Plato's first two dialogues, a reflection of his political hopes

In the present paper I shall discuss two dialogues, the *Phaedrus* and the *Charmides*. I'll argue that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* in 405 and the *Charmides* in 404 B.C. In doing so I am at variance with platonic scholarship according to which the *Phaedrus* is a late dialogue and Plato began to write dialogues only after Socrates' death, that is after 399 B.C.

I shall begin with the biographic tradition related to the *Phaedrus*. Diogenes Laertius writes in his 'Life of Plato': 'There is a tradition (*logos de*) that he wrote the *Phaedrus* first; and that there is indeed something juvenile (*meirakiôdes ti*) about its subject. And Dicaearchus censures even its whole manner as contentious (*hôs phortikon*).' (III.38)[i] The association of Dicaearchus, a notable disciple of Aristotle, with the view that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue is not fortuitous, for we can learn from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* that the reading of Dicaearcuhs' book *on the soul* profoundly changed his dating of the dialogue. For in the *Orator*, before reading Dicaearchus' book, he believes that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* long after the death of Socrates, whereas in the *Tusculan Disputations*, after reading it, he appears to be certain that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* before Socrates died.[ii]

The theory of Forms is prominent in the *Phaedrus*; if we view it as Plato's first dialogue, we must therefore suppose that he discovered the Forms prior to his writing it. This supposition chimes well with what Aristotle says on Plato's conceiving the Forms. For he says that Plato in his youth embraced the Heraclitean doctrines that all things we can perceive are in constant flux and there is no **knowledge** about them (*kai **epistêmês** peri autôn ouk ousês*). Then he encountered Socrates who was the first to bring his mind to a standstill (***epistêsantos** prôtou tên dianoian*) on definitions of moral terms, and he thought that this was happening in relation to other entities and not the things of our perception that are constantly changing; he called these entities Ideas (*ideas*, mostly rendered in English as Forms). In Aristotle's narrative the term *epistêmê*, which stands for 'knowledge', is essential; it is composed of a preposition *epi*, which means 'on', 'upon', and of the verb '*histêmi*', which means 'to stand'. In the world of our sense-perception there is nothing on which the mind could 'stand still'. This is why Plato realised that Socrates' bringing his mind to a standstill on definitions must have been occasioned by different entities than are the things of sense-perception.

In Aristotle's narrative Plato's accepting Socrates and his conceiving the Forms goes hand in hand; it must have been an extraordinary experience for the young Plato. Aristotle's account is thus in harmony with Diogenes Laertius who informs us that Plato began to philosophize as a follower of Heraclitus and then he says: 'Afterwards, when he was about to compete for the prize with a tragedy, he listened to Socrates in front of the theatre of Dionysus, and then consigned his poems to the flames, with the words "Come hither, O fire-god, Plato now has need of thee." From that time onward, having reached his twentieth year (so it is said), he was the pupil of Socrates.' (III. 5-6, translation R.D. Hicks) The Lenaean Dionysiac festival took place in the month Gamelion called Lenaeon in other Ionian calendars, which corresponds to our January-Febuary, and so we may well emagine that Socrates' audience assembled around a fire to make themselves warm.

Plato was a descendant of an aristocratic family of note and a promising poet, and so the spectacular way with which he became Socrates' follower must have been much talked about. I think it was this incident to which Aristophanes alludes in the choric song in which he disparages Socrates towards the end of the *Frogs* staged in 405, that is two years after the incident (if Plato was born in 427, Diog. Laert. III. 2) or four years after it (if Plato was born in 429 Diog. Laert. III. 3). Aeschylus is about to return to Athens from the underworld to save the city and the chorus of the *Frogs* sings that 'it is delightful therefore (*oun*) not to sit by Socrates in idle talk, **having thrown away *mousikê*** (*apobalonta mousikên*) and abandoned what's the greatest, the art of tragedy' (1491-5).[iii] The chorus sings as a follower of Socrates delighted that the coming of Aeschylus 'who possesses a keen intelligent mind' will make him free from Socrates' company which he had joined at the expense of having thrown away *mousikê*. The song could have its comic force only if the incident of having thrown away *mousikê* was well known to the audience.

The choric song of the *Frogs* corroborates the story in Diogenes Laertius describing the drama of Plato's becoming a follower of Socrates and at the same time indicates a date before which the *Phaedrus* could not have been written. With its sneering 'it is delightful not to sit by Socrates in idle talk, having thrown away *mousikê*', which was directed at Socrates as well as Plato, the choric song of the *Frogs* provided a powerful motive for Plato to make true, in his own way, Socrates' conviction that philosophy was the highest form of *mousikê*.[iv] In Socrates' second speech on love in the *Phaedrus* he displays philosophy in its beauty, turning his eyes to the Forms: 'Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily. But this is the manner of it, for assuredly we must be bold to speak what is true, above all when our discourse is upon truth. It is there that true Being dwells, without colour or shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul's pilot, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof.'[v] (247c3-d1, in this essay the translations from the *Phaedrus* are by R. Hackforth)

Socrates introduced his second speech as a song, a Palinode, in which he recanted his first speech that presented *erôs* as an evil harming both the lover and the beloved. In the Palinode he presented love as 'a thing sent from heaven for the advantage both of lover and beloved … a gift of the gods, fraught with the highest bliss' (245b5-c1). He began to do so by proving the soul's immortality, and then he described the world of the immortal Forms – 'a god's nearness whereunto makes him truly god' (*pros hoisper theos ôn theios estin*, 249c6) – which our souls beheld prior to their fall and incarnation; it is the beloved's beauty that arouses in the lover's mind the memory of the Form of beauty so that 'he sees her once again enthroned by the side of Temperance upon her holy seat (254b6-7) … And so, if the victory be won by the higher elements of mind guiding the lover and the beloved into the ordered rule of the philosophic life, their days on earth will be blessed with happiness and concord; for the power of evil in the soul has been subjected, and the power of goodness liberated: they have won self-mastery and inward peace' (256a7-b3).

Plato displays the poetic aspects of philosophy in the Palinode, but he reserves his mythical identification of philosophy with *mousikê* for Socrates' very prosaic discussion of the nature of good and bad writing (258d7). Socrates introduces this task with a myth which can be

seen as Plato's response both to the charge of throwing away (*apobalonta*, *Frogs* 1463) *mousikê* and of getting engaged in idle pastime (*diatribên argon*, *Frogs* 1498).

It is high noon, cicadas are singing on the tree above their heads, and Socrates narrates a myth about them: :'If they were to see us two behaving like ordinary folk at midday, not conversing but dozing lazy-minded under their spell, they would very properly have the laugh of us, taking us for a pair of slaves that had invaded their retreat like sheep, to have their midday sleep beside the spring. If however they see us conversing and steering clear of their bewitching siren-song, they might feel respect for us and grant us that boon which heaven permits them to confer upon mortals (259a1-b2) … they go and report to the Muses how they severally are paid honour amongst mankind, and by whom (259c5-6) … To the eldest, Calliope, and to her next sister Urania, they tell of those who live a life of philosophy and so do honour to the music of those twain (*tên ekeinôn mousikên*) whose theme is the heavens and all the story of gods and men, and whose song is the noblest of them all. Thus there is every reason for us not to yield to slumber in the noontide, but to pursue our talk (259d3-8).'

The chorus of the *Frogs* levelled the charges against Socrates in the name of a follower who threw away *mousikê* so as to sit by Socrates (*Sôkratei parakathêmenon*, *Frogs* 1491-2) in idle talk. Plato shows in the *Phaedrus* that 'sitting by Socrates' meant the opposite; he did so by presenting his own philosophy through the prism of Socrates' philosophic not knowing.

At the beginning of the dialogue Socrates and Phaedrus walk along the river Ilissus in search of a convenient place to sit. The surroundings remind Phaedrus of a myth about Boreas seizing Oreithuia and he asks: 'Pray tell me, Socrates, do you believe that story to be true?' (229c4-5) Socrates replies: 'I can't as yet "know myself", as the inscription at Delphi enjoins; and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters.' Consequently I don't bother about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries, as I have just said, rather to myself.' (229e5-230a3).

Socrates' philosophic ignorance comes to prominence when he is about to present a speech which is to rival the speech of Lysias. After reading it, Phaedrus maintained that Lysias in his discourse 'has not overlooked any important aspect of the subject, so making it impossible for anyone else to outdo what he has said with a fuller or more satisfactory oration'. Socrates disagreed: 'If I were to assent out of politeness, I should be confuted by the wise men and women who in past ages have spoken and written on this theme.' When Phaedrus asked to whom he referred, he answered: 'I can't tell you off-hand; but I'm sure I have heard something better, from the fair Sapho maybe, or the wise Anacreon, or perhaps some prose writer. What ground, you may ask, have I for saying so? Good sir, there is something welling up within my breast, which makes me feel that I could find something different, and something better, to say. **I am of course well aware it can't be anything originating in my own mind, for I know my own ignorance**; so I suppose it can only be that it has been poured into me, through my ears, as into a vessel, from external source; though in my stupid fashion I have actually forgotten how, and from whom, I heard it.' (235b2-d3)

After deciding to discuss the nature of good writing and bad Socrates suggested taking as examples the speech of Lysias and those two speeches that he delivered: ‘It seems a stroke of luck that in the too speeches we have a sort of illustration of the way in which one who knows the truth can mislead his audience by playing an oratorial joke on them. I myself, Phaedrus, put that down to the local deities, or perhaps those mouthpieces of the Muses that are chirping over our heads have vouchsafed us their inspiration; for of course I don’t lay claim to any oratorical skill myself.’ (262c10d2) The last clause, in which Socrates expressed his ignorance of ‘a science of rhetoric’ (*technês tinos tou legein*) is better translated by C.J. Rowe: ‘For **I don’t think I share in any science of speaking**.’

