gained through diligent personal reflection and participation in dialectic by stating the opposite view and vanquishing it. Some of the
sophists (notably Tisias) taught apparently that probability was both as good a foundation for the art of speaking as truth and much easier to come by. Socrates demonstrates to Phaedrus' satisfaction that even Tisias would admit that probability is just another name for "that which most people think" (139), or popular opinion.

A person willing to settle for probability will not have to examine anything as rigorously as a truth-seeker. And when it comes to looking inward, knowing thyself, the former can unconsciously choose the most palatable probabilities concerning their own character and conduct and thereby avoid the painfully deep probing and exhaustively courageous, unblinking honesty required for self-examination by the truth-seeker. People who make a habit of accepting probability instead of searching for the truth become lazy and dangerous. They urge others also to take the easy road, and they become as seductive as a dangerous drug; their ways are habit-forming. Although truth-seekers will never find truth, they will, Socrates claims, come much closer to some ultimate ideal than those who deliberately turn away from the struggle.

In both oral and written rhetoric, we can see the vast potential to advocate positions and persuade others to follow. The Muses have an awesome power to deceive, or to reveal truth, and that power is embodied in both speaking and writing. When we remember Nietzsche's point that people are so easily deceived because they wish to be, we can see why Plato was worried about the potential power of rhetoric to pollute peoples' souls. Griswold elegantly explains what Plato understood two millennia earlier, that "The problems of self-knowledge and self-deception lie at the heart of the problem of rhetoric" (173). Phaedrus perfectly represents 'Everyperson' being pulled in two directions at the same time. There is the glamorous seduction of the easy, popular path advocated by Lysias, and opposed to that is the more difficult but ultimately more rewarding path urged by Socrates. Socrates and Lysias exemplify the two-faced power of the muses, the
cure/poison potential of the pharmakon. And it seems to me that Plato makes Socrates work so hard restating the same lesson over and over again in a different form because he recognizes the power of Lysias and those like him to undo everything Socrates has accomplished. Socrates' dialectic is rather like a vaccination which must be given, the results interpreted, then possibly given again and yet again and again until finally it takes. And even then, we cannot underestimate the power of popular opinion.

Meanwhile, back in the metonymical framework of Plato's text, the corpses of rhetorical techniques used by Lysias and Tisias to promote probability over truth now litter the battleground, not just cut down, but with stakes driven through their hearts to prevent any later resurrection in Phaedrus' mind. Finally, Socrates surveys the carnage and declares that enough has been said about the proper and improper uses of the art of speaking. Now it is time to move on and discuss writing in the same way, and with the introduction of the new subject, Socrates relates the final myth of the Phaedrus, the myth of Theuth.

Socrates has utilized Phaedrus' taste for myths several times before: the myth of Boreas, the myth of the soul and the myth of the cicadas, and here, he breaks the metonymical continuity to present Phaedrus with one last sugar-coated pill to introduce a dialectical discussion of the art of writing. Maybe these pills are appetite-enhancers to make Phaedrus hungry for the more serious and difficult work of searching for truth with Socrates.

Section Three

The final myth of the Phaedrus, the myth of Theuth, calls on the pharmakon metaphor once again. Theuth, a minor Egyptian god, inventor of many things, brings them
to the god-king Thamus. Thamus praises and criticizes everything according to its merits. When Theuth presents his invention of letters, he proudly announces that he has discovered an elixir of memory and wisdom. In the translation used by Illich and Sanders, Thamus complains, "This facility will make souls forgetful because they will no longer school themselves to meditate. They will rely on letters. Things will be recollected from outside by means of alien symbols; they will not remember on their own. What you are offering me is a drug for recollection, not for memory..." (25).

I chose this translation because of the words "school themselves to meditate." My usual translation renders this phrase as "practice their memory" (140). The "meditation" translation better clarifies for me the distinction that Plato is trying to make between recollection, and memory derived through serious introspection—the kind that gives us inner direction, awakening the conscience and rendering us less susceptible to the wind of popular opinion. Memory, the goddess Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, offers to us a sacred river of remembrance which is our only conduit to the universal truths which our souls have glimpsed in the past, and this river must be reached through meditation, a rather arduous and disciplined mode of introspection, which is very close to Socrates' kind of inquiry and very far from simple recollection.

