

# **Phaedrus Study Guide**

## **Phaedrus by Plato**

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# Plot Summary

Socrates runs into Phaedrus outside Athens, who follows his exercising routine suggested by their common friend and doctor Acumenus. Phaedrus has just left Lysias, son of Cephalus, a well known rhetorician and his lover, who gave a speech on love. Socrates convinces Phaedrus to share its details in a discourse. They analyze the content of the speech and the manner in which it is written.

Socrates, eager to follow any discourse, is determined to hear everything that Lysias and Phaedrus discussed. Their discussion is triggered by the speech written earlier concerning love. They both engage in the analysis of his writing, along with merits and faults. They analyze the subject of the nature of love and then other aspects of composition and writing. They discuss the content and the manner of writing. Lysias examines various types of love, considering a partner who is in love as less advantageous than the partner who is not in love. He finds love driven by emotions to be a burden for both partners. Dangers of love can be averted when passion is free from hate and allows for maintaining friendship with others without causing jealousy in a partner. Losing control can create difficult situations.

Socrates agrees with arguments given by Lysias when delivering his first speech. He is skeptical of the contributions that lovers can bring into their relationship. A relationship based on love can be more difficult than a relationship based on sex that is free from desire. When love is involved there is more opportunities for arguments. Lovers change while in a relationship. Such changes also involve transformations that may be unwanted by the partner, leading to disappointments for both. When reaching the end of his speech, Socrates comes to the conclusion that he failed to treat the matter fairly because he ignored certain points. As the god of love is Eros, failing to do justice in the right treatment of the matter may result in punishment. He decides to make another speech.

Socrates admits that he fears love sent by gods. Although lovers engage in madness that is dangerous, their love, being sent by gods, cannot be evil. Madness has been found to be part of various noble achievements. As part of artistic endeavor it involves mania. It is also godly because it is given by gods. To explore madness and love, it is essential to engage in the exploration of the soul. Souls engage in various activities that can make them fly high or be wingless, meaning they can be inspired or lack inspiration. Souls can be driven by different feelings depending on whether they are inspired by passion or the pursuit of beauty. Love can be part of passion or the pursuit of beauty, leading to a relationship appropriately based either on bondage or harmony. Reason bestows harmony while passion dependency. Relationships deprived of love are also calculative while depriving souls engaged in such relationships of noble and divine aspects. A relationship deprived of love leads to the inability to reach heaven in the after life. Socrates concludes that the divine love inspires while relationships deprived of love are condemned by gods, as the souls that engage in them fail to enter heaven. Love also involves wisdom and beauty. Their lack robs the soul of wisdom and mind.



Engaging in speech competition is also part of becoming immortal. Speaking involves the examination of various souls that characterize the audience. Apart from knowledge and understanding, all speeches require practice. The knowledge involves things that are certain and uncertain, and hence debatable, such as love. Through rhetoric the soul needs to be won and persuaded. Failing to incorporate various elements of speech, such as the beginning, middle and end, leads to failure in speech making. Speeches should start from the beginning, represented by the head, then form the body that consists of the right and left hand, symbolizing both sides of the argument. Hence arguments incorporate positive and negative aspects. Upon reaching a conclusion of what is good and bad writing, Socrates and Phaedrus carry their messages to their lovers.



# Chapter 1 (227-234)

## Chapter 1 (227-234) Summary

Socrates runs into Phaedrus outside Athens, who follows his exercising routine suggested by their common friend and doctor Acumenus. Phaedrus has just left Lysias, son of Cephalus, a well known rhetorician and his lover, who gave a speech on love. Socrates convinces Phaedrus to share its details in a discourse. They analyze the content of the speech and the manner in which it is written.

Lysias has been visiting Epicrates at Moruchia house. He discussed with Phaedrus various types of love. Socrates wants to share its details in a discourse and convinces Phaedrus to do that while they both walk along the Illisus stream. Phaedrus reveals the content of the speech concerning a relationship between a lover and a non-lover that can be more rewarding than the one based only on love.

They both follow Illisus into the countryside that is little experienced by Socrates who regards people in cities as more conducive to learning. The sites they explore are so enchanting that Socrates revels in the exploration. Phaedrus doubts whether he can reproduce the speech as well as it is written although he practiced it already. Socrates is certain that Phaedrus worked on the speech, urging him to go ahead. Still, Phaedrus wants to deliver the beginning and main points of the speech only but Socrates notices that he has the manuscript with him and wants him to read it. They both agree to do that once they find a place with a tree and breeze.

Along the way they explore the story of Boreas who took the nymph Orithyia from the stream of Ilissus. Socrates thinks that the event took place further away from them, near the temple of the Huntress, where there is also an altar to Boreas. He is reluctant to analyze this event, especially since he is aware of a few versions of the same story. Such story would have little probability and events that have little factual information are difficult to rationalize. There are matters that are more pertinent as they concern the nature of one's self. The Delphic motto 'know thyself' inspires internal examination that is more essential. Rather than investigating opinions it is more worthwhile to investigate our own inclinations, which can be quite complex. Upon forming such a conclusion they reach a plane-tree near the water. Socrates is amazed at the beauty of the place so full of fragrance that it can even become addictive. In the same manner he is drawn towards any opportunity that involves engaging in discourse. According to him, if learning can be derived from an experience one should follow it.

Socrates encourages Phaedrus to start his speech, lying down on the grass. Phaedrus starts reading the speech written by Lysias that begins with a statement that lovers regret their kindness and selfishness while non-lovers have no such concerns, make no complaints about problems caused by love, and do what gratifies the lover. It is more prudent to engage in a relationship that advances both partners even if it is not based on love. Socrates is somewhat skeptical of such an argument. He thinks that it would be



more useful if an argument explored matters pertaining to poverty and youth. If one made preference of a poor person over a rich one or an old over a young one it would be more beneficial to society. Such argument would foster more sympathy towards the circumstances of poverty and age.

As lovers become affectionate about those they love their passion can urge them to do things that are beyond their control, including finding new lovers. Their lovers then become rejected as new lovers replace them. Those who are no longer loved become hurt and out of control as new lovers are pleased. Those who are in love are more concerned about themselves than others.

Phaedrus is fascinated by the speech and in particular by the language used.

## Chapter 1 (227-234) Analysis

Lysias presents arguments that show superiority of a relationship that is not based on love and free from emotional attachment. His speech is to encourage a relationship between an older suitor and a younger lover as part of a homosexual relationship, which was a frequent occurrence in ancient Greece. Such arguments may also pertain to a relationship in general due to certain features that love involves.

He claims that those who are not in love can be more accommodating, because they care less about what others think. Such partners contribute to the relationship with more reserve. Greater control can render them less concerned about various efforts or troubles that are part of a relationship. Such an attitude can be more satisfying as it allows for more respect between partners.

Those who are loved can suffer through unpredictable desires. They deserve pity rather than envy because they are exposed to passion and hate. Non-lovers are free from such emotions and are a better prospect in a relationship. Their dispassionate attitude makes them better companions. They are attentive to their friends even when in a relationship, unlike lovers who ignore their friends. Non-lovers tend to be more grateful for what they receive. Those who are free from feelings can appreciate better what is offered to them. It is prudent to assess first any favors granted to a lover who can ignore them. As it is important that matters are beneficial to both parties, lack of emotions may be a more positive factor in a relationship.

