Writing versus Speaking and the Quest for Self-Knowledge in Plato's *Phaedrus*

Eric Stein

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Political Science

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Public Policy and Public Administration) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
April 2010

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-67163-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-67163-4

Abstract

Writing versus Speaking and the Quest for Self-Knowledge in Plato's *Phaedrus*

Eric Stein

In Plato's *Phaedrus* Socrates tells his interlocutor Phaedrus about how writing is a copy of speech and thus inferior to speech. But it can be suggested that this is less of an indictment than it is a warning. Writing is a medium that induces the appearance of knowledge but not knowledge per se. The Platonic dialogue teaches in its form how writing can be useful and this is when it can induce the quest for self-discovery and self-knowledge onto its readers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my parents! Thanks to their effort and sacrifices I was given the opportunity to complete my bachelors and masters. I thank them for their support, encouragement, and love they have provided me over the years. To my brother, Rodrigo I would also like to thank for having had an important presence during the last couple of years. That he put up with me was in itself worth thanking but also that he was there for me.

To Professor Horst Hutter, my first reader, more than a supervisor to me he has been my mentor. In the last six years I have had the privilege of being his student, TA, and now have him as supervisor for my thesis. I am in deep gratitude for the insights and teachings which were more than just academic, they are valuable life lessons. May he continue to enlighten minds of students for years to come. It has been an honor working under your supervision sir!

To my second reader, Professor Marelene Sokolon, I like to thank for all her help in clarifications and for grounding this project. Her comments and remarks helped give direction and way to this project which was sometimes vague and convoluted. I thank her for her dedication and time.

To Professor Ed King, although not directly involved, I also want to thank for the years of valuable education and insights. Having been his student and TA helped me indirectly in conceptualizing and articulating this project.

I would also like to make a special thank you note to Professors Axel Huelsemeyer, Travis Smith, and Fred Krantz. Their passion inspired more than just curiosity in me; it encouraged a deep appreciation for the humanities and social

sciences. I have the greatest of respect and admiration for their charismatic styles of teaching and passion for their work.

Finally I would like to thank the Concordia Political Science staff for their technical help in particular to Julie Blumer and Jeannie Krumel for all the clarifications made and to Patricia McFarlane for all the borrowed staples.

In the Loving Memory of my Grandmother Margret (la Mimi) Heinemann

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION:

Oh most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the element of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them (Phaedrus 274e).

This statement is said to have been made by the Egyptian god Thamus to his counterpart Theuth upon the latter's invention of writing.[1] Thamus explains that while one man can give birth to elements of an art or craft only another can opine as to how this new invention will benefit or hinder others (*Phaedrus* 274e). As an observer, Thamus predicts that while the creation of writing is based on a noble principle, primarily to act as a tool that will help humans in their intellectual endeavors; it will, however, hinder them once it is put to practice. Humans will become reliant on the written word to such an extent that, rather than developing intellectually, the opposite will happen as they will become too reliant on writing, debilitating their capacity for memory. Humans may become too reliant on this new craft, ensuring their dependency on the craft to the point that their societies may not be able to be without writing.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

It may appear as problematic or even paradoxical that Plato uses the figure of Socrates in a written dialogue as a voice of criticism of the art of writing. If Plato the author thinks that writing is inferior to speaking then he contradicts himself by writing. Likewise he uses the figure of Socrates, someone who never wrote, within a written dialogue in order to criticize writing. This leads me to the research questions

[1] It is said that Theuth also discovered numbers and calculation as well as geometry, astronomy, and even the games of draughts and dice (Phaedrus 274d). In the dialogue Socrates recounts a myth he has heard to Phaedrus after the two have spoken about love and then rhetoric. The fact that Socrates has heard this will stress the importance of orality which Socrates relies on as opposed to reading.

that I propose to be the core of my thesis: What does this critique imply? Why make a critique about writing through writing?

As with any Platonic dialogue there is more to what the dialogue states literally and this story has its meaning and purpose. As Leon Craig points out a Platonic dialogue is a complex entity which has been carefully crafted with each word positioned in an exact place as if it were a brick forming a building (Craig xxx). The *Phaedrus* has Socrates and Phaedrus discussing on questions of love and rhetoric. After having talked in depth about speaking and the ways to ensure a proper approach to the art of speech, the two touch on whether writing is better as a means of communication than speech. Socrates will explain that in fact writing is not an adequate means for communicating and is inferior to speaking.[2]

One important element that is raised in this passage is the place writing has or should have within human affairs. Although Socrates will claim that speaking is better than writing, writing still has an important place among human beings. The goal is to figure out what kind of place this art should have, and to ensure that this is achieved and improved so that its healing capabilities are met and not its killing ones. As it turns out writing is described as being a *pharmakon* (drug) (*Phaedrus* 274e).

Writing has to be treated as a compendium (companion) for self-development and self-knowledge. In Platonic pedagogy the goals of education and knowledge are to be seen as steps towards the Delphic pronouncement, "Know thyself." The

[2] Arguably, Plato touches upon several insights with that section alone that raise a series of philosophical questions that to this date are still relevant. For example, one can extrapolate from this discussion on writing and see this discussion as a metaphor for the role of technology in general in the place of human affairs. Moreover, there is the question raised by Jacques Derrida about the craft of writing acting as a pharmakon (which in Greek means drug); thus having the potential to heal but also to kill depending on the dosage and the frequency with which it is used (Johnson xxiv). These are just two examples of the numerous debates that the dialogue allows for.

dialogues are to be used as a tool for those readers who are willing to internalize the teachings being offered. This can only be done if the reader regards himself or herself as the unit of analysis surrounding ethical questions, emotional matters, aspects of psychological and physical wellbeing, intellectual enrichment, and many more elements that are uncovered within the text. To understand Plato is in this regard of secondary importance.

There are also profound implications that arise in this analysis and what it entails for the exercise of reading. In the Western tradition there have been great books and even sacred books which account for the origins of humans as well as acting as guidance on ethical matters. In this sense "learning" how to read such books is an important endeavor that would allow the reader to gain intellectual and personal enrichment from these texts. One of the problems of reading is the likelihood to not understand what the author or authors are pointing at in the text. Hence learning how to read involves more than literacy, which Platonic dialogues seek to investigate and present.

THE PROBLEM OF WRITING:

For Jacques Derrida Plato presents in the *Phaedrus* a false dichotomy between writing and speaking (Johnson xxiv). The dialogue states that whereas speech is an adequate medium to communicate (given that it can present instant clarifications among those who engage in a conversation) writing is problematic for it is nuanced, ambiguous, and must cope with the fact that it may be constrained by distance across space and time (from the writer to the reader) (Johnson ix). Writing is also an

imitation of speaking and thus is of lesser value for it cannot be used as an adequate medium to uncover truth (Johnson ix).

But Derrida sees in the condemnation of writing within the context a problematic discourse which is prone to construct an artificial binary relationship between speaking and writing (Johnson xxv). The subordination of writing to speaking stems from a false prejudice which asserts that when speaking one is less removed from the audience than when writing (Johnson ix). The reality is that one is as removed from the audience when one speaks as when one writes for there is never total clarity between the transmitter and receptor, the only difference is that the speaker is within the immediate presence of the listener whereas the writer is seldom near the reader, especially if the distance between reader and writer consists of time (Johnson ix). Yet Plato still wrote, and for Derrida this accounted to serve as a form of parricide (Johnson xxvi). Parricide understood as writing killing off its paternal source (i.e. speaking) but also the parricide of Socrates, who never wrote (Johnson xxvi). Derrida thus, takes this to show that Plato and its "offshoot" "Platonism" display a deep disdain for writing as being problematic and inherently dangerous as means of communication, while simultaneously favor heavily speaking as an adequate means to truth (Johnson xxvi).

But not all see the critique of writing as exclusively a condemnation of writing. For authors like Leon Craig, while the dialogue illustrates the problematic of writing, it also presents an attempt to mitigate the shortcomings of this craft (Craig xxi). In writing in dialogical format, Plato is absent and presents a simulacrum of a conversation that imitates speaking and thus is capable of disseminating different

ideas without having the author appear to be contradicting himself (Craig xxxiii). The characters serve as masks that can echo different valid perspectives and be shown to be at odd with one another (Craig xxxiv). Moreover, as an imitation of conversation the dialogue is capable of developing an understanding on a subject matter, for it presents generally different if not opposing sides on an issue through different characters which enables a synthesis on a given subject comprising aspects of the two contending perspectives (this is what is called dialectics) (Craig xxxiii-xxxiv).[3]

Aside from censorship a piece of writing could end up in the hands of someone who lacked not just the knowledge about the subject matter but could also gather foolish if not dangerous assumptions from that piece of writing; Plato thus, sought to mitigate this by "hiding within the text itself" the intended essence and meanings of that text for those who were well versed and initiated into a certain mode of thinking (Craig xx). Writing esoterically enables the piece to be both democratic (accessible to anyone who can read) but also elitist by having the core meanings hidden, requiring extensive work in order to be deciphered, which most are unable or unwilling to do (Craig xxi).

Therein lies a crucial element of Platonic dialogues, they are difficult and are not meant for everyone (Craig xxi). The emphasis on esotericism is made through exoteric means. In part a literal read of the text is inescapable because of the very nature of language, especially written language[4].

The myth of Theuth and Thamos literally states that writing is inferior to speaking. Since the literal read is always present when reading any text the dialogue

[3] For example, in *The Republic* the question of justice is discussed in great length without ever truly answering what it is.

[4] More will be discussed on the Pre-Socratic notion of language as a medium utilized to point at things.

introduces a remedy by its own format. Literally characters speak of issues in a certain order. Literally they state their opinions. At this level all those who are literate would concur on that notion. When it comes to gathering the meaning behind the statements being made, then that would change and different interpretations on this would arise. The dialogue purposefully obscures this and expects the reader to come with having read other works beforehand to which tacit reference may be made, having some understanding about themes discussed, and seeing how they relate back to the reader himself (or herself). A foolish interpretation may still be drawn but since Plato never states anything in his own name, he may become exonerated from such read.

By remaining quiet on any issue, Plato is in fact inducing thought and contemplation. The answer, as is the case with much of what Plato produces, is never fully disclosed. There is no "unit of measurement" or threshold found in Plato to discern what is the "right" way to do anything. However, a person may contemplate whether the lessons drawn are relevant in their life. The goal is not so much to produce an answer but ask the right questions concerning any given matter (Craig xxxvi).

The Phaedrus as a dialogue raises questions concerning writing and rhetoric more generally that are never answered but can raise awareness and insight as to the complexity and importance of these issues. Writing holds an important place in the dissemination of the Socratic humanist project of self awareness and self knowledge, given its capacity to reach audiences which are distant in space or time. Not only does the dialogue explain this but it also exemplifies it.

The aim of the dialogue is more than just being propositional; it also seeks to be inspirational for the sake of a better life. What exactly is the better life is itself an issue that can never be fully resolved and, in full circle, one delves again into thought and contemplation about such subject matters. This shows in part the cyclical nature of Plato, when one question is fully exposed, another one comes up and when that one is fully exposed then another one and so on and so forth (keeping in mind that the challenge of Platonic readings is to understand what is the question and why it is relevant and not what is the answer since there may be different answers for different epochs and different places).

While Derrida shows that there is distance between speaker and listener as there is between writer and reader, the dialogue needs to be seen more as a guide into learning about oneself rather than a series of definite statements concerning the ills of writing. In this sense the dialogue lends itself to illustrate that there are indeed problems of communication at both written and oral levels given the human condition which we all have and of which are invited to discover for ourselves our individual situation by the dialogue.

RHETORIC: THE ART OF KNOWING WHAT TO SAY WHEN TO SAY AND TO WHOM TO SAY IT, AND WHY.

Rhetoric can be understood as a craft, a skill involving persuasion through the use of language. In other words it is a means to an end. The means being, acquiring the ability to communicate or transmit a message from an emitter to a receptor with the knowledge of what is necessary to state how, when, and why (and inversely what not to say, when, how, and why). Rhetoric aims at persuasion; to induce a particular

understanding or perception on a given matter or theme, or to induce a certain course of action not present prior to the initial act of persuasion. However, persuasion serves as a means to an end. Rhetoric seeks to point at questions or options that may have an impact in the development of human beings.

Platonic dialogues aim to persuade about matters concerning one's course of life. But this does not mean that implicit in Plato's dialogues lie a formula for maximizing one's life. Instead, it is suggested, Platonic dialogues seek to improve the condition in which humans find themselves. We are sentient with the capacity of cognition and communication; we are capable of transforming our landscape; we have emotions that govern our being in our life time; etc. Moreover, we are bound by our very nature to live in societies and communities with other people. Since despite our existence as individual creatures, we cannot exist on our own and have our basic needs met (such as food, shelter, water etc) echoing a point which is stressed by Aristotle when stating that the individual who can exist on his own outside the city is a, "either a beast or a god but not a man" (*Politics* 1253a4-5).

What does this mean for us in our lives; how can we ensure that we live a "good" life keeping in mind all that can plague us and all that brings joy; when have we had too much of one thing and very little of another. By asking questions the Platonic dialogue seeks that one become aware of his/her living condition, not just materially but psychologically as well and through awareness strive for a life of sufficiency (neither too excessive nor too deficient) where one is capable of engaging in making choices and decisions that are for the wellbeing of this person. However,

there is no certainty that the choices one makes are flawless and one can accidentally chose wrong.

While choosing may seem a simple matter in the Platonic understanding it actually is not, for what we have in the realm of civil society and with our norms and mores provide the "illusion" of choice rather than the real act of it. One of the challenges that arise from this exercise is the realization that much of what we understand and hold as "true" or "self evident" about ourselves is in fact not so. In fact we tend to live a life in which we are estranged from our reality. It is by becoming aware of this condition that we can work towards our removal of the "veil" of conventions that impede us to see our "true" selves, while simultaneously remaining within societies from which we cannot escape. In other words, we can become aware of the dogmas that we may unconsciously be clinging onto because of our rearing which may in turn be an obstacle against fully developing the inner essence of ourselves.

THE PROBLEMS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF WRITING:

Speaking may be understood to be a better mode of communication than writing because it is more suited and more capable as a craft of adapting itself to an audience, context, or circumstance. Speaking is more malleable to circumstance and, as a means, more prone to be adapted by the speaker to rectify, clarify, or question what is being said. Since rhetoric aims at persuasion, such an adaptable modicum is suited best to point out to an audience (either of one or many, or even just of one's self) these questions and induce self knowledge and self transformation. Speaking by its nature is rhetorical in that aims to persuade. However not all speaking is equally

persuasive, hence why rhetoric is also a skill in that a speaker must learn to adapt his/her message to a particular audience corresponding to a particular circumstance.

Writing cannot do the same because of its very nature. Once writing has been imprinted on a page it is "stuck." It cannot answer, question, or retaliate, nor can it defend itself. It presents itself the same way to anybody who can read (unlike when speaking, a written work cannot adapt itself to an audience). Although the message of the text may be understood by some and not by others, the words present themselves in exactly the same way and order to all readers and therefore the text cannot modify its speech in order to ensure that all those who read it understand it. Writing cannot prevent, as much as speaking, of being misrepresented and misunderstood. A reader may have a preconceived aim when encountering the text.

Once a work has been written down it is impossible for the work itself to adapt itself to a reader in order to clarify doubts to the reader or answer back at an inaccurate read. When the work is written and removed from its author, it is left at the mercy of the reader. The work in this sense always needs to be defended by its father, the author since a reader may render an incorrect interpretation of the text.

In this regard writing as a medium is poised with too many shortcomings that prevent it from bridging the gap of transmission between the author's thoughts and the reader's comprehension since the author is usually separated from the reader by space and time. It is impossible for the reader to comprehend the essence of the author's motivation and desires just from reading. But as it turns out speech is no better than writing, for speech too cannot bridge the gap between the speaker's intents and motives to the listener. No form of human communication can do that.

But that is not the core of the critique against writing. Rather, given that writing cannot answer back it cannot elaborate, explain, or clarify what it states. However readers may and tend not to consider that upon their read. Readers see writing as a transmission of information from the author to them. Hence, the core of the critique is that writing gives the impression of knowledge and learning to the reader when in fact it does not do so. Writing tends to solidify dogma in that the reader takes at face value what is written to be true.

Most of those who read fall for the presentation of writing as authoritative and question very little (like seeing a: a) man or woman in a white robe and therefore inferring that they are doctors and b) that they are smart). Writing, rather than being used as a companion to speaking and an aid for memory, ends up informing preconceived opinions. People will read any given work and infer that it must be right because it is written, since only that which is truthful will ever be written, or dismiss it entirely as it does not correspond with their preconceived opinions.

Writing does have an advantage over speaking, its greater longevity. A piece of writing, if taken care of, can outlive the producer. Writing records what has been said to be later re-examined and discussed. Moreover, writing permits the reader, the receptor, to begin wherever he/she whishes to engage with the text whenever he/she can do so. In addition, the reader can read and re-read the text over and over again. In speaking it is impossible to repeat verbatim in the exact order, sequence, and intonation what has been said and virtually impossible to permit for the listener to choose where and when (in a speech for example) he/she wants to begin listening. Writing in this sense is better suited to adapting to time.

THE OVERCOMING OF THE PROBLEMS OF WRITING:

A solution to this problematic is "hiding" the meaning or essence of the text within the text itself. This means that the aim is not to understand what the text is about. Instead, the goal is to have the reader struggle to find within the metaphors and other literary devices being used at what exactly is the text pointing. By "hiding" the main points of the text, it becomes harder to arrive at a conclusion based simply on the literal reading of the text.

For this paper I will make the distinction between esotericism in structure and in meaning of a written text. A text can be esoteric in its structure in that it becomes very difficult to understand given the usage of words, or syntax by the author. It would mean that to know and understand the message of a text one would have to be well versed in a specific terminology or style of writing that can only be acquired through time spent learning such terms or style. An example of this would be a text written in a medical journal. Given that most literate people lack the kind of knowledge of terms and concepts used within medicine, any text concerning this craft becomes esoteric and only those with a proper medical training will garner an understanding from it.

When a text is esoteric in meaning then it is not so much what is being said that becomes a challenge but rather how and why. There may be themes and morals that may be tacitly enveloped within the text itself that are never fully proposed literally within the content. An example of this is a fairytale. Usually fairytales are literally stories involving characters and creatures doing fantastic if not impossible feats by human standards. But the aim of the fairytale is to transmit a message or a

moral hidden within the text itself. After reading literally a fairy tale one may ask of what the characters or events are metaphors. Moreover, what the story as a whole is a metaphor of and in so doing one may see past what the story literally states and ponder at what the story aims. Normally these stories aim at educating on psychological, moral, or philosophical issues about human beings. In this thesis, I will speak of esotericism in meaning when speaking of Platonic dialogues.

To be clear there is no "fool proof" method of writing. The hermeneutical circle, that is ascertaining the exact idea being transcribed from the moment of insight of the author into written language and then into the insight of the reader can never be closed. It is safe to say that one can never know with absolute certainty exactly what it was that Plato meant or intended. Nor is this even the goal. The fact of the matter is that the hermeneutical circle always remains open for although one can read and understand what the text may mean literally and even metaphorically this does still not fully disclose what went inside the mind of the producer at the moment of conception of the idea behind the text or his/her impetus for writing it.

The issue is thus not trying to fully unearth the author's motives but rather to see how the text itself can work for the benefit of the reader. In this sense the goal is for a form of relationship formed between the reader and the written work. Much like the digestion of food, which helps the consumer of food more so than the producer (or the source for that matter), Platonic dialogues have the potential to act as source of "nutrition" for the reader's soul.

What matters is the relationship the reader develops with the dialogue. To just literally read of a text like the *Phaedrus* is a myopic effort that does not benefit the

reader intellectually. But to engage with the text enables further insight not just about what the text states but also about how it relates back with the reader. Since the questions being exposed are about human affairs then the reader is forced to ponder on the many allegories and other literary devices, "where do I fit in this?"