Throughout the Phaedrus, Socrates is constantly demurring about his own speeches and ideas. They belong to the local deities who inspired him, or he remembers hearing them but forgets where. C. J. Rowe calls this a "transparent ploy" (9), but I find it perfectly compatible with Socrates' notion of memory. Any philosophical verities that finally come to us through meditation are gifts from the wellspring of Mnemosyne, and these very gifts are the raw material which Plato has Socrates painstakingly elicit from Phaedrus. The verities are then examined and discussed to produce a successful dialectic.

Meditation is a difficult and demanding exercise, and if we can instead read books
which purport to have all the answers we need, those books will become for most of us a seductive drug. We must now look back at Plato's distinction between probability and truth. "Only philosophical reflection," Rowe says Plato believes, "will enable us properly to grasp the good, and realize our nature as moral beings. This fundamental idea, together with the equally fundamental model of philosophy as an unflagging search for the truth, he [Plato] inherited from Socrates" (5).

Truth is hard, if not impossible, to reach, so why not settle for probability, or that which is considered right by popular opinion? It is always easier in the short run; it is usually seductive, just as the hallucinogenic drugs that alter the state of reality. What harm is there in taking the easy way out? Only irreparable harm to our immortal souls, says Plato through Socrates. Griswold puts it succinctly when he says, "The written word lets us persuade ourselves too easily that we are in irrefutable possession of the truth, while in fact we are not. It facilitates our tendency to become dogmatists or zealots rather than philosophers" (207). Throughout history, the path of the person in "irrefutable possession of the truth" has been the frightening and vicious path of the fanatic. We have only to think of Hitler in order to comprehend the danger.

Maybe the only way we can ever recognize that we are on the path toward truth, not echoing popular opinion, is to realize that we have not yet found the truth and never will. We can only keep searching. This attitude of humility, Socrates' attitude, is in direct contradiction to the dogmatic attitude that Thamus worries will be fostered by the written word when he tells Theuth, again in the Illich Sanders translation, "Your instruction will give them only a semblance of truth, not truth itself. You will train ignorant know-alls, nosy know-nothings, boring wiseacres" (26).

Plato's distinction between remembering and memory is discussed by Illich and Sanders in a helpful chapter entitled, "Memory." Any discussion of Plato's thoughts on
memory must begin with Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses and goddess of memory, who is older, even, than the Olympian gods. Illich and Sanders describe her "wellspring of remembrance" this way:

In her clear waters float the remains of past lives, the memories that Lethe has washed from the feet of the departed, turning dead men into mere shadows. A mortal who has been blessed by the gods can approach Mnemosyne and listen to the Muses sing in their several voices what is, what was, and what will be (14).

Here, we have memory described as a wellspring, and later in the chapter, she is described as a stream. These are moving, changing, elusive metaphors for memory, well suited for a pre-literate culture because speech is also a moving, changing thing, as is thinking in an oral culture. This concept is much closer to the mythos of the metaphoric period than the logos of the metonymic era. Plato, while espousing logos, demonstrates that mythos and memory as described here are valuable guideposts in the search for self-knowledge. He is headed in a fruitful modern direction (logos) while still valuing part of the old way (mythos). The problem of truth versus popular opinion is highly complex and Plato's mind far too subtle to enable him to come up with simplistic answers favoring only the new at the expense of the old. He chooses to work with the best aspects of both eras, examining the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each in order to clarify his pursuit of truth. Anderson also looks with interest at Plato's combining of both mythos and logos. "The subject of the Phaedrus," she avers, "emerges from the clash of the mythos and the logos of the text" (28).

But this concept of mind and memory as a river in which the same thing never floats by twice is so alien to a literate person as to be very nearly impossible to grasp. In an effort to help us understand the pre-literate mind, Illich and Sanders say that prior to
the invention of the alphabet, "Thinking itself takes wing; inseparable from speech, it is never there but always gone, like a bird in flight" (4).