In the *Seventh Letter* Plato says that in his youth he was ‘impelled with a desire to take part in public and political affairs’ (325a7-b1). This desire pervades the *Phaedrus*. In the Palinode, Zeus, the mighty leader in the heaven, is ‘ordering all things and caring therefor’ (246e4-6); Plato views himself as one of those who in their pre-incarnated state followed him: ‘we beheld with our eyes that blessed vision, ourselves in the train of Zeus, others following some other god’ (250b6-8) … the followers of Zeus seek a beloved who is Zeus-like in soul; wherefore they look for one who is by nature **disposed to the love of wisdom and the leading of men**, and when they have found him and come to love him they do all in their power to foster that disposition (252e1-5).’

Politicians of those days appear to have viewed the preoccupation with writing with contempt; the very act of Plato’s writing the *Phaedrus* thus threatened to become an impediment as far as his desire to do politics was concerned. Against such contempt, Plato defended the art of writing vigorously. When Socrates ended the Palinode Phaedrus mentioned that a politician was railing and reproaching Lysias ‘constantly dubbing him a “speech-writer”: ‘so possibly we shall find him desisting from further composition to preserve his reputation’ (257c5-7). When Socrates doubted that the politician ‘meant his raillery as a reproach’, Phaedrus replied: ‘Of course you know as well as I do that the men of greatest influence and dignity in political life are reluctant to write speeches and bequeath to posterity compositions of their own, for fear of the verdict of the later ages, which might pronounce them Sophists (257d4-8).’[vi] Socrates disagreed: ‘You are unaware that the proudest of politicians have the strongest desire to write speeches and bequeath compositions; why, whenever they write a speech, they are so pleased to have admirers that they put in a special clause at the beginning with the names of the persons who admire the speech in question.’ – Phaedrus: ‘What do you mean? I don’t understand.’ – Socrates: ‘You don’t understand that when a politician begins a composition the first thing he writes is the name of his admirer … he says maybe “Resolved by the Council” or “by the People” or by both: and then ‘Proposed by so-and-so” – a pompous piece of self-advertisement on the part of the author; after which he proceeds with what he has to say, showing off his own wisdom to his admirers, sometimes in a very lengthy composition … Then if the speech holds its ground, the author quits the scene rejoicing; but if it is blotted out, and he loses his status as a recognised speech-writer, he goes into mourning, and his friends with him … Which clearly implies that their attitude to the profession is not one of disdain, but of admiration … Then the conclusion is obvious, that there is nothing shameful in the mere

writing of speeches … But in speaking and writing shamefully and badly, instead of as one should, that is where the shame comes in.' (257e2-258d5)

In all this defence of good writing Plato stands and thinks within the framework of politics as it was pursued in the Athenian democracy. With it he opens the way to the lengthy discussion of rhetoric, which he proposes to transform into real science, based on dialectics. In all this discussion politics and rhetoric are practically synonymous, as it indeed was the case in the Athenian democracy in which he wrote the *Phaedrus*.

But let me now leave the *Phaedrus* and turn to the *Charmides*, which I view as Plato's second dialogue, written shortly after the dissolution of democracy. Plato writes in his *Seventh Letter* that the revolution was headed by fifty-one leaders[vii], of whom Thirty were established as the supreme rulers of all[viii]: 'Now of these some were actually connexions and acquaintances of mine; and indeed they invited me at once to join their administration, thinking it would be congenial … I imagined that they would administer the State by leading it out of an unjust way of life into a just way, and consequently I gave my mind to them very diligently, to see what they would do.' (324d1-6; translation from the *Seventh Letter* R.G. Bury) I date the *Charmides* as written in the initial stages of the rule of the Thirty, when Plato could entertain hopeful prospects about it. What led me to this dating is its closing scene; to make it meaningful, I must say a few words about the main theme of the dialogue.

The whole dialogue is narrated by Socrates to a noble friend (*ô hetaire* 153b8, *ô phile* 155c5, *ô gennada* 155d3); in his narrative he directly quotes himself and his interlocutors. He tells his friend that after he returned from the military camp at Potidaea, he went to his old haunts, one of the wrestling-schools. Everybody there praised young Charmides for his beauty. Socrates says that he asked Critias, Charmides' older cousin and guardian, to present the young man to him. Critias did so under the pretence that Socrates is a doctor who can cure the morning headaches of which Charmides lately complained. Socrates tells Charmides that a Thracian doctor gave him a leaf for curing headaches, but that the leaf is useless and should not be applied unless the soul is cured first by charms that instil in it *sôphrosunê* – translated as self-control by Duncan Watt whose translation I shall use[ix]. At that, Critias says that Charmides surpasses all in his age group in self-control as well. If that's so then Charmides can be given the leaf straight away, says Socrates, and so he asks Charmides: 'Tell me yourself, then, whether you agree with Critias and say that you already have enough self-control, or whether you say that you are deficient in it' (158c2-4). Charmides cannot say whether he has enough self-control or no, so Socrates suggests that they investigate the question jointly. Follows Socrates' investigation of 'what is *sôphrosunê*', first with Charmides, and then with Critias, which ends with Socrates' lament at his inability to find out what *sôphrosunê* is.

'"Do you see, Critias, how all this time I had good reason to be apprehensive, and was quite right to accuse myself of not conducting a worthwhile inquiry into self-control? Something that is agreed to be the most admirable of all things wouldn't have seemed to us to be of no benefit if I had been any use at making a proper investigation (175a9-b2) … I'm not annoyed so much for myself as for you, Charmides," I said, "because you, who have such good looks and are in addition very self-controlled of soul, will not profit from that self-control, and

despite its presence in you, it won't bring you any benefit at all in life (175d5-e2) … In fact, I really don't think that this is the case at all, but that I'm an awful investigator – because I do think that self-control is a great good, and that if you do possess it, you are fortunate. See whether you do possess it and have no need of the charm – because if you do possess it, I'd advise you instead to consider me a fool, incapable of investigating anything in a reasoned argument, and yourself the happier the more controlled you are." Charmides said, "But heavens, Socrates, I don't know whether I possess it or whether I don't. How can I know it, when on your own admission, not even you and Critias are able to discover what on earth it is? Still, I don't really believe you at all, Socrates, and I really do think I need the charm; and as far as I am concerned, there's no reason why I shouldn't be charmed by you every day, until you say I've had enough." "All right," said Critias. "But, Charmides, by doing that, you'll prove to me that you are self-controlled – if you turn yourself over to Socrates for charming, and don't disappoint him in anything either great or small." "Rest assured that I will follow him and won't disappoint him. I'd be behaving terribly if I didn't obey you, my guardian, and didn't do what you tell me." "I am telling you," he said. "Well then, I'll do it," said Charmides, "starting today." "What are you two plotting to do?" I asked. "Nothing", said Charmides. "We've done our plotting." **"Are you going to resort to the use of force, without even giving me a preliminary hearing in court?" I asked. "I certainly am," he replied, "since Critias here orders me to – which is why you should plot what you'll do." "But there's no time left for plotting," I said. "Once you're intent on doing something and resorting to the use of force, no man alive will be able to resist you." "Well then," he said, "don't you resist me either." "I won't," I said.**' (175e5-176d5) With Socrates' 'I won't resist you then' (*Ou toinun enantiôsomai*) the whole dialogue ends.

I cannot see how Plato could have written the *Charmides* after the incident of which Socrates speaks in the *Apology*: 'The Thirty sent for me with four others to come to the rotunda and ordered us to bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis to be put to death … Then I, however, showed again, by action, not in word only, that I did not care a whit for death if that be not too rude an expression, but that I did care with all my might not to do anything unjust or unholy. For that government, with all its power, did not frighten me into doing anything unjust, but when we came out of the rotunda, the other four went to Salamis and arrested Leon, but I simply went home; and perhaps I should have been put to death for it, if the government had not quickly been put down.' (32c4-d8, translation H.N. Fowler).