Lysias condemns various aspects of love, such as pleasing the loved ones at any expense, even if it involves hurting other people. When love overtakes emotion, people become dependent on those they love, making them victims of their own feelings. Relationships based on love are more difficult to form because it is hard to find those who deserve such love. The process of selection in itself limits the number or possible lovers.

Lovers tend to be more suspicious about their partners and think that their actions are designed to hurt them. In consequence, they isolate those they love. Lovers engage in boasting about their conquests. Their jealousy encourages the fear of betrayal. They are



preoccupied with everything that concerns their partners, and try to acquire the knowledge of anything that may influence their relationship.

Lovers are suspicious about their partners and their true intentions. They fear dangers of ending the relationship by the partner that would result in being hurt. Other threats are posed by wealth, as those with money appear superior. As the prospect of a better suitor may encourage lovers to find a richer partner, such lovers need to be guarded from any adverse influence. Protecting independence is another negative factor leading to arguments that can destroy the relationship.

Non-lovers exhibit more reserve because they are less concerned about what others think. Their lack of involvement makes them more relaxed. They also approach various features of a relationship in a more relaxed manner, understanding the need for friendly conversations that are necessary for the well being of their partners. Lovers encounter difficulties that can discourage both partners. Their feelings are also so hard to maintain that they rarely last.

Non-lovers lack jealousy and can create a better environment for a relationship with their partner. Such relationship can be safer as it is not based on changing passions. Lovers become indifferent when their feeling driven by passion is gone. Unlike non-lovers who maintain their friendship, lovers cease their friendship. Love also involves overestimation of those that are loved, bringing disappointments.



## Chapter 2 (235-241)

### Chapter 2 (235-241) Summary

Socrates praises Phaedrus for the passionately delivered speech that also affected him. While Phaedrus is more concerned about the use of language and the treatment of the subject, Socrates is more preoccupied with form and rhetoric. Phaedrus regards repetition in speech as necessary and beneficial. Socrates views the expression in Lysias's speech as vain, failing to incorporate the right treatment of the subject.

Socrates regards the speech written by Lysias to be not as valuable as what others have written on the subject. He wants to deliver a speech with the proper arrangement of points. Phaedrus is excited at this prospect and encourages him to proceed. In the end, he resorts to a threat that he is never to present another speech if Socrates fails to deliver his.

Socrates is embarrassed to compete with Lysias although tempted and compelled by Phaedrus at the same time. He begins by referencing a situation where a man who is in love with a boy tries to convince him that he is not. Dealing with the subject requires the knowledge of the subject. Lack of knowledge in an argument leads to the inability to reach common understanding and conclusions can become contradictory. A thorough analysis requires the subject to be not just familiar, but fully understood. Socrates formulates the definition of love and its influence. He then intends to examine its advantages and disadvantages.

Love pertains to desire and such desire involves beauty. Although we are led by innate desires that stem from emotions, we are also guided by what is beneficial through reason. These two features are part of our actions that are guided by reason or impulse. Such features can also be in harmony, oppose each other or dominate one another. When reason takes control it discards emotions. Being out of control when guided through desires can lead to excess or overindulgence. Lack of moderation can be exhibited in various forms, belonging to various categories. Uncontrolled desires for food can become excessive and take the form of gluttony. Those who yield to such desires become gluttons. When reason is overtaken by the desire to drink, such a person becomes an alcoholic. The same process involves all other desires that dominate reason. Socrates concludes that the desire for pleasure of the body that overtakes reason becomes a force called love or 'Eros'.

Those who are overtaken by desires of love tend to do everything to please those they love. As those who are in love can be regarded as those with an unsound mind, they behave in such a manner. People with an unsound mind like everything that is agreeable with them. They hate all that is superior or equal.

Lovers prefer their partners to be weak, less capable, or make them appear so. They try to slow their lovers down in wit, engaging in the tactics of making them ignorant,





cowardly or feeble. When inferior, such partners become dependent on them, rendering satisfaction. Jealousy leads to the isolation of those who are loved. Lovers want their partners to stay away from society, friends, and anything that can benefit them so that they need help. These aspects make love deprived of any guidance, wisdom, and inspiring wrong attitudes.

## Chapter 2 (235-241) Analysis

Love can be dangerous and cruel when only one's own priorities count as most important. Love is only beneficial to those who are not in love. Only with full control of senses can relationships succeed. Those in love can be disloyal, hurtful, and injurious to health and body as well as spirit. Vices interfering with love itself make such a person of lesser value as well. Love inspires selfishness, where personal gains are more important. It consumes vitality making a relationship similar to the one between a wolf and a lamb.

The physical state of those who are in love and are led by desires rather than what is good deteriorates as such people tend to spend more time inside rather than outside, work little, remain weak, and rely on others for help. Bodies subjected to negative habits become incapable of coping with physical efforts. The demands of fighting wars make them vulnerable and useless. In this way, they present danger to themselves and to those who love them.

Love is part of uncontrolled feeling and it is what Socrates regards as 'Eros'. Such love drives towards everything that is unwanted, unreasonable, or damaging. The only way to avoid it is to manage partners by offering them friendship. When in love, lovers want their partners to be deprived of anything that can make them independent. In this way, lovers want their partners to have no possession, family, or friends as they see their relationships as threatening. Wealth also poses risk of being difficult to handle. If deprived of property such a person becomes more accessible. Even marriage, home, and children can pose a threat to the relationship. Being in love invites manipulation and control rather than compassion and reason.

Momentary pleasure and satisfaction are part of many evil things. In this way flattering offers comfort and can influence. Satisfaction can be misleading as it only leads to short term benefits. In this way, satisfaction offered by courtesans is not just momentary but also deceptive, as it only appears to be pleasant.

When lovers stay together they encourage difficulties. They tend to disagree and argue even when they become used to each other, acquiring similar types of enjoyment. Despite their bond they can become tired of each other. They can impose constraints upon their partners, controlling them and demanding their presence. Those who live together for a long period of time have to face their partners' aging body and countenance that also reminds them of their own aging. Both partners become frustrated. Such frustration increases with the pressure to tolerate their deficiencies.



Lovers who are unpleasant during love become even worse after their love is gone. They judge the relationship differently after they are no longer in love and change. Despite such changes lovers prefer to see their partners in the same way and behave in the same way, provoking confusion and arguments. Those in love consider it is not necessary to fulfill their promises. They exhibit a lack of insight through lack of responsibility, only trying to avoid previous faults. They try to change, but when unable to meet their obligations they flee, causing their partner's suffering, anger, and pursuit. In this way, a relationship based on love is vulnerable, full of dangers, and adverse consequences, encouraging avoidance rather than quest.



## Chapter 3 (242-248)

### Chapter 3 (242-248) Summary

Phaedrus encourages Socrates to discuss other advantages of a relationship that is not based on love along with reasons indicating their superiority. Socrates attempts to devise a composition suitable for the rest of his speech about to end. Phaedrus thinks he is only in the middle of it and wants him to continue while discussing the advantages that non-lovers have. As such advantages appear to be simply in opposition to advantages that a relationship based on love has, Socrates wants to conclude the speech.