The literate mind is much more comfortable with Aristotle's concept of memory as a storehouse. Moving waters or a storehouse. These are two vastly different ways of characterizing memory, and perhaps Plato's myth of Theuth can help clarify the difference. Thamus worries about the effect that the invention of letters will have on human memory; the effect he is worried about, I think, is the turning of a fluid memory into a static storehouse.

When memory is a river, it is open to all sorts of possibility and potential. It has the unusual and rather mysterious power to produce surprises. Walter J. Ong, in *Orality and Literacy*, gives us a better understanding of the functioning of memory in the metaphoric era when he says that

Persons whose world view has been formed by high literacy need to remind themselves that in functionally oral cultures the past is not felt as an itemized terrain, peppered with verifiable and disputed 'facts' or bits of information. It is the domain of the ancestors, a resonant source for renewing awareness of present existence, which itself is not an itemized terrain either. (98)

This description almost mirrors the differences perceived by the modern mind to exist between history and myth. If a person persists in questioning the historical veracity of a myth, she will miss the resonance that Ong speaks of. Maybe myths, when their function is properly understood, can serve us by reactivating the river of Mnemosyne in our modern minds.

A river is always running, so the same memory cannot be captured twice in identical form. A storehouse, on the other hand, is a more static place. A person can
retrieve the identical memory many times because she actively and deliberately stored it to begin with. Of course, we modern people still have the river of the unconscious which can flood the carefully-catalogued storeroom of memory from time to time producing a degree of mystery and surprise, but a storehouse memory stands much more under the control of the owner than a river memory. Unfortunately, that control carries a high price because most of the mystery connoted by the river concept is eradicated, and its broad potential is circumscribed. Frye says that "As the critics of the god Thoth, the inventor of writing, remark in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the ability to record has a lot more to do with forgetting than with remembering: with keeping the past in the past, instead of continuously recreating it in the present" (22). Only through some form of meditation, of deliberately exposing ourselves to the river through arduous concentration, can we modern literate humans recapture what Plato saw as the true function of the memory, to lead us toward that which is real.

So Plato has plenty of reason to make Socrates wary of the new invention of writing if, as Thamus says, it is capable of weakening the resources of memory in the souls of those who use it. However, Plato cannot despise writing. He obviously conceives it to be a helpful tool as long as it is used in the right way. Of course he himself used it to write his dialogues because he recognized its vast power. He may have been one of the many who saw the good side of writing but one of the few voices crying in the wilderness to warn of the potential for evil that the revolutionary new written alphabet also held, hence his extensive use of the pharmakon metaphor. Havelock, in discussing the vast differences between the oral and literate mind, the metaphoric and metonymic conceptual processes, and between the pursuit of opinion and the pursuit of abstract truth, says that "Plato was aware also and rightly so that only his genius had been able fully to realise that this was a revolution, and that it had to be pushed with urgency" (267). Plato was certainly waging a
revolution against what he perceived as improper uses of speaking and writing, uses not couched in truth. This is why Plato makes Socrates so ruthless in his battle for Phaedrus' soul. Socrates uses extensively the powerful rhetorical arsenal at his disposal, especially metaphors and myths.

By beginning the discussion about writing with a myth, Socrates has introduced Phaedrus to his major arguments in a light, lyrical way, well-suited to the young man. Phaedrus, although still unable to appreciate on his own the subtle wisdom of Socrates' myths, is becoming in one way a more sophisticated listener and accuses Socrates of making up myths and stories to suit his points of argument. Socrates tartly reproves him for looking too critically at the source of the message rather than judging it according to the truthfulness of its underlying wisdom. This is entirely consistent with the message Socrates delivered in his discussion of the Phaedrus' first myth, the myth of Boreas. It doesn't matter where the stories of myth came from or whether they are historically true; what matters is what they can teach us about ourselves.

This consistency illustrates the beauty of unity in the Phaedrus. Throughout the text, Plato gives Socrates complete constancy of purpose. The metonymical contiguity is broken with many techniques that temporarily halt textual progress, including metaphor, myth, prayer, speech, and use of ironic devices. Each break, however, is strategically necessary to advance the dialectic, even while seeming to block the flow of the text. The pace and direction of the text is determined by the progress of the dialectic, and when we see this, we are no longer troubled by the impromptu twists and turns in this work.