This incident affected Plato deeply; in his old age he wrote: 'I saw how these men ["the Thirty"] within a short time caused men to look back on the former government as a golden age; and above all how they treated my aged friend Socrates, whom I would hardly scruple to call the most just of men then living, when they tried to send him, along with others, after one of the citizens, to fetch him by force that he might be put to death … he, however, refused to obey and risked the uttermost penalties rather than be a partaker in their unholy deeds. So when I beheld all these actions and others of a similar grave kind, I was indignant, and I withdrew myself from the evil practices then going on.' (*Seventh Letter* 324d6-325a5, translation R.G. Bury)

On the proposed dating, the *Phaedrus* was written in democracy in the closing stage of the Peloponnesian war, the *Charmides* in the initial stage of the reign of the Thirty. In democracy, oratory was the key to success in politics; in the *Phaedrus* a considerable part of the dialogue is devoted to reforming it. Plato outlines dialectic as a foundation of rhetoric in 265d-266c, then he reviews the existing rhetorical manuals in 266d-267d, then he reduces the inventions contained in those manuals to the status of mere necessary antecedents to the true science of rhetoric (*ta pro tês technês anankaia mathêmata*, 269b7-8), reemphasizing that only rhetoric founded on dialectic can reach a status of true science in 273d-e. If we take into account the retrospective inclusion of Lysias' rhetorical piece and of Socrates' two speeches on love as examples of bad and unskilful (Lysias' speech) and good and skilful rhetoric (262c5-d6), and the exhortation addressed to Lysias and to Isocrates in the closing part of the dialogue, in which the 'propriety and impropriety in writing' is discussed (278e3-279b3), then the dialogue in its entirety can be viewed as devoted to the discussion of rhetoric.

In the *Charmides* Plato outlines the society he hoped the rule of the Thirty aspired to. Socrates depicts it as the outcome of Critias' definition of *sôphrosunê*: '"If, as we assumed in the beginning, the self-controlled man (*ho sôphrôn*) knew what he knew and what he didn't know – that he knew the former and didn't know the latter – and was able to examine anyone else in the same position, it would be a great benefit to us, we maintained, to be self-controlled (*sôphrosin einai*) … because **we'd neither try ourselves to do what we didn't know, but would find those who did and hand the matter over to them, nor trust those whom we governed to do anything except what they were likely to do properly – and that would be what they possessed knowledge of. In that way a house run on the principle of self-control would be likely to be run admirably, as would a state that was run on that principle and everything else that self-control governed** (*hou sôphrosunê archoi*).' (171d2-e7) There was no place for rhetoric in that society. In fact, as Xenophon informs us, when Critias and Charicles were rewriting the laws so as to suit the rule of the Thirty, the former inserted a clause that made teaching of rhetoric illegal (*logôn technên mê didaskein*, *Memorabilia* I.ii.31

It was imperative for Plato to free important aspects of the *Phaedrus* from their association with rhetoric; dialectic with its power to discover the truth on any subject had to be liberated from its subservience to it. For within the framework of Plato's reformed rhetoric dialectic served the rhetorician by enabling him to successfully persuade the audience of whatever he wanted. Thus, as Socrates points out, the knowledge of *erôs* allowed him to show *erôs* as damaging both the lover and the beloved in one speech, and in another as the greatest good (263c10-12). In the final stage of discussing rhetoric as *technê* ('science', 'art', 'scholarly discipline') Socrates gives voice to Tisias in defence of the traditional conception of rhetoric: 'There is no need for the budding orator to concern himself about what is just or good conduct, nor indeed who are just and good men whether by nature or education. In the lawcourts nobody cares a rap for the truth about these matters, but only about what is plausible. And that is the same as what is probable, and is what must occupy the attention of the would-be master of the art of speech.' (272d5-e2) Socrates rejoins: 'In point of fact, Tisias, we have for some time before you came on the scene been saying that the multitude

get their notion of probability as the result of a likeness to truth; and we explained just how these likenesses can always be best discovered by one who knows the truth.' (273d2-6) The role thus allotted to dialectic in Plato's project of scientific oratory in the *Phaedrus* was ancillary. In contrast, in the *Charmides* the discovery of truth is the aim that is to be pursued for its own sake: 'it is a common good for almost all men that each thing that exists should be revealed as it really is' (166c5-d6)

Let me compare the masterly way in which Socrates in the *Charmides* applied the two procedures of dialectic outlined in the *Phaedrus* with the difficulties in which he got entangled in connection with the rhetoric. When Charmides' first attempt to define *sôphrosunê* failed, Socrates exhorted him: '"Well then, Charmides," I said, "this time concentrate harder and look into your own self. Consider what sort of a person the presence of self-control makes you, and what it would have to be like to produce such an effect on you. Think it all through (*panta tauta sullogisamenos* 'bringing this all together in your thinking') and tell me plainly and manfully what does it seem to you to be."' (160d5-e1) This is a brilliant application of the first procedure 'in which we bring a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together (*eis mian idean sunorônta*): the purpose being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition.' (*Phaedrus* 265d3-5)

The second procedure is 'the reverse of the other, whereby we are enabled to divide into forms, following the objective articulation; we are not to attempt to hack off parts like a clumsy butcher, but to take example from our two recent speeches. The single general form which they postulated was irrationality; next, on the analogy of a single natural body with its pairs of like-named members, right arm or leg, as we say, and left, they conceived of madness as a single objective form existing in human beings: wherefore the first speech divided off a part on the left, and continued to make divisions, never desisting until it discovered one particular part bearing the name of "sinister love", on which it very properly poured abuse. The other speech conducted us to the forms of madness which lay on the right-hand side, and upon discovering a type of love that shared its name with the other but was divine, displayed it to our view and extolled it as the source of the greatest goods that can befall us." (*Phaedrus* 265e1-266b2)

As Hackforth remarks, 'there are serious difficulties in this paragraph. Socrates speaks as though the generic concept of madness (*to aphron, paranoia, mania*) had been common to his two speeches, and there had been a formal divisional procedure followed in both of them. Neither of these things is true. In the first speech Socrates starts by bringing *erôs* under the genus of *epithumia* ['desire'] but this is superseded by *hubris* ['wantonness'], which is declared to be *polumeles kai polueides* ['has many branches and forms'] (238a); it is then shown that *erôs* is a species of *hubris*, but this is done not by successive dichotomies, but by an informal discrimination from an indefinite number of other species, of which only two are named. It is only in the second speech that Socrates starts with a clear concept of "madness"; but here again there is no scheme of successive divisions, whether dichotomous or other: there is merely the single step of a fourfold division. It must therefore be admitted

that Socrates' account of the dialectical procedure followed in his speeches is far from exact.' (R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus*, Cambridge University Press 1972, p. 133, n.1)

With his two speeches in the *Phaedrus* Plato was responding to Aristophanes' reprove of having thrown away *mousikê* ('poetic art') and wrote them in a state of enthusiastic inspiration. When he outlined the two dialectic procedures, he was guided by an effort to reform rhetoric and thus make a positive contribution to the political situation in Athens. His combining the two could not work properly. Compare the ease and self-assurance with which Socrates uses the second procedure in discarding Charmides' first definition of *sôphrosunê*, which the latter gave in accordance with the first procedure: 'He said that in his opinion self-control was doing everything in an orderly and quiet way – walking in the streets and talking and doing everything else in the same way. "In my opinion," he said, "what you're asking about is, in short, a sort of quietness (*hêsuchiôtês*)".' (159b2-5) Socrates began by assuring himself that Charmides considered *sôphrosunê* ('self-control') 'to be one of those things which are admirable' (*tôn kalôn*, 159c1-2). Then he considered different forms of activities, all of which could be done quietly and slowly, or quickly and vigorously, and asked, in which way performed they could be considered more admirable.

His questioning went as follows: '"Is it more admirable, then, in a writing lesson, to copy the letters quickly or quietly?" "Quickly." "What about reading? Quickly or slowly?" "Quickly." "And playing the lyre quickly and wrestling nimbly are much more admirable than doing these things quietly and slowly?" "Yes." (159c3-10) … "And with running and jumping and all the activities of the body, isn't it the nimble and quick performance of these which is the mark of the fine body, whereas the laborious and quiet performance of them is the mark of the contemptible one?" "So it seems." (159c13-d3) … Was self-control an admirable thing (*kalon*)? "Yes." "With regard to the body at least, then, it isn't quietness but quickness that would be the more self-controlled thing, since self-control is an admirable thing." "So it would appear," he said. "Again, is facility in learning the more admirable thing, or difficulty in learning?" I asked. "Facility in learning." "And facility in learning is learning quickly, whereas difficulty in learning is learning quietly and slowly? (159d4-e4) … And further, in the investigations of the soul and in deliberating, it isn't, I think, the man who is quietest and discovers with great effort who is accounted worthy of praise, but the man who does it most easily and quickly." (160a8-b1) And so Socrates can point out to Charmides that "since we assumed in our discussion that self-control was one of the admirable things, and we've shown that quick things are just as admirable as quiet ones" (160d1-3), his first attempt at defining *sôphrosunê* failed to be acceptable. – As can be seen, Socrates displayed here the analytical dialectic procedure in its power to refute false opinions and definitions.