While considering the points he has made Socrates discovers that he received a sign from the spirit indicating that he engaged in a speech for the sake of applause rather than truth. He realizes that he offended gods, recalling that Eros is the son of Aphrodite and a god that was ignored in his speech. Love transmitted by gods would involve godly aspects that make it divine and harmless rather than evil. One is under obligation to make speeches that are right, as wrong speeches lead to wrong conclusions and wrong actions. Socrates now has to purify himself for failing to acknowledge the truth. He fears it can be fateful to the speaker as was the case with Stesichorus, who ignored the truth in his poems and became blind. Only upon rectifying his mistake was Stesichorus able to regain his vision when presenting the truth in a poem called "the Recantation".

Socrates is afraid of offending Eros as much as he is afraid of love itself and wants to do his own Recantation. He also wants to deliver a fair treatment of the matter. Upon hearing it, Phaedrus promises that he will convince Lysias to change his writing if he finds out about good aspects of love. Socrates urges Phaedrus to listen to his next speech before he accepts a non-lover instead of a lover. While the previous speech involved Phaedrus from Myrrhinus, he declares the next one to be inspired by Stesichorus from Himera.

Accepting lovers rather than non-lovers because they may act insanely is improper because insanity is godly rather than evil. Madness can have advantages as Delphic priestesses or Dodona's women proved through their noble achievements. Certain achievements have been possible only because they involved madness. Various beneficial predictions have also been made in madness, such as those made by Sibyl. Madness is not shameful as manic efforts that are part of mania involve artistic achievements. Contemporary use of this word at the time of Socrates differs. The evidence that mania is noble can also be shown through the association of the word mania with manic art. As the ancients acknowledged the connection between what is perfect and what is divine, they linked it with the ability to predict future. The art of prediction called by ancients "oinistic" was derived from the word "dianoia" involving reasoning, "nous" intelligence, and "historia" information.



Mania is part of striving for perfection that is sent by God. There are other types of manias that afflict houses, where suffering occurred. Such manias deliver purification and safety.

Another type of madness involves the Muses inspiring artistic pursuits. Poetic art inspired by madness represents much higher value than poetry deprived of it as lacking the gift of madness conveyed by gods. Socrates examines the nature of the soul that yields to madness.

The nature of the soul is both mortal and immortal. Everything that is immortal has no beginning and no end as self-moving things such as the universe are eternal. As humans have the features that are self-moving but have the beginning and end they must be both earthly and divine. Souls follow gods in their pursuit of knowledge and truth being reborn according to their achievements. The cycle that they engage in lasts ten thousand years during which through wisdom they can acquire wings. Souls that finish their first life undergo judgment and if necessary corrective measures. Those rewarded receive light and can remain in heaven. In the thousandth year the second life needs to be chosen. A human soul can become a beast and a beast can become a man. Those without vision cannot become humans that have intelligence as part of an ideal form that stems from sense-perception. The lover of wisdom that has the closest communication with god through the broadest recollection of wisdom and truth. Turning away from earthly concerns makes them appear as mad for some fail to perceive that such people are inspired.

## Chapter 3 (242-248) Analysis

The soul in its form can be compared to a chariot driven by two horses. The horses of gods are both good and noble while the horses that drive the human soul include one black that drives it downwards towards desire and evil, and one white that is noble and good.

Immortality is godly as it engages no origins and no ends. Constant motion is part of the universe, where everything is moving without cessation. Everything that is self-moving is immortal. Immortal souls are self-moved. Everything that has the beginning can be destroyed.

Souls can acquire various shapes as they move through heaven. Those that are good fly high, influencing the world while those that are lost need a place to dwell. They find an earthly body that they move. Those that have bodies are mortal while those that are immortal are gods.

The soul loses its wings to carry weight, moving up towards gods. It is part of the divine, such as beauty, wisdom, and goodness when its wings are strong. When the wings are weak and the soul vanishes it is ugly and evil. Zeus overlooks everything, putting it in order so that gods and spirits can follow. Gods that follow him advance but those that



are evil lag behind and fall to the earth. Souls that are immortal can reach what is beyond heaven, becoming part of the celestial cycle.

Above the heaven is a substance that is a true being, colorless essence, and intangible mind. All that is part of true knowledge. The divine intelligence that is part of reason and pure knowledge is available to the soul that can arrive there. The soul is nourished until the end of the cycle and it comes back to where it came from. Throughout the journey the soul reflects on absolute justice, temperance, and knowledge. It is nourished when watching other realities, but sinks when deprived of nourishment. The soul that follows god reaches the outer realm and becomes reborn. Souls attempt to reach realities moving up and down in a struggle for what is above. Souls fight for truth as that is the food nourishing their wings to rise.

Souls that saw realities are safer from harm until the next cycle. Such procedure can make them unharmed. Souls that are weak become forgetful and evil. They lose their wings and fall to the earth. In their first birth the soul is a man. Their nature depends on their previous heavenly experience. Those with the broadest vision become involved with the love of wisdom or beauty, serving the Muses or Eros. Those with lesser vision become kings or rulers. The third type of vision allows for being a statesman or merchant. The fourth becomes an athlete while the fifth is involved with mysteries or a diviner. The sixth is available to poets or imitators, the seventh to the artisan or farmer, and the eighth becomes a demagogue or sophist. Finally, the ninth becomes a tyrant. Those that have a better life have better options.

Souls are both earthly and divine, being engaged in matters both earthly and divine. They are driven by both noble and base pursuits. As love is divine the soul engages in it in a divine way.



## Chapter 4 (248-256)

### Chapter 4 (248-256) Summary

Souls retain some of the vision gained before they entered the body. The limited memory and partial awareness of the other world makes their perception of reality difficult. In their perfect state they had a vision and knew no evil. Bodies limit the perception of souls that allow for seeing perfection and simplicity.

Souls readily discern beauty. Its effect strikes them through sight although beauty has no connection with wisdom. Those affected by evil find it difficult to recognize true beauty that involves purity, and are unable to admire beauty on earth. They engage mostly in sensual pleasures driven by desires. Beauty provides inspiration and nourishment allowing for acquiring wings. Those that can recognize true beauty experience love through admiration and respect. It is manifested through a tingling experience, where inspiration provides nourishment that encourages wings.

Beauty can stimulate the movement of particles that form desire. Such feeling inspires joy and relief. The soul also experiences purification with a fluid while being released from stress. As the desire grows it finally becomes pain although memory of beauty remains. The soul becomes frantic during the day and cannot sleep at night. Only through contact with the loved one does the soul become relieved from pain while pleased. The soul can forget everything once in love, ignore family, property, despising everything that was once cherished. It is ready to submit and do anything as long as it can be within the vicinity of the lover. Such is the state of love.

Souls retain their association with the gods they followed. Those that are associated with Zeus handle love in a way that is particular to such a god. If souls are associated with Ares, they can behave in the manner that is characteristic of Ares, becoming violent when suspecting the wrong doing from their partners. They follow their gods in their behavior as well as attitudes, seeking lovers that also resemble them. Once such lover is found they also make sure that they become like such god. To achieve that the partner is treated in a way their god deserves. They search for the divine through within themselves, seeking in this way their own god. Only one particular type of people that is peculiar to their god can inspire them. Souls that belong to those associated with Hera would try to find royal characteristics in their lovers. They long for nature that is shared by their gods.