Phaedrus recognizes the justice of Socrates' reproof about the myth and admits that he was wrong. From there, they proceed to discuss the myth and its meaning. I think it intriguing that after this small sign of restiveness from Phaedrus, his teasing of Socrates about the source of the myths, Socrates stops using myths for the rest of the text. In fact,
the whole dialectic turns toward a conclusion at this point. Back in our metonymical storyline, Phaedrus begins to get restless. Maybe he is hot and tired. The only sign of his discomfort is his light-hearted remark about Socrates' stories, but Socrates, the good physician, is always watching the patient's reaction to each of the drugs' applications and he knows when to quit using each different rhetorical pill as he observes its effectiveness wane. The small remonstrance from Phaedrus gives Socrates the signal not to overdose the patient.

Socrates rapidly ends the dialectic with one last simile and a final metaphor. The simile compares writing to painting, noting that it seems lifelike but is not. Writing says always only one thing and is incapable of answering questions about itself except through its mother/father. And since the author is almost never present with the reader, a work of writing is essentially an orphan—as Derrida describes it—and is, therefore, much less helpful than the living, breathing words of a dialectic.

The metaphor, following so fast on the heels of the simile as to almost trip over it, compares writing to gardening. Socrates convinces Phaedrus that a wise person "who has knowledge of the just and the good and beautiful" (141) would not carelessly sow his words in ink and expect instant results, but would painstakingly plant his words by means of dialectic so that they would bear the greatest fruit in the long-run. The unexpected proximity of these last two extended figures of speech gives us a feeling of rushing toward the finish line. Socrates does not want to lose Phaedrus' interest and goodwill as he draws his dialectic to a close. At this point, Phaedrus conveniently asks for a synopsis of the arguments about oral and written rhetoric.

Plato has Socrates drive home his key points one last time, now using literal language that lends itself to no alternate interpretations. Socrates' deft use of the pharmakon of figurative language has done its work of persuasion, and the patient is now
ready for straight talk. Phaedrus, at this point, agrees with everything Socrates says. Socrates stresses the need to speak and write from the vantage-point of truth, truth discovered within oneself through the process of dialectic with the aid of Mnemosyne. Also, one must realize, he says, that writing is never the way to achieve great certainty and clearness. Rather, it is a somewhat playful mode, and not altogether serious. Therefore, speaking and writing can be helpful if properly used. But, says Socrates, woe betide the lazy person who speaks and writes on a foundation of probability alone or takes writing too seriously. "For whether one be awake or asleep, ignorance of right and wrong and good and bad is in truth inevitably a disgrace, even if the whole mob applaud it" (142).

Socrates, as always, says that knowledge of right and wrong, good and bad is to be found in one's own soul through meditation and reflection, and this knowledge can be examined and reinforced through a dialectical process undertaken in company with other seekers of truth. But rarely do we get anywhere near to the truth by letting the "whole mob" do our thinking for us, because popular opinion, Socrates has shown, by its very definition, is nearly always the spokesman for probability instead of truth.

Socrates follows his précis with messages for Phaedrus to deliver to Lysias about the day's discussion, and the text ends with another prayer by Socrates, this one addressed to "Pan and all ye other gods of this place" (143). This final prayer is the only one in the Phaedrus that does not contain a petition for the gods to improve somebody else. Socrates asks only that he, himself will be brought closer to eternal truth. This reverent, humble prayer is certainly the most appealing and seemingly the most heartfelt one in the entire text. Phaedrus begs to "share in this prayer; for friends have all things in common" (143), and the final plank is hammered into the metonymic framework of this dialogue as they take their leave together.
Chapter Three: The View

We have just witnessed not only a pristine example of dialectic in action, but a scene of epic battle in which two powerful camps wage war for possession of Phaedrus' very soul.