In the *Phaedrus* Plato intends to develop rhetoric as the science that studies and takes care of the soul. In doing so he takes medicine as a model: 'Rhetoric is in the same case as medicine … In both cases there is a nature that we have to determine, the nature of the body in the one, and of soul in the other, if we mean to be scientific and not content with mere empirical routine when we apply medicine and diet to induce health and strength, or words and rules of conduct to implant such convictions as we desire, and virtue.'[x] (270b1-9) In the society which was to 'lead the State out of an unjust way of life into a just way'

(*Seventh Letter* 324d4-5) there was no place for rhetoric, yet taking care of the soul of the citizens became the most important task. In the *Charmides* Plato envisages a science of healing that begins with the care of the soul: *sôphrosunê* is the healthy state of the soul, which is to be engendered in it by charms, which are 'the beautiful speeches' (*epôidas tautas tous logous einai tous* ***kalous***, 157a4-5).

In my view, the term 'the beautiful speeches' points to the two speeches on love presented by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*; the reference is helped by Phaedrus' praise of Socrates' second speech as being 'more beautiful (*kalliô*)' than the first (257c2). It is further helped by Socrates' description of the soul as 'the source and first principle of motion for all other things that are moved' in the second speech in the *Phaedrus*, to which corresponds in the *Charmides*: 'all things, both good and bad, in the body and in the whole man, originate in the soul and spread from there' (156e6-8). The correspondence is even more telling in the original, for Duncan Watt's 'originate in the soul' stands for *ek tês psuchês hôrmasthai*, which means 'from the soul are set in motion', and his 'spread from there' stands for *ekeithen epirrein*, which means 'flow in from there'. The Heracliteans used the concept of 'constant flow' (*aei reontôn*) to describe the constant motion of all sensible things; Plato was a Heraclitean before he conceived the Forms under the impact of Socrates' fixation of mind on definitions of moral term; after conceiving the Forms, Plato persisted in believing that all sensible things were in constant flow. (See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a33-b1) The reference is lost in Watt's 'and that these charms were beautiful words' for Socrates' ***tas*** *d' epôidas* ***tautas tous*** *logous einai* ***tous*** *kalous* (157a4-5), which means '**these** charms are **the** speeches, **the** beautiful ones'; note the definite article *tas* that goes with *epôidas* ('the charms'), the definite pronoun *tautas* that further specifies the 'charms', and the duplicated article *tous* that goes with *logous* ('the speeches') and with *kalous* ('the beautiful [ones]').

Care for the souls of the citizens was for Plato of primary political significance. His hopes concerning the rule of the Thirty are projected into the closing scene of the Charmides. Charmides resolves to be educated in *sôphrosunê* by Socrates and Critias fully endorses his resolution. Socrates bows to Charmides' resolution and thus indirectly to Critias' command. Narrated by Socrates, the last scene reads like a solemn compact between the three. Socrates will take care of the souls of the citizens; thus honoured, he will bow to the commands of the Thirty. To make this dream palatable to Critias and Charmides on the one hand and to Socrates on the other, Plato projected the dialogue dramatically into the year 429. But in the end-scene he transcends the dramatic dating with Socrates': '"Are you going to resort to the use of force, without even giving me a preliminary hearing in court?"

Xenophon says that 'as a first step the Thirty arrested and brought to trial for their lives those persons who, by common knowledge, had made a living in the time of democracy by acting as informers and had been offensive to the aristocrats; and the Senate was glad to pronounce these people guilty, and the rest of the citizens – at least all who were conscious that they were not of the same sort themselves – were not at all displeased.' (*Hellenica* II.iii.12) Slightly modified, Socrates' "Are you going to resort to the use of force, without even giving **them** a preliminary hearing in court?" sheds light on those proceedings that

took place in those days. Socrates expressed his uneasiness about it, but in the end complied: '"I won't resist you then", I said' (*Ou toinun, ên d' egô, enantiôsomai*).

If we want to fully appreciate the political daring and ambition with which Plato wrote the *Charmides*, we must view it against the background of what Xenophon tells us about the incident that happened long before Critias became one of the Thirty. He says that when Socrates 'found that Critias loved Euthydemus and wanted to lead him astray, he tried to restrain him by saying that it was mean and unbecoming a gentleman (*ou prepon andri kalôi k'agathôi*) to sue like a beggar to the object of his affection, whose good opinion he coveted, stooping to ask a favour that it was wrong to grant. As Critias paid no heed whatever to this protest, Socrates, it is said, exclaimed in the presence of Euthydemus and many others, "Critias seems to have the feelings of a pig: he can no more keep away from Euthydemus than pigs can help themselves rubbing against the stones." Now Critias bore a grudge against Socrates for this; and when he was one of the Thirty and was drafting laws with Charicles, he bore this in mind. He inserted a clause which made it illegal to teach "the art of words (*logôn technên*)". It was a calculated insult to Socrates." (*Memorabilia* I.ii.29-31, translations from Memorabilia E.C. Marchant)

Critias can hardly be seen as off the mark if he aimed his law against Socrates after reading the *Phaedrus*; for in it Socrates presented an outline of rhetoric as a science that can be taught. Furthermore, when he read the dialogue, he must have seen Socrates' first speech on love as related to his affair with Euthydemus: 'the boy … ought not to have yielded to a lover inevitably devoid of reason … surrendering himself to a faithless, peevish, jealous and offensive captor … who would ruin his physique, and above all ruin his spiritual development (241b7-c5).' When in the second speech Socrates speaks of the unruly part of the soul 'surrendering to pleasure' and 'essaying to go after the fashion of a fore-footed beast' (250e4-5), it must have reminded Critias of what Socrates said to him 'in the presence of Euthydemus and many others.'

Plato could neither renounce nor rewrite the *Phaedrus*; 'once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place' (*Phaedrus* 275d9-e1). In the *Charmides* he shows the theme of love in terms reminiscent of the *Phaedrus* in a new light. It is the man smitten with the infatuation who is in danger to be devoured by it, and that man is Socrates himself. But let Socrates tell the story as he narrates it to his noble friend:

'We'd got back from the camp at Potidaea. I'd been away a long time, so I was glad to return to my old haunts (153a1-2) … I sat down, said hello to Critias and the others, and proceeded to tell them all the news from the camp (153c8-9) … When we'd exhausted that subject I asked them about things here: what was happening in the field of philosophy; had any of the young men become pre-eminent for wisdom or beauty or both? At that Critias looked towards the door … "I think you're going to get an answer to your question about the handsome young men right away," he said. "Those young men coming in just now are, as it happens, the advance guard and lovers of the young man who is thought to be most handsome at present …" (153d2-154a6)

“But who is he?” I asked. “Who’s his father?” “I’m sure you must know him,” he replied, “although he hadn’t come of age before you went away. He’s Charmides, my cousin, the son of my uncle Glaucon.” “Heavens, I do indeed know him,” I exclaimed. “He was very promising when he was still a child. As it is, I suppose by now he must be quite the young man.” – “You’ll know right away how old he is and what he’s like (154a7-b6) … We’ll call him.” With that he turned to his attendant. “Boy,” he said, “call Charmides. Tell him I want to have him see a doctor about the complaint he spoke to me of the day before yesterday.” Critias then turned and said to me, “You see, he said recently he’d been having headaches when he got up in the morning. Now what’s to stop you pretending to him that you know some remedy for a headache?” – “Nothing,” I said. “Just let him come.” (155a8-b7)

In the event Charmides came and sat between me and Critias. Well, by then, my friend, I was in difficulties, and the self-assurance I’d felt earlier that I’d talk to him quite easily had been knocked out of me. When Critias told him I was the man who knew of the remedy, he gave me a look that is impossible to describe and made ready to ask me something … That was the moment, my noble friend, when I saw what was inside his cloak. I was on fire, I lost my head, and I considered Cydias to be the wisest man in matters of love. When speaking of a handsome boy, he said by way of advice to someone, “Take care not to go as a fawn into the presence of a lion and be snatched as a portion of meat.” ‘I felt I’d been caught by just such a creature.’ (155c4-e2)

In the Charmidean version it is the lover who is threatened by getting devoured by his infatuation with the young man. In fact, it chimes well even with the story in Xenophon. For it was Critias who on Xenophon’s story was of primary concern for Socrates. And it chimes well even with the version in the *Phaedrus*, in which the lover would lose everything if he gave in to his infatuation. But at the sight of the beauty of the beloved boy the memory of the lover goes back to the Form of Beauty itself seeing her ‘once again enthroned by the side of Temperance (*meta sôphrosunês*) upon her holy seat’ (254b5-8). This sight enables the lover to subdue his unruly desires ‘with the aid of philosophic discourse’ (*meta philosophôn logôn*, 257b6). In the *Charmides* the introductory Socrates-Charmides love-scene lead to the philosophic discussion of *sôphrosunê*. – Again, translations obfuscate the correspondence; in Hackforth’s translation of the *Phaedrus sôphrosunê* is rendered as ‘temperance’, in Watt’s translation of the *Charmides* as self-control.