The way the affection of lovers is gained is compared to the way the charioteer handles his horses. The horse that is white is honorable and modest, holding back with restraint. The other black horse represents lust and rushes forward uncontrollably. When an object of desire is approached, the horses behave differently. The white obedient horse keeps its distance. The black horse goes out of control and charges towards the person. They approach the lover who yields to requests but the image of eternal beauty provokes fear. The charioteer forces the violent horse to obey until the horse follows the



charioteer but fears lovers. Having eternal beauty in mind leads to restrain, but desires lead to demands.

When desire is restrained, lovers become enslaved, following their loved ones while also engaging in friendship. Only when reason prevails the relationship that keeps desires under control can become harmonious. As based on philosophy such lovers also acquire wings in the after life. Non-lovers cannot attain such merits and cannot reach heaven, being caught floating around the earth for nine thousand years.

## Chapter 4 (248-256) Analysis

Lovers can experience their relationship on various levels that can make them confused and discouraged. They are in pain when away from their lover and driven by desire when present. It is difficult to know when love is only desire. Friendship can be even more satisfying when it stems from the previous relationship. Desire and reason both influence lovers who also have to endure their conflicts. Desire can be more intense through keeping distance and occasional encounters. It leads to a different type of intimacy and contact. One part of desire is accepted while the other part comes back to the lover. If the returned desire reaches the soul it becomes filled with love. The lover is in love although he is not aware with what he is in love. Such a lover behaves as if sick, unable to explain what happened in any way, seeing one's own image in the image of the lover.

The difference between love and friendship can become confusing. Desire can turn into love. Lovers may have a halting effect in the presence of their partners, longing always for their presence. Desire can be considered as only part of sensual urge and be only expressed occasionally although it is more than friendship. The experience of love can be overwhelming and unrecognized.

Lovers can become friends whether still in love or over it. They keep their promises that are maintained and believe that it would prevent hatred between them. Their friendship encourages nobler aspects of the relationship. As longing for wings is always present, the body desires to attain them and love maintains its power. The wings of love are attained when the journey has begun as part of the reincarnation that is connected with love.

The horse of want demands sexual rewards while the lover is not responsive. The attempts to express love can confuse the partner, who also responds in the same way. The relationships that are led by the feelings of desire become complicated. The lovers withdraw and fall back into the relationship. Only when reason is part of the relationship do both lovers become more happy, better mannered, and more in control. Upon the end of their lives their souls can fly because they accomplished true contests.

If the impulsive aspects of the relationship are under control, the evil part is overcome and the relationship can be more rewarding through self-control. Such relationships become harmonious as based on reason and philosophy. When they end their lives, the



advantages of wisdom allow them to acquire wings and partake in rewards. If their lives are not good their souls will be joined through a similar intention. The lives are joined together through mixed intentions. Those that lead less rewarding lives but engage in love are allowed to remain within the arch of heaven. These choices are not available to those who partake in a relationship deprived of love.

Non-lovers experience their relationship differently, treating their partners in a calculated manner. They are free from emotional attachment, being less constrained by the relationship, and accepted by others. Their base desires make them unable to reach the outer realm. They remain within the vicinity of the earth, where they have to cycle unable to attain what is godly, such as wisdom or mind. Their attitudes are deprived of the divine gifts of love.





## Chapter 5 (257-264)

### Chapter 5 (257-264) Summary

Phaedrus, full of admiration for the speech delivered by Socrates is confident of its superiority over the speech written by Lysias.

Writing can be as beneficial as it can be cruel, being also the evidence of either poor effort or the subject of conceit for those who like to boast. Engaging in competition allows for a chance to become immortal. Writing inspires differently than other professions as failure to be selected is met more often with admiration rather than disdain as it may happen with other professions. Writing is also a profession that encourages a high regard by those involved, who consider themselves as being above other professions.

Socrates considers writing as honorable if it is endowed with good qualities. The more important issue for him is what makes a good or bad writing rather than whether to engage in it or not. Its analysis would involve a comparison of various types of writing or various types of people that are engaged in it. It can also be assessed in terms of its needs, such as whether it is used for something in particular or for pleasure. Pleasures that are part of bodily pleasures are servile but need to be pursued. Pleasures can be both active and inactive while its advantages and consequences need to be recognized.

Socrates thinks that idleness and sluggishness is something that slaves engage in and is not worthy of intelligent creatures. When given a choice between activity and inactivity it is more beneficial to engage in activity that can be inspired by gods who can partake in nature. As Socrates claims, their influence can be exerted through such creatures as cicadas that used to be humans in their previous existence. They died of singing when enchanted by the Muses and in their present form they can sing until death without any food. They then meet the Muses telling them about those who honor them. They give their reports to appropriate Muses according to activities observed. In this way, they report to Erato about those people that engage in love, and to Calliope and Urania about those people that are involved with philosophic pursuits. These muses are most important than others as they deal with issues that are both heavenly and human. To receive their care and help it is better to engage in discussion rather than sleep.

According to Socrates, a well written discourse requires the same that is needed before anything is spoken or expressed and involves the knowledge of truth concerning the matters discussed. Phaedrus thinks that it is the knowledge of what is more appropriate to the crowd in a given time that is most important. If what appears seems right, the crowd forms an opinion through which it is persuaded. Persuasion is part of appearance and not the truth.

Various devices can render speeches more or less effective. They can make things appear differently to the audience through the knowledge of similarities and differences



between things. If truth and reality is known matters and objects that are similar can be discerned. Such similarities betray adherence to reality. Engaging in speeches involves the knowledge of things that are certain or uncertain. Objects that have the same meaning are certain while objects that can be viewed differently by different people are debatable.

Persuasion that is based on lack of knowledge between what is true and what is false can lead to harmful consequences although persuasion itself requires no knowledge. If rhetoric is an art it needs to be based on truth. A Spartan opinion claims that for an art to exist it needs to have the knowledge of truth. Speaking on any subject requires, however, the knowledge of philosophy.

## Chapter 5 (257-264) Analysis

The proper inquiry about speaking needs to involve the proper examination of the subject, hence Socrates intends to analyze the speeches made.

Rhetoric is designed to persuade and win the soul. It is also part of persuasion that is used in courts. Those who argue in courts need to present various matters in certain ways. The same matter may seem to be right and wrong at the same time depending on the way persuasion is applied.

Through speaking, matters may appear differently depending on the skills employed. Palamedes of Elea (Zeno) made certain things appear in a single or multiple form as well as at rest or in motion. Making things appear differently requires the knowledge of reality that allows for seeing differences and similarities. Through exploring similarities false assumptions about reality can be detected.

Similarity to truth allows for escaping detection, hence talking that intends to disguise truth needs to move in bits rather than jumps. When attempting to deceive it is necessary to have the knowledge of things that are similar or different. Such knowledge also involves the knowledge of truth.

When opinions differ from reality, the truth can be established by referring to similar occurrences. The knowledge of reality involves understanding of the nature of things. Steps and gradations that involve similarities and reveal deception. For Socrates, speaking that is based only on forming opinions is not based on truth and involves no art.