We can see the reason for this gargantuan rift in rhetorical theory if we look at Gorgias as a spokesman for the Sophists, comparing his views with Plato's. Romilly tells us that Gorgias acknowledges the aptness of comparing rhetoric with both magic and drugs in order to grasp the vast potential power of rhetoric for good or evil. Beyond this, however, Gorgias turns sharply in another direction absolutely antithetical to Plato. "Gorgias," says Romilly, "had also admitted in the Helen that the very principle of the art of speech was to stir passions, and thereby to deceive...He had established this power of speech on the frailty and uncertainty of human opinion. Now nothing was so averse to Plato's passion for accurate knowledge than such an attitude" (25). Indeed, deceiving by appealing to passions seems to be an ignominious end for rhetoric to aim at. This discussion is reminiscent of our earlier one on the separation of thoughts and feelings. If a person allows herself to substitute feelings for rational thought, her behavior will become erratic, unpredictable and dangerous. Thought, as Plato fully understood, is the only solid foundation for prudent action.

Plato is suspicious of both oral and written rhetoric, linguistic tools which are demonstrated to hold great power in the dawning metonymic era. Both are pharmakon, both have amazing powers to cure or to poison. His delicate accomplishment in the Phaedrus consists of having Socrates persuade the impressionable young man to become aware of the full spectrum of potential power held by both speaking and writing, to teach
him to recognize both the dark side and the enlightening side of these two modes of communication.

For these reasons, Socrates uses all the drugs in his rhetorical repertoire in order to inoculate Phaedrus against the dangers of seduction represented by Lysias and Tisias. For these men know how to use writing and speech-making with the Muses first-stated end in view, that of making things appear true which are really false or only half true. They know how to use the pharmakon to poison the soul and drag it backwards away from the light of truth and self-knowledge, into the darkness of emotion-driven, unexamined popular opinion.

How one feels about Plato's pursuit of absolute truth depends on one's individual orientation to life. Although we don't all agree on the merits of Plato's philosophy, there is little argument with the view that he was a very able advocate for his ideas. His command of the arts of both rhetoric and writing is awesome, and his use of devices found in these disciplines is supremely masterful. Platonic ideas of abstractions like truth and honor go hand in hand in hand, as we have seen, with Vico and Frye's description of the metonymic era, the birth of an individual self, and the concept of personal responsibility. Frye says that in the metonymic era, words are 'put for' thoughts--"outward expressions of an inward reality" (8). The sophists' concept of expediency is not so closely allied with the metonymic idea of a transcendent order as is Plato's concept of absolutes. In fact, Plato's concept of "truth" or "reality," as explained in the Phaedrus, almost defines the idea of transcendent order. If we can sometimes catch a glimpse of absolute truth, the lessons we learn from it will give us guidelines as to how best to live our lives in harmony with the transcendent order perceived through the very existence of that absolute truth. If there is a certain absolute truth, then there are ways to live in conformity with it and ways to live out of balance with it. The Sophists search for expediency rather than truth presupposes that there is no
transcendent order but only justifiable ends to pursue. The means used to reach these expedient ends do not need the scrutiny routinely given to conduct by the person striving to conform to a higher truth. The sophists, therefore, can take shortcuts and use means considered reprehensible to the truth-seeker, Plato. They have no need to examine their conscience as Plato does; the successful achievement of the expedient end shows them that they have done the right thing. These two positions, Plato's and the sophists', are mutually abhorrent. Hence, we have the great battle of the *Phaedrus*.

Frye notes that when thinking and feeling become untangled in the metonymic era, and people begin to look at pure, unemotional thought, then abstractions become possible and logic is born. Logic ideally leads us to perceive that there are "valid and invalid ways of thinking" (7), which is exactly why Plato has Socrates teach Phaedrus by painstakingly dissecting the differences between truth and popular opinion. This absolute commitment to the search for the most valid way of thinking makes Plato the idealist, the uncompromising dialectician, the perfect spokesman for the metonymic mindset. Curran says, "Rhetoric is the main topic of the dialogue; Socrates provides the tools for rhetoric to gain respectability, and Plato uses these tools in the structure of his dialogue, thus persuading his readers" (71). These tools are the tools of dialectic: the painstaking method of precise definition of terms, the careful organization of the argument and consideration of the readiness of the soul of the listener to absorb and utilize the arguments presented. These tools can raise rhetoric from the quagmire of raw emotion onto a smooth, solid plain of reason where a search for truth can be earnestly conducted. Without these tools, says Plato, rhetoric can only function as the poison pharmakon, the killer of the very soul.