THE CONCEPT OF TRUTH AND "CORRECT OPINION"

What we find across numerous cultures is *doxa* (opinion) about what is true (Klein 119). There is never a full assessment of truth by anyone because of human fallibility. However, this does not preclude the existence of *truth*, rather it just means that it is inaccessible to humans. Nevertheless, in the Platonic understanding, human societies partly aim at truth for the sake of their survival. For example when humans learn that when a person drowns they die this may inform the wellbeing of the society so that it takes precautions in order to prevent exposure to large bodies of water. In this case knowing the truth about drowning may work in the interest of the social order. However, it is not always the case that the interest of the society relies on what is *true*. The utility of social order tends to prevail over what is true and the two may be at odds with each other. An example of this would be the realization that constructing dwellings along places where there may eventually be a flooding is not prudent. Nevertheless, if a society has gotten used to such practice it may find itself unwilling to desist from building more dwellings in places where floods can come. While the truth about flooding would suggest a different pattern, the social convention may remain reluctant to accept this realization.

It is social conventions which the Platonic dialogues aim to examine. The dialogue exposes them as conventions and not truth. Normally this is done by having

one character, usually Socrates, induce a series of questions onto his interlocutors. At first these interlocutors are convinced they know what is true on any subject, but it is amidst a series of questions presented by Socrates that they realize that they have only opinion and no more.

Despite this realization the aim of the dialogue is not to dismiss conventions. Instead the dialogue seeks to induce a critical aspect when confronted with these conventions. One should wonder as to why they exist and what value they have. For example in the *Republic*, different concepts of justice depicted can be understood as being set upon conventions of what it is to be just. Moreover, these conventions themselves rely on the supposition of the existence of justice as a concept. But what is most difficult is to see the place from which all these suppositions emerge. This may mean that one has to see what it is that links all these different, sometimes even contradicting, notions of justice as well as the suppositions about the existence of justice. While one never gets a full picture of the "whole," given out human fallibility, one can get "glimpses" of the "whole" from which justice emerges (Klein 122). This is what is referred to as φιλοσοφία, *philosophia* (philosophy) (Klein 124).

This is extremely difficult for it is our tendency to rely on what is familiar to us (Klein 124). Moreover, it can also be dangerous for those who engage in this process; for it may create tension with the existing political order and consensus about what is "right" and may therefore ensure alienation and even persecution.

Therefore, philosophy is more than mental activity involved in attaining more concise knowledge about the "whole" of things. What is at stake is how this relates back to the person engaging in philosophy. In a sense one becomes the "unit of

analysis" in this process. The task is to decide which opinions are worthy of informing the actions and decisions one makes. If one can see that these decisions and actions are bad for one the challenge lies also in changing the course of action which one undertakes. This can become revolutionary provided that there is an element of self transformation. Only when one can become aware of his/her place within a certain context can that same person strive for improving the state of his/her society.

In the case of writing it is important to realize that we all are influenced and rely on opinion and thought that we gain through the conventions which mold us, when reading a text. Moreover, writing is itself a technique that disseminates opinion. When we learn about how we rely on opinion we can discriminate between "correct opinion" and "bad opinion." When reading a text we can contemplate the suppositions behind the assertions and negations being made by the author, as well as what is being hinted by the piece so that we can then regard a particular piece of writing as a worthy compendium in the self-development or a noxious one.

CHAPTERS:

Chapter 1: Writing versus Speaking:

Chapter one will focus on writing versus speaking; two forms of *dianoia* (discursive thought) which aim at deliberating and producing a message. Writing is said to be a copy of speaking, it is also a technology. Writing is inferior to speaking on some levels. It cannot adapt itself to an audience. It says the same thing over and over again. A written work has a harder time in dealing with the nuances of an audience (for example mannerisms, mores, etc). But amidst writing's incompleteness comes it biggest problem, the propensity to present itself as a disseminator of

knowledge when in fact it disseminates *doxa*. What we have is not pure and complete understanding of an object or subject, instead we have trust on the consistent assumptions we make about phenomena because they are consistent with our observations.

Despite this, writing does have a couple of advantages over speaking. It has greater longevity than speech. A reader can also start and end wherever he/she pleases. If something is not clear then the reader can go back many times over the passage and read and re-read. Speech cannot do that.

However, when we examine closer at what is at stake, the problem of perception and comprehension, then there is greater nuance. Writing is extremely problematic, for it lends itself to misinterpretation and misappropriation of the text by the reader. The hermeneutical circle cannot be closed; this means that a reader's insight can never be the same as the insight acquired by the author at the moment of the conception of the text. But this also occurs with speech. The insight of the speaker, has to be translated into language which requires for the speaker to adapt to conventionaly set rules of grammar and rhetoric before he can communicate them, then the receptor must listen decode the message and arrive at his/her insight about what is being transmitted. Therein lies the issue; the insight of the transmitter will never be identical to that of the receptor either in writing or in speech. This illustrates part of the problem of language. It is an incomplete medium of communication.

If language is an incomplete mode of communication then why do we still rely upon it? To examine this question perhaps we have to ask beforehand can we attain a perfect mode of communication. The likely answer to this is probably not.

Nor does it seem to matter. Language can be understood as a conventional set of metaphors utilized for labeling and describing purposes. For example, that we call a certain animal a horse does not mean that the truth of the matter lies in the name. In other words, it is not a horse because the names we give it make it such. Language however has a powerful effect in shaping us. We cannot live outside language, for it is an indispensable part of our social being. We cannot live without or outside the society and our society cannot live without language.

Chapter 2: Truth

In order to fully understand the problematic of language we need to understand the idea of *truth* as a theme in Platonic dialogues. Certainly there will be no clear answer as to what *truth* is. Yet *truth* is that which language aims at, usually most of the times, when it sets to label or describe, in principle it does so under the notion that it is being as close as possible to the truth of the matter. We utilize language as a means to express our insights about what we perceive to be true and/or when we do not know something we also use language as a medium to ascertain knowledge about that and hopefully have insight about it. Thus, when we see a horse we call it horse and not donkey, not because the label is the 'true' name of the creature but that, behind the word bear there is a series of definitions and codes we utilize that render a mental image that fits better the creature we see as bear and not as wolf. As we perceive *onta* (objects), both natural and/or manmade, we seek to 'make sense' of our perceptions for ourselves, through discursive thought (*dianoia*). In a way it is like 'processing' that which has been seen. The more the subject thinks of what has been perceived the more that same subject will rely on his/her imagination

which will re-create that which has been perceived (for sight it will create pictures, for sound it will regenerate sound etc.).

It is through *dianoia* that we arrive at *noesis* or insight about the perceived subject or object; there is something particular that distinguishes this subject/object from the rest. At this point I am still relying on an image in my mind to make any statements about it. Yet, we still cannot say we 'know' about the subject/object in question for I, the subject who perceives, am now relying on my imagination to make assessments. For example, through imagination I can draw links between different kinds of horses like the Arabian horse or even a pony[5] and label them under the name horse and not include a donkey, a zebra, or even a tiger or a lion.

But at this point we have clearer conceptions of *onta*, yet not more precise knowledge on the matter. In the example of the bears, we have been able to distinguish bears from lions and tigers but not say we know more about bears themselves. In order to increment our knowledge on subject or object we need to move beyond *noesis*. The change comes when, from that insight, I move towards *episteme* no longer relying on the image but rather at a concrete science of the object in question. So in the example of the horse, *episteme* would ensure we understood why this is a horse, no longer having to differentiate the creature from others. Through *episteme* the subject is now the bearer of knowledge about the object in question.

But this does not mean I have full knowledge on the 'truth' of an object, in this case the bear. It means that I have arrived at *aletheia* (literally, that which discloses itself) through the idea about this creature in hand. The horse has unhidden

[5] Ponies are sometimes classified as different from horses.

itself to me and I have attained fuller knowledge about it. I have not yet understood the truth about the creature, merely I have deepened my understanding from the insight I had earlier about how this creature was not a donkey etc. Although I am still at episteme I must rely on language and convention. I cannot escape those. Therefore although I may have episteme or scientific knowledge about the creature I must rely on the convention of language in order to designate a name for it and other conventional languages such as a scientific method that can be imitated by others in order to verify my conclusions about what I see. This is said to be what gives way to the development of the natural sciences. Now man can understand the world and have command over it through technology.

It is important to note that this does not mean that humans have through science a vision of *truth*. Rather, it means that the experience of *aletheia*; or unhideness can lead to insight and more over intensified understanding on a matter, but as the saying goes 'even bridges collapse' referring that no one has perfect knowledge on any subject or object in question and is ultimately still operating under the realm of convention. The point of *episteme* is to read and digest the *logos* of *onta*. The bias of science is the reduction of *onta* and *physis* in general as having an inherent *logos* (rational, detectable, understandable, and readable nature) and through *episteme* one can identify, see, and understand that *logos*. Thus we derive the conception of truth as correspondence. What one perceives and derives from the logos of any *onta* must correspond with the *onta* in perception. Thus when I say that the light is on it is true because my observation corresponds to that which I perceive, in this case that the light is on and not off.

Plato breaks with the notion that alethia is more experiential. For the pre-Socratic philosophers there is no universal truth but rather an array of experiences that may shed insight about the state of being (Han 7). Plato introduces a metaphysical dimension to truth since the truth about objects and concepts lies beyond their immediate presence and is found within the realm of the universal.

However, scientific knowledge too is a convention, which relies at the end of the day on axioms and convictions that are accepted by a scientific community. Although we can see that science helps us in the quest to knowledge it is itself as incomplete (as any other means) to knowledge that we derive. To remain 'stuck' in acquiring the *episteme* of *onta* by reading their *logos* is an oversimplification that brings a series of problems. The conception of the cosmos is that nothing stands alone and everything is part of a greater unity.

The tendency of science is to further the compartmentalized approach to knowledge. Concepts are reduced to an atomistic level in order to gain 'command' over them. Thus, although one may gain scientific knowledge about a subject or an object, episteme reduces the subject/object and isolates it from its place in the cosmos. Science in the end is itself a convention that may deepen the knowledge of the particular but because of this, must always compartmentalize and atomize as much as possible an aspect of any subject. For example, one goes from the study of the cosmos (order) to that of chemistry to that of organic-chemistry to biochemistry to molecular biochemistry and so forth. Science requires specialization. But this is not what Plato is pointing at. For although episteme is an outcome for the search for

knowledge it is not the ultimate goal, I would argue. The *agathon*, or the good would imply that there be a greater and more holistic approach to knowledge.

Chapter 3: Why did Plato write dialogues?

This is not meant to provide a definitive interpretation on this matter. Instead it is important to touch on certain aspects that may clarify us further the question of Plato and writing and speaking. We had mentioned earlier that Plato does not seek to present a case for relativism, i.e. any interpretation is valid. However, it must be also pointed out that seeing Platonic dialogues as renditions of scientific understanding over certain themes, such as justice, truth, love etc is also incorrect.

Thus Plato writes in a manner that will challenge our convictions on any matter. The goal is to induce the *elencus* (questioning) which never arrives at propositional knowledge on any matter. Instead it exposes all notions of truth about a matter as conventional. Without defining anything one is forced to examine the subject closer and see that one may just have conventional knowledge on that matter. If anything this may help one get better grounded and understand why one has certain convictions. The elencus induces self knowledge. One has to ask why "I think a certain way about certain matters?" "What is that position informed by etc." It is only though self-knowledge that one can have a clearer appreciation of knowledge, it informs us about aspects of ourselves. Our interests etc. are aspects of who we are and the Platonic dialogue seeks to induce further contemplation on self-knowledge; never fully to provide an answer to the questions but to induce a friendship onto one's self. *Askesis*, or exercise, for the mind is an important aspect for the last chapter. Writing should induce *askesis* as a means to self knowledge. Speech and writing that

induces *askesis* of the mind, self questioning is a vehicle that promotes this conception of self knowledge.

Plato teaches this not in what he states but how he states it, through the dialogue. As the reader examines closely the text and realizes the exposition doxa, he/she may too realize the convictions that operate within him/her. This person can then seek to induce contemplation as to what is worthy and what not but more importantly upon that realization this person can now live by that new sense of conviction. While one is still bound to conviction one can now "own" it as opposed to repeat it by acculturation. Moreover, one can be willing to always learn more about the limitations of these convictions and this sense always grow as a person. This is not something that all can do but something that is hoped will be achieved by those of philosophical inclinations. In their pursuit of wisdom they will induce self-knowledge and with this self-transformation. That is the goal of the dialogue.

Conclusion:

This brings us back to where I started with writing versus speaking. The two are forms of *dianoia* with their respective limits. Their aim is truth yet they never reach it. What we learn from Plato is the value on questioning thyself, on the knowledge you may have on any subject or object. In order to "own" what you know you need to be willing to examine the limits of what you know and that ultimately your convictions too are grounded on limits. When you can be 'true' to yourself on this then can you be a true when you speak and write. You will be cautious with what you affirm and how and acknowledge the vulnerability of your position. This does not

mean that you will be invulnerable to misinterpretation either in speech or in writing; rather, that you will be truer to yourself and attempt to express yourself better.

Some important themes:

Why writing?

From an historical point of view Plato's time is one that is characterized by a transition from oral customs to written ones. This is not to suggest that this transition occurred within Plato's lifetime.[6] However Plato's commentary can be seen as a powerful devise which may yield insight about the nature of this new medium as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Plato sees the utility and power of this craft; however, he is aware of its limitations and problems. Thus with Plato we get more than just a guide on how to write, we gain an appreciation of how writing shapes and transforms our societies modifying the way we are. Given the power of writing, this is a topic with profound implications not just for our individual development, but for a greater understanding of the social structures which surround us.

Psychology:

The problematic of writing and speaking is raised in a dialogue that starts out as a discussion on love.[7] The connection between love and writing and speaking emerges in that both these crafts are tools that can enable one to channel the potential of love for the pursuit of the philosophical life. The importance lies in realizing that both writing and speaking are "tools" for the betterment of human affairs. One needs

---

[6] More on this will be discussed including the notion raised by Marshall McLuhan about the transition from oral tradtion into the new technological medium of writing.

[7] While love can be connected to other themes on human affairs for example medicine, jurisprudence, architecture etc. the fact still remains that Plato the author concocts the themes of love and rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*. The discussion of love does not fully define what love is but it does open up an understanding that love, being a form is one of the greatest forces that can posses a human being. Socrates will suggest that one learn to "orient" love into noble pursuits like that of wisdom.

to remember that just like with any other tool, one needs to learn not just their mechanics (how to make them work) but also have a sense of prudence and caution when utilizing them. To learn when to use it, how to use it, and why use it is a much more complex process that involves to some extent external guidance but some degree of personal intuition and wisdom.

Self-knowledge marks an important step in the learning of rhetoric. This entails not just learning when to state and not to state but also what it is that is compelling one to opine in the first place. The goal is the Socratic humanist project which sees that man become man and achieve his utmost potential. Writing is meant to be a companion in this process of self development and self transformation that will last a life time. The *Phaedrus* is an invitation to self discovery and self transformation, using the energy of love to achieve this.

Epistemology:

Our social condition shapes the essence of who we are. Societies occur but they are not necessarily naturally or perpetually adhesive. As a result we are bound also by the content that our society produces; in the form of culture, values, norms, mores etc. which shape our conventions. Awareness of our conventions is important but also awareness on why those conventions are so, and what they seek. We can never be fully exempt from the existence of *doxa* the mere fact that Plato is still relevant is an illustration of this. But we can at least reason so as to whether opinions are good or bad for us.

In the context of writing this works in two ways. Firstly, one should be critical enough to discern whether the opinions that inform the outlook of a given text are

"good" or "bad." Secondly, the insight one gains after reading a text founded on "good" opinions has to be "digested" by the reader. While it is up to the reader ultimately as to whether he/she should follow the advice of that piece, in principle the insight should ensue action. The speeches of Lysias and Socrates on love attest to this; since they aim at persuasion on a course of action. In addition the speeches are anchored on certain assumptions in the case of the speech of Lysias (*Phaedrus* 230e-234c) and the first speech of Socrates (*Phaedrus* 237b-241d) that a youth should court someone who does not love them and in the case of the second speech of Socrates that the youth should go with someone who does love him (*Phaedrus* 243e-257b).

Furthermore episteme enables one to conceive the world in a certain image. In so doing there are implications that impact the surroundings of those who arrive at episteme. "Correct opinion" on any given matter pertaining to the visible world can alter the relationship one has to that world since episteme produces altered perception of the visible. From *episteme*, humans are capable of deriving technology by manipulating the physical in their surroundings and therefore transforming the world constant with their perception of it. This too has implications regarding the manner in which we treat our surroundings and ourselves given that we have the capacity of creating major alterations to the physical world.

CHAPTER 1: WRITING VERSUS SPEAKING

You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality (Phaedrus 275a).

The problematic of writing is raised in a dialogue that starts out as a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus on love. In the dialogue Phaedrus invites Socrates to join him for a walk outside the city, a most unusual act for Socrates rarely left the city (Nehamas and Woodruff x). Socrates learns that Phaedrus is hiding under his cloak a speech written by Lysias[8] and is enticed as a result to follow his younger friend (Nehamas and Woodruff x). Eventually Socrates persuades Phaedrus to bring out the speech and read it as part of their short excursion out of the city[9] (*Phaedrus* 230d). It turns out that the speech written by Lysias has elaborated a seemingly clever position on how and why it is better for there to be sexual intercourse between two non-lovers as opposed to two lovers[10]. Socrates and Phaedrus deal with this issue until Socrates concludes that it is actually better to love than to not love when engaging in sexual intercourse (*Phaedrus* 231a-234d).[11] Yet the dialogue does not

---

[8] Lysias was the son of Cephalus brother to Polemarchus and Euthydemus. Lysias was renowned as a good rhetorician.

[9] This is an important feat, for Socrates rarely, if ever left the walls of Athens for any reason (Nehamas and Woodruff x). That he leaves, is in part due to the enticement presented by Phaedrus, of the possibility of a good speech (Nehamas and Woodruff x).

[10] It is important to clarify that the context of the sexual relationships being described here are the ones that took place between *erastes* and *eromenos* (something like tutor and pupil respectively) that often turned into sexual as well as educational (Nehamas and Woodruff xvi). Though these relationships could be regarded as "homosexual" in nature by contemporary standards, in antiquity it was seldom the case that these relations were the only sexual relations that either erastes or eomenos would engage upon in their life times. It was usually the case that both would at some point also engage in sexual relations with women and have families of their own (Nehamas and Woodruff xvi).

[11] Lysias commences his speech by asking a hypothetical youth (probably Phaedrus himself) to have sex with him despite the fact that Lysias is not *in love* with him (*Paedrus* 231a). Lysias will state that being in love is like being mad and therefore like being sick (Phaedrus 231d). Those who are in love are led in their relation with their loved by this madness and are plagued by jealousy and possessiveness over their loved ones (*Phaedrus* 232c). Worse of all, when the lover falls out of love with his beloved, his madness is gone and with it, his awe and ogle for the beloved will vanish and his attention may go onto another beloved who has now cast madness onto the lover (*Phaedrus* 231a;

end when Socrates defends love over non-love. Rather, it evolves into a conversation that deals with rhetoric and culminates with a discussion on writing and speaking.

This significant shift in the dialogue from a discussion on love to one on rhetoric may seem problematic misleading and even erratic. However, it can be suggested that this shift is in fact done carefully and with good reason by the author Plato. Lysias after all, is cleverly and logically makes a case that is very convincing yet unsettling at least in the eyes of Socrates. But the statements of Lysias are persuasive enough that Phaedrus sees nothing wrong with what Lysias has said (*Phaedrus* 234e). Socrates is, thus, confronted with problem; in this case the young Phaedrus has been persuaded by an astute orator on the validity of gratuitous sex without any commitments. It appears as if the power of words and language are capable of convincing a man to engage in acts that may work to his disadvantage as.