Examined speeches are considered according to their artistic merits. Such merits can be determined through the knowledge of things that are certain and uncertain that are also debatable. Agreement is crucial when forming an opinion while the analysis of matters help to reach an opinion. In this way, matters that have the same meaning lead to understanding and agreement. Matters that are doubtful and debatable lead to deception. Forming opinions requires the knowledge of things with the same meaning. In this way, the word 'iron' signifies the same to everybody while words such as 'good' or 'right' can mean different things to different people.



The power of rhetoric also involves what is uncertain and debatable, such as love. Love can be both harmful or beneficial depending on the way it is represented. While substance of the speech is crucial its form matters equally. The beginning of the speech written by Lysias contains in fact what should be at the end. The opening should contain an introduction that should state the definition of the matter discussed. It is vital that discourses are arranged in order. The best type of arrangement is similar to the body of a creature containing the beginning, the middle, and the end. where things relate to each other as part of one unit.

If speech contains no beginning, middle or end it renders no purpose, such as present in inscriptions similar to the one that is part of the tomb of Midas, as Socrates unveils. Any part of this inscription can be read first or last.



## Chapter 6 (265-272)

### Chapter 6 (265-272) Summary

Socrates and Phaedrus analyze their discourses analyzing relationships that are either based on love or based only on sensual desire. Socrates considers love to be part of divine madness.

Although madness is a certain type of human illness, it can also be inspired by divine interference that frees humans from their usual way of life. There are four divinities associated with four types of gods that provide inspiration accordingly. Apollo provides prophetic inspiration, Dionysus mystic madness, the Muses inspire with poetry while the madness of love is provided by Aphrodite and Eros. These divine inspirations involve four types of madness that are endowed by them. Socrates considers the fourth type to be the best. As previous speeches contained only an outline of the true picture of love with a mixture of various features of love only, it only provided the effects of a story or myth rather than a speech full of persuasive force.

To provide proper elements in a speech it needs to be analyzed according to what Socrates calls an artistic function, but entailing analytic methods. Such methods are that of synthesis and combination. In synthesis elements are viewed in a comprehensive way so that further knowledge can be gained. It can be done through a definition of the subject. Such definition allows for clarity and self-consistency. When defining love, the formulated concept can clarify the issue. The other method involves the opposite process, where an issue is divided into its natural components while connections are maintained. Such components previously indicated the two aspects of love that can be either negative or positive. Through analysis and combination matters that are uncertain can be clarified. Their usage also can improve the clarity of thinking that leads to better speaking. Socrates follows such methods that are part of dialectic considering those who profess them almost as gods.

There are also other essential elements that are part of rhetoric, incorporating such vital parts of speech as the way the opening of the speech should be made. Other elements involve narrative, testimony, evidence, probabilities, confirmation, and sur-confirmation. Rhetoricians regard probabilities as most important in speech making, using logic to change the appearance of various matters. Speeches should also have the appropriate length and be neither short nor long.

Various writing about speech includes "Muses' School of Speech" by Polus with chapters called "Duplicate Expression", "Art of Maxims", "Art of Imagery, and "Vocabulary of Licymnius". Protagoras wrote on "Propriety of Language". According to Socrates, the best speeches are those that induce emotions, making crowds angry or soothing them, such as made by Thrasymachus. His abilities also involved making up calumnies and disposing them. All authors agree that speeches should have a



conclusion although some call it recapitulation. It can also be called the summary of points that are recalled in terms of what has been said.

The knowledge of various elements is insufficient in proficiency. Apart from introductory elements, organization needs to be employed in the art of making speeches. It is most vital to gain both understanding and practice, which are equally important. Socrates also considers discussion and natural elements as crucial to achieve results.

It is through the knowledge of the nature of mind or the nature of the soul that one can achieve full proficiency in constructing speeches. Only by knowing the aspects of the audience that the speech is addressed to can effective arguments be formed. Such arguments involve the analysis of the nature of the soul. Hence the true art of rhetoric needs to incorporate the knowledge of the soul.

## Chapter 6 (265-272) Analysis

The art of rhetoric or becoming proficient in rhetoric requires understanding and practice. Both aspects are equally important. For Socrates, Lysias fails to incorporate rhetoric as an art.

As in healing, where the nature of the body needs to be analyzed, rhetoric requires that the nature of the soul that the speech is addressed to be explored. Arguments need to be practiced so that they achieve the intended effect. They need to encourage a conviction that is potent.

The knowledge of the nature of the soul needs to be applied in practice. There are various steps that need to be engaged in the process of making effective speeches that need to be followed or results will be missed. If they are ignored, the power of their application is diminished, the effect can be less powerful, and there is more chance that disbelief is created. When a speaker is unsure about the way skills need to be applied he may become unsuccessful in his endeavor.

Arguments are more effective if the audience is known. The type of personality that is part of the audience needs to be ascertained so that its nature can be explored. Various categories of speeches and personalities unveil emotional reactions that can be expected. Upon gathering all information on possible causes and effects of arguments, an appropriate persuasion can be constructed. There are various types of souls and various types of arguments. Certain types of men can reach certain convictions when they listen to particular speeches. The speaker should know the proper time to speak, refrain, discern, use concise, pitiful or terrible style, various types of discourses, along with good and bad moments when certain elements should be used. Missing certain steps either in speech or writing even when the author has the strongest conviction in his work is insufficient to provide the same belief in the audience. If disbelief arises even when best efforts are employed if the audience remains unconvinced the effort is lost.

The way to go about achieving results should be advantageous and ways that are shorter and better are preferable to longer, more arduous ways. Speeches in courts



may involve little truth that can be irrelevant. Truth in courts concerns what is believed and pertains more to probability rather than truth. Hence those who want to acquire art in speech need to engage in such matters. There is no need to say what happened if the way in which it happened is improbable. Probabilities need to be justified and truth can be forgotten. Such probability if maintained throughout the speech involves the art of rhetoric.

Only when aspects of soul are taken into consideration in speech and writing can arguments be effective. Instructions on speech should incorporate expressions that need to be used, but to achieve an artistic effect involves the knowledge of how to win the soul. Those who want to become artists in speech making need to know about the soul.

The engagement of the nature of mind in speeches hence assures effectiveness. Pericles, who achieved good speaking abilities, led discourses with Anaxagoras. He achieved excellence in Rhetoric through acquiring the knowledge of the mind.



## Chapter 7 (273-279)

### Chapter 7 (273-279) Summary

Tisias regarded probability as sufficient to encourage belief that can be instilled in the mind of the audience and in this way accepted. He formulated certain rules of the procedure if two men are brought to trial, where one who is courageous but weak fights another who is strong but coward. The courageous and feeble man robs the other man of his possessions and both are brought to court. Neither of them should speak the truth as denying their actions leads to further lies by the other side and gives the opportunity to disprove what is being said.

To be eloquent in the art of speaking requires the application of analysis, where realities can be classified, various natures considered while both particulars and generalities understood. Probabilities are similar to truth and only those who know the truth can know similarities and differences between things. Such an approach also requires effort that needs to be endured not for the sake of pleasing others but to achieve noble ends. Artistic endeavors should be the effect of aspiration towards higher achievement rather than striving to satisfy those that need to be pleased. Even if results are difficult to attain, work needs to be undertaken. All great results involve effort, where means of achievement may change. Desires justify the effort and drive towards achievement.