Plato's warnings about rhetoric echo down the centuries, reinforced by the sordid parade of tyrants and demagogues who have flourished in every age of human history, administering their vilely poisoned pharmakon to unwary listeners and leaving destruction
and misery in their wake. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, there is soul-shaking justification for Plato's distrust of rhetoric—especially in the hands of a politician. We have seen what Plato could only imagine. We have witnessed rhetoric gone mad, the extreme dark end of the spectrum, in speeches by Hitler. It is often said that one didn't even have to speak the German language in order to understand Hitler's speeches. His message was clearly and consistently one of poisonous hatred, an emotion as far removed from the cool upper regions of reason as can be found. His message was spelled out in his uncontrolled demeanor during delivery of his speeches. His veins stood out, his face got red, he screamed and brandished his fist in the air. This is what happens when feeling is so much in command of thought that thought is, for all practical purposes, obliterated.

So much for the orator, but what of the listeners? We have also seen the nightmarishly mesmerizing effect that these vituperative speeches had on Hitler's followers. In response to his poisonous diatribes, they seemed to slough off like an old skin the broad, fundamental moral and ethical standards held to be universally valid for the human family. Many listeners ceased to be individuals with functioning consciences and became mindless, willing conspirators in Hitler's monstrous evil, and many more looked the other way and were silent.

But, we complacently remind ourselves, these were Germans, not Americans. There must be an inherent flaw in their national character. We, thank God, are different. If we take refuge in this fallacy, we have fallen precisely into the trap against which Nietzsche warned us. We are fooling ourselves. It is our natural inclination to shield ourselves from brutal reality, but by doing so, we risk leaving ourselves unprotected from our very selves. We leave our dark side conveniently unexamined and therefore unfettered.

If we are to learn the lessons of Plato's dialectic, we must each look at our own soul and reflect, meditate, wonder whether our real self is strong enough to withstand the
onslaught of such mind-bending rhetorical persuasion. Remembering Nietzsche's comments on the inclination of humans to allow themselves to be deceived, we must weigh our real selves and be wary of easy answers. Where is my personal line drawn that I would not cross for any consideration? If I do not consider each issue very carefully, using some of Plato's absolutes as my landmarks, I can easily persuade myself that my line is much closer to Plato's "truth" and farther from the sophists' "expediency" than it probably is. It might be easy to quiet one's conscience and conform to popular opinion, especially when disagreeing could bring deadly peril to self and loved ones.

Plato saw the dangers inherent in both oral and written rhetoric at the dawn of the metonymic period when many of his contemporaries saw only the excitement of the latent persuasive power in these tools of communication, not the vast potential that that power held for either good or evil.

During the course of the Phaedrus, Plato has Socrates use a vast array of rhetorical techniques, including some which seem to be incompatible, in his effort to persuade Phaedrus to adopt truth as his guiding star instead of emotion-driven popular opinion. However, we have seen how each technique serves a special purpose that makes it worthwhile for Plato/Socrates to use. We have seen the superficially incompatible polar opposites of metaphor and metonymy tamed by Plato's mastery of language till they compliment and reinforce each other in this towering dialogue from ancient Greece.

Speeches, metaphors, prayers, myths and irony all cut across our flimsy fabric of metonymic continuity in the Phaedrus. Indeed, it is almost as if the disparate patches of interruptive or metaphoric techniques are lightly stitched together with the thread of metonymy, making a sort of crazy quilt out of the finished text rather than a fabric with a continuous pattern as we would expect in a metonymic text. However, crazy quilts are beautiful, creative and interesting to contemplate even though their pattern is more
difficult to discern. The same can be said of the *Phaedrus*.

It is almost as though the interruptions of the metonymic flow are subliminal messages to a Phaedrus who is not yet ready to receive this information overtly. Although each interruption cuts across the contiguity of the realistic framework, they each function as a beneficial form of pharmakon in the hands of Socrates, the good physician.

The *Phaedrus* is an impressive example of dialectic teaching in action, and I feel confident that if Phaedrus is not entirely converted at the end of this day, he has at least been exposed to those critical-thinking skills that will make him a wiser judge of the rhetorical arts of persuasion in the future. Perhaps he is on the way toward being born again, this time as a philosopher.
Works Cited