Critias was brought into the discussion of *sôphrosunê* in a humorous and not very flattering manner. When Charmides failed in his attempts to define it, he said he heard someone to say that it is ‘doing one’s own things’ (*to ta heautou prattein*, 161b6). When Socrates surmised that he heard it from Critias, ‘“It must have been from someone else,” said Critias. “It certainly was not from me (161c2).”’ Socrates suggested that whoever said it, he did so as a kind of riddle: ‘”Or do you believe that the writing-master does not do something when he reads ort writes?” “No,” he said, “I do believe he does something.” “Then do you think that it’s only his own name that the writing-master reads and writes, or teaches boys to? Or did you write your enemies’ names just as much as your own and your friends’?” “Just as much.” “Well then, were you meddling – that is, were you without self-control in doing that?” “Not at all.” (161d3-e2) … “And, my friend, healing, building houses, weaving and

producing any piece of skilled work whatsoever, by any skill whatsoever, are all presumably 'doing something' … Well then," I said, "do you think a state would be well run by a law like that, which commands each person to weave his own coat and wash it, and make his own sandals and oil-flask and scraper and everything else on the same principle of each person keeping his hands off what is not his own, and working at and doing his own job?"[xi] "No, I don't," he replied. "Nevertheless," I said, "a state run on the principle of self-control would be run well." "Certainly," he said. (161e6-162a6) … "Was it some fool that you heard saying this, Charmides?" "Far from it," he said. He seemed to be pretty clever fellow (*panu edokei sophos einai* 'he seemed to be very wise'), you know." (162b2-3) … "So what on earth would doing one's own job be? Can you tell me?" "Heavens, I don't know," he said. I dare say there is no reason why even the man who said it should have the slightest idea of what he meant." As he said that, he gave a little smile and looked at Critias. Now Critias had clearly long been champing at the bit in his eagerness to impress Charmides and the others present. He had only with great difficulty managed to restrain himself up to then, and this was the last straw.' (162b8-c4)

B. Jowett translates Socrates' last two sentences less poetically: 'Critias had long been showing uneasiness, for he felt that he had a reputation to maintain with Charmides and the rest of the company. He had, however, hitherto managed to restrain himself; but now he could no longer forbear.'

Watt's translation appears to be coloured by his interpretation of the dialogue. In the 'Introduction' to his translation he writes: 'Part of Plato's purpose in this dialogue is to exculpate Socrates from any responsibility for the crimes of his former companions. Xenophon, in *Memorabilia* I.ii.12 ff., also comes to Socrates' defence against the same charge, stating that Socrates had taught Critias *sôphrosunê* in his youth and had spoken out so strongly against his later behaviour that he had taken great offence. By showing Critias as both quite lacking in *sôphrosunê* and quite ignorant of its meaning beyond a superficial acquaintance with its conventional use within his aristocratic circle; by representing Charmides as equally unaware of its true purport, despite his possession of the natural *sôphrosunê* of youth, which he will lose when he reaches adulthood; and by portraying Socrates as trying his best to discover with them the true meaning of *sôphrosunê*, and as failing to elicit the answer from them, though possessing the virtue himself – by all these means Plato is endeavouring to show that Socrates tried to educate Critias and Charmides in *sôphrosunê*, but failed. But by trying, he saved himself from any possible accusation for their later crimes.' (Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, Penguin Books, 1987. p. 167)

Duncan Watt's view of the dialogue is what it should look like if it were written after the death of Socrates. Let us therefore see whether Socrates' questioning of Critias supports his interpretation.

Far from taking Critias' uneasiness as a lack of *sôphrosunê*, Socrates takes it simply as a confirmation of his initial guess: 'I think it's absolutely certain – as I assumed at the time – that it was from Critias that Charmides had heard this answer about self-control. So Charmides, who did not want to explain the answer himself, but to have Critias do it, kept trying to provoke him and pointing out that he had been refuted. This was too much for

Critias. It appeared to me as though he had got irritated with Charmides, just as a poet might do with the actor who treated his poetry badly. So he gave him a look and said, "Is that what you think, Charmides? That if you don't know what on earth the man meant who said that doing one's own job was self-control, he doesn't know either?"' (162c4-d6)

Socrates used Critias' 'getting angry' (*orgisthênai*, Watt's 'getting irritated') with Charmides to get him involved in the discussion: '"Why, Critias, my dear fellow," I said, "it is not at all surprising that at his age Charmides doesn't understand it; but, of course, it's natural for you to possess that knowledge in view of your age and your devotion to study. So if you agree that self-control is what Charmides says it is, and are willing to take the argument over, I'd much rather investigate with you whether what is said is true or not." "Well, I do agree," he said, "and am willing to take it over."' (162d7-e6)

Critias defined 'doing one's own things' as 'doing things that are a man's proper business', maintaining that doing what is proper is beneficial (163d1-3). But this definition is short lived. Socrates asked: "I am surprised that you believe that men who are self-controlled do not know that they are self-controlled." "But I don't," Critias protested. But Socrates pointed out to him that one could sometimes do what is beneficial, i.e. self-controlled, and be himself self-controlled, without knowing that he was being self-controlled. "But that could never happen, Socrates," Critias said. "Still, if you think that that must follow as a result of what I admitted earlier, I'd rather retract part of that admission – and I'd not be ashamed to say that I was wrong – than ever allow that a man who does not know himself is self-controlled. Indeed, I'd almost say that is what self-control really is, knowing oneself (164b7-d4) … as the inscription [at Delphi] implies and as I maintain, 'Know thyself' and 'Be self-controlled' are the same thing (164e7-165a1) … I'm willing to explain this fully to you (*ethelô toutou soi didonai logon* 'I want to prove this to you'), unless you do agree that self-control is knowing oneself."' (165b3-4)

In answer to Critias' suggestion Socrates rapped him over the knuckles: '"You're treating me as if I'm maintaining that I know what I'm asking about, and as if I'll agree with you if I really want to. But it's not like that. In fact, I'm going along with you in investigating whatever proposition is made, because I myself am in ignorance. So, when I've considered it, I'm prepared to tell you whether or not I agree with you. But wait until I've considered it." "Consider it then," he said. "I am," I said. "If indeed self-control is knowing something, it will obviously be a knowledge and a knowledge of something, won't it?" "Yes," he said. "Of oneself."' So Socrates points to medicine, which inasmuch as it is the knowledge (*epistêmê*) of what is healthy produces health, a splendid product. Then he points to the knowledge (*epistêmê*) of building, which produces buildings. Maintaining that the same is true 'for the other arts' (*hôsautôs de kai tôn allôn technôn*),[xii] he asks: "What splendid product worthy of the name does self-control, in so far as it is knowledge of oneself, produce for us?" (165b5-e2)

Critias protested: '"But Socrates," he said, "your method of investigating the question is wrong. It isn't like the other knowledges, and they aren't like one another either; but you're conducting the investigation as if they were. For tell me", he went on, "what is the product of the art of arithmetic or geometry, in the way that a house is the product of the art of

building, a cloak of the art of weaving, or many other such products of many arts which one could point to? Can you point to any such products of those arts? You won't be able to." I said, "That's true, but I can point to this – what each of these knowledges is the knowledge of, that thing being different from the knowledge itself. For example, arithmetic is the knowledge of the even and the odd, of the way in which members of the one group are numerically related to one another and to members of the other group, and vice versa, isn't it?" "Yes, certainly," he said. "Aren't the odd and the even different from arithmetic itself? (165c8-166a10) … Tell me, then, what is self-control the knowledge of, that thing being different from self-control itself?" "That's just it, Socrates," he said. "You've come in your investigation to the question of what the difference is between self-control and all the other knowledges. You're trying to find some similarity between it and the others. There isn't any. All the others are knowledges of something else, not of themselves. Self-control alone is the knowledge both of the other knowledges and of its own self. You're well aware of that. Indeed I think you're doing what you said just now you were not doing: you're ignoring the real point at issue in our discussion in your efforts to refute me."' (166b5-c6)

Socrates replied: '"How can you believe, I exclaimed, "that if I'm trying my hardest to refute you, I'm doing it for any other reason than that for which I'd investigate what I say myself! You see, my great fear is that I may some time not notice that I'm thinking that I know something when in fact I don't. And this, I tell you, is what I'm doing just now: looking at the argument mostly for my own sake, but perhaps for the sake of my friends as well. Or don't you think that it is a common good for almost all men that each thing that exists should be revealed as it really is?" "I do indeed, Socrates," he said. "Well then, Critias, don't be discouraged, and give me the answer, as you see it, to the question. Never mind whether it's Critias or Socrates who is the one refuted. Just concentrate on the argument itself, and consider what on earth will become of it if it is examined." "I'll do that," he said, "because I think that what you're saying is quite reasonable."' (166c7e3)

Is there anything in this long chain of Socrates' questions, Critias' responses and of their heated arguments that might support Watt's claim that by portraying Socrates as trying his best to discover with Critias the true meaning of *sôphrosunê*, and as failing to elicit the answer from him, Plato is endeavouring to show that Socrates tried to educate Critias in *sôphrosunê*, but failed, and that by trying, he saved himself from any possible accusation for their crimes? I'll take here issue with only one of his points. He wrote that in the dialogue Plato showed Critias as quite ignorant of the meaning of *sôphrosunê* beyond a superficial acquaintance with its conventional use within his aristocratic circle. But what conventionality can be found in Critias' defining *sôphrosunê* as 'doing what's one's own' (*to ta heautou prattein*)? As Watt himself noted, 'this is the definition of justice given at *Republic* 433a'. (*Op. cit*. p. 186).