Just as rhetoric is dictated by certain rules, writing has its own principles. The ancient Egyptian god called Theuth, who invented arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, dice, and writing wanted to encourage writing habits among the Egyptian people. He unveiled various advantages of writing to the ruler Thamus also called Ammon. The knowledge of letters can foster learning, memory, and wisdom. Thamus regarded such knowledge as harmful because greater power can be assumed in them than they deserve. When an effort to learn something external is involved, it may lead to forgetting about one's own self, where relying on external rather than internal guidance can be misleading. Memory may fail to be cultivated while only apparent knowledge gained leads to ignorance. No true wisdom can be acquired without instruction.

Writing can reveal only to the extent that the author allows for it. It works in the same way as painting does, where through a perspective and the resemblance of reality a picture is formed. It is not possible to inquire or verify the written material. The word "applied" conveys one message only and provides no further explanation. The content becomes indifferent if it fails to be comprehended by the audience. Socrates considers what is written as weaker due to its inability to clarify uncertain issues, regarding it in this way as being defenseless. If used improperly it needs guidance from those who wrote it.

Only when applying the knowledge of what can inspire, hence what is good and beautiful, can writing render full of purpose, where an argument based on truth achieves





strength. Information is a vital part of writing, becoming in this way also a record of time and age. Verbal messages can be more powerful than written.

Socrates and Phaedrus decide to depart once they formed messages that Phaedrus is to deliver to Lysias and Socrates to Isocrates, a rhetorician himself. After Socrates offers his prayer to Pan and nymphs, they leave.

## Chapter 7 (273-279) Analysis

Writing is an expression that can differ depending on who is expressing it in the same way that truth can differ depending on who is uttering it. Writing can be deceptive as it can conceal true expertise that can be claimed by authors. The audience can assume more importance in the message than it deserves.

The way writing is practiced needs to incorporate the knowledge of the subject as well as proper judgment. Words that incorporate truth can nourish and influence changes. Those that gain from what is written acquire the benefits of happiness.

The issues of substance that involve writing require the incorporation of art. Artistic writing involves the knowledge of the subject matter and is based on truth. Things that are written about need to be defined and subdivided until such subdivision cannot be made any more. At the same time the nature of the soul has to be examined with appropriate arguments addressed to individual souls. Such discourse also needs to be ordered while the aspects of those with its various aspects also applied. In this way a simple effect would be incorporated to simple personalities. These devices can make discourses artistic as they are also ruled by art.

When writing is approached with intelligence it can affect the soul. It can then stand on its own and defend itself.

Writers that engage philosophy in their work are not only writers but also philosophers. If writing is devoid of the principles of truth it is only a composition that attempts to flatter.

Only those who have the knowledge of what is just, beautiful and good can be competent in their craft, creating sound arguments with deeper meaning. Various types of writing can provide insights into various subjects, but when dialectic is applied it can become more effective. Through dialectic words can be more forceful while leading to the achievement of better results.

Writing requires judgment. The ability to perceive merits of writing is part of the ability to judge what is right and wrong. Being critical of one's writing involves the ability to evaluate errors and imperfections. When perceiving faults various principles that need to be applied can also be discovered. Approval by the audience is insufficient to signify the true merits of writing.





Being a true writer requires judgment and the ability to reach the soul while engaging best efforts in what is just, beautiful, and good, with clarity, and value. Such writing incorporates caring, individuality, and inspiring others.



# Characters

## Socrates

Socrates meets Phaedrus while on a walk outside Athens and entices him to engage in discussion about the speech written by Lysias. Socrates has a vast knowledge of philosophy as well as rhetoric. He has developed the habit of asking questions in such a way that answers lead to vital conclusions while forming principles and rules. In this way, various insights on issues involving rhetoric are exchanged and shared. He instructs Phaedrus through dialectic and logical analysis on the way rhetoric should be practiced. Through such insights Plato expresses his own concepts of discourse. Philosophical discussion often pertains to mythical events, Egypt, and Sparta. While he avoids analyzing various legendary deities and events, they become part of allegories. In this way, cicadas participate in human daily activities because of their past. As former humans cicadas were engaged in art. Their connection with gods that deal with art is beneficial to those who practice art rather than be idle. The critical view of Egyptian gods sheds insights on writing, its influence on education meaning.

The statements made make impact due to reason they involve while analysis made engage wisdom derived from experience or others. He adhered to virtue, pursues truth even if such truth hurts or has derogatory implications. Admiration for Sparta is apparent through the use of Spartan proverbs. Apart from issues involving rhetoric, other vital concerns are raised such as the way art should be practiced and its role in society.

## Phaedrus

Phaedrus meets Socrates outside Athens. After spending the entire morning with Lysias, a well-known rhetorician, he wants to refresh himself. He engages in walking as part of his exercise and meets Socrates who insists on hearing the speech. Both of them walk along the Ilissus river until they can rest and discuss the speech. They read the speech that further entices Socrates to provide his insights on the impact of the speech. Phaedrus considers the speech as best that has been written. The repetitions used have for him certain literary flavor that is necessary. His interest in speeches excites Socrates. Phaedrus who is Lysias's lover has gained a certain knowledge on speech that he is keen to deepen. One of his views pertains to the way the truth should be engaged in speeches. He thinks that what is most important is the ability to persuade. Phaedrus is eager to listen to another speech, encouraging Socrates to continue by promising to make a golden statue for him. When Socrates delivers his speech, he feels that he hasn't been fair in his treatment of the topic. Phaedrus wants to continue his discourse with Socrates who yields to the persuasion further stimulated by the interference of gods. Ultimately he delivers another speech.

Socrates is full of appreciation for madness that he considers as beneficial while being part of love. Love also involves the spiritual relationship through its impact on the after



life. Phaedrus expresses his concern about the derogatory way politicians treat Lysias. Socrates regards as the most important concern the ability to write well. He thinks that writing is not shameful as long as it is good. They analyze good and negative aspects of writing, pray to Pan, and proceed to meet their lovers with the messages they have formulated.

## **Anaxagoras**

Anaxagoras taught Pericles who derived from him the knowledge of Rhetoric. In this way, Pericles was also able to acquire the nature of mind.

## **Stesichorus**

Stesichorus, Euphemus' son from Himera, was a poet who wrote about Helen and Trojan War and was blinded. After restoring the negative image of Helen that he incorporated in his poem called Recantation saying that there is no truth in it his sight was restored. The allegory to Stesichorus is intended as a warning that truth should be told. Socrates subsequently attempts to be truthful in his next speeches.

## **Tisias**

Phaedrus studied Tisias and Socrates knew him. Socrates used his argumentation regarding what is the difference between probability and belief as exerted by crowds.

## **Herodicus**

Herodicus suggested that one should walk as far as Megara to maintain health.

## **Anacreon**

Anacreon was a famous Greek lyric poet. Socrates has had high regard for him as he inspires him to do his speech.

## **Acumenus**

Acumenus is a friend of Socrates and Phaedrus and advises that walk is healthier than running. Phaedrus follows his advices and engages in walking around Athens.

## **Sybil**

Socrates thinks Sibyl was inspired to deliver various prophecies while mad.