Lysias is asking for sexual intercourse but simultaneously asking for no affinity between the lover and the beloved. This on its own is not the problem, for Lysias may genuinely just want physical intimacy with his beloved. The problem emerges in the manner in which Lysias pleads his case, making it a moral case where the lover is derided for his strong emotional attachment towards the beloved, whereas the non-lover is praised for his alleged composure. Why is the moral claim a problem? As soon as it becomes a moral question it becomes a compulsory matter where Lysias is manipulating the beloved, probably Phaedrus in this case into getting what he wants. Lysias decides that the beloved ought not be told that Lysias simply wants a casual relationship with him (the beloved). Instead, Lysias appeals to the beloved by

---

231c). The non-lover on the other hand is not plagued by madness and becomes better suited for sexual intercourse as he will not induce severe repercussions onto those he engages in sexual intercourse with (*Phaedrus* 234c).

comparing a non-lover with a calm sober person vis-à-vis the lover, a maniac possessed by jealousy (Phaedrus 234c).

In this case it seems as if Phaedrus has been "duped" in the eyes of Socrates, by the cleverer Lysias; having the former take advantage of the latter. In other words, language and rhetoric have the propensity to mislead. It appears that upon certain consideration the suggestions of Lysias may have deleterious consequences. Yet Phaedrus has not dwelled much on whether the results of engaging in the enterprise proposed by Lysias may be adverse. Instead, Phaedrus seems to be more concerned with the persuasive power of the speech and how "smart" and clever Lysias is for being capable of arguing in such a persuasive manner.

It is when the consequences of the proposition done by Lysias are taken into consideration, that a connection can be made between the first half of the dialogue, the emphasis on love with the second half, examining rhetoric (Nehamas and Woodruff xv). The dialogue explores how language and rhetoric are a medium utilized by one actor to convince another. In the case of the *Phaedrus* this is seen with regards to love. However, as the discussion on rhetoric in the second half shows, language and rhetoric have a profound impact on human matters (Nehamas and Woodruff xv).

Language is the mode of communication that humans rely upon to express themselves and communicate with one another. Language has the power of clarifying and enlightening given that it can label and name the elements which cause affliction or pain to humans (Hinman 184). Language has the power of labeling human experiences and give them meaning (Hinman 184).

It is important to clarify that language and rhetoric are not necessarily the same thing. Whereas language may refer to any form of communication exerted by a transmitter to a receptor, for example sign language, communications through flags, music, brail system, etc rhetoric refers to the art of knowing what to say how to say when to say to whom to say it and why to say it (Griswold 159). Rhetoric is the utilization of language for persuasive means. One seeks through rhetoric to affect the opinion of the receptor. Perhaps the aim is to influence a change in the behavior of the receptor, or to gain something from him/her (Griswold 160). Rhetoric can be used for positive or beneficial aims, perhaps to deter an individual from committing certain actions with nefarious consequences, or to induce a change in habits of one person, to reconsider different perspectives. But because of this power rhetoric exerts over an audience a good speaker may utilize rhetoric with manipulative aims, so that he can persuade an audience to consider his/her point of view so as to satisfy the transmitter's aims, even if these aims have nefarious consequences. Rhetoric can become an "arm" utilized by demagogues and sophists[12]. It is important, at this point, to clarify that by "good speaker" it is meant with regards to his/her faculty as an orator, not necessarily from an ethical perspective.

The *Phaedrus* looks at the differentiation between rhetoric and sophistry /demagoguery. Yet in the dialogue we are confronted with two forms of media inherently rhetorical, writing and speaking. We find that on the one hand Socrates and Phaedrus speak to one another about the perils and benefits of rhetoric. On the other

[12] A demagogue is someone who through rhetoric relies on the emotional prejudices of his audience as a means to persuade them of his point of view. A demagogue's goal is usually power, regardless of the consequences of that which he proposes entails. A sophist is someone who relies on rhetoric and logic usually to win arguments. In the *Phaedurs* a sophist is a label given to those who compose speeches and write speeches (*Phaedrus* 257d).

hand the fact that Lysias had written a speech brings questions about rhetoric and writing. It turns out that writing as an art is itself more susceptible to the vicissitudes that prone oral communication. Yet despite Socrates' critique on why writing is inferior to speaking, one fact remains; this is argument is stated in a written dialogue. It is worth considering if there is validity to the criticism of writing, if this is expressed through writing.

It appears that Socrates condemns writing as an inferior form of communication. In fact, it can be suggested, Socrates is laying a warning against this medium rather than issuing a prohibition (Ferrari 205). Socrates' concern is that most will be under the impression that they are confronting a medium that yields them knowledge and wisdom, when in fact it is only "duping" them, as Lysias did with Phaedrus.

What separates rhetoric from sophistry/demagoguery may be unclear and difficult to define. Speaking is not immune to the same shortcomings in writing. However, compared with speech, writing has greater difficulty in coping with circumstantial nuances. For example, in a speech the audience can ask for clarification or question the statements of the speaker. When we look at oral communication we are talking about living beings engaging with one another in discussion or conversation. In writing one of the parties present (the book, scroll, sheet etc.) is in a way "dead" inasmuch as it cannot respond to any questions or comments that are made by the reader, the writer is removed by space and time from the reader.

The Problem of Writing:

The warning against writing emerges from the difficulty that many humans have in seeing the rhetorical. Most either are fully swayed by those who yield far greater rhetorical power over them, or fully dismiss the ideas of those with who they do not agree. They rarely contemplate what is being said and see the strengths and weakness of an argument. In writing this is exacerbated for writing presents itself as a medium that is "truthful" in its account. Writing is the result of the truthful inquisition of the author, the convention goes, but it is still rhetorical. Since the author is gone, it may be harder to notice this by a reader who cannot question or clarify from the book itself. The following is the explanation given by Thamus as to why writing may not be as a great an invention as Theuth thinks.

> O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust into writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many thins without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they sill merely appear to be wise instead of really being so. (*Phaedrus* 274e-275b).

Writing is discovered by Theuth along with numbers and calculation, geometry and astronomy, and the games of draughts and dice (*Phaedrus* 274d). But it

is writing that catches the attention of Thamus, which he calls a technology[13] (*Phaedrus* 274e). As a technology, writing is an artifact devised with the intention of facilitating labor (*Phaedrus* 274e). Theuth intended writing to act as an imitation of speech, aiding *anamnesia* (memory) and function as a "compendium" to *anamnesia* (*Phaedrus* 274e). One can infer that writing is to be relied upon as an auxiliary in the form of record which can be read in the future as a copy of what was said and in the order in which it was said.

Yet Thamus does not share the optimism of Theuth and tells him that his invention of writing functions as a *pharmakon*, a drug (*Phaedrus* 274e). It is a drug because, writing has the intended power to aid *anamnesia* as Theuth intends but it also has the capacity to revert the effects of memory and actually work against it (*Phaedrus* 275a). Medical drugs have a similar feature, they have the power to heal but also the power to kill; the effects they produce are dependent on dosage. When the dosage is appropriate it will heal the patient who is afflicted by a particular ailment. However, if the dosage of a drug is excessive the person taking it may die. When the dosage is too low then it may do no harm but no good either. In order for a drug to heal one needs to know exactly to provide the right dosage to the right recipient. This is itself a difficult task. The exact dosage of medicine varies from patient to patient based on circumstance. Therefore, for example, the same dosage of a given medicine cannot be the same for someone who is agonizing as for someone

[13] The Greek word *techne* is utilized interchagably as craft or art (Nehamas and Woodruff (in footnote) 28). The word technology derives itself from the combination of the word techne and logos (in this case knowledge). Thus technology is the use of knowledge applied to a human craft or art (Nehamas and Woodruff (in footnote) 28). Writing becomes a technology as it is a craft edified by humans utilized with the intent of aiding labor.

who mildly is ill. It takes certain wisdom to be able to discern how much is enough in a given circumstance.

The same is the case for writing. On a metaphorical basis we can observe that those who read the written works of others have been inspired to either do good or harm. We see that if writing can inspire good or bad it is indeed like a *pharmakon*, the key lies in knowing what the right dose is. But Socrates does not go as far as to discuss how a piece of writing can influence tremendous harm, although this is not necessarily omitted in the discussion as will be explained.

While writing does have the capacity to become a "compendium" to memory for the most part as technology writing will "spoil" those it touches (*Phaedrus* 275a). A reader will desist from utilizing writing as a "compendium" but instead will become dependent on it as its source of memory, meaning that rather that enhancing the memory of the user, writing will become the fountain of memory from which the reader will be always recurring in order to remember (*Phaedrus* 275a). The reader may become too dependent on writing rather than work his memory. The reader will always trust that writing will record and therefore not work hard enough on memorizing. In this way writing can "soften" the reader's faculties.

But the problem of writing goes beyond its inverse relation to memory. Far more problematic is the illusion that writing gives that of enhanced knowledge or wisdom for those who read (*Phaedrus* 275a). The convention among men is that writing is an authoritative "neutral" entity that disseminates knowledge (*Phaedrus* 275b). The beholder of a piece of writing may equivocally come under the impression that, because he/she has read a given piece of writing, has therefore gained

knowledge or wisdom (the two are not the same in the Platonic understanding; check chapter 3 for more on this). Writing has the appearance of being authoritative.

In this sense, if we examine closely the warning of Thamus and Socrates a piece of writing deceives the reader above all, for it is the reader who is under the impression that he has gained wisdom or knowledge. Socrates compares writing to a painting in order to illustrate this closer:

> You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to lean more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse rolls about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not (here is the self censorship) [essentially literacy is the only requisite for reading. This is kind of related to the sorcerer's apprentice where accessibility alone is not enough when wielding some craft (techne)]. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly it always needs its father's support (cannot defend itself); alone it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support (*Phaedrus* 275d-275e).

Writing is a manifestation and representation of the physical world which one can observe but cannot really engage with. One can observe a painting which may look like a real copy of a landscape, animal, human, or event, yet no matter how realistic it looks it is only a rendition of that which it copies. It is never the real thing, nor can a viewer of any painting "get into" the painting and interact with the objects in it. This is also the case with writing. It may look as a vivid realistic entity but it is only a copy, whereas painting is a copy of the visual world, writing is a copy of the world of communication, a copy of speech (*Phaedrus* 275d).

As a copy of speech, writing is limited in ways that speech is not. Writing may "say" something like any speaker would. But unlike a speaker a written work cannot answer back (*Phaedrus* 275e). Thus, a written work can be "wrongfully convicted" of saying something which in it fact has not (*Phaedrus* 275e). But because a text cannot say anything in its defense the accusation can remain. Only when the author is present (referred to as the "father" of the text) can the text be defended (*Phaedrus* 275e). Yet when a text's father is separated from his "offspring" across time and space this is impossible. In this case a "wrong" interpretation of what the author had intended may have nefarious unintended consequences, for example the justification of an act such as mass murder on the alibi that it was inspired by the writings of some author.

Another problem is that writing says the 'same thing' to any one who can read. A piece of writing is not capable of adapting itself as vividly to its audience as a good speaker can (*Phaedrus* 275e). Therefore once the statement is placed within a piece of writing, the final result is what is left in print. There may be a tendency in the reader to regard a piece of writing in its pure literal sense. A reader may read and halt to consult what the text he/she has just finished reading *literally* states, and not understand there be a metaphorical read that is better suited for this (*Phaedrus* 275e).

Moreover, a text makes itself available to all those who can read (*Phaedrus* 275e). It may be the case that a piece of writing is intended by the author to be read by those who have been instructed in a certain fashion or tradition, and thus, have an esoteric component making it very hard to understand by those not versed in that tradition (*Phaedrus* 275e). However because writing requires the reader be literate

only, this may thus lead to someone either unaware or incapable of reading the esoteric meaning of the text, to nonetheless, read that same text and again gather incorrect or even foolish assumptions about what is being said (*Phaedrus* 275e).

Equally problematic is the inability for any written text to "remain silent" when need be. From a rhetorical point of view it may be the case that confronted with a certain audience, a speaker may choose to remain silent. It may be wise to remain silent when confronted with a hostile audience, for example. Yet just as writing cannot answer back it cannot remain silent once the text has been edified.

And yet despite all of these "setbacks" readers end up not realizing that they are, as in the case of a painting, next to a "representation" or "manifestation" of reality. Socrates is not suggesting that readers regard written texts as speaking sources, with whom readers can have conversations; instead, he is suggesting that learning is not linear process where information is disseminated and absorbed. If communication were linear learning would not be such a complicated endeavor

In order to clarify this, Socrates tells Phaedrus of another form of discourse which is written down, except this one is written in the soul of the listener (*Phaedrus* 276a). Like a harvest, knowledge needs to be "cultivated" in the souls of people (*Phaedrus* 276e). The metaphor here suggests that it is an induced process which relies on the transmitter as well as the receptor. One can only learn through process of trial and error, by experience, and above all by contemplating that different forms of understanding may exist on a subject (*Phaedrus* 277a).[14] One can memorize and repeat that which he/she has read or heard. But this is not an indication that one has learned, merely that one has retained. For Socrates learning is more than just retention.

[14] This is the role of the dialectician. For more on this see chapter 3.

There is an experiential component in learning (Griswold 187). As in the case of habit, learning is a process that requires a degree of repetition and contemplation. To say that one has indeed learned something from the transmission of information requires a series of factors worth considering. An audience needs to be able to ask questions for the sake of clarification or elucidation of doubts that they may have about the subject matter being exposed by a speaker. There may be points of disagreement, an incapacity for the audience to relate with what the speaker states given the lack of experience on the same matter, etc. Learning is an endogenous process. To learn requires the element of insight. To have insight involves work and struggle which occurs within one's self; it involves doubting, questioning, and challenging what one *believes* one knows (*Phaedrus* 278a).

However, the written text is presented in linear format. If the reader has any questions, doubts, clarifications to be made, or just inability to engage with the text then he/she is at a position where he/she will gain very little from his reading exercise. The reader may consult other sources to gain clarification of what the text is attempting to state, but unless the author is present it becomes very hard for the reader to gain a clear picture of what is being said.

Thus one must be aware at least of such limitations prior to engaging with the text. Yet, the problem is that most readers either overlook this, or are completely oblivious to this. Readers wind up taking literally what a text relates to them and appreciate the text, usually, as a "truthful" account. Equally problematic, is that readers may also dismiss entirely a text, based on the authorship of it or based on the fact that the text does not resonate with their convictions, and not consider the

possible sound statements being made. Thus when a reader asserts that he has "gained" knowledge usually this means that he has found further reassurance to his convictions (Griswold 206). Yet a stronger sense of conviction is not necessarily the same thing as a gaining knowledge.

A contemporary example that mirrors the problem of writing is to assume one *knows* math because one can *use* a calculator. Like writing, calculators are technology intended in the aid of memory. One may know how to press certain keys and what functions they perform in turn. Although this person may know that the "+" is for addition and the "–"for subtraction this person may neither really know how these arithmetic procedures are done but more importantly why they are done in the first place. It would be misleading, naïve, and even ridiculous for one to say that one knows math just because one knows how to use a calculator. Although they did not have calculators at the time of Socrates, we can appreciate this parallel. We see that the two technologies facilitate human labor. But in facilitating human labor they have just simplified a task or aspect of that labor activity. They do not, however, ensure their users actually learn.

With writing, most readers do not make such differentiation. The reader tends to believe that he/she knows more about a subject because he/she has read about it. Moreover, the reader may not even ponder as to whether the author is making an accurate statement or a fallacious one. Even less contemplated, by the reader, is whether or not the information being transmitted should even be worth considering in the first place. Why is the theme of any text worth considering in the first place?

These are questions that Socrates fears, will be omitted by readers, but are nonetheless of utter importance when reading:

> Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accepted them, thinking that writing can yield results that are clear or certain, must be quite naïve and truly ignorant of Ammon's [Egyptian name of Thamus] prophetic judgment: otherwise, how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about? (*Phaedrus* 275c-275d).

Rhetoric in Speech and in Writing:

One of the problems of writing lies in that it is a medium that is rhetorical in nature, but rarely seen as such.[15] Writing too seeks to persuade, and thus recurs to similar figures of speech to convey a message. Most readers, though, miss this for they tend to see just what is literally stated and not what is implied or referred to. The fact that writing cannot ensure its message be clarified, makes it harder for readers to assess the rhetorical nature of writing. Particularly, a written text cannot adapt itself to circumstances. A text is not able to differential or discriminating an audience, something that is indispensable for rhetoric.

One of the faculties that are important to the art of rhetoric is for the person seeking to persuade to be adaptable to his/her audience. In the case of speech, a speaker has to adapt not just in terms of what he/she says to an audience but also the manner in which this is said and how and when (Griswold 160). There is thus a series

[15] While writing as a medium of communication is rhetorical, in that it seeks to persuade, not all forms of writing are deliberately and intentionally rhetorical. For example, a medical treatise intends to transmit as clearly as possible the instruction on how to proceed through surgery. The Platonic dialogue though is intended to remain rhetorical, which brings up an important distinction, rhetorical in essence and in format. All writing is rhetorical in essence but not all writing presents itself as rhetorical in its format or style. More on this will be discussed in Chapter 3 where the subject of why Plato wrote dialogues is brought up.

of nuances that are incorporated into this art that go beyond just verbal articulation. A good speaker will rely on mannerisms that invoke moods or cultural mores. The speaker may also choose to speak in manners that resonate with common vernacular or he/she may seek to. The speaker may also choose to deliver a message in a jovial and friendly manner or he/she may decide it better to use a more somber and distanced tone in their delivery. A good speaker may know what is best said at the best moment that may include not saying anything at all if the circumstance require.

Perhaps most crucial to all this is that a speaker can engage with his audience in cross examination. Thus, at the lack of clarity from the audience, the speaker can elucidate his/her answers better or provide examples so as to clarify the message he/she is trying to get across. The speaker can defend his/her arguments in the face of critique or even misinterpretation.

It is this adaptability to nuance that is difficult from writing to cope. Once a piece of writing has been finished, it can not defend itself from being interpreted contrary to what the author intended. A reader may miss, either intentionally or not, the motives of what the author says as well as some of the literary devices the author may use (Ferrari 205). For example, an author may make an argument with the intent of being ironic, yet this may be taken literally by the reader (Griswold 235). In this sense any arguments can be made about a piece of writing provided that a reader knows how to read. And thus at the time of "confronting" the written work, the reader may lack some of the critical elements needed in speech. The reader may require the work to clarify, accentuate the important aspects, and deemphasize details, yet a written text cannot do this. Works cannot adapt themselves to the nuances of the

audience as a speaker could. They cannot adapt to the mannerisms or idiosyncrasies of a particular audience and then readapt to those of a new audience. Writing cannot censor itself in the face of a hostile audience, nor can it clarify in the face of an inquisitive yet confused audience.

Thus the rhetorical component of writing gets lost in this myriad of obstacles that are endemic to writing, to the point that when someone reads, one may not see what the author is trying to persuade upon, where the author is exaggerating etc. The reader though may still read, erroneously judge the work and because of his/her literacy assume that he/she has understood the text, and gained further knowledge on what the author is trying to propose.

From Rhetoric to Demagoguery/Sophistry:

Given the rhetorical nature of speaking and writing it is possible for a transmitter to purposefully rely on demagogic or sophistic ways to ensure persuasion. Socrates gives an example of a salesman selling donkeys to soldiers persuading them that they are in actuality horses (*Phaedrus* 260b). To a certain degree this seems a bit ridiculous, but in the case that one has never seen either a horse or a donkey, how can one ensure that one knows which is which (for more on this see chapter 2). Socrates points that some rhetoricians may seek to sway an audience in a certain direction, regardless of the consequences that may ensue from this (*Phaedrus* 260c). The rhetorician may intentionally mislead for the sake of construing an advantageous situation for him/her at the expense of his/her audience. As Socrates clarifies, rhetoric is not an artless practice but is indeed art (*Phaedrus* 260e). To underestimate this is to become even more susceptible to the demagogue or sophist.