When Critias maintained that 'doing what is one's own' is doing what is good, and Socrates pinted to instances of men who are on that definition self-controlled (*sôphronountas anthrôpous*) yet do not know that they are self-controlled, Critias redefined *sôphrosunê* in line with the Delphic inscription 'Know thyself' (*Gnôthi sauton*) as "knowing oneself" (164d-165b). The readers of the *Phaedrus* were undoubtedly at this point reminded of Socrates'

proclamation: 'I can't as yet "know myself", as the inscription at Delphi enjoins; and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to enquire into extraneous matters.' (229e5-230a1) – At this point I may be reprimanded for bringing in suppositions completely alien to Duncan Watt. In his view the *Phaedrus* was a late dialogue and thus Socrates in it had little in common with Socrates in the *Charmides*. But on such a supposition, the problem is even more pronounced. How can one think of Critias' definition of *sôphrosunê* as an expression of its 'conventional use within his aristocratic circle' when Plato gave 'knowing oneself' such a prominent place in the *Phaedrus*?

Aristotle maintained that the Delphic inscription 'Know thyself' was for Socrates the starting point and principle (*archê*) of the philosophic *aporia* and investigation.[xiii] If we view Socrates' investigation of Critias' definition of *sôphrosunê* in the light of Aristotle's testimony, we can see that Plato in the *Charmides* involved Socrates and Critias in an investigation of the greatest importance for Socrates himself.

And so, 'third time lucky' (*to triton tôi sôtêri*, Watt remarks: 'Literally "the third [libation] to [Zeus] the Saviour". The third cup of wine of a libation was dedicated to Zeus the Saviour. To drink this third cup was to pray for good luck.'), Socrates investigates the very possibility of anything being related to itself, beginning with the senses of perception. Can we envisage a vision that can see no colour, that can see nothing of what the other visions are visions of, but is the vision of itself and the other visions? Can we envisage a hearing that hears no sound but hears itself and the other hearings? … If something is superior to something, that something is inferior to it; if it is superior to itself, it must be inferior to itself … (167c-168e). And so he asks, whether things 'could ever relate their own faculty to themselves' (*tên heautôn dunamin pros heauta schein*, 168e5): "Whereas hearing and vision, and also **motion moving itself** (*kinêsis autê heautên kinein*, 168e9-10) and heat burning itself, would excite disbelief in some people, though perhaps not in others. What **we need**, my friend, is **some great man** (*megalou dê tinos andros dei*) **to determine satisfactorily** (*hostis hikanôs diairêsetai* '**who will determine satisfactorily**') for all instances whether none of things which exist relates its own faculty to itself naturally, but to something else instead, or whether some do, but others don't; and if there are things which relate it to themselves, whether the knowledge which we say is self-control is one of them. I don't believe I'm competent to settle these questions." (168e9-169a8)

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates defined all soul as that which is 'ever in motion' (*aeikinêton*, 245c5) for it is 'moving itself' (*to hauto kinoun*, 245c7); as such it is immortal (*athanatos*, 245c5), never born (*agenêton te*) and does not die (*kai athanaton*, 246a1-2). The proof of the immortality of the soul is given in an apodictic form, flagrantly transgressing Socrates' self-professed ignorance. By enclosing 'motion moving itself' among things that Socrates is incompetent of determining, Plato in the *Charmides* gives voice to Socrates' reservations on this point. Socrates' covert reference to Plato expressed in his words 'We need some great man who will determine these things satisfactorily' is particularly telling if Plato was born in 429 B.C. (Diog. Laert. III.3), the year in which the *Charmides* is set dramatically. Yet Socrates' ignorance concerning 'motion moving itself' is aired very unobtrusively. Plato's desire to get involved in politics was most acute at the time when he wrote the *Phaedrus* and the

Charmides (see his *Seventh Letter* 324b8-324d6); Socrates' not-knowing pitched against one of his most important insight was the last thing he needed; politics cannot be built on ignorance.

The political dimension of the dialogue comes most strongly to the fore in its closing stages. Setting aside all his reservations concerning Critias' definition of *sôphrosunê* as 'knowing what one knows and what one does not know', Socrates depicts a society founded on its basis as a great good: "When error has been removed and correctness leads the way, people in those circumstances must do admirably and well in their every activity, and people who do well must be happy." (171e7-172a5) But just as he had made this statement, Socrates began to question it: "I don't think that we were right in allowing what we were saying a minute ago, that self-control would be a great good if it were a thing like that, and organized the running of both house and state." When Critias asks "Why?" Socrates answers: "Because we readily allowed that it was a great good for men if each group of us were to do what it knows and were to hand over what it doesn't know to others who do know (172d3-10) … I agree that the human race, given this, would do things and live as knowledge directed – because self-control would mount guard and wouldn't let ignorance creep in and be a partner in our work. But that by doing things as knowledge directed we'd do well and be happy, that is something we can't as yet be sure of." When Critias objected "You won't easily find any other complete form of success, if you disregard doing things **as knowledge directs**", Socrates asks "as knowledge of **what** directs?" (173c7-d9) After a chain of questions and answers Critias gives the answer Socrates wants to hear; it is the knowledge '"By which [one knows] the good and the bad," he said.[xiv]

Let me give the follow up to Critias' discovery as Socrates narrates it: "You wretch," I said, "you've been leading me round in a circle all this time, keeping from me that it was not living as knowledge directed that made one do well and be happy, not even if it were knowledge of all the other knowledges put together, but only if it were knowledge of this one alone, that of good and bad. Because, Critias, if it's our intention to remove that knowledge from the other knowledges, will medicine make us healthy any the less; shoemaking make shoes any the less; weaving make clothes any the less? Will piloting prevent death at sea any the less, or generalship death in war?" "No," he said. "But, my dear Critias (*ô phile Kritia*, 'my friend Critias'), we'll be unable to ensure that each of these is performed well and beneficially if that knowledge is absent." "That's true." "But it would appear that that knowledge isn't self-control, but rather the knowledge whose function is to benefit us. It's not the knowledge of knowledges and ignorances, but of good and bad; so that if that knowledge is beneficial, our self-control must be something else." "Why wouldn't self-control benefit us?" he asked. "If self-control is in the fullest sense the knowledge of knowledges and presides over the other knowledges too, it would certainly govern the knowledge of **the** good too[xv] and consequently benefit us." "Would it make us healthy too," I asked, "not medicine? Would it make the products of the other arts, instead of each of them making its own? (174d10-e5) … How will self-control be beneficial, then, when it is the producer of no benefit?" "It won't at all, it would appear, Socrates." (175a6-8)

Follows Socrates' berating himself for his inability to investigate anything properly, for the investigation "has made such sport of it as to demonstrate to us quite brutally the uselessness of self-control as we defined it (175d2-4)." Yet in the end he rejects this result: "I really don't think that this is the case at all, because I do think that self-control is a great good" (175e5-7). In view of all that had been said, one must at this point ask: 'How can *sôphrosunê* be a great good?' The answer is obvious: 'Because the good makes it good, just as it makes good all the other things that are good.' Plato lets here Socrates step at the very threshold of the theory of the good, which is the foundation of his political philosophy. In note five I connected Plato's introduction of his theory of Forms in the *Phaedrus* with the passage in the *Laws*, the work of his old age, where he says that a man who is to be blessed and happy ought to partake of the truth at the beginning. Let me now give the whole passage in T.J. Saunders' translation: 'Truth heads the list of all things good, for gods and men alike. Let anyone who intends to be happy and blessed be its partner from the start, so that he may live as much of his life as possible a man of truth. You can trust a man like that.' (730c1-4) For years I believed that with these words Plato is looking back at his encounter with Socrates in the course of which he beheld the Forms and at the *Phaedrus* in which he immortalised that experience: 'For assuredly we must be bold to speak what is true, above all when our discourse is upon truth' (*Phaedrus* 247c4-6). The closing scene of the *Charmides* compels me to say that in the given passage in the *Laws* Plato does not reflect only on his theory of Forms and on its presentation in the *Phaedrus*, but that he reflects on his theory of the good, on which he founded his political philosophy.

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[i] R.D. Hicks in his LCL edition of Diogenes Laertius translates differently: 'There is a story that the *Phaedrus* was his first dialogue. **For** the subject has about it **something of the freshness of youth**. Dicaearchus, **however**, censures its whole style as **vulgar**.' The Greek original is as follows: *logos de prôton auton grapsai ton Phaidron· **kai gar** echein **meirakiôdes ti** to problêma. Dikaiarchos **de kai** ton tropon tês graphês holon epimemphetai hôs **phortikon**.* Hicks' 'something of the freshness of youth' stands for *meirakiôdes ti*, which is in conformity with the view that the source of the story was a pedant who could not see Plato in his later years writing with passion on love. The ancient tradition was dismissed on this ground as far back as W.G. Tennemann's *System der platonischen Philosophie* (Leipzig 1792).