## Sappho

Socrates mentions Sappho as one of the writers that dealt with love and who probably have been much superior in dealing with this matter than Socrates can be.



# Objects/Places

## Megara

Megara was a place that was located at a distance that was convenient for exercise. Herodicus advised to walk there to maintain health.

## Ilissus

Ilissus or Ilissos was a river in ancient Greece that was along the defensive site of Athens. It was also the son of Poseidon and Demetra worshiped in the Ardittos Hill.

## Mars Hill

Mars Hill is a place from which Boreas might have snatched Pharmacia.

## Attica

Socrates would go around the whole of Attica to listen to the discourse. Attica was between the Cyclades Islands and the Aegean Sea.

## Mhyrrinus

The place where Phaedrus was born.

## Himera

Himera was a city in the north of Sicily where Stesichorus was born.

## Dodona

Women of Dodona have accomplished many things in their madness while others accomplished nothing in their sane state.

## Hellas

There have been many creations made by mad women in Hellas.



## **Temple of Olympian Zeus**

The house of Morychus has been close to the temple of Olympian Zeus.

## **Egyptian Thebes**

Egyptian Thebes was a city where the Egyptian ruler Thamus lived.



# Themes

## The Art of Rhetoric

The art of rhetoric is based on the knowledge of human nature. Through the analysis of human nature arguments formed render conviction in the same way that healing can provide treatment upon the examination of the condition. Only when the conviction reaches the soul it can be effective.

Every speech needs a different approach as it is arranged appropriately to the nature of the soul. To achieve that, speeches employ different styles that may be concise, pitiful, or terrible. Particular styles are used in certain moments being more or less timely.

In courts rhetoric deals more with probability than with truth. What is believed is more important there than the truth. Probability should be kept throughout such speech to achieve its intended effect. It is due to its similarity to truth that probability can be successful.

All types of speaking incorporate rhetoric that has to engage truth in order to be classified as an art. It allows for detecting similar features in various things. Similarities unveil deception in false opinions. Speech as part of persuasion is constructed with the knowledge of truth and the true nature of things. Its ability to persuade also depends on the ability to differentiate between things that are certain and uncertain. The power of rhetoric is especially effective in matters that are doubtful and debatable such as love. A competent speaker can present issues differently while making them also appear different.

Through understanding and practice the art of rhetoric can be mastered. With the knowledge of mind and its negation it is also necessary to be able to know the nature of things. Such ability allows for classification of speaking that produces certain reactions, where persuasion depends on the type of argument used. Different souls require different ways of persuasion.

It is the knowledge of truth that is most essential in speaking and the ability to define matters that are talked about, subdivide them to the core of the matter. When the nature of the soul is analyzed and the speaking ordered the skills transpire through clearness and certainty. The speaker needs to possess the knowledge of what is right. Only through philosophy speaking can attain its merits while dialectical principles provide guidance. To achieve all that is necessary and achieve goals requires work.

## Love

Love is the subject that is debatable while it is also the main theme upon which rhetoric is analyzed. It can be viewed as the pursuit of something noble, acts of passion that incorporate base instincts, and the reflection of our connection with life beyond earth. It



can be viewed on various levels involving conventions, pure desire, and disinterested love. Love has common aspects regardless of partners, sex, or age. Partners experience exclusion, jealousy, fear or rejection, superiority, arguments, and the feeling of being outside reality.

Emotion and passion make love difficult to endure although advantages that create a more enduring relationship are based on reason that makes the experience less exciting. The love between souls is true love, being also certain purification as part of cycles and trials involving reincarnation. The relationship formed in this way leads to the transformation in partners.

Love is also driven by impulses. Such impulses represent horses that drive human chariots. The horse that is white obeys while the black horse is untamed and symbolizes impulses that are out of control. The black horse is eventually controlled and becomes obedient allowing the lover to pursue the beloved. They both reflect appropriately an aspiration towards certain ideal and animal desire as part of passion. Both madness and control are hence part of love.

There is lower and higher love. The lower love is driven by base desires while the other is spiritual, incorporating truth and justice. The rational side fights the emotional and lusts.

The higher love is also inspired by beauty and pursuit of pleasure. It is the true beauty beyond heaven that is most inspiring. Such beauty is formed by memories gained in the afterlife. Spiritual significance of love has its consequences in reincarnation.

## **Spoken versus Written Word**

Plato regarded the spoken word as more superior. Writing seems to be less stimulating than speech as it fails to deliver responses to questions while assuming certain knowledge. Even though writing incorporates knowledge it is unable to defend it. The critique of writing can render it less useful. Stated prophecies in writing can be employed without being questioned. Consequently, too much reliance on the written word can lead to false assumptions—especially since different audiences understand matters differently.

Only one type of writing can be free from weaknesses and faults. Such writing needs to be based on the knowledge of what is beautiful, just, and good. Good writing should also incorporate dialectic. Plato compares such writing to planting, where force can be carried forever through growing.

Only critical writers that have the knowledge of their art along with what is right and wrong can be critical while their work can also be tested according to its merits. Ignorance of what is good and bad leads to lack of professionalism.

The inventor of writing, according to Socrates, is Theuth the Egyptian god who desired that such skill be spread among the Egyptian people. Thamus, who ruled Egypt





considered writing as only partly beneficial if employed narrowly. If learning lacks understanding only part of the knowledge is formed. False assumptions can also be formed when too much reliance on external matters is adopted. Such reliance on external matters can also deprive of the essential ability to use internal guidance in solving problems of life. It is most essential to reach what is internal in life as well as in speech if it is to be effective.

Engaging in writing is only honorable if it incorporates qualities. Good writing has to be based on the knowledge of truth in everything written. Dialectical principles provide guidance to the way writing can be valuable. Hence elements should be defined, classified, until division is no longer possible. Such analysis needs to be coupled with the analysis of the human soul. The written word also deals with various sides of human nature to achieve its artistic qualities.



# Style

## Point of View

Plato expresses his view on rhetoric, its uses, significance, and the way it should be applied while deliberating on the content and manner of making speeches. Through his analysis of the concept of love he shows that only engaging a sense of truth can provoke beneficial insights. Clarity and perfection transpire through the ability to employ justice and beauty that are the qualities that reach the soul. Great efforts that are part of both speech and writing can nourish those they affect. Artistic merits depend on being aware of what is right. Such skill is most essential as bad quality is deemed wrong even if it receives approbation from the crowds. Ignorance in this way invites deficiency.

Through the knowledge of truth that contains its wider aspects and analysis while the right type of argument is applied to the appropriate type of human nature in an organized fashion is the feature of an artistic speech. When containing the body with the beginning, middle, and end, discourses can be true instruments of persuasion. There is no shame in applying skill as long as efforts assure quality.

Words that contain truth can inspire and nourish human souls contributing to happiness. The knowledge and incorporation of truth is the strength in both speech and writing that defends it. Although writing is less interactive it can only be valuable if it employs philosophical and dialectical principles.

Truth is part of internal and external matters. It is pertinent to know the truth incorporated in reality so that similarities can be ascertained. Probabilities that form opinions among crowds along with realities, particulars, and various types of human nature lead to eloquence. Such eloquence can assure certain control over the audience. One should however please gods and therefore aspire rather than only please servants and satisfy crowds. These pursuits are nobler and require more effort rather than mere manipulation.