From Thucydides we had learned about how demagoguery has uses as a means to power. The example of Alcibiades and his advocacy for the war with Sicily demonstrated the ability a good speaker can have in order to convince an audience to follow a course of action which is perhaps not the best suited for the city.[16]

Alcibiades was good enough to persuade the Athenian assembly to attack Syracuse, despite the latter not having much to do in the conflict between Athens and Sparta (Thucydides 118). Athens paid the price for it entered a war with a party that had nothing to do with the conflict ensuring an alliance between Sparta and Syracuse against Athens. Alcibiades appealed to emotion and patriotism of Athenians, he insisted on the superiority of Athens over the Sicilian foe as he spoke in front of the Athenian assembly (Thucydides 118). He also appealed to fear by arguing for the need of a preemptive strike, against an enemy that had not yet done any harm to Athens, under the alibi that to not strike first would ensure a future attack from Sicily against Athens (Thucydides 119). To attack the Sicilians would heighten the power of Athens and enhance the city's glory (Thucydides 120). Alcibiades appealed to the Athenian sense of confidence, by ensuring that victory would prevail on the side of Athens (Thucydides 120).

The speeches of Alcibiades may have been logically coherent and rhetorically sound; they persuaded many Athenians about the good of going to war. Alcibiades had no real reason for insisting on the occurrence of the war other than his personal ambitions for glory and recognition. Strategically, the war was a disaster for it added

[16] In *The History of the Peloponnesian War* Thucydides recounts the war which occurred between Athens and Sparta 431-404 BCE. The text exposes many of the speeches given by all parties involved in the conflict. One of these speeches presented is given by Alcibiades, an Athenian Statesman who advocated for Athens to attack Syracuse in Sicily, a city-state that had not been previously engaged in the war on either side.

one more enemy for Athens, encouraged an alliance between two parties that were not aligned before, exacerbating the number of fronts on which the Athenians fought. In the example of Alcibiades we see the use of rhetoric for purely demagogic purposes [More on demagogue].

In contrast Pericles is an exemplar of a good rhetorician who is skillful at his craft who unlike Alcibiades is not a demagogue.[17] Socrates even suggests that Pericles was the greatest rhetorician of his time (*Phaedrus* 269d). Pericles sought the common good of Athens and not personal glory and fame. Although Pericles took Athens to war with Sparta he urged caution and restraint in the military operations that lay ahead. Yet both were effective communicators who gathered enthusiasm from their audiences whenever they delivered their speeches [why].

Here we have an example of how rhetoric is used in ways that may ensure negative repercussions. What these examples show is that the way in which the craft of rhetoric is used is significant. To be fair, these are examples of oral rhetoric being malleable and "misused" by an individual. However the example serves to illustrate the power of rhetoric. Writing too can be susceptible to the efforts of demagogues and sophists. Utilizing rhetoric a writer can engage in lofty wording or flattery for the sake of securing an argument that benefits the transmitter over the receptor.

In this light, Socrates tells Phaedrus that what is shameful is not whether one writes or speaks but whether one writes or speaks shamefully or badly (*Phaedrus* 258d). In order to clarify this, Socrates explains that a rhetorician may content himself/herself with knowing what *seems* just as opposed to what actually *is* just

[17] Pericles was an Athenian statesman who was the leader of Athens during the initial stages of the war (Woodruff 168). It is worth clarifying that some lay blame on Pericles himself as one of the instigators of the war.

(*Phaedrus* 260a). A good rhetorician may know that what matters is to appeal to the emotions of his/her audience as well as their sense of conviction (for more on truth and conviction go to chapter 2) (*Phaedrus* 260d). But the prudent rhetorician, the one who pursues wisdom (for more on philosophy and rhetoric go to chapter 3) knows that rhetoric's power lies in its ability to sway the human soul (*Phaedrus* 261a).

The speech of Lysias appeals to ambiguity for he speaks of love, madness, and lovers without ever defining his terms (*Phaedrus* 264a). This creates an ambiguity on the terms that allows for obfuscation and thus manipulation of these words (*Phaedrus* 264a). To be clear, Socrates suggests that Lysias may not even know what the terms he is using mean, but nonetheless is benefited from the lack of clarity that ensues (*Phaedrus* 264a).

Connection:

But as mentioned earlier, Socrates pronounces a "warning" sign against writing and not a "forbidden" sign against it. Writing does have some advantages over speech. As a technology and extension of speech the clearest advantage is its longevity, its ability to transcend space and time in manners that speech cannot. That one can still have access to Plato through his writings perhaps vivifies this best, though he is no longer alive we still have access to what he wrote.

Writing has another series of advantages over speech. Although it says the same thing over and over to whom ever is literate, a person can go back and re-read that same statement which will have not changed from the first time he/she read it to the second or third and so on. In speech it is very difficult to repeat in the same order and sequence using the same words and intonations, any statement previously made

especially at the request of the audience. A reader may change but the text does not, thus upon gaining insight on a matter a reader may re-read and be enlightened in ways that he/she was not in the past. He/she may see words and understand them differently than he/she did the first time he/she encountered the text. One can also choose where to begin reading and where to end. For example one can choose to read the ending first and read the beginning last; this is impossible to do with speech, for speaking tends to be improvised.

However, these can only be advantages to the cautious reader. The cautious reader, the one who scrutinizes the text only that person can fully profit the advantages of the text. Thus, literacy is only one condition necessary for reading. A good reader will try to know who the author of the text is, from where is he/she coming and with regards to the text, what are the affirmations being made, on what assumptions do they rest, what is the text referring to, what are the metaphors pointing at etc. In all the reader must fully question the text as much as he/she can.

Writing can be a "crutch" onto which memory can rest on in its exercise. But as Socrates points out it is important that this be as part of an endeavor in the pursuit of truth. When writing is intended just to indulge an audience with what it wants to hear or read then writing may fall into demagoguery or sophistry (*Phaedrus* 272d).

Language as Metaphor:

If writing is sometimes good then why does Thamus condemn the craft so harshly? After all, he could have said that writing is sometimes bad if misapplied, but can equally be good if used by those who are cautious. Socrates is more lenient than Thamus with writing, but he too is skeptical of the craft and its propensity to mislead.

Writing seems to generate more confusion than clarity in the criticism presented by Socrates and the myth of Theuth and Thamus.

Yet the confusion that writing generates is not one that is obvious to either the reader or writer. This type of confusion is anchored on the distortion of meanings about words and subjects. Socrates gives the example of iron and silver as generating similar mental images in the minds of those who visualize both (*Phaedrus* 263a). The two metals are similar and even used as synonyms of each other but are inherently different.

Socrates then points out that when it comes to the difference between the word just and good, words which are also synonymous there is also a difference in terms of what they mean (*Phaedrus* 263a). There are many reasons why these two words diverge such as to why this is so, such as socio-cultural background, economic status, gender etc, for example someone can be a good criminal but an unjust person by virtue of being a good criminal. At this point what is important to point out is that there are differences when it comes to individual and collective definitions concerning the same word or concept. This most certainly occurs in speech and in writing. But as mentioned earlier in speech the speaker can defend himself/herself as well as adapt to circumstance that the writer cannot. One problem both writing and speaking have is the inability to establish a clear and concise avenue of communication between transmitter and receptor. This as we see is a problem to language as a whole, there can never be full transparency of thought between all parties that engage with one another through language.

Writing in particular has the difficulty of transmitting the thoughts of the writer be fully disclosed and not obscured by the text. It is not only the writer who struggles in the intent of making himself or herself as transparent as possible in order to be fully understood by his/her readers. The reader too can never have full recourse to all the thoughts that went into the author's mind as well as the emotions, anguishes, etc. that could have been influential at the time of composition never really knowing why the author chose to write words in a certain way.

A hermeneutical reading of a text attempts to incorporate to its study of the text considerations such as historical factors, the life of the author, the literary tradition from which the author comes, allegorical references to other texts, etc. Yet even a hermeneutical reading of a text can never render fully the opinions and thoughts of the author to the fullest in a way that is satisfactory for the reader. The reader will never be able to get into the mind of the author nor will the writer ever get into the mind of the reader. Full, total, and impartial clarity can never be reached; the hermeneutical circle can never be closed between writer and reader.

But this is as much the case of oral communication as it is of written communication. For a speaker can never get into the thoughts of his/her audience or vice versa. Much of this is endemic to language as a whole. For it is language that does not have power to fully unhide every specificity and meaning between transmitter and receptor. Language by its very nature can never achieve absolute clarity (Han 184).

Language needs to be understood as a social convention. Letters, words, even sounds are accorded and given a certain meaning culturally. In this sense the

definition of words, grammatical rules, verb tenses etc are nothing but the result of a tradition of acculturation within a society. Language is the result of a long tradition and evolution.

The most important consideration to be made under such consideration is that the nature of language is indispensably metaphorical (Hinman 184). Language sets to designate, label, name, account etc. within a social and cultural context; this means that language provides a set of agreed symbols that are suggestive in their naming of objects and actions. One can think, for example, of language acting as a set of metaphorical arrows which "point at" objects or concepts (Han 184). Thus words are accorded meaning and because they are accorded meaning, they are upheld within cultures as symbols of that which they signify.

If we take the example of the horse and donkey given by Socrates, as a case in point of this, it can be argued that there is nothing inherently true about the word "horse" or "donkey". The word "horse" is used to "point at" a large quadruped, with fur, that can also stand on its hind legs at points, gallops, and lives in certain regions. The word "horse" is also used so as to distinguish the creature from other furry quadrupeds like "donkeys" but also perhaps bears, lions, and tigers. In that sense the word "horse" is useful for it clarifies and demarcates said creature from other ones that are similar or have similar features. Also, it enables humans to transmit information about the said creature. We establish and hold conventionally that this creature is a bear and with that we can make other observations of that creature. For example when we speak of "horse" we can look at creatures that fall under such label and also name that which we see or believe to be attributes of them, such as diets.

In the example of "horse" we see that the word bear is itself the result of a culturally binding term used to designate and label a certain creature. There is nothing inherently true about the word "horse" with regards to relation to the creature it names. The name could have been any other and culturally upheld to name the same creature though differently. This, however, does not mean that there is no creature i.e. no horse. While the word is itself a convention the existence of the entity is itself not in question or the result of convention for that matter. In other words, while the term "horse" is conventional, the creature's existence is not put in doubt (for more on this go to chapter 2).

What is important in this consideration is that language is inherently metaphorical and conventional. It conventionally labels, but its labeling power corresponds to the metaphorical structure that language has, which enables the users of a language to understand the "things" words are labeling.

It is from language's metaphorical essence that we can command power over that which we label. There is great explanatory power in language and we command that power over that which we label. However, because of language's own metaphorical structure, we can never have more than just proverbial "arrows". Since there is no inherent truth to the words which we use the propensity for obfuscation remains present, event in the clearest of languages. Thus obfuscation is never gotten rid of with language. Perhaps it can be minimized but not totally undone.

Through acculturation and convention words take up meaning and prevalence among the inhabitants of such society. But then the question is, why is it that certain words have more prominence over others? After all, the entire notion that words are

conventions may induce a notion that all social conventions are themselves relative as they rest merely on conventional wisdom and not on any inherent or real reason of being, this could then be used as an excuse or pretext to commit violations of conventional notions of the good like murder, for example. But the Platonic corpus does not suggest that in the least.

Language thus is more than conventional, it is explanatory. But if language is cultural how is explanation not? It is not that explanation itself does not come from acculturation as well it is rather on the matter of practicality and utility for a society (Han 2). As Han points out, "our truths must be understood as schematizing fictions which crystallize the flux of reality in the logical categories (such as identity) that allow us to orient ourselves in the world: a 'true' proposition is would thus be one which is useful to life" (Han 2). Language creates a medium that is beneficial for the subsistence of a society. A society takes primacy in the examination of language, for an individual cannot exist outside of the confines of the city (*Politics* 1253a1). The social world needs to flourish in order to ensure some of the basic and indispensable needs for their individual inhabitants who comprise that society (*Politics* 1253a25). Socially speaking the division of labor is necessary so as to ensure the edification of homes acting as shelters for the inhabitants protecting them from the extremes of the weather. This division of labor is also required so as to ensure the procurement of food for all as well as access to drinking water for the inhabitants. A society is also better adept in dealing with defense from other foes as well as wild beasts. In short there are a series of tasks that are critical for survival that a single individual human cannot do this alone.

But while survival may be one of the founding causes of a society there is no inherent procedure to secure the survival of a sound and good society. Societies, after all may degenerate into tyrannies where one man rules and leads the commonwealth of the society in order to satiate his own appetites at the expense of the common good (*Republic* 576b).

It is in this regard that language assumes primacy in the social realm. Language becomes the "backbone" for social cohesion and facilitates the division of labor. But the power of language is the power of naming, and the power of naming stems from the authority it places onto humans over that which they name. Labeling gives power to the one who labels for the reality of the social convention is now in the label that has been socially accepted. The word "horse" for example carries with it not just an identifier of a certain creature but a series of associations about that creature itself. Horses are quadrupeds, tamable, useful for farm life.[18]

What matters is the relation between language and the social, which labels and clarifies. But how do certain words assume primacy over others. According to Lawerence Hinman basing himself on the works of Nietzsche, the key that lies in this relation is the metaphorical character that language has; language is fundamentally metaphorical (Hinman 180). Language can be characterized as being a series of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms that have as their goal the exposure of truth (Hinman 184).

"We can only designate the 'relations of things to man, and to express them one call on the boldest metaphors" states Hinman (Hinman 184). Thus, it is the social

[18] As will be examined in chapter two this enables the creation of science where man has control of knowledge over that which it names.

experiences themselves which generate these metaphors as means to further express and enhance social relations in the first place (Hinman 184). Human experiences generate sensations and sensations are associated in the mind (Hinman 185). The associations made in the mind may be accompanied with sounds or mental pictures, which may themselves create words (Hinman 185). These words create concepts in the mind about these same experiences and sensations (Hinman 185). This is a process that occurs and recurs across generations over time in societies (Hinman 185). Words become "proverbial arrows" which designate and point at. Their power lies in that they label in the imagination of those acculturated into these same words.

The Ubiquity of Language:

Language's inherent metaphorical nature precludes the possibility of full clarity between transmitter and receptor. But taking the discussion on metaphors seriously means that the idea of clarity as well is a metaphor. Humans create the notion of clarity, which an aspect of how discernable and understandable something is on its own account. For example, how clear is a statement in term "small horse" when describing the size of a horse? Clarity becomes yet another metaphor and metonym which informs our conventional vocabulary. From this premise the idea of clarity appears as a useful fiction but no more than that.

It would be a mistake to assess that language is meaningless. That language is metaphorical and, thus, all concepts that we may have from language are essentially metonyms does not mean that communication or language are futile. For humans communication is an indispensable act elemental in some of their most basic human interactions. Language is the mechanism through which humans can converge,

cooperate, and help one another. Language becomes the fabric that enables human unity. In addition, language is integral to social organization.

As language becomes an instrumental medium in the development of human societies it becomes an indispensable asset for the attainment of information. This information becomes central to the social apparatus. Language is essential for societies to subsist and, thus, also for individuals to subsist as well. Language thus becomes embedded within society. Information is so indispensable that the means towards it becomes as well and in so doing, the means to information becomes gradually regarded less as a means to an end and more as an end in itself of social interaction. Thus to attain communication and its counterpart, clarity becomes central to human interactions. As language is used to inform, it also informs the components of human societies. Emotions, needs, desires, in short human experiences become encapsulated by language as they are given names, for example the words sadness and happiness now not just describing emotions, they become nouns and thus conventionally regarded as the emotions themselves. Other social constructs like class, laws, order, all require the advent of a language through which these are not just justified but also created. An individual is born into these social constructs and thus born into language.

But therein lies the problem, the individual experience is itself subject to the conventional wisdom that rules over it. Social conventions are upheld and of great utility in designating and labeling. But individual experiences are in their essence individually felt and thus have a hard time translating into the labels of what is socially conventional. Words may themselves be futile in fully describing what has

been inherent to an individual, for they are merely "designating" or "proverbial arrows." The word "sad," for example, cannot on its own account sufficiently pronounce the woes, angst, or perils an individual may have felt across his/her life. The word "sad" just becomes an adjective that can at best present an image or concept even of how an individual feels, but it can in no shape, way, or form transmit the essence of this person's feelings. A word cannot place the emotional state of this individual onto anyone else's emotional being.

There may even be an imbalance between both transmitter and receptor. There are times when the transmitter has greater knowledge and thus has an advantage over the receptor; the sophists are an example of this. Other times though, the receptor has an advantage over the transmitter; for example, when the receptor is capable of distorting the message of the transmitter. In this example distortion is done deliberately, though sometimes distortion can be accidental. Power, in this case regarding who is more acculturated within the conventional wisdom of the society, is utilized in the favor of the strong over the weak and is capable to distort communication. For example, this dynamic can be observed in the relationship between parents to children, professors to students, masters to slaves, doctors to patients or any other dynamics in which there is a power relation at stake. In distorting the message, the receptor can utilize the distorted theme against the transmitter, making it seem that the transmitter has said something he/she actually has not. A child may, for example, say "x" but the parent may distort that "x" into a "y". In the realm of parental-child relations the "y" may be utilized by the parent for further scolding the child or punishing him/her. As another example one party may

severely interrogate another, through excessive means (perhaps physical torture), in order to secure the response that suits the most powerful one. Thus, interpreting what is being said can be sometimes used against the person wishing to express himself/herself. In other words there can be deliberate or accidental distortion that works against the person trying to communicate.[19]

And it is this problem of having individual experience incapable of being adequately expressed through the conventional medium that translates itself into writing. How can the writer rely on written words to fully disclose his/her experience? How can the reader from his/her experiences fully understand the author? In fact the reader may sometimes upon his/her experiences and the conventional wisdom on any subject matter get an interpretation from what the writer is making that is completely erroneous from what the author intended.

The Place of Language:

On the one hand language is artificial and conventional yet on the other it is indispensable and formative for humans. Individually the human needs the social and with the social come the conventions that maintain the society. At the same time these conventions may prove insufficient for the transmission or expression of individual experiences. Communication can never be infallible and yet it can never be done fully away with. We can gather that neither writing nor speaking can ever be perfected as mediums of communication. Even the clearest of languages will be plagued by nuances and imperfections resulting from language's own limits.

---

[19] This is not to suggest that distortion is always used against someone. Sometimes distortion may work to the advantage of an individual, for example a robber may confuse people in order to steal from them.

But in the *Phaedrus* writing is not equated with speech as an indispensable medium of communication. To the contrary, writing is a *techne* that is developed by humans to facilitate communication and help memory (*Phaedrus* 275a). But as a *techne* it too operates under the rules dictated by convention. Writing conforms itself to a series of grammatical and stylistic rules that dictate the way characters look like, what they pronounce, and how they are to be utilized when making sentences. This is all the result of convention. The problem we seem to gather from Socrates' warning is that writing as a medium has a harder time bridging that gap between individual experience and conventional rules of communication. When a written work is far from its author, especially across time, it has a harder time adapting to its receptors, the many readers it encounters across time. Yet despite this setback people still write, failing to realize that their works may be subjected to distortion.

It would seem from this that the *Phaedrus* as a dialogue proposes that writing be an activity that remains solely between the writer and a few people that are close to the writer (*Phaedrus* 277e). Writing cannot be a medium through which information can be transmitted in the sense that it cannot really "educate" those who do not already "know" what is to be known concerning a certain subject matter (Phaedrus 277d). As Socrates states, "That if Lysias or anybody else ever did or ever does write—privately or for the public, in the course of proposing some law—a political document which he believes to embody clear knowledge of lasting importance, then this writer deserves reproach, whether anyone says so or not. For to be unaware of the difference between a dream-image and the reality of what is just and unjust, good and

bad, must truly be grounds for reproach even if the crowd praises it with one voice" (*Phaedrus* 277d-277e).

But Socrates also clarifies that:

> On the other hand, take a man who thinks that a written discourse on any subject can only be a great amusement, that no discourse worth serious attention has ever been written in verse or prose, and that those that are recited in public without questioning and explanation, in the manner of the rhapsodes, are given only in order to produce conviction. He believes that at their very best these can only serve as reminders to those who already know. And also thinks that only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good and clear, perfect, and worth serious attention: Such discourse should be called his own legitimate children, first the discourse he may have discovered already within himself and then its sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls insofar as these are worthy; to the rest, he turns his back. Such a man, Phaedrus, would be just what you and I would pray to become (*Phaedrus* 277e-278b).