There are grounds for dismissing this facile dismissal of the ancient tradition. For at the beginning of the 20th century an ancient commentary on the *Phaedrus* was published in which Hermias defends the dialogue against critics who maintained that Plato in the dialogue argued for and against love 'like a juvenile' (*hôsper meirakion*) and that he contended against the speech of Lysias as a 'contentious youngster' (*philoneikou neou)*, thus exposing the orator to comic ridicule (*kômôidountos ton rêtora*, Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, ed. P. Couvreur, Paris 1901, p. 9) It is thus the contentious manner in which Plato wrote the dialogue that the ancients criticised as *meirakiôdes ti*, i.e. as something juvenile.

Dicaearchus was a notable disciple of Aristotle. In Hicks' translation his testimony stands in contrast to the ancient story concerning the dating of the *Phaedrus*, for he translates the collocation *de kai* by the adverb 'however'. Hicks thus takes *de* in its adversative sense and leaves *kai* unaccounted for. The natural way of interpreting this collocation is to take *de* as a connective meaning 'and' followed by '*kai* with a sense of climax' (Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, p. 291, 6). If we then interpret Dicaearchus' *phortikon*, which Hicks translates as 'vulgar', in the light of its use in *Phaedrus* 236c2, we arrive at the notion of ridiculing 'as the comic writers do' (*to tôn kômôidôn phortikon pragma*). It thus appears that Dicaearchus used Plato's own phrase in censuring the *Phaedrus.*

Let me add that Hicks translates the collocation *kai gar* by causal 'for', as if the story that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue was occasioned by the thought that its 'subject has about it something of the freshness of

youth'. But *kai gar* has rarely this function, if ever. It mostly introduces a corroborative statement, as I have argued in 'Plato's First Dialogue' (*Ancient Philosophy* 17, 1997, p. 31-32.)

[ii] In the *Orator* (42) 'written in the latter part of the year 46 B.C.' (H.M. Hubbell in the 'Introduction' to his translation of the *Orator*) Cicero quotes (in his translation) the prophecy concerning Isocrates from the *Phaedrus* and adds: *Haec de adulescente Socrates auguratur* ('Socrates made this prophecy about the youth'), *at ea* ***de seniore*** *scribit Plato* ('but Plato wrote it **when Isocrates was in middle life'**) *et scribit aequalis* ('and writing as a contemporary'; translations from the *Orator* H.M. Hubbell). R. Hackforth remarks on this testimony of Cicero: 'This is indeed vague enough; but if we may accept W.H. Thompson's belief that the word *senior* would not be applied to a man under fifty, it would follow that Plato, being at most eight years younger than Isocrates, was certainly over forty at the time.' (Plato's *Phaedrus*, Cambridge University Press 1952, 'Introduction', p. 1) Thompson's belief may be reinforced by Stallbaum's assertion that the Romans used the term *senior* when they spoke of a man aged between forty-five and sixty (*Platonis Phaedrus*, 2nd ed. 1857, pp. cxiii, cvii, cxx).

In the *Republic* written several years prior to the *Orator* Cicero wrote that after the death of Socrates Plato went to Italy and Sicily in order to become acquainted with the discoveries of Pythagoras: 'And, as Pythagoras' reputation was then great in that country, he devoted himself entirely to that teacher's disciples and doctrines. And so, as he loved Socrates with singular affection and wished to give him credit for everything, he interwove Socrates' charm and subtlety in argument with the obscurity and ponderous learning of Pythagoras in so many branches of knowledge.' (*De Re Publica* I.16, translation C.W. Keyes) Cicero's *Republic* ends with Pythagorean speculations presumably derived from Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*. These speculations culminate in the proof of the immortality of the soul as it stands in the *Phaedrus*, which indicates that at that time Cicero viewed the *Phaedrus* as written as a result of Plato's studies of the Pythagoreans.

In the *Tusculan Disputations*, in contrast to his view expressed in the *De Re Publica* and in the *Orator*, Cicero became certain that Plato conceived his proof of the immortality of the soul prior to the death of Socrates. For in it he again reproduces the proof of the immortality of the soul from the *Phaedrus* (I. 53-54), as he did in *De Re Publica*, and then he writes: 'All the common crowd of philosophers – for such a title seems appropriate to those who disagree with Plato and Socrates and their school – though they ley their heads together, will not only never unravel any problem so neatly, but will not even appreciate the accuracy of this particular conclusion.' (I. 55, translations from *Tusculan Disputations* are by J.E. King). Here Cicero appears to be speaking of Socrates as a man well acquainted with Plato's proof of the immortality of the soul. That he does so becomes clear when he says later on: 'Influenced by these and similar reasons Socrates sought out no advocate, when on trial for his life, and was not humble to his judges, and on the last day of his life he discussed at length this very subject; and a few days before, though he could easily have been removed from prison, he refused, and then, with the fatal cup almost actually in his hands, he spoke in language which made him seem not as one thrust to die, but as one ascending to the heavens.' (I. 71)

There must have been a powerful reason for Cicero to change his mind on this, for viewing the *Phaedrus* as a late dialogue was very important to him. Himself an orator, he loved Isocrates, and viewing the *Phaedrus* as a late dialogue entitled him to say in the *Orator* that Plato 'a critic of all rhetoricians, he admires him only' (42). How do we know that Dicaearchus' book *on the soul* is the most likely reason for Cicero's abandoning his dating of the *Phaedrus* which he indicated in *De Re Publica* and made manifest in the *Orator*? Let me quote on this a paragraph from the 4th chapter of *The Lost Plato* entitled 'The dating of the *Phaedrus*, Ancient Sources': 'We know that Cicero wrote the *Orator* in the latter part of the year 46 B.C. and that he sent it to his friend Atticus, an authority on Greek and Roman antiquities. In a letter to Atticus from the end of that year Cicero appreciates Atticus' reading of the *Orator* and thanks him for correcting his wrong attribution of a quotation from Aristophanes to Eupolis (*Letters to Atticus* XII, 6a). From Cicero's letter to Atticus of May 28, 45 B.C. we learn that Atticus suggested to him that he ought to read Dicaearchus' books, for Cicero welcomes the suggestion and asks Atticus to send him the books. He repeats his request in his next letter to him, of May 29 – 'Please send me Dicaearchus' two books *on the soul*' – and finally acknowledges their receipt in the letter of June 3. In the *Tusculan Disputations* written in the year 45 B.C. he refers to Dicaearchus repeatedly, invoking Plato and Socrates against Dicaearchus' view that 'the soul is nothing at all' (I. 24); for Dicaearchus 'argued most incisively against this immortality' (I. 77). From Cicero's comments we can infer that Dicaearchus discussed the *Phaedrus* in his book *on the soul*, for mentioning the myth of rape of Ganymede Cicero refers to Dicaearchus' criticism of Plato (IV. 71,72). Plato makes the myth of Ganymede an integral part of the Palinode (*Phaedrus* 255c). All this suggests that Cicero changed his view on the dating of the *Phaedrus* as a result of the information contained in Dicaearchus' book.' (*The Lost Plato* is available on my website.)

[iii] In translating Aristophanes' lines 1491-5 I differ from B.B. Rogers' translation. The lines are *charien oun mê Sôkratei parakathêmenon lalein, apobalonta mousikên, ta te megista paraliponta tês tragôidikês technês*.