There is a difference between knowledge and conviction. Conviction is reached through forming opinions that can be achieved by employing probabilities. The art of eloquence incorporates the knowledge of realities and similarities so that opinions can be formed. Opinion formation is also most effective in matters that are debatable.

When concepts convey different meanings to different people only truth can lead to beneficial insights. The content and substance of any utterance, including speech, needs to incorporate the knowledge of truth. Anything that is expressed needs to engage more than opinion but be based on knowledge.

Utterances devoid of such essential elements as the beginning, middle, and conclusion achieve no purpose of persuasion. Engaging true wisdom and philosophy in both



speech and writing can have impact and existence that depends on the quality of expression.

## Setting

The dialogue takes place when Socrates and Phaedrus meet each other on a walk outside Athens. Phaedrus has seen Lysias and listened to his speech at his house. The speech concerned love and its various types and meanings. Socrates is excited at every prospect of hearing speeches and convinces Phaedrus to go along the river Ilissus and discuss the speech. They are to find the place that suits them and engage in a discourse.

Although Socrates expresses his criticism of the topic chosen by Lysias as he would prefer that he deals with subjects that give preference to poor over rich and old over young, he maintains his enthusiasm.

As Lysias has put a great effort into writing, Phaedrus feels that he would do damage to the speech with his own interpretation. He thinks that his interpretation may fail to deliver the quality in Lysias's writing.

Socrates is confident at his assessment of Phaedrus. He knows that Phaedrus must have listened to the discourse a few times and asked Lysias to repeat it. Socrates also suspects that Phaedrus hides the original writing, hence knowing it thoroughly after trying to learn it to the point of exhaustion. He also thinks that Phaedrus was happy to see Socrates as this would give him an opportunity to share it and rehears it.

As Phaedrus tries to gather his thoughts so that he can reproduce the speech in the best way Socrates discovers that he has in fact the written speech hidden underneath his cloak. Upon this discovery Socrates refuses to hear the interpretation but wants instead the speech to be read in its entirety.

They then turn off the road walking in the river along its course until they find a plane tree. After discussing the story of Boreas who took with him the nymph Orithyia, they reach a place where Phaedrus begins reading the speech.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the dialogue is full of enthusiasm while providing various insights. The first dialogue has rhythm along with reason. The first speech that is full of inspiration incorporates harmony and thorough reasoning. Irony that is engaged in dialogues pertains to widely held opinions. While ironic and reflexive elements build up the argument, common sense in the end prevails.

The meaning of the language involves the examination of love and rhetoric. Along with various myths and references, there is order and structure. Metaphors provide poetic references incorporating reason driving the chariot led by the horses of passion and



rational approach. Symbolism renders certain poetic allure to the dialogues. Impulses drive moral aspects hence need to be controlled. Mixing sense and nonsense gives it a particular flavor while allegories may also lead to certain confusion.

The essential meaning in the dialogue is the criticism of rhetoric that is viewed by Plato as lacking purpose or truth. Such view is conducted is presented through arguments that lead to the final conclusion. Various devices employed, such as mannerism or trickery are ridiculed by Plato as a writer and a philosopher who finds simplicity and truth most rewarding. Rhetoricians are criticized as some may be ignorant of composition, succumbing to superficiality and vanity.

Language is full of enthusiasm as both Socrates and Phaedrus deal with their subjects with passion. Engaging in analysis combined with sharp insights is driven by curiosity to pursue anything of interest.

Various connections between distinct insights unveil harmony, where the world is viewed with irony while subjected to deep considerations. Plato connects everyday matters that are local with spiritual and eternal. The pervading reasoning and analysis is mixed with references to myths verging on fantasy, where metaphors encourage deeper meanings.

## Structure

The structure of the work follows a certain succession in a conversation involving various themes, such as love, rhetoric, the soul, and mythology. The main emotion of the soul is love. Plato engages in various topics that, combined, form a certain meaning. The dialogue seems to be structured freely although it emphasizes certain points.

Phaedrus is a dialogue that is quite irregular. It consists of speeches by Socrates, where the first speech is most balanced and second speech is the criticism of the first. The first speech praises non-love while other subjects are also considered at random. The third dialogue has more dialectic principles.

The dialogue is structured in a way that allows for more than one idea to be incorporated in the work that seems loosely arranged. It starts with a speech on love but the second part involves the formulation of the view on what is rhetoric and what should be involved in its practice. More than skill and practice is required to achieve its mastery, hence the knowledge of this discipline is crucial.

The two speeches made by Socrates that follow the first are based on conclusion of what is love. One supports the view that is expressed by Lysias that love that is dispassionate and involves an older suitor can be more beneficial. The second speech involves the true nature of love as being part of the gift of madness. The discussion of the way the soul is involved in love leads to the analysis of other aspects such as the way immorality and soul affects love.

The discussion involves the assessment of the speeches and the way rhetoric is used there that pertains also to its broader application. Apart from defining what rhetoric is as an art, various aspects of proficiency in speech are established. The substance needs to incorporate form that contain structural elements involving the beginning, the middle, and the conclusion.



## Quotes

Socrates: "Either I know Phaedrus, or I no longer know myself." 228 p. 8

Socrates: " To inquire first into extraneous matter, I take to be absurd." 230 p. 10

Socrates: "I am a lover of learning; the countryside and the trees will not instruct me." p. 11

Socrates: "That love is a desire is clear to all; again, that non-lovers too desire the beautiful, we know." p. 19

Socrates: "Accordingly, in what concerns the mind, a man in love is no wise a helpful guide and comrade." p. 20

Socrates: "If Love be, as indeed he is, a god or a thing divine, he can be nothing evil." p. 25

Socrates: "But in reality the greatest blessings come to us through madness, for there is madness that is given from on high." p. 26

"Now as for justice, temperance, and whatever else is precious unto souls, no gleam of them appears in their semblances here below; with groping faculties hardly do some few of us by recourse to images have glimpses of the generic form which is imaged." p. 33

Socrates: " Oh what amazing love would Wisdom cause in us if she sent forth an image of herself that entered the sight, as the image of Beauty does!" p. 34

Socrates: "The disgrace, methinks, begins when some one speaks and writes, not well, but basely, badly." p. 43

Socrates: "Clearly, therefore, when people form opinions at variance with reality, and are duped, the deception filters in through resemblances." p. 48

Socrates: "The function of a speech, we saw, is to win the soul; and hence the man who aims to be an artistic speaker must necessarily know the soul in all its species." p. 61

Socrates: "But when you strive for noble ends, it is also noble to endure whatever pain the effort may involve."

Socrates: "In advance, a man must know the truth about each particular of which he speaks or writes." p. 68

## Topics for Discussion

What is the meaning of love as seen by Lysias?

Why does Socrates consider the subject of love to be debatable?

What is the view of rhetoric as seen by Socrates?

What is the meaning of higher love for Socrates and why is it important in the consideration of rhetoric?

What is the meaning of the soul that is so crucial in considering all arts?

Why does Socrates doubt the way writing and speech were produced in Athens?

What is the essence of good speaking and writing?

Why is dialectic essential in arts and reasoning?