The goal of the endeavor should be knowledge and knowledge cannot be fully transmitted through writing. Writing can just remind and echo what one already knows. If one does not know one may still get an echo from the piece of writing. But that piece of echo will be of the convictions that individual already has, being themselves the product of convention. From this point it becomes clear that writing can certainly enhance one's opinions about conventions (for more on this refer to chapter 2 and 3). Experiential knowledge is itself not transmissible through writing. At most one can hope that someone else who has lived through similar woes or joys can empathize or sympathize given one's own individual experience. But this becomes an individual question the essence of which cannot be transmitted through words and much less through the written word. And in this sense it is that Socrates

insists that only upon contemplation can one individual gain certain insights about his/her experience and not through what a piece of writing has to say. Only when someone after one can contemplate and indulge in his/her life experiences can he/she then write, again not as dissemination of information but as a medium to remind himself or herself of their respective insights.

Thus writing acquires the characteristic of a "crutch." Like a crutch writing can only help the particular individual who has need of it. That same crutch cannot simultaneously provide support and balance to many handicapped at the same time. In this same way a piece of writing cannot "assist" simultaneously and in the same fashion everyone who has "need" of it. The piece of writing can only speak in a certain way to the one who wrote it for its content is the result of the struggle of the writer to seek enlightenment on knowledge on a subject matter by that individual. The piece of writing is there to remind *him/her* about that process. That same piece can enlighten a likeminded person or someone with common experiences, but not just anyone who can read.

But Plato Still Wrote:

It would seem that this is essentially the message of the *Phaedrus*, to write a memoir in late life (*Phaedrus* 278a). And yet what is most astounding abut this is that this is stated in a *written dialogue* by Plato. In other words, this is not a note that Plato does to himself for future reference, it as a literary work of certain characteristic that transmits this idea. While there is the critique of writing and the realization that it usually only enhances opinion not real knowledge this is said so in a written dialogue. Plato seems critical of writing and yet he wrote; why?

It is upon this question that I would like to conclude this chapter. Plato, the author, puts forth a comprehensive dialogue that seeks to present as part of its content a critical consideration about "good writing." And yet this is transmitted in written format. Was Plato contradicting himself or the victim of a careless work?

On this question there are diverging positions which will be touched in chapter 3. What is also important worth touching on is that writing may itself be a bad mode for the individual to express himself or herself. But writing is still a powerful method for disseminating convention in the forms of laws and regulations as well as scientific inquiry. Science relies heavily on the established parameters of convention as a means to knowledge to that which it studies. Writing is used to present scientific inquiry. As will be explored in chapter 2 science is a means to a good life, for science brings knowledge.

Conclusion:

Considering all the problems that plague oral communication we realize that they also apply to written communication; but writing is more deficient than speaking, writing seems to be relegated to an activity worth avoiding. But in this regard we still have to wonder why Plato wrote and moreover what can be the benefits from writing as a whole. This will be the focus of my last chapter. But before we get into that, I propose it is important to remain on the question of language as a medium. Language is instrumental for the development of science.

Through science, language aims at truth. For the Platonic dialogue truth is something elusive yet inherently critical to any philosophical consideration. Language in this sense can be seen as a vehicle to truth. In this regard, in the Platonic context,

language is more than just an abstraction. Despite its conventional essence language is not to be confounded with an alibi for relativism, in other words to completely disregard conventions on the account that they are man made. As we shall see in the next chapter the understanding of truth is a central point within Platonic dialogues; a study which is never fully resolved yet with what we are constantly. And from the understanding of Platonic truth, we can begin to see why language becomes so critical not just for human endeavors. From this discussion is that we will be able to contextualize why writing also has its place in the consideration of Plato, as it too aspires to truth. It will be from the discussion of truth that writing becomes regarded as a flawed imitation within the *Phaedrus*. And yet it is from the consideration of truth, that writing also becomes central to the pursuit of truth. As the next chapter will examine, the pursuit of truth in the Platonic understanding has as a consequence the creation of scientific method which aspires to remain truthful in the search of what is true. This scientific method will also become an anchored convention that will arguably transform the manner in which the world is viewed. And it is from science that writing assumes the characteristic of the truthful, for writing will become a medium that can incorporate science.

CHAPTER 2: TRUTH

Suppose I were trying to convince you that you should fight your enemies on horseback, and neither one of us knew what a horse is, but I happened to know this much about you, that Pahedrus believes a horse is the tame animal with the longest ears— (Phaedrus 260b)

In the last chapter I examined the problematic of writing and speaking. Writing has difficulty in adapting to circumstance. The written word cannot "defend" itself when taken to mean something which it does not "say." In other words, it is easier to misinterpret what is written than what is spoken. But as it turns out speech too has problems for speech also can never fully disclose the ideas or insights of the individual transmitter to the receptor. This is partly due to the fact that language is a metaphorical convention which acts as a "proverbial arrow" pointing at the objects and subjects they say they are naming or describing. Language depends on its acculturation in a society for it to become dominant within a society. Despite its conventional essence, language is indispensable for human affairs given the critical role it plays within human societies. Truth in language seeks the utility and functioning of the society but is not necessarily the *truth*.

Language is a tool that serves humans not just as the fabric which holds societies together; it is also an important agent in the betterment or worsening of those same societies. Conventions as a whole are devised as agents serving the utility of human societies, since there is a reality that exists beyond the confines of human society and their conventions. And language is a means to attain understanding of that reality. That reality is exogenous to human matters and, nonetheless, it is something to which humans must always respond to be it seasons, hunger, thirst, etc. There is a fundamental *Truth* about that reality; this truth is also exogenous to human

conventions. The wellbeing of human societies depend on the harmonization of their conventions with what is true. However, usually societies fail at this since conventions flourish mostly because of their utility not because of their truth. Language is in part a tool used by humans to aim at truth. But since language is also a convention it can be used to distort and go against truth.

In this chapter I will examine what the consideration for truth is in the Platonic dialogue. The *Truth* is not the result of convention, but rather conventions are devised in order to cope with what is inherently *True* about the world by gaining an understanding of it. In this regard, language is sometimes "correct" in its description or labels. But by correct I am referring to language *corresponding* in its labeling or description of reality to the true essence of that which it names or labels. To clarify, what is true is not the *logos* (word) but rather whether the logos' label or description accurately represents the essence of that which is being named. In other words, does a statement accurately encapsulate that which it labels.

In this regard, language acquires concreteness within human consciousness. Words no longer are artifacts devised to communicate; they become heralded as accurate labels for description and taxonomy. In this process words cease being regarded as the "arrows" which point at things, but rather become the things in and of themselves. Reality is now in the word (logos). The human becomes an *observer* of reality in his/her pursuit of truth (Heidegger 6). The human subject can aspire to grasp and command truth (Han 8). The relationship between subject and truth is one characterized by it its division, where the subject is separate from truth and thus the subject searches and eventually acquires it (Heidegger 6). This makes truth an object

towards which subject aspires to (Han 8). The truth about objects and subjects is not within them. The truth can be found outside them as these objects or subjects are inherently manifestations of the universal which supercedes them. This makes language problematic yet indispensable vehicle to truth for Plato.

Of Horses and Donkeys:

In chapter one I explained how a demagogue or sophist could confuse his audience about what is a horse and what is a donkey. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, someone could mistake the identity of horse for that of a donkey. Moreover this case of mistaken identity can be induced through demagoguery and sophistry. In this example we can say that though the two animals are similar there is an inherent difference between them. Despite the fact that their names are derived from convention there is something true about the fact that horse is not a donkey and vice versa.

After giving his palinode, where Socrates defends love over non-love in response to Lysias's proposal for the opposite, Socrates notices that Phaedrus is impressed with Socrates' speech but worries that Phaedrus is impressed just because the speech was well delivered (*Phaedrus* 257d). Phaedrus is content simply with the aesthetical component of rhetoric; he preferred dwelling on how beautiful or persuasive a speech was, and not whether that speech was worthy of consideration or more importantly, if what it was advocating was true (*Phaedrus* 258d). But this is a problem. To dwell just on the beauty or power of a speech means not contemplating what it proposes or whether what is being said is true. To dwell solely on the aesthetical of a speech also means to be susceptible to demagoguery or sophistry

which can through the use of flattery induce confusion and cement "incorrect opinion" on their audiences resulting in the manipulation of the speaker over his audience.

Socrates points out that while rhetoric can clarify it can also mislead meaning that rhetoric can expose what is true as well as obfuscating it. As it turns out the sophist/demagogue makes this distortion to the audience for his/her personal gains. But even though the demagogue/sophist may be talented, he is not regarded as a good rhetorician by Socrates (*Phaedrus* 257d). The problem with sophists/demagogues is that they are chasing after the opinions of their audience (*Phaedrus* 262c). They seek to make statements that may appeal to prejudices or conventional notions of what *seems* true and not what actually *is* true (*Phaedrus* 262c). Whether the sophist/demagogue either deliberately or unconsciously is doing so, he/she is not being *truthful.*

To illustrate this, Socrates asks Phaedrus to visualize a scenario in which a salesman tries to sell a donkey under the auspices that it is in fact a horse worthy for military life (*Phaedrus* 260b). Despite the conventionality that bounds any society a clear distinction is made in Socrates' example between the animal called horse and the animal called donkey. Though the names may be arbitrary, the consequence of correctly identifying the difference of the two matters for war, for example (Ferrari 40). Just because the name horse or donkey have no inherent "true" reason for being such, the distinction made between the two creatures that these names demarcate is important for human matters. To take a donkey and rely upon it as if it were a horse can have disastrous consequences when in war. While the animal we call donkey is

known for its incredible strength and power, it is also characterized as being stubborn and slower than a horse. In war, a solider ridding a donkey may be at a disadvantage, if confronting a foe ridding a horse. A horse is more obedient and faster than a donkey. The horse may be more suitable for a battle than a donkey, given the formers' attributes vis-à-vis the latter. As mentioned in chapter one, conventions seek to maximize the utility of societies.

It is important for a soldier to distinguish these two creatures. To make a mistake between the two could have disastrous effects. To err in selecting the right creature means to wrongfully choose. One can err if one has incorrect information at the moment of selection. A soldier may have never seen a horse and thus err if confronted by the salesman. The soldier may choose a donkey, thinking that he/she has selected a horse. The soldier may even be persuaded, or fooled, into thinking that a donkey is in fact a horse.

There may be instances where some may benefit if such an error is made. Perhaps the enemies of the soldier in an effort to confuse and gain an upper hand in battle may deliberately persuade the soldier to see a donkey as a horse. Or perhaps the salesman is a mere opportunist with no real allegiances who cares solely for the monetary benefits he/she can reap, and thus has no problem in selling a soldier a donkey claiming that it is actually a horse.[20]

It may also be the case that neither the seller nor the buyer in this case knows the difference between a horse and a donkey. When the two err and the soldier purchases the donkey the consequences may be just as disadvantageous for the soldier had he been knowingly misled by the salesman. But in this case the seller is in no

[20] For more on the deliberate usage of rhetoric as an unscrupulous means to power see chapter 1.

better position than the buyer. The seller too does not know which is which and though he/she may have profited from a wrong sale, if confronted with a similar situation in which the differentiation between the donkey and horse is at stake, then the salesman too could be at a loss.

From the example of the horse and donkey comes up the question of "right" and "wrong" interpretation or opinion. "Right" or "correct" opinion is crucial for warfare in the selection of the beast. But a series of questions emerge with regards to this notion of "correctness". If one has never seen a horse or a donkey how can one know which is which. Moreover, can someone actually be "fooled" into thinking that a donkey is a horse and vice versa? When can one be certain that one has attained "correct" opinion on a matter?

The example of the horse and donkey show us many possibilities. One can, not know and err; one can know and err; one can not know and assert; or one can know and assert when distinguishing the two creatures in so far as the relations these creatures have in the view of man. In the analogy of the horse and donkey it is knowledge of the two creatures which is central to their differentiation. While one may not know the difference between the two animals, there is a *real* and *true* difference between the two. For Socrates what matters is not just the assertion of which is which. To assert without knowing is having a coup of luck but no more. It is better to actually know which is which.

Truth as Correspondence:

The example of the horse and donkey shed light into the essence of truth. In the case of the horse and the donkey we saw that to err in the differentiation had

repercussions at least when it came to war. In this case we learn that there is something crucial to the differentiation of the creatures. The differentiation illustrates an important aspect of language, one that is central in the discussion of writing and speaking as forms of language; it is the notion of truth.

The truth lies in whether or not the names correspond to the creatures. Truth is correspondence between language and reality, in this case, correspondence between the animal and the label (Heidegger 2). But if the essence of the object in questions lies not in the name that it is given to the creatures, then to what exactly is it that we are referring by correspondence? Correspondence refers to whether we have accurately understood the essence of each creature, giving us the capability to differentiate them. Correspondence is the ability to, upon understanding essence of both animals, be able to see why they differ and why that matters in war.

Although language is conventional, the objects described by it are of a reality exogenous to that convention. There is a horse and a donkey whether we name them or not. A subject observes reality and uses language to label it. There is a relationship between a perceiving subject and the object which it perceives. Correspondence refers to whether the subject's perception of the object accurately matches the real essence of the object. The subject is confronted with a *manifestation* of the object. This means that the object in question does not stand alone on its own vis-à-vis the perceiving subject. Instead the subject perceives an aspect of the universal object.

If we were to encounter a donkey and a horse at some point, we could not say that we are witnessing all of "horse-kind" or "donkey-kind" merely out of the recollection of one specimen of each. What we can say is that we have seen *a* horse

and *a* donkey, meaning that we have come across creatures that match the description of horse and donkey. The key here is that we have seen examples or manifestations of "horse-kind" and "donkey-kind". In our understanding, derived from convention, the term horse represents a particular quadruped of certain demeanor and features, same with donkey. These terms acquire an abstract notion in our imagination that have the power to encapsulate under their label all creatures that "fit" into the definition we have ascribed to "horse" and "donkey."

The words horse and donkey become universal in our imaginations. Each describes every single specimen that fits the definition of horse/donkey in past present and future. In fact these names apply to fictitious horses and donkeys for in our minds these names already project an image of horse/donkey. We know though that all horses and all donkeys are different. Within each species there are differences in size, color, shape, etc. Nevertheless, there is a universal idea of horse in our minds with which we are able to bridge all these differences and still identify a horse and a donkey. If we encountered a white horse and brown horse we would not call the latter a donkey simply because of the difference in color, for example. It is only by creating the abstract entity of "horse" and "donkey" that we can then make generalizations and catalogue a creature under either label.

The abstract notion of "horse" and "donkey" which we generate in our imaginations take a universal dimension vis-à-vis those creatures that are under its label. The specimen is a representation of the universal "horse" and "donkey" and thus when we see one of the two we can call them by their universal label. Truth is

corresponding in what we know and what we state, in this case correctly calling a horse and a donkey (Heidegger 6).

The universal lies in the abstract and the abstract lies beyond the object in question, in the example of the horse and donkey, beyond the individual specimen we encounter. But if the universal exceeds the individual, where is the universal? The answer to this question perhaps is best elucidated in another of Plato's dialogue, the *Republic*. It is the myth of the divided line which explains issue of the universal as well as the emergence of *episteme* (knowledge) science commanded by a subject (*Republic* 509d). The command of a subject over science will enable this same subject to elaborate abstract generalizations and properties from the universal to the specific. It is through the development of science that a subject can acquire a notion of the universal and subsequently ensure that the label that is placed over an object corresponds to the universal.

Correct Opinion[21]:

The concept of truth in the Platonic understanding is available to all, but comprehensible only by some.[22] What we find throughout cultures and across time is not truth itself but rather *doxa* (opinion) about what is true (Klein 119). If we remove ourselves from the temporal and spatial context of any society we can hypothetically see that what is once true may eventually be dismissed or even become regarded as false. However this does not mean that all is relative. In the Platonic understanding there is a higher notion of what is true which supersedes the conventional.

---

[21] This subheading and its context was already used for my paper proposal.

[22] This will have repercussions in the writing of Plato, for many will read but only some will understand.

One of these concepts is that of truth. In *The Republic* Socrates tells Glaucon about the "divided line" and the "allegory of the cave" as cases in point to illustrate this (*Republic* 509d). Socrates tells Glaucon to visualize a line with two segments. The realm of the lower segment corresponds to the realm of the sun and visible entities and the realm of the upper segment corresponds to that of the intelligible in which we find that *Agathon* "the Good" (Klein 113). The top segment is twice as long as the bottom segment (Klein 113). Both the top segment and the bottom segment are each divided into two (Klein 113).

Within the realm that is visible there are objects which occur naturally (for example: plants, animals, and humans) and those which are man made (chair, table, shield etc), they are referred to as *ta onta* (beings), which are on the higher part of the bottom segment (Heidegger 21). In addition to that, there are the "images" that are projected from these beings such as for example, reflections on water or on a mirror, shadows etc. these are "images" and are called *eikones*, which are on the lower part of the bottom segment (Klein 113). It appears as if both humans and animals as sentient cognitive beings are capable of observing and understanding the presence of an image, however it seems as if only humans are capable of differentiating between the "original" and the reflection or "image" cast by the original, although sometimes even for humans this is quite hard (Klein 114). The ability to discern an image *as an image* is called *eikasia* (Klein 114). When it comes to the perception of the visible world as a whole, of *onta*, our notion or acceptance of what is or what is not there relies

heavily on trust (*pistis*) and knowledge of what is accepted to be true and what is accepted to be false in accordance to social convention or *doxa* (Klein 114).[23]

When it comes to the domain of the intelligible[24], of the universal, there is also a division. On the lower level of the top segment there is the realm of *dianoia* (thinking) (Klein 115). On the higher part of the top segment is the realm of *episteme* (knowledge) (Klein 115). *Dianoia* is what enables us as humans to relate and differentiate objects (Klein 117). For example, it is through *dianoia* that we can compare a finger with another finger, see what they have in common and what sets them apart and in addition to determine which is bigger and which one is smaller through counting and numbering as well as through other units of measurement (Klein 117). But *dianoia* does more than just rely on measurement (Klein 118). Through counting and numbering a person investigating an observable entity, or for that matter an "image," can transform those images within his/her imagination and regard them there (in their imagination) (Klein 118). Imagination enables a different kind of visualization that the senses prevent (Klein 118). Since objects in the exterior have similarities and differences, through imagination, one is capable of compounding the universal or intelligible aspect of the object in question (Klein 118).

It is through this process that one can get a clearer image, within one's sense of perception, about the domain of the visible; a new form of *eikasia*, *dianoetic eikasia* (Klein 119). But as with the case of *eikasia*, the *dianoetic* type too is linked with *pistis* and part of the domain of *doxa* (Klein 119). The *dianoetic eikasia* enables us to understand visible objects in terms of their intelligible foundations (Klein 120).

---

[23] Klein calls this the familiar and non familiar (114).

[24] This said to be the realm of the *idea* where objects and subjects exist in their abstract form under the rule of the *Agathon* (the good) (*Republic* 516b).

Taking the example of the horse/donkey we can asses that there are different types of horses/donkeys in terms of size, shape, color, texture, etc. But one can nonetheless conceive in the imagination what it is that links all horses/donkeys together, despite their differences what is the universality that encapsulates their essence as horse/donkey. In the examples of horses and donkeys, through *dianoetic eikesia* the two creatures can be separated under different categories of *mamilia* quadrupeds. Moreover, the different specimens of different sizes, shapes, colors etc can be categorized under their respective label, provided that the creatures in question *correspond* with the criteria of each label.

This creates a situation in which while on the one hand imagination is used to gain clarification about the visual world through the "images" drawn based on what is perceived from the visual world; on the other hand it also makes the visible world depend, for the sake of clarity, on the "images" of imagination (Klein 120). For example we seek to show based on the image of a horse or donkey in our mind that when we come across a large quadruped of a certain demeanor whether or not it is a horse or donkey. However, this does not account for how it is that we arrive at *doxa*, or convention, from which we derive the *pistis* of an object in question (Klein 121). To be able to go beyond and see from where it is that we derive our opinions from requires us to move away from the realm of the observable but also from the realm of *dianoia* and the dianoetic extension of *eikasia* (Klein 122).