Rogers translates: 'Right it is and befitting, not by Socrates sitting, idle talk to pursue, stripping tragedy art of all-things noble and true.' Rogers leaves out the most important characterization of this follower of Socrates, namely his 'having thrown away *mousikê*'. And when he translates Aristophanes' *ta te megista paraliponta tês tragôidikês technês* with the words 'stripping tragedy art of all-things noble and true' he obviously has in mind Euripides whom Aristophanes through the eyes of his Aeschylus views as such. But Euripides has been left behind in the underworld defeated by Aeschylus. Rogers' participle 'stripping' is contemporaneous with 'by Socrates sitting, idle talk to pursue' as if he spoke of someone who was pursuing the art of tragedy and stripping it 'of all-things noble and true' while 'by Socrates sitting'. But Aristophanes' participles *apobalonta* 'having thrown away' and *paraliponta* 'having abandoned' are aorists that describe what had happened prior to and as a precondition for the follower's sitting by Socrates in idle talk; the present participle 'sitting' correctly translates Aristophanes' present participle *parakathêmenon*.
There is one more thing that in Roger's translation obscures the point of the choric song. He leaves out without translating Aristophanes' *oun* 'therefore', which links the delight of being freed from sitting by Socrates with the preceding song of praise of Aeschylus as a great thinker who possesses 'keen and intelligent mind' (*echôn xunesin êkribômenên*, 1483-4) and who comes 'to bring good to the citizens' (*ep' agathôi men tois politais*, 1488) because he is wise (*dia to sunetos einai*, 1490). It is because Aeschylus is about to ascend from the underworld that the chorus goes on to sing 'it is delightful therefore not to sit around Socrates in idle talk.' It is only the ascending of Aeschylus from the dead that might free Plato from Socrates and thus allow him to pursue his political aspirations at the time when the very existence of Athens is at stake. Cf. B.B. Rogers, *The Frogs of Aristophanes*, 2nd edition, London 1919.
[iv] In prison, on his last day, Socrates explains why during his days in prison he began to write poetry when he never had done so before: 'In the course of my life I have often had intimations in dreams "that I should make music". The same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words: "Set to work and make music (*mousikên poiei kai ergazou*)", said the dream. And hitherto I had imagined that this was only intended to exhort and encourage me in the study of philosophy, which has been the pursuit of my life, and is the best and the noblest of music (*philosophias men ousês megistês mousikês*). The dream was bidding me do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor in a race is bidden by the spectators to run when he is already running. But I was not certain of this; for the dream might have meant music in the popular sense of the word, and being under the sentence of death, and the festival giving me a respite [during the festival nobody could be put to death by the state], I thought that it would be safer for me to satisfy the scruple, and, in obedience to the dream, to compose a few verses before I parted.' (60e4-61b1)
Having satisfied the scruple, in the course of his discussion that followed Socrates satisfied the bidding of the dream as he understood it throughout his previous life; he turned his last day on earth into his best display of philosophy: 'Will you not allow that I have as much of the spirit of prophecy in me as the swans? For they, when they perceive that they must die, having sung at times during their life, do then sing a longer and lovelier song than ever, rejoicing in the thought that they are about to go away to the god whose ministers they are … because they are sacred to Apollo, they have the gift of prophecy, and anticipate the good things of another world; wherefore they sing and rejoice in that day more than ever they did before. And I too, believing myself to be the consecrated servant of the same god, and the fellow servant of the swans, and thinking that I have received from my master gifts of prophecy which are not inferior to theirs, would not go out of life less merrily than the swans.' (84e4-85b7; translation from the *Phaedo* B. Jowett.
[v] On the margin of my Oxford text I wrote De Vries' remark: 'Of course it is entirely wrong to conclude from the present passage (as was often done in the nineteenth, and even in the twentieth century) that the *Phaedrus* offers "the first exposition of the doctrine of Ideas".' I would never dare to derive such a conclusion from the given passage, but since I have plentiful reasons for accepting the ancient tradition according to which the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue, in reading it I can share Plato's delight in his intimating his view of the Ideas (Forms) to his readers for the first time. In my mind it is linked to the passage in the *Laws*, his last great work, where he says that a man who is to be blessed and happy (*makarios te kai eudaimôn*) ought to partake of the truth straight at the beginning (*ex archês euthus*) so as to live as a true man throughout a prolonged life (*hina hôs pleiston chronon alêthês ôn diabioi*, 730c2-4).
[vi] Hackforth notes: 'The implication is that most prose works hitherto had come from the pens of Sophists; and a glance at the relevant *testimonia* in Diels-Kranz, *Vorsokratiker* II, makes this easy to believe.' This consideration on its own ought to have induced Hackforth to doubt his dating the *Phaedrus* after the *Republic* (and dozens of dialogues written prior to the *Republic*). 'The implication is that most prose works hitherto had come from the pens of Sophists' makes sense only if the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first prose writing.
[vii] Plato's uncle Charmides was one of the fifty-one.

[viii] Critias, under whose leadership the rule of the Thirty turned into the rule of terror, was Charmides' cousin.
[ix] Donald Watt says in the 'Introduction' to his translation of the *Charmides*: 'The etymological meaning of *sôphrosunê* is "soundness of mind" (Cf. *Cratylus* 411e); but what is meant in the popular usage of Socrates' and Plato's day was primarily self-control, and this is how the word has been rendered in this translation, despite the manifest inadequacy of such a rendering.' In the accompanying note he adds: 'Older translations have tended to favour "temperance", but that word now has rather different connotations. "Moderation", "soberness", "temperateness", "chastity", "modesty", "self-restraint", "self-discipline", "self-respect", "discretion", "wisdom", "prudence", "humility", are among the large array of alternatives, all of which cover at least some of the aspect of *sôphrosunê*. "Sense", meaning "good sense", perhaps best conveys the wealth of connotation of the Greek word, and is probably immediately recognizable as a major virtue in the English-speaking world; but since it fails directly to connote "self-control", which is the primary meaning the word held for Greeks in the fifth and fourth centuries, it has been rejected in favour of that primary meaning.' – I have only one quibble concerning this note. On what basis does Watt make his claim that "self-control" 'is the primary meaning the word held for Greeks in the fifth and fourth centuries'? When Critias as the leader of the Thirty appealed to the Senate that they should sentence Theramenes, the former leader of the Thirty, to death, if they have *sôphrosunê* (*ean sôphronête*, Xenophon, *Hellenica* II.iii.34), he appealed to their prudence, as he understood it, certainly not self-control. When Kleon tried to persuade the Athenians that all inhabitants of Mytilene – which revolted against Athens, but then the demos of Mytilene opened the gates to the Athenians – should be put to death, he appealed to *sôphrosunê* (Thukydides III.37.3, best understood as 'common sense'; for he argued that if their allies learnt that any revolt would be punished mercilessly, they would not dare to attempt revolting. When Deiphobus spoke against him and argued that they should be spared, he too appealed to *sôphrosunê*: 'If we are sensible people (*ei sôphronoumen*), we shall see that the question is not so much whether they are guilty as whether we are making the right decision for ourselves.' (Thukydides III.44,1, translation Rex Warner) Watt seems to have generalized the meaning the term *sôphrosunê* has in Xenophon, where the latter argues that even Critias and Alcibiades 'were **prudent** (*sôphronounte*) as long as they were with Socrates' (*Memorabilia* I.ii.18, translation E.C.Marchant), that in their youth they were made *sôphrones* by Socrates (*Sôkratês paresche sôphrone* 'Socrates controlled them' translates E.C. Marchant, *Memorabilia* I.ii.26), and that Socrates cannot be blamed for their later conduct: 'If his own conduct was always **prudent'** (*ei d' autos* ***sôphronôn*** *dietelei*, *Mem.* I.ii.28, translation E.C.Marchant). In all these three cases Watt's self-controlled would do.
In the *Charmides* the term self-control works well when Socrates at the beginning speaks of *sôphrosunê* as a healthy state of the soul. But when Charmides remembers someone defined *sôphrosunê* as 'doing one's own things', in discussing it with Charmides Socrates brings in the political dimension of it, and from then on, in discussing it with Critias, 'prudence' or 'enlightened self-interest' would be better.
[x] Hackforth translates 'when we apply … words and rules of conduct to implant such convictions and virtues as we desire'. I have changed the last clause: 'when we apply … words and rules of conduct to implant such convictions as we desire, and virtues' for Plato wrote: '*têi de logous te kai epitêdeuseis nomimous peithô hên an boulêi kai aretên paradôsein*'; '*hên an boulêi*' ('as he may desire') qualifies convictions the rhetorician desires to implant in the souls of his listeners; his task to implant in their soul virtue is unqualified.
[xi] Duncan Watt says in the preamble to this section of his translation: "'Doing one's own job' or more literally, 'doing (*prattein*) one's own things', is the definition of justice given at *Republic* 433a. There it means 'each man performing the one function in the state for which his nature most suits him'. Here, however, Socrates takes it to mean the opposite, by interpreting the phrase as 'each man doing (or making) everything for himself': each man should weave his own clothes, wash his own clothes, make his own shoes, etc. (This is the form of social organization rejected at *Republic* 369 ff.) On the basis of this interpretation, Socrates refutes the definition by arguing that self-control is good, yet there are times when doing one's own job is bad; therefore self-control is not doing one's own job." (Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, Penguin Books, p. 186; *Charmides*, section D. Third Definition: Doing one's own job.)
But in fact, Socrates does not refute the definition 'doing one's own things' (*to ta heautou prattein*). He shows that whoever said it, could not mean what he said, he must have meant by it something else. When he begins his 'refutation' by asking 'Then do you think that it's only **his own name** that the writing-master reads and writes, or teaches boys to? Or did you write your enemies' names just as much as **your own** and your friends?', he simply takes the words *to ta heautou prattein* to mean what they simply say: 'doing what's one's own'. I use here the pronominal 'what' instead of 'things', for it better corresponds to the pronominal *ta*.
[xii] As can be seen, Plato uses here terms *epistêmê* and *technê* synonymously.
[xiii] *To gnôthi sauton Sôkratei <tês> aporias kai zêtêseôs tautês archên edôken*. See W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis Fragmenta Selecta*, 'Peri philosophias' fr. 1.

[xiv] *Hêi **to** agathon, ephê, kai **to** kakon* (174b10). Watt's '"Good and bad," he replied' is quite wrong. The definite articles '**the** good' and '**the** bad' are of fundamental importance.
[xv] *Tautês dêpou an archousa tês peri **t'**agathon epistêmês ôpheloi an hêmas*; Watt in his translation again misses the definite article determining '**the** good': 'would certainly govern the knowledge of good too and consequently benefit us'.