This takes one to the higher level of the segment, that of *episteme* (knowledge or science). In this realm the task is to see the "whole" from which our concepts are derived (Klein 124). This "whole" is supposition free and stands on its own; it does

not stand on another concept or image but rather is the point from which concepts and images emerge (Klein 123). The task here is to discern on what suppositions our thinking relies on, moreover what is behind the axioms on which our conventions where accorded (Klein 122). Because it "stands on its own," the "whole" no longer relies on the visible or on suppositions as source, for one wants to get to the source of the supposition (Klein 122). This difficult task requires the usage of dialectics in which one learns to relate what it is that makes that is universal about different concepts (Klein 123). In a sense this can be seen as an exercise in which one tries to see the "whole" by looking at different "parts" and trying to link them together to get a picture of the "whole" (Klein 123). Science is a means to an end, the end being here *aletheia* (*truth*) (Han 7). Science seeks to expose what is true about reality. In the example of the horse and the donkey science seeks to discover what is inherently true about the essence of each creature.

Rhetoric and Knowledge:

This brings me back to my opening point in this chapter. The sophist and the demagogue concern themselves with chasing opinions of what *seems* true merely for their own gains, but never engage what *is* true. Socrates will make the case that what matters in order to be a good rhetorician is for one to *know* the subject matter that he/she is speaking of (*Phaedrus* 262c).

However, there are two important considerations that need to be made in this pronouncement. Firstly rhetoric is still needed as a means to persuade an audience about what is true. As the following quote suggests, rhetoric is the vehicle that permits the truth to emerge, "I am not forcing anyone to learn how to make speeches

without knowing the truth; on the contrary, my advice, for what it is worth, is to take me up on only after mastering the truth. But I do make this boast: even someone who knows the truth couldn't produce conviction on the basis of a systematic art without me" (*Phaedrus* 260d).[25] The second consideration that needs to be taken is that Socrates is aware of the difficulty of distinguishing between what *is* true as opposed to what *seems* true. This is difficult individually for an individual is reared and educated within the conventional settings of his/her society. Thus this individual must struggle with the *doxa* to which he/she has been acculturated, a feat which proves to be difficult. But this is also difficult for the individual with regards to the collective. As it turns out it is hard to confront the conventions of a society without being perceived as a threat by that same society, something which may warrant a reaction against that individual, sometimes perhaps even a violent one.

The problem concerning the exercise of distinguishing what *is* true from what *seems* true emerges from the fact that there exist objects and concepts which are similar to one another (*Phaedrus* 261e). Socrates gives as an example silver and iron as two metals which look similar but are in fact different (*Phaedrus* 263a). The same is the case when discussing concepts like just and good (*Phaedrus* 263a). It is precisely when confronted with concepts that are similar to each other that confusion can ensue about the nature of them since one may not really know the nature of either concept but just certain aspects.

It is when things are similar that there is a propensity to obfuscate and err and it is amidst this that a sophist/demagogue can succeed in "fooling" his audience. But

[25] This statement is made by Socrates who anthropomorphizes rhetoric, who is in turn explaining why she is still needed.

Socrates insists that to fool an audience does not proof that the person doing the fooling is himself not fooled (*Phaedrus* 262a). Thus the good rhetorician must himself/herself not be deceived by those things that are similar.

First it is important to realize that rhetoric is the art which aims at directing and redirecting the soul (*Phaedrus* 261a). In this way Socrates makes sure to include all forms of rhetoric, be it in the law courts as well as the homes of individuals, all rhetoric corresponds to a larger whole. Thus, Socrates will clarify that all language is rhetorical.

In order for one to be able not to be deceived between things that are similar to each other it is important that one must be capable in recognizing and knowing what distinguishes these things; for Socrates, this is taken to mean that one must be capable to learn how to divide these similar things or rather separate them (*Phaedrus* 263b). This can be taken as a metaphor to imply that the division occurs in the mind of the person seeking to know the truth about these objects in question, be they silver versus iron, just versus good, or horse versus donkey, for example. But because these objects are too similar and even may be synonymous in the minds of the beholder, then the task is to know the "exact" point that "separates" these two objects in the mind of the beholder. Thus, before one can begin speaking and writing one must already have full knowledge about the subject matter.

But Socrates is cautious; he realizes that knowledge can be taken to mean just memorizing facts without true insight without ever contemplating why these facts are worth memorizing in the first place. To have knowledge about a subject matter one can be a passive observer and claim, after numerous observations, that one has

knowledge of that subject matter. This is part of the problem of writing it gives readers the impression that they have knowledge after reading (see chapter one for more on this). One can visualize what has been written but not say they know what is intended to be transmitted. To illustrate this Socrates gives the example of someone claiming to know medicine on the basis that he has read or observed medical procedures (*Phaedrus* 268b). Socrates elucidates that the man who reads or contemplates on a craft like medicine or music is taking a step in the right direction, inasmuch as he has begun to gain conceptual knowledge of what is at stake in the practice of these crafts (*Phaedrus* 268e). But to gain conceptual knowledge in itself is not the determinant criteria of *having* knowledge about an object or subject in question. One can think of a contemporary example, to have read about flying an airplane, maybe even seen movies, and even interviewed pilots, but this does not make one a pilot. One can have good insights into the mechanics behind flying but this is no guarantee that if confronted with a situation in which one had to operate an airplane that one would do so successfully. To have knowledge means more than just conceptual knowledge about a subject, it also involves a degree of practice within the field one seeks to speak of or write about (*Phaedrus* 269d).

The good rhetorician therefore does not just hold *episteme* he is also a man who has some experiential knowledge, that comes with practice and repetition which in the long run may become habitual to him/her. As Socrates will explain one needs to know the different types of circumstance that may lie ahead for the rhetorician (*Phaedrus* 271d). There are different types of souls and different possible scenarios with which one can be confronted, thus the good rhetorician will be able to see what

suits best what situation (*Phaedrus* 271d). To know this requires that one have the insight about them in the first place and practice enables that insight to come.

The good rhetorician must begin by understanding himself/herself as the object of study (Griswold 5). After all, the rhetorician too has a soul which itself reacts to different forms of "stimuli." Anger, fear, happiness, awe, inspiration etc. are feelings most feel though not usually for the same reasons. The rhetorician must be aware that he or she is just as capable of having his/her soul led by the power of someone else's words. Like a vessel the soul finds itself reacting to not just what occurs in the present but also what has past. Rhetoric has the power of guiding the soul precisely because it has the power to strike at points which may bring association with the past, either grievances or joyous occasions. The good rhetorician thus must begin by asking himself/herself what and why makes him react in a certain way and must also be capable of orienting his/her own soul from torment or towards inner peace, a task that is not easy. In this way the rhetorician gains practice in part through his own soul. But this is just the beginning, the rhetorician must also learn to relate to others, involving also to learn to see the way others' souls operate (more on the importance of self knowledge will be developed in chapter 4).

The Limits of Truth:

As we see Socrates' advice to the good rhetorician involves theory and practice. One may be incomplete with out the other, so far as knowledge is concerned. However to have theory and practice does not mean that one has infallible knowledge about a subject or object in question. Both theory and practice are themselves still bound by convention or *doxa*. Conceptual knowledge is still bound by language and

other conventional rules, for example a scientific method needed to ensure a verifiable and repeatable procedure which can be used by others to corroborate the findings of one person. This means one has to still adapt to the conventional norms behind science, without these science cannot exist. Even knowledge derived from practice, one still has to "learn the rules of the game." To practice a craft or discipline one must be acculturated into the existing established procedure, which precedes the individual. For example to become a doctor, one must learn the rules and dictates of medicine. Although one may gain insight as to how and why certain procedures occur, this still requires the individual to learn what medicine sanctions.

This is best illustrated in Book VII of the *Republic* with the allegory of the cave. In it, Socrates recounts a myth in which there are human prisoners all chained in rows watching shadows projected onto a wall that is in front of them (*Republic* 514b). The prisoners cannot move as a result of their shackles and cannot see what is behind them (*Republic* 514b). Behind the prisoners are shadow-makers who through the use of puppets and statues project the shadows of these artifacts by lifting them and moving them in front of a fire, which is behind them (the shadow makers) (*Republic* 514b). The shadows appear to the prisoners not as *eikones* but rather as *onta*, as the prisoners have throughout their lifetimes regarded these shadows as real (*Republic* 515c). The prisoners have been habituated into seeing the shadows for what they are not.

At one point one of these prisoners manages to escape from the chains that bound him (*Republic* 515c). This same prisoner observes the dynamic of the cave involving shadow-makers and shadow-counters (the prisoners) the fire and the

shadows. The prisoner eventually ventures outside the cave and *sees* that he has been under an illusory life with regards to his perceptions, which at first is a very painful and difficult experience (*Republic* 516a). Outside the cave as he attempts to regard what is in front of him he is blinded by a powerful light (the sun), making it extremely difficult for him to see (*Republic* 516a). The prisoner returns back to the cave with his new awareness and insight and yet observes that nothing has changed despite his absence (*Republic* 517a). How to proceed next is a matter he must take seriously for there may be serious repercussions against him where he to attempt to expose his discovery.

One thing that can be drawn from this story is the notion of "false reality" (Heidegger 21). For the prisoner the shadows were themselves *alethes* (Heidegger 21). He did see the shadows but not as shadows, rather as the real objects themselves. But this is not his fault or doing, rather it was the conventional attitude of the environment in which was reared in (Heidegger 25). In other words, the prisoner did not on his own think he was seeing real objects, rather he learned it. The chains which impeded his movement were also indispensable in his rearing as this prevented the prisoner from "seeing" other objects which could have cast doubt onto the shadows as reality (Heidegger 25). While the prisoner may gain insight about the illusion of the conventional world of his society, there is a reality that exists beyond the confines of the cave; in a place where the prisoner can only be for a short period of time (*Republic* 516e).

While the "reality" of the society is false, the prisoner is bound to remain within the social world. Perhaps Aristotle sheds most light into this predicament when

he states that man is a political animal by nature and to exist out of the realm is to be a beast or a god but not man (*Politics* 1253a25). Essentially man is confined to live for numerous reasons within societies that wind up creating these artificial bonds. Social norms, mores, rules, etc. are all conventional and require illusory means in order to appear as real. The prisoner may be aware of this and no matter how hard he tries he can never fully exist outside of the social confines. He is limited in part by the fact that on his own he cannot have access to his basic needs. But in the end despite his individual awareness the prisoner is still a product of the society. His insight can only be expressed through the accepted codes and symbols he learned in society be them language, art, or music. Upon this predicament he finds that no one will take him seriously or worse regard him as a threat to the integrity of the society.

The prisoner may be truthful in recounting what he saw but the society may regard this as false. For the social truth may find itself to be at odds with the *truth*. In the case of the cave any statements made by the escaped prisoner may run counter to the integrity of the social system. The prisoner on the one hand must confront the shadow makers who wield a lot of power within the society. Not only do they control the shackled prisoners, they also control what they see and how they see it. In this case they have power over dictating what is true for the society as it they who ensure the education and acculturation into their norms of the shadow counters. The shadow makers have the final say as to what is "real" and what is not. Arguably since the shadow-makers wield such power it is likely that they control the media of communication as well. The shadow-makers in this sense control, among other things,

language. The prisoner who has been acculturated through these media, in a way has to "play by the rules" of the shadow-makers.

On the other hand the prisoner must also confront the shackled many, who although they are less powerful than the shadow-makers have been acculturated and habituated into a social system. Almost instinctively and by second nature, they do not question what they see as being real or false, they *know* it's real. As we had said earlier in this chapter, there is an experiential component to knowledge. If their experiences have always taught them that the shadows are real then, they will know this to be true. When someone questions their sense of convictions, in a way he is questioning what they assume to be their experience. The prisoner is thus alienated from the society but cannot leave it for he would die. How then can he expose what is *true*?

When *is Alethia*:

The example of the allegory of the cave shows us the predicament of *truth*. While it is important for societies to adapt themselves to reality for survival and thus explore what is true about reality, as means to ensure better adaptability, as was discussed in chapter one. What is true for the society may not always be what is really *true*. In a society instrumentality prevails over reality and truth. The instrumentality of a society may be to ensure its survival or social status quo thus what is really true may in fact be a danger to that society or social order. What is true may also be a threat to those who wield power and construct the artificial reality of the society. If the prisoners found out they were prisoners how would they react? The *truth* is inaccessible to most. But the social truth is present to all.

For Martin Heidegger this problem is central to Plato (Heidegger 12). But, as Heidegger points out, this is in fact an alteration of the tradition of the pre-Socratics[26] which preceded him (Heidegger 12). Like Plato, the pre-Socratics also differentiated between *alethia* and convention. However, truth for the pre-Socratics lay not in a reality exogenous to the individual. This was after all the crux of the allegory of the cave, reality and truth were beyond the confines of the cave and thus beyond the limits of the prisoner's essence. For the pre-Socratics *aletheia* meant that which discloses itself (Heidegger 7). *Aletheia* stood as an action that involved both subject and object. The object would disclose itself or unhide itself in the presence of the subject; but the idea here is that the object sought to remain hidden or its opposite (Heidegger 9). In this regard truth occurs when the essence of an object or subject is left exposed, although this never occurred to the fullest there was always a limit. Hence truth was an endeavor for there was always a gradual sense of greater disclosure to happen (Heidegger 9). In the example of the horse and donkey, just seeing the creatures is not a guarantee of *alethia*. It would be upon the interaction with the creatures within their environment and the relation that may ensue between one and them that their essence may begin to be disclosed. Under the pre-Socratic notion the horses' or donkey's essence comes from their being (Heidegger 9). Their categorization under genus and species matter very little. It is in relating with the creatures that one can get to know them, one would get to know the individual creatures.

[26] The name given to philosophers who precede Socrates. Heidegger for the most part will speak of Heraclitus.

Truth comes not from an object corresponding to its abstract essence (Heidegger 12). Its essence comes from its presence and manifestation in the immediate sensory world, its essence comes from being (Heidegger 7). Plato alters this notion of *alethia* from unhiddenness to correctness in correspondence (Heidegger 12). While *alethia* still symbolizes truth, truth under Plato is not dependent on being (Heidegger 12). Instead, one achieves truth through its abstraction, through correctness (Heidegger 6). The true horse or donkey is a model constructed and imagined. What is horse or donkey obeys to a series of established definitions and functions accorded within a scientific community. One goes to the creature as an "observer." One may still interact with them but their essence corresponds to their "universal nature" which can only be discerned through science, through correctness (Heidegger 10). This changes the relationship between subject and object. Under this view of truth, knowledge becomes an object of the subject, for the subject *possesses* knowledge, and the truth emerges from this possession on knowledge corresponding with reality (Heidegger 12).

For the pre-Socratics truth is not the object of knowledge nor is knowledge the object of the inquiring subject (Han 8). There is as much doing by the object, which discloses itself and the subject onto whom the object discloses itself. One can only know on a case by case basis and not have generalized notions about objects.

This had profound implications in the relation between humans and their surroundings, including themselves. To be fully disclosed meant more than just being in plain sight; it also meant learning about the truest essence of any being or object (Heidegger 9). This informed the manner in which humans regarded themselves

individually. To be truthful meant learning to *see* one's undisclosed self, the self that exceeded the self created by conventions (Han 3). Self-knowledge was not taken as a scientific psychology. Self-knowledge involved learning about one's desires, fears, angst, reconsidering past grievances or joys in relation to one's present state (Han 6). It meant that an individual pondered what it was which made him react and what made him act (Han 6).[27]

Plato makes truth metaphysical in the eyes of Heidegger (Heidegger 12). No longer is truth in being (Han 11).[28] Being is what precludes truth or what enables deception in the Platonic notion, since in being objects hide their true essence (Heidegger 9). The truest essence of an object lies beyond its being, in the abstract outside of the conventional. This has an impact, for it transforms what it is to be truthful. One can be truthful in one's inquiries by finding out the truth about what he/she is curious. But finding out what is true may not lead to living truthfully at least not in the pre-Socratic sense. To be truthful one has to be true to one's self.

Philosophy is the goal:

Although the goal of rhetoric is persuasion, what is important is for the person attempting to persuade to at least know what he is doing and why. When Socrates asserts that a rhetorician should know his subject matter before he speaks, he does so in part to cast doubt on whether Lysias knows about what he is talking. Lysias was speaking about love, without really shedding any light into whether he knew what

---

[27] The idea here is that we aas indivduals are a totality of a series of multiplicities within us, some of which have been induced into us by habit from rearing or experience and some which are inate to us (Han 6).

[28] The example of Jesus and Paul attests to this as Jesus lived and was by he preached as part of his practice (Han 11). Paul on the other hand is a man of reflection who in his being is not the same man as the one of his logos, in fact his through his logos he seeks to diminish some of his instincts and feelings as much as he can (Han 13).

love was in the first place (*Phaedrus* 264a). Socrates questions as to whether Lysisas is just referring to conventional notions of love when attempting to persuade the young lover (*Phaedrus* 265a).

It is in this light that Socrates tells Phaedrus that one should know about what one talks about otherwise one may be in a position no different than that of the salesman who cannot distinguish horses from donkeys. As mentioned earlier, knowledge here is both theoretical and experiential. One may know theoretically a lot on love but may have never experienced love for his part. Theoretical knowledge here is the object of an inquiring subject. In other words to know about love partly requires an understanding of love in an abstract manner, knowing the true essence of love as it is without the distorted notions that may come about from convention.

It is important to clarify that by knowledge, Socrates is not referring to technical knowledge or *techne*. *Techne* relies on basic skill and memorization; it is the result of repetition and habit. A speaker may need to have some technical skills when speaking, for instance knowing what to say to whom. This is reminiscent to the example of the calculator where it is insufficient to say one knows math on the account that one knows how to operate a calculator. One cannot say they truly know rhetoric just because they have some basic understanding of certain key principles of rhetoric.

It is also unlikely that Socrates is proposing *episteme* to be the driving force for a rhetorician. A rhetorician may have scientific knowledge for example of medicine and why it is the case that certain drugs elicit certain reactions in the body while others do not. Moreover it may also serve a rhetorician to know why certain

types of people react in a certain manner when confronted with certain speeches and why others do not. But there are two problems with reliance just on *episteme*. On the one hand science cannot be just taught to an uninitiated audience (in science). To speak of medical procedures to someone who does not know medicine would likely be futile if the speaker does not explain in lay words his procedures to his uninitiated (in medicine) audience. Hence the essence of rhetoric requires the transmitter be able to relate to his audience in ways that supercede science. This means that there is more than just transmitting knowledge. In order to know what to say, the speaker should be sensitive as to what the listener can or cannot understand but more importantly the speaker should be careful with what the listener is willing to listen to and what not. For example, amidst the loss of a close relative, it would be a bad a idea for someone to tell the person mourning the loss that the deceased was in fact a bad person, no matter how true this is. Thus, the speaker must be aware of the sensitivities and biases of the speaker and appeal to him baring this in mind. Otherwise, the listener may just not want to listen to what the speaker has to say, regardless of how true or how important that message is. More important than being a good communicator is the ability of relating.

In addition, science is still subjected to *doxa*. Science cannot on its own become an independent medium to truth for it relies on the conventions of language and method to ensure its practicability. As Heidegger points out, there may be science and even a theory of knowledge within the cave which are conventionally true (Heidegger 63). Science can at most be seen as a compendium to a good life but not

an end in itself, for example, knowing that drinking too much alcohol is lethal may encourage certain temperance when indulging in alcohol consumption.

The best way a rhetorician can ensure his transmission adequately reaches his audience is by relating to his audience, and relating involves both experience and theory. But it also involves a sense of wisdom, the result of contemplation and practice, usually this comes with time. But Socrates knows that limitation of the human prevents the possibility of possessing wisdom (*Phaedrus* 278d). But to pursue wisdom means constantly questioning the convictions one may have as a result of conventions and experience and whether these are valid or worth having. As Ferrari says,

> The difference between the position of the orator and of the philosopher is the difference between knowing the truth and seeking truth; between truth as intermediate and as primary goal. And this difference is not to be accounted for by the formal mechanism of collection and division, but by the structure of goals – the structure of life within the method is applied. For the advocate could make use of entirely truthful assimilations and dissimilations, if this gave him the desired result in court; but then, he would only be using the technique of dialectic. But what Socrates wants to say to him is: don't use it; live it (Ferrari 62).

The goal becomes not to create a binding and solid set of propositions about the world. The goal is to aim at understanding the world while simultaneously being conscious of the limitations that may come with any set of discoveries and insights. In realizing one's limitations one is willing to be a constant learner and never a full master on any domain. Thus, the philosopher does not seek to assert any doctrine of his own, his aim lies in enriching his experiences by seeing the worth and value of any position on any domain as well as its flaws and problems. Philosophy prevents

one from making categorical assertions or negations about any state of being for one has to observe how much one's own "knowledge" is itself influenced by convention.

A philosopher needs rhetoric in order to persuade or dissuade others from certain course of action (*Phaedrus* 260d). More importantly, philosopher may need rhetoric to persuade himself/herself and induce a degree of doubt upon his/her convictions as well as encouraging a sense of faith in elements he/she may feel strong about. But rhetoric itself may be used simply for the sake of attaining power over others and thus seek the manipulation of an audience. Thus, it is important to know the context and circumstance of when something should be said and when not and seek not the manipulation of others but seek self-improvement. One may also see the importance in persuading others on the importance of inducing certain changes within the social political realm from which one comes, as it may be the case that the social and political may find itself in a crisis of induced misery (induced by the ruling elements of that regime) or in a crisis of belief by the masses in the social and political order.

But the philosopher never offers any answer or any proposal as to how to live better. Instead, he teaches by example and moreover, he induces others into that realization without ever stating this. In the next chapter I will discuss how and why it is this is done. This will then take me into the question of why it was that Plato wrote dialogues in return to the discussion on writing versus speaking. As it turns out Plato does not entirely disregard the notion of self-knowledge as exposed in the pre-Socratic sense. Writing can become a compendium to self-knowledge, for Plato will teach not through verbal articulation but by example how it is that writing can help

induce self-awareness and self-knowledge. However it is a certain method of writing that will enable this—the dialogue (Grisowld 223). The key in a dialogue will be the introduction of the dialectic.

CHAPTER 3: WHY DID PLATO WRITE DIALOGUES?

To call him wise, Pahedrus, seems to me too much, and properly only for a god. To call him a wisdom's lover—a philosopher—or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly (*Phaedrus* 278d).

In chapter two I explained how *truth* is central to the discussion of writing and speaking. In the Platonic tradition *truth* is in the idea, in the universal, away from the material and in the metaphysical. But *truth* has to be reconciled with convention; since convention may not always be anchored on truth. Plato in this sense breaks with the pre-Socratic tradition for which truth was in being truthful to one's self and one's essence. Truth was not conceptual nor in the idea, rather in being.

However, Plato does not entirely do away with the pre-Socratic tradition. To seek truth is important but also to live truthfully. One must not just say what is true but also live by that as well. Conventions may be distant or even cemented in untruthful notions, for example drinking alcohol to the point of intoxication to prove a man's virility, despite the nefarious effects this may induce. Since one cannot escape the social realm one is inevitably tied to conventions and thus one can never be entirely *with* truth; one can be in constant pursuit of what is truth but, it will always elude him/her. In this regard one seeks more than just information what is true. It is still important to relate with one's environment and society. As with truth, wisdom is elusive but to be in constant pursuit of it; is the goal as proposed by Socrates, as the above quote shows. Ultimately the lover of wisdom is not just concerned with the truth but rather with living in truthfully to one's self seeking one's betterment. This can also lead to the betterment of one's society. Thus the goal is to love wisdom and

seek it as if it were a loving partner, to become a philo-sopher means to become a lover of wisdom.

There is still, however, one important question, I suggest, to be touched upon in this regard. If the goal is not just to *say* what is true but also *do* what is true, why did Plato write? To write would seem to counter the warning of the dialogue, where Socrates explained how writing should be used for memory's sake and among those who are already aware or sensitive to the subject matter (see chapter one for more on this). Plato does not seem to be writing a memoir for his and his students' sake. Moreover, if the emphasis is to live truthfully then why write?

These are important questions to consider for they ultimately shed light into the place writing can have as a healing technology. Ultimately Plato the author leaves us with a medium that can induce self knowledge on those who seek it. Plato will show this both within the content of his dialogues but also through the method he employs when writing—the dialogue.

Plato wrote dialogues, works that could be considered fiction involving real (characters who actually lived like Socrates) and sometimes fictitious characters. The dialogue is simulacrum of a conversation. Thus, the dialogue is not read as a treatise or exposé. Instead, a dialogue is read as the remnants of a live conversation where there are diverging opinions which seemingly flow spontaneously. The dialogue is not immune to the critique of writing for it is still plagued by some of the shortcomings of writing; perhaps most obviously that a reader cannot interrupt Socrates, for example, in the *Phaedrus* and ask him questions. Nevertheless the dialogue is rhetorically devised to be a piece that is adaptive to its audience. It says

different things to different readers because in essence the dialogue speaks for itself, Plato never states anything in his name. Thus, the dialogue in a way anticipates different readers, from different conventional backgrounds and in so doing, can say different things to different readers. The key with the dialogue is that it is not just rhetorical in essence, all language is, and it is also rhetorical in style. Plato the author carefully edifies an entity that presents itself as a window into a conversation that is taking place in the presence of the reader. The reader becomes a "spectator."

Why write?

Jacques Derrida claims that Plato in his philosophy truly disregarded writing and saw it as a dangerous enterprise for whoever engaged in it (Derrida 110). When one writes one is removing the *logos* from the source, in Derrida's interpretation of Plato, one is committing a form of parricide (Derrida 78). This parricide occurs because when words are written they are separated from their source (Derrida 78). Plato thus ends up himself committing a form of parricide by "bastardizing" the words of Socrates, someone who never wrote (Derrida 163). In stating in writing that writing is inferior to speaking, Plato denies the orality of Socrates and thus commits parricide on the words of Socrates.

But Derrida points out that oral speech cannot rid itself from the essence of writing as Socrates needs metaphors derived from writing in order to clarify how and why speech is better (Johnson xxvi). This ultimately shows that oral communication is itself a problematic medium that can never fully transmit the essence of thought from transmitter to receptor (Johnson xxvi). Derrida does not set out to vindicate writing or condemn speech but rather to show how the way we conceive of both

media is problematic (Johnson ix). We tend to construct the idea that writing is an inferior copy of speech inadequate for the dissemination of knowledge when in fact speech is just as problematic (Johnson ix).

In the case of Derrida, he at least tries to understand what it is that Plato means with certain statements in the text. Derrida attempts to expose the rationale of why the issue of writing and speaking is brought up. Derrida still evaluates the text and attempts to draw a hermeneutical analysis of the text.

There are those, however, who take on a literal interpretation of Plato and his dialogues. The case of Karl Popper and *The Open Society and its Enemies* illustrates this best. Popper attempts to demonstrate that Plato seeks through his dialogues to discourage the movement in Athens from tribalism towards an open society (Popper 190). Popper argues that Plato in fact reacts against the democratic tendencies in Athens (Popper 194). Popper sees in Plato the origins of totalitarianism, since in the eyes of Popper, Plato calls for the compliance of the citizenry with the imposition of a strong ruler accompanied by the submission of the populace (Popper 165). Popper thus argues that Plato dislikes and attacks the emerging concepts of civil liberties for these are an atrophy against the decency and stability that existed in tribal times (Popper 167). Popper sees Plato as an early proponent for political tyranny (Popper 194). Plato becomes dangerous because he wrote this in his dialogues, Popper counters, and by writing this disseminated his ideas for future generations providing a type of manual for tyranny (Popper 194).

With Popper we see a very literal interpretation of the text. His focus lies in exposing the anti-democratic pronouncements made across Plato's texts. Popper sees

the elements where Plato calls for a strong ruler over democracy (Popper 194). Popper does not dwell on the metaphorical elements of the text nor does he acknowledge the importance of the tacit author, Plato, who never makes a case in favor for or against anything. Unlike Derrida Popper's interpretation is less exegetical and is instead more driven with the intent of exposing Plato. But to pinpoint something on Plato becomes quite difficult when none of his dialogues expose conclusive remarks.

On the question of interpretation we may find ourselves going around a circle; if there is no doctrine to be found in Plato's dialogues how can we say that there are incorrect interpretations? In the case of Popper we can say that he attempts to read an inherently metaphorical text purely along literal lines and purely from the context and reality of the reader. While, as was mentioned in chapter one, the hermeneutical circle cannot be closed, it is important for a reader to maintain a degree of partiality when confronting the work of another epoch. Popper is concerned with demonstrating the roots of totalitarian movements like Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union being essentially the result of the works of certain men (primarily Plato, Hegel, and Marx). It is likely that a certain interpretation of Plato may render Nazi or Stalinist sympathies but Plato was not just long dead by the time these movements had emerged, it becomes an anachronism to assess the means of totalitarianism to be remotely associated with Plato.

In the case of Derrida it is not a question of literary interpretation of the text but rather one of the conclusions gathered from his interpretation. Derrida does not attempt to impose a read of Plato that connects him with his contemporary events. At

least, this is not his main goal. Instead, Derrida wants to show by extension that Plato dismisses writing as an inadequate means of communication whereas in reality speech is no better.

But one cannot still state that despite the concern with dogma that Plato does not present any meaning in his dialogues. To understand Plato we have to remove ourselves from the notion that writing transmits information which the reader absorbs and instead regard writing as an artifact that can expose elements about us as readers. Writing can act as a mirror in which we begin to see ourselves.

This interpretation is central to the likes of Craig, Grisowld, Ferrari, Hadot and White. For them, Plato was indeed concerned with the limitations of writings as a medium that could solidify *doxa* as opposed to encourage questioning and critical thinking (Griswold 207; Ferrari 217; White 255). But Plato writes in such a manner so as to mitigate, as much as is possible, the problems endemic to writing (Craig xxx; Griswold 220). Through the encouragement of the dialectical method, Plato encourages the constant questioning and reconciliation of different positions on the same subject matter (Griswold 226).

However, Plato also becomes an exemplar in the manner in which he writes, meaning that much of Plato's lessons come in the structure he chose to deliver his message, the dialogue, and not just from the content of his writings (Griswold 223). Plato winds up writing in an esoteric fashion, meaning that he hides the text within the text itself. Literally Plato's dialogues involve characters talking about issues. But a careful reading begins examining the metaphors and allegories being employed, the typologies used by Plato in order to reference other texts. To read Plato one must read

carefully and realize that every word has been carefully selected as a part of a whole, like bricks to a house (Craig xxx). Nothing in Plato's text is accidental and all serves part of a bigger purpose (Craig xxx). This requires a careful detailed reading that involves a degree of familiarization and training in this form of reading (White 259-260). Thus, Plato did not intend to write for everyone who was literate but only those of a certain inclination and disposition (Grisowld 221). By hiding the meaning of the text within the text Plato is capable of ensuring that his message reached only those who did the appropriate read of the text in accordance to him (White 260). Moreover, by writing dialogues, Plato also remains silent on the issues being discussed in them (Grisowld 220). Although Plato is the author, one cannot attach any idea to him as he never states anything in his name (Grisowld 220).

The Discerning Writer/Reader:

As was mentioned in chapter one, Socrates' myth of Theuth and Thamus should be seen more as a warning against the problems inherent to writing rather than a total condemnation. Before one can see the benefits from writing it is important that one is aware of the dangers, making one, as a reader, more cautious and less vulnerable to some of the problems associated with writing. The reader should above all realize that writing is in the end a piece of *doxa*. It is important to clarify that *doxa* is not inherently false. *Doxa* is needed within a scientific community in the edification of a scientific method as means for inquiry and verification. *Doxa* is the trust one places on the *epistemic* convention that sets to both explain and understand phenomena. However, the epistemic convention may not always be true. Moreover,

the element of trust means that a scientific community can never fully know all there is to be known about the phenomena in question.

Aware of the element of *doxa* one can begin to regard a work of writing not as something which is infallibly true but as work that proposes something. In this sense, to *know* what one piece of writing suggests one must have insight and in order for an insight to occur one needs not just to understand the conceptual aspect of the text but one must also have an experiential understanding about that same subject; to truly learn means, in part, doing. As mentioned in chapter one, writing does have some advantages over speech. In part, writing has the ability to overcome space and time, as a medium, in ways that speech cannot. In the discussion of writing, Socrates states that writing is a *pharmakon*, a drug (*Phaedrus* 274e). The misuse of a drug can yield deleterious effects on its users. The wrong dosage of it can poison. However, in its right dosage writing can heal. The key now is to understand how it is that writing can heal. Plato will demonstrate this best not in what he states but in how he states it, through the dialogue.

In the dialogues, the protagonists are speaking generally about issues in which they have strong opinions but generally very little knowledge. Whether it is justice, love, knowledge, or truth we find that characters always represent different conventional notions on these subject matters. The protagonists are like "ambassadors" of different conventional backgrounds. However, upon questioning and contemplation, it is revealed that what these characters do not *know* the *truth* about that which they speak. Instead they are exposed as having an opinion, perhaps a very well founded one, but not the *truth*. But at the end of the dialogue the issue is

never resolved either. We never learn what exactly love is, for example, from the *Phaedrus* even though we know that there may be conventions about it.

But the dialogue does more than just expose *doxa*, it can also induce the reader to examine his/her conventions. Ultimately the dialogue can expose to the reader that he/she too has an acculturated sense about what *appears* to be true rather than the actual *truth*. The reader can then also question his/her opinions and examine what they are the result of. Without ever fully knowing *what* something is the reader may constantly strive and question his/her opinions and what influences them, conventions, past grievances, experience etc (Griswold 222).

This in turn can trigger those willing the process of self-discovery and self-knowledge. One can contemplate to what extent one's opinion is the result of convention and acculturation. Where are one's desires pointing at? How can one become in touch with one's self? Self-discovery can have a therapeutic and healing effect; for the self that was "buried" or castigated and denied by conventional wisdom may gradually begin to re-flourish. One can induce a sense of appreciation for what one is and what one has become. Fundamentally the goal is to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life, understood here to be with regards of how true one is to one's self. In this sense, the Platonic goal can be compared with that of the pre-Socratics, being one's true potential is the goal.

But the dialogue anticipates that as a piece of writing it can be read by anyone who is literate. The propensity to misinterpretation is still present. However, the rhetorical structure of the dialogue functions in that it hides the essence of the text within itself. Without ever stating, all people have is *doxa*, the dialogue is able to

appear as just a conversation between characters. It will take only those of a contemplative disposition, having also been initiated in the Platonic tradition, to see the esoteric essence of the text and see that one too as a reader is informed by *doxa*. The dialogue without being fully immune to the perils of writing, can say different things to different people.

The Dialectic:

One important piece to the dialogue is the dialectic. Socrates had for his part told Phaedrus how the art of dialectic was important for *knowing* where exactly did objects or concepts of great similarity, like silver and iron or good and justice, diverge (*Phaedrus* 263a). By learning about the points in which similar concepts and similar objects divide one can begin to learn about the essence of each object/concept individually. For example, by learning about the difference between iron and silver, one can begin to understand iron and silver individually and not with regards to the other. The exercise involved here requires seeing what exactly it is that makes them similar. After that one would see what it is that makes them different.

This becomes an illustration of what the Platonic dialogue does it seeks to distinguish between things that are similar but inherently different. In the case of the *Phaedrus* we see that with regards to Lysias, he presented an opinion on what love was, for him love was a form of madness and therefore bad (*Phaedrus* 231c).[29]

[29] In the written speech of Lysias love is compared to madness and therefore to being a disease (*Phaedrus* 231c). When one is possessed by love one becomes jealous and unpleasant (*Phaedrus* 232 c). In the palinode, Socrates will counter that if love is madness it can indeed be a disease but it can also be a healthy form of madness (*Phaedrus* 244a). Madness after all is what inspires the prophetess of Delphi and priestess of Dodona when they perform their work (*Phaedrus* 244b). Madness can also bring relief from inner torment (*Phaedrus* 244e). It inspires great works of art, music, and poetry (*Phaedrus* 245a). Finally the madness induced by eros (love) (245b) is perhaps the most powerful of all life forces as it is the force that elevates the human soul, if only briefly, in close proximity to the *agathon* (*Phaedrus* 250b).

Socrates concedes that if indeed love is a form of madness, it can be bad if madness is understood as a disease but later in his palinode he also says how madness can be good, when it inspires creativity (*Phaedrus* 244a). Thus if madness can be good and love is a form of madness, love can also be good. Socrates is capable of taking that which is similar and differentiate it, love is good and bad, because madness is both good and bad.

It is important to note that while love is compared to madness when we finish the dialogue we do not have either a concrete definition about what love is or if it is always madness. However, Socrates is keen in picking up on Lysias' argument. Without defining love or madness for that matter, Lysias lumps them together and rushes his arguments about why one should not have sex with someone who is in love (*Phaedrus* 264b). What Lysias does then is play with the ambiguity that lies in his comparison. He does not say what love or madness is, but madness elicits a certain image. Someone who is mad is someone who is sick. The key here is that madness equals sickness. Sickness for its part is unpleasant and dangerous. Love then, becomes unpleasant and dangerous.

Socrates then takes it upon himself to examine if this is so. Certainly madness can equate diseases and Socrates explains when this is so (*Phaedrus* 238a).[30] However, Socrates also explains that madness has a therapeutic effect, when it inspires people to accomplish great feats, like art and poetry for example (*Phaedrus* 245a). Since Lysias does not clarify what madness is, Socrates can add this understanding to madness, as being good for those who are possessed by it. Socrates

[30] In his first speech Socrates compares love with a form of hubris, as it encourages people to seek more than they need (Phaedrus 238a).

here has worked with the ambiguous association between love and madness to counter Lysias' claim. Fundamentally though, Socrates exposes that in the end Lysais has presented convention and not something which is true. Love can be sickness but it can also be therapeutic, at least if love is compared to madness. Socrates for his part never tells us what love actually *is*. Socrates shows that he too does not fully know what love is but that he can tell that neither does Lysias, whose pronouncements are just artful play on notions on love.

The Dialogue as Dialectic:

The dialogue as a working entity brings together different conventional opinions on a subject matter. In this case it was love. In the *Republic*, for example, it is justice. We see that there are different opinions on each matter. Through questioning, usually done by the figure of Socrates though not always, we see that in the end there is opinion but not *truth*. The figure of Socrates engages in what is called the elencus, questioning to point at the core that informs the other protagonists' assertions and convictions.[31] Through questioning Socrates exposes the nuances and deficiencies behind the assumptions of his interlocutors. The *elencus* can point at inconsistencies and even contradictions which stem from the opinions of others.

The reader in this sense gets to see how these conventions are exposed by the *elencus*. As a spectator he/she witnesses how conventions are in essence all that the speakers ever have. But the *elencus* can also transcend the action of the dialogue and

[31] It is important to distinguish convictions from conventions. Conventions are social upheld notions which seek to explain the way things are. The key with conventions is that they seek to explain and no more, although this is itself sometimes unclear or even untrue. Convictions for their part represent more an imperative notion for those who uphold them. Convictions seek to explain how things ought to be and not how they are. An example would be that conventional notion holds that boys do not cry. In this regard when confronted with a boy, it is understood that he never cries. Yet if one sees a crying boy, which stands against the convention, one's convictions can interject and one can exclaim that as a boy he should not cry.

operate within the reader. Ultimately the reader may too begin to induce questioning to his/her degree of certainty on any matter, be it justice or love for example; the reader will have an opinion and as the elencus unmasks opinions within the dialogue it will do as well for the reader.

The dialogue can induce sensitivity to the reader upon the realization that he/she has been informed by convention and not by what is *true*. The reader may then awaken curiosity and thus induce the *elencus* within himself/herself, casting doubt and questioning on that on which he/she has an opinion on (Hadot 149). It is important here to realize that the goal is not to induce a sense of relativism. The purpose of the *elencus* is not to expose every social convention as "manmade" or "artificial" and thus worth disregarding. The point is not to induce a sense of cynicism about social conventions. Instead, the *elencus* seeks to challenge to dogma and orthodoxy. The lack of flexibility regarding the finitude of opinion is what induces visceral reactions against alleged detractors. It is that people may become obstinate and unwilling to question their convictions which the dialogue points out. Although all people have is opinion, they nevertheless herald it as true. It is dogma and obstinacy which are the biggest obstacles to philosophy for to be dogmatic one never questions; if one never questions one can conform and never actively pursue wisdom. One becomes like an automaton without much questioning repeating convention and convictions. To do philosophy requires the realization of one's own limitation and fallibility. Questioning and contemplation brings forth an understanding of why certain conventions have taken their essence and whether they are worth maintaining or changing. Thus one does not just cynically react against all

conventions but rather learns to value their worth as well. The goal is not to disregard all forms of conventions and rules which emanate from them. Sometimes it is wise not to exceed one's limits, for example. Instead, the goal is to contemplate and ask when certain conventions are good and when are they not.

For example in the *Republic* different speakers expose their distinctive opinions on the matter. Although different positions on justice are exposed, in the end, the *Republic* does not provide any absolute definition or account on justice. Nor is this the goal of the dialogue. Instead, via the juxtaposition of the many opinions on justice can be a consideration as to what is worthy from each. One can ponder as to what is it that "unites" these different notions on justice and what "separates" them. In other words every definition of justice given seeks to be an imitation of the true form of justice, something which they all ultimately fail to do. These definitions represent different forms of *doxa* on the subject matter that exist not just among individuals but within different groups across places and times. Thus they are still indicative of different conventional opinions on the matter.

But more importantly the individual reader also begins to see within himself/herself the conventions and opinions that govern him/her. These conventions/opinions inform not just the way that the individual regard norms, mores etc. but also his/her place within his/her society. The individual may become conscious of the habits that have been induced in him/her some of which may be good while some may not. But awareness into what habits *are* good or bad for him/her is far better than just doing what is considered to be good. The individual becomes more than just a passive vehicle for social conventions; he/she can now

dictate what *is* good for him/her, meaning to actively seek his/her wellbeing aware of the decisions he/she makes! This can be a dangerous endeavor, as the allegory of the cave shows. To be in contrast of the conventional wisdom, makes one stand out and to do this may make one appear as in opposition to the eyes of the majority which still upholds the conventional. One risks alienation, persecution, and even death in this process. Hence why the quest for self knowledge, is not easy and is a struggle.

As a result this process is not intended for all readers. There is the anticipation that most are either unaware of their own orthodoxy or unwilling to challenge it. In this regard the Platonic dialogue carefully hides its intention within the text. Never stating anything it becomes instead just a text showing a conversation between different figures. Their discussion may be insightful on other levels. For example, in his palinode Socrates tells the myth of two horses and the rider as metaphors for the human soul (Griswold 226). For some this may be regarded as an attempt to accurately account for the forces that operate within the human soul, in the form of a primordial psychology. In this regard the dialogue is not intended for all but its rhetorical structure enables it to be read by all those who are literate but understandable only by a few. In other words, the dialogue adequately says different things to different readers (Griswold 226).

Why did Plato Write?

The esoteric nature of the Platonic dialogue may shed light as to why it assumes its structure. By presenting a conversation of multiple characters, Plato the author is absent and therefore leaves the protagonists to question one another in the pursuit of better understanding a particular subject. Plato's absence makes it hard for

a reader to assert that his doctrines are being delivered through, although in a peculiar manner, the dialogue. One cannot say with certitude that the character of Socrates stands for essentially Plato. Such assumption would overlook the importance of his interlocutors as "ambassadors" of different conventional notions on the subjects being discussed (Griswold 223). Lysias is an important piece for the dialogue for he represents more than just those who state that love is a disease, in a way he represents the skepticism most may have about love. Love can be dangerous, especially when it is unrequited. The elencus thus does not just induce one to question social conventions but also the sense of conviction one may individually have. If Socrates represents Plato, so too do the other characters as forms of inner struggle between conviction and doubt.

In the end, though, Socrates does not come out as an authority on any subject. Rather his ironic pronouncements become accentuated even further, that he in fact knows nothing (Hadot 154). Socrates never asserts his doctrine over that of his interlocutors. The dialogues questions become a mirror to show the limits behind one's own convictions and why it is important to contemplate and acknowledge that one does not have full access to the *truth* and therefore why one should be weary of falling into dogma and fanaticism. Plato does have a project in mind when he writes, to induce self-awareness and self-knowledge, to those who may be far and whom he may never see. The dialogue may help them.

In this light if we go back to the opening of this work and see the warning of Thamus we can now appreciate the dangers of writing but also see the positive aspects that writing can have. Plato teaches not in what he says about writing but in

how he writes, by writing the esoteric dialogue which states different things to different people, remains without doctrines, and attempts to mitigate dogma. His style may not be infallible; readers may still exacerbate their sense of convictions upon reading a dialogue by Plato. But the goal is not to be infallible either, that becomes an impossibility in the realm of human limitations. Plato remains hidden, making it hard for any doctrine to be associated to his name.

Doing Philosophy:

This brings me to the last point I want to touch on, the importance of *doing* philosophy, central to the pursuit of wisdom. Philosophy becomes more than just propositional; it becomes central to the life of those who practice it. One does not just say what is good or bad, one also lives by that sense of conviction being aware of its why it is worthy for him/her and also aware of its limitations.

The realization of one's limitation and propensity towards conviction and *doxa* can act as catapult for the contemplation and the pursuit of wisdom. But contemplation alone is not the goal. Socrates clarifies that human limitation prevents us all from acquiring wisdom, we can never become *sophos* (wise) (*Phaedrus* 278d). To be in love with wisdom though, is different (*Phaedrus* 278d). As when one loves another person, it is the distance and separation that flames the desire to get closer to that person. As with wisdom, those who seek *her* can only want her more on the accounts of her distance and separation (Hadot 160).[32]

---

[32] Hadot refers to the *Symposium* where Socrates recounts a conversation he had with Diotima a priestess from Mantinea (Hadot 160). Diotima tells a myth of the origins of Eros (not just love but the god of love). In the myth, upon the birth of Aphrodite, whilst there was a banquet in celebration by all the gods, Penia (poverty, privation) came to beg for food (Hadot 160). She noticed that Poros (the god of expediency and means) was drunk and asleep, and thus Penia had sex with him as a means out of her destitution (Hadot 160). This accounts for the essence of Eros, for he inherits his mother's poverty-stricken insatiability and from his father he inherits cleverness and resourcefulness to attain his goals

The pursuit of wisdom should enlighten those in pursuit about their place within the context of their time and societies. On the one hand this means that one does in fact correspond to a world of convictions and *doxa* of the society. To contemplate on these convictions and discern the worthiness of these opinions is itself a commendable task. This involves one to asses first and foremost if these conventions are worthy for the individual in question but also for the society as a whole. Hence in that regard one does not seek the total destruction of the social realm but whether or not its norms and orders are *good.*

On the other hand one must also see that one is within that social context. The point is then not just to ponder about it but act within it. There may be social elements that are abject. Individually one may seek not just to separate one's self from those conventions but moreover to work for their cessation. There is a degree of individual transformation to be made but the possibility for social transformation is not excluded from this either.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is the figure of Socrates. There is a discrepancy to be made between the literary figure of Socrates found in the Plato's dialogues and the historical Socrates who lived in ancient Athens (Hadot 153). In the literary figure of Socrates we see an exemplar, a figure who lives his life in accordance with that which he finds valuable, namely demonstrating his lack of knowledge by questioning the affirmations and negations made by his interlocutors (Hadot 149). Socrates claims that he "knows he knows nothing" yet always winds up exposing how he, despite this, is in a much better position than the rest; this was part

---

(Hadot 160). This is the Eros for the beautiful which captivates us as humans upon the presence of another. Socrates sees this force as worthy in the pursuit of Sophia as well.

of the Socratic irony (Hadot 152). The key is that Socrates is at least aware of his limitations and finitude; his interlocutors on the other hand are not (Hadot 152). They are generally confident of their own senses of convictions and have no problem in making statements. Socrates succeeds in exposing them without ever making any pronouncement in favor or against any doctrine (Hadot 154). To the contrary, the key of the Socratic elencus is simply to ask questions to show he too knows nothing (Grisowld 225).

But Socrates does more than just ask questions. Socrates *lives* by the essence of that which he conveys—being his limitation. Socrates is first of all described as a very ugly man with not too much concern for his physical appearance (Hadot 148). Despite this feature, Socrates is powerful enough to captivate and enchant all those with which he engages (Hadot 162). Socrates demonstrates that his power lies not in the convention of beauty, which he never denounces or criticizes, but rather in his ability to *relate* with those he encounters (Hadot 163). He is attractive because he is open to all those who seek him and his enchantment comes upon the realization of his power to induce doubt in the most certain (Hadot 163).

Likewise, Socrates is not a wealthy man nor does he aspire to be one (Hadot 161).[33] His poverty is central to his character and yet he is a figure that attracts people from different classes including the wealthy. Again his power lies not in the convention of money or wealth, but in his ability to serve as a guide and instructor to all those who befriend him (Hadot 163).

The key of the Socratic figure is that he is *not* conventional (Hadot 158). Socrates is almost antithetical to convention. However, he never adopts a cynical

[33] He is in fact compared with Diotima (Hadot 161).

approach to the conventions of his friends and disciples (Hadot 154). Not once does he advocate for one to cease engaging in certain rituals or practices on the account that they are conventional. Rather, Socrates merely points that one be aware of why one espouses certain conventional aspects and not others (Hadot 157). In this sense Socrates becomes more than just a teacher. He guides those willing to be in touch with themselves (Hadot 154).

The literary Socrates acquires his in his idealization by the reader, the worth and power the reader has but for which he is unaware (Hadot 151). The reader may unconsciously project all the value and power that lies within himself/herself upon encountering the Socratic elencus (Hadot 151). At first the figure of Socrates may seem like a powerful master towards whom one should aspire (Hadot 154). But when the *elencus* is internalized one may realize that the imagined Socrates of the reader always existed within himself/herself, Socrates just helps in the realization of this (Hadot 154). One projects onto the imagined figure of Socrates the power of assertiveness and power (Hadot 151). To visualize these attributes involves their presence within the reader. When the reader realizes that, he/she induces self-transformation. This self-transformation entails awareness of limitation and of potential. One is far from being perfect and, thus far, from having perfect knowledge, truth etc. But one has the potential to grow with regards to these limitations. One can become more intuitive and learn how to relate to others despite their limitation and learn to be a friend to others, the *polis*, and eventually to one's self. One can in this sense endeavor to live a life like that of Socrates with awareness of what is one's inner capacity manifested by one's actions and relations to others (Hadot 163). In this

sense Socrates becomes the ideal teacher, he just mirrors this to his students without ever telling them (Hadot 154).

Therein lies the power of Socrates, his ability to show others how to live by what they contemplate (Hadot 157). One may assess that certain habits are bad but if one does not desist from doing them, one has not really accomplished much. Socrates perhaps illustrates this best with his own death (Hadot 170). Amidst the accusation of blasphemy and corruption of the youth Socrates stood in constant opposition to the charges (Hadot 166). He questioned the conventions that charged him and the procedures that ensued from them, such as the trial (Hadot 168). But he never called for the destruction of the order which convicted him; instead he maintained his innocence assuming that this could in fact cost him his life (Hadot 168). When given the chance of fleeing or dying he chose the latter, for fleeing exposed the opposite of innocence (Hadot 168).

This is not to suggest that one should always defy conventions at the cost of one's life or to suggest that one should never actively seek social or political transformation. Rather one should aspire to live by the same tenets which one contemplates to be worthy. To question and be cynical is no better than to not question and blindly obey conventions, for the cynic does not seek his /her self transformation or that of which he/she criticizes. The goal is to aspire to manifest within the context that one is a part of the essence of one's own being; to manifest one's inner essence. In this sense art, music, etc. can become extensions of self-awareness and vehicles for self-overcoming, overcoming of affliction and grief towards appreciation for life. Ultimately this can be seen as if one can treat one's life

as if it were art and make of one's life a work of art. One can impact in a positive manner the same social order which reared him. It is in this sense that the dialogue aspires to induce more than just self-awareness. The goal is self-transformation based on that awareness.

CONCLUSION:

O dear Pan and all the other gods of this place, grant that I may be beautiful inside. Let all my external possessions be in friendly harmony with what is within. May I consider the wise man rich. As for gold, let me have as much as a moderate man could bear and carry with him. Do we need anything else, Phaedrus? I believe my prayer is enough for me. (Ph) *Make it a prayer for me as well. Friends have everything in common.* (Soc) *Let's be off* (*Phaedrus* 279c).

These are the last words of the dialogue. Socrates has just finished his discussion on writing and rhetoric. We learned that despite his critique of writing, Socrates did not set out to make a sweeping indictment against writing. Instead his goal was to raise awareness as to how to write and read properly. We need to realize the limits of writing as a transmitter of knowledge and regard it also as a solidifier of *doxa*.

The dialogue teaches us about proper writing through its structure. There is no prescription on how to write properly, there is only the example of the dialogue itself. The dialogue can induce the same elencus being practiced within the action of the text, in the reader, to the point that reader too begins to question his/her convictions. In this regard, the dialogue can induce self-discovery and self-awareness. But the dialogue anticipates that not all can or are ready to do so, hence this becomes hidden within the action of the dialogue. It is what makes the dialogue esoteric in meaning.

We have observed through the work how the difference between doxa and *truth* are relevant for the discussion of writing and language altogether. The goal is to understand what convictions are of greater worth than others, a task that is not simple for in the end the value and worth we may ascribe to any convention is itself informed by doxa. The importance is the realization that humans are not gods, something which may seem obvious yet forgotten at the moment of asserting or refuting any conviction.

The *Phaedrus* ends with a prayer to Pan (who was half human/half goat) said to be a god of the place in which Socrates and Phaedrus had their discussion on love and rhetoric. In the end Socrates, prays he is granted with inner beauty and sufficiency. These are important for the life of Socrates. His inner beauty is to be reflected in his constant pursuit and love of wisdom inducing in him the sense of humility. His call for sufficiency is also indicative of his humility. Not only does Socrates acknowledge he is limited, on the accounts of his limitations he also reminds us that he does not require more than his basic needs. He wants enough gold to be able to carry with him, arguably not a whole lot, given that Socrates was known for being someone constantly in motion and discussion within the walls of Athens. Phaedrus reminds us of a third wish worthy of being granted and that is friendship, when he says, "friends have everything in common" (*Phaedrus* 279c).

To conclude I want to point out the importance of this last statement regarding the discussion on writing and speaking we have had so far. In the end the lessons discussed so far matter very little if they do not stand in connection with the social and political orders of which one is a part. The goal of the Platonic project is to be able to relate to one's peers and contemporaries. The goal is learning to be a friend to others as well as being a friend to one's self.

From our discussion it is important to clarify that friendship too may appear as self evident. Being friendly, non-hostile, hospitable, and courteous may all appear as attributes of friendship. But as our discussion has shown, one must know that convention and *doxa* inform our understanding of friendship. Moreover, we may find ourselves following conventional friendships, being friends simply as a result of

circumstance to the person who was incidentally closest. To become a friend will also involve a deep sense of inner struggle; a struggle which involves learning to find ones authentic self, and as we have learned this is something that lasts an entire life time.

As stated in chapter 3 doing philosophy involves learning to relate to those around us as well as to one's self. To do philosophy involves learning to relate to one's environment. The figure of Socrates perhaps best exemplifies this. He was an Athenian who had very little to his name and yet had a lot of friends. Socrates cultivated his friendships. His friendship consisted in more than good feelings towards his peers. Socrates was a figure who opened the doors of self-friendship to those he encountered. In inducing self-doubt Socrates also induced a degree of consciousness to his interlocutor. He taught people about themselves as they would look within to understand why it was they saw the world in a certain way and based on which experiences. Moreover, he taught them to be in control of themselves, not through dominance of their desires but to seek conscious action. He taught his followers to seek as much as possible to always act in a conscious manner aware of their opinions, inclinations, and desires.

The key was that Socrates taught his followers how to be once again friends to themselves. Learning to be in tune with one's woes and desires also meant learning to be patient with one's self, it meant learning to struggle with inner traumas, to heal one's self from past grievances and to appreciate the essence of who one was. This struggle was not meant to be simple for it induced much distress into a soul already habituated to notions about life and being. Learning to be a friend to one's self may

ensure that one no longer reacts to convention but rather actively seek to engage with it knowing to discern what works for that particular person and what not.

Being a good friend to one's self also ensures one can be a good a friend to others. For only when one can relate to one's self can one relate to others and thus also induce a degree of self knowledge in friends, for the sake that they gain self appreciation. Socrates again teaches this by example, for inducing self-knowledge he is inducing self-friendship.

It is important to note that the intended goal is not to cement vanity and arrogance. These are not forms of self friendship. Vanity and arrogance derive from illusive ideals regarding the conventional notions of beauty and worth. One is subject to what is sanctioned as being beautiful as a filler of self worth and not a genuine appreciation for self. Moreover, vanity masks the admittance to imperfection. Socrates teaches us that he admits his limitations and imperfections and rejoices over these. By rejoicing I do not mean acting like a buffoon for the sake of displaying his farcical nature. Rather, Socrates recognizes his limitation and is willing to grow; he sees the limitation not as a hindrance but as an opportunity to help him grow and reach his utmost potential within his human experience.

In addition it may appear that this model of friendship is very self-centered. To be solely concerned with the self and self-transformation may appear to come at the expense or neglect of the social and political realm. As was mentioned in chapter one, the human is inevitably tied to the social and political realm. No one can exist or subsist on their own. Even the philosopher who might be aware of the conventional and his/her being is not capable to fully remove himself from the social. If one cannot

be removed from the social context one is, to a degree, the result of that context and ought to do something in the service of that context.

But this would be to disregard the role of friendship. To be a friend induces wellness into those individuals one is friends with. Moreover, in inducing self-friendship one may be sowing the seeds not just of self transformation but of transformation and also encourage a degree of social transformation.

In the end:

In looking at the *Phaedrus* we have observed many things. We learned that individual expression can never be total for it is dependant on conventional modes of expression. We learn that language seeks to designate and label partly aspiring to truth but also for the sake of utility. We see that all we have are conventions, but that nevertheless some are better than others. We learn of the importance of self knowledge and doing philosophy.

In coming back to my original point of departure on writing versus speaking, we can now say that the problems of writing cannot be fully done away with. One can attempt to write well and consciously read a document keeping in mind that it is *doxa* and not truth which he/she is reading. But writing can never escape conventionalism, this thesis is a good example as it is a work that must correspond to a series of standards be they grammar, structure, spelling etc. But then again, there is really no other way for self expression other than the conventional. In the end the goal is to learn how to bridge that gap between the individual and the conventional and make it work. That, at least, is the suggestion of this thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Aristotle. *The Politics*. Trans. and ed. Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Craig, Leon Harold. *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. and ed. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Ferrari, G.R.F. *Listening to the Cicadas: A study of Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Griswold Jr., Charles L. *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986.

Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a way of Life*. Trans. and Ed. Arnold I. Davidson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Han, Beatrice. "Nietzsche and the 'Masters of Truth': The Presocratics and Christ." *Nietzsche and the Devine*. London: Clinamen Press, 2001, 1-20.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Essence of Truth*. Trans. and Ed. Ted Sanders. New York: Continuum, 2002.

Hinman, Lawrence M. "Nietzsche, Metaphor, and Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 43, No. 2 (Dec., 1982), 179-199.

Klein, Jacob A. *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, 1965.

Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. and ed. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1995.

Plato. *The Republic*. Trans. and ed. G.R.F. Ferrari and Tom Griffith. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002

Popper, Karl R. *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950.

Thucydides. *On Justice Power and Human Nature: Selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans and ed. Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1993.

White, David A. *Rhetoric and Reality in Plato's Phaedrus*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.