

## The Lost Plato Volume 1

### Chapter 4: The Dating of the *Phaedrus*: Ancient Sources – revised

Diogenes Laertius preserves the following ancient biographical tradition about Plato: ‘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’ (*logos de prôton grapsai auton ton Phaidron, kai gar echein meirakiôdes ti to problêma. Dikaiarchos de kai ton tropon tês graphês holon epimemphetai hôs phortikon*, iii. 38)<sup>i</sup>. This dating of the *Phaedrus* has been dismissed out of hand by modern scholars. I shall argue that it can in fact be corroborated in a number of ways.

1. by understanding better the terms in which it is expressed in Diogenes, and taking into account additional corroborative sources, in particular Cicero, Themistius, Olympiodorus and Hermias.
2. by considering that a strong case can be made for dating the dialogue on internal grounds prior to the death of Polemarchus.
3. by thus viewing the dialogue as Plato’s response to Aristophanes’ biting attack on Socrates and his disciples as men who threw away *mousikê* and all that is best in Greek art.

Grounds for discrediting the ancient tradition have been found in Diogenes’ clause ‘For the subject has about it something of the freshness of youth’, which has been taken as the actual basis on which the story of the dating was founded. As early as 1792 the element of ‘youthfulness’ was identified by Tennemann with the theme of love.<sup>ii</sup> As a consequence, Diogenes’ source was dismissed as a pedant who could not envisage Plato in his later years writing with passion on love. The connective *kai gar*, which links *meirakiôdes* (‘of the freshness of youth’, ‘youthful’,<sup>iii</sup> ‘boyishly mischievous’,<sup>iv</sup> or ‘youthfully contentious’) to the statement about the dating of the dialogue, is thus given a causal force. And yet, although the combination of *kai* and *gar* can occasionally have the force of the causal ‘for’, it usually introduces a clause that merely corroborates the aforesaid; it then has the force of ‘and indeed’, or ‘for there is a further fact’.<sup>v</sup> For example, in *Apology* 34d3-5 Socrates addresses an imaginary critic: ‘My friend, I have a family, *and indeed (kai gar)*, as Homer says, I am “not of a tree or of a rock”, I am a man.’ The connective *kai gar* introduces the quotation from Homer in support of Socrates’ statement ‘My friend, I have a family’ so as to give it a special touch, but Socrates’ having a family does not causally depend on Homer’s saying.<sup>vi</sup>

In order to decide which is the syntactic function of *kai gar* in the given case, we must enquire into the meaning of *meirakiôdes* as it recurs in ancient references to the dialogue. Hermias begins his *Commentary on the Phaedrus* by taking on Plato’s critics who maintained that Plato in the dialogue argued for and against love ‘like a youngling’ (*hôsper meirakion*), and that he contended against the speech of Lysias as a ‘contentious youngster’ (*philoneikou neou*). According to Hermias, what the ancients saw as a streak of juvenility was not the theme of love, but the contentious manner in which it was presented, as well as the contentious manner in which Plato argued against Lysias.<sup>vii</sup> Hermias’ testimony is supported by Themistius who in his *Oration xxvi* addressed philosophy [identified in the passage with Plato] as follows: ‘and you were not afraid that someone might accuse you of juvenile behaviour (*meirakieuesthai*) when you contended against Lysias’ (329c).

Contentiousness was perceived by the ancients as a typical characteristic of young men, as shown by Plato's portrait of Ctesippus in the *Euthydemus*, so that its marked display in the *Phaedrus* could be adduced as a confirmation of its early dating, but the claim that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue could hardly have been based on this alone; on this basis why not give precedence to the *Crito*, the *Laches*, the *Lysis*, the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, or the *Cratylus*, which all display the Socratic predilection for controversy? This leaves us with a clear choice as to what meaning should be given to the connective *kai gar*; in Diogenes' passage it has the corroborative force of 'and indeed': 'There is a story that the *Phaedrus* was his first dialogue, and indeed, that there is something *meirakiôdes* about its theme.' The character of *meirakiôdes* was perceived in the dialogue by the ancients on the basis of its being known as Plato's first dialogue, but it was not the ground for its dating as Plato's first.

In Diogenes the remark regarding something *meirakiôdes* about the theme of the *Phaedrus* is closely connected with the testimony of Dicaearchus: 'but Dicaearchus in fact criticizes its whole character as onerous' (*Dikaiarchos de kai ton tropon tês graphês holon epimemphetai hês phortikon* (iii. 38). This connection has disappeared in Hicks' translation: 'Dicaearchus, however, censures its whole style as vulgar'. Having translated *meirakiôdes ti* in the first remark as 'something of the freshness of youth' and *to problêma* as 'the subject', and Dicaearchus' *phortikon* as 'vulgar' and *tropon* as 'style' in the second, Hicks removed any meaningful connection between the two, in spite of the connective *de kai* that binds them together. The connection nevertheless reappears if we view the word *phortikon* in its Phaedran setting, for in the *Phaedrus* it means the 'contentious ridiculing' to which 'the comic writers take recourse' (*to tôn kômôidôn*, 236c). The term *phortikon* thus conveys the meaning of contentiousness as does the term *meirakiôdes* in Diogenes. Dicaearchus thus appears to have taken Plato's own phrase of censure from the *Phaedrus* and used it in his criticism of the dialogue. Whereas previous critics of the *Phaedrus* censured merely a certain aspect of the dialogue as *meirakiôdes*, Dicaearchus extended a similar censure to the dialogue as a whole (*ton tropon tês graphês holon*). This is elucidated in Hermias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus* where the connection between the alleged youthful contentiousness (*hêsper meirakion, philoneikou neou*) with which Plato argued for and against *eros*, and the onerous ridiculing of Lysias in the manner of the comic writers (*kômôidountos ton rhêtora*) - Plato's critics alleged that like a malevolent and contentious youngster Plato exposed Lysias to comic ridicule - becomes obvious. (Hermeias, p. 9)

A further objection to the connection between Dicaearchus and the ancient dating of the *Phaedrus* might be that the ancient tradition, to which Diogenes refers in the second clause, viewed something in the subject (*problêma*) of the dialogue as juvenile, whereas Dicaearchus, to whom Diogenes refers in the third clause, censured its style (*tropon*) as something *phortikon*, so that these two sources refer to different aspects of the dialogue, whatever the interpretation of *meirakiôdes* and *phortikon* may be. But this difficulty is again caused by insufficient attention to the meaning of the Greek terms, for *problêma* does not mean simply a 'subject', it means 'a task set in front of a man'. It is derived from *proballô*, to 'throw in front'; the meaning relevant to the given case may best be illustrated by its use in Plato's *Symposium*, where Pausanias criticizes Phaedrus for wrongly setting the task (*probeblêsthai*) of praising Eros (180c4). The rendering of Diogenes' *tropos* as 'style' is equally misleading, for applied to a person or a thing *tropos* designates its character. Thus in the *Republic* Plato says that there are as

many characters of soul (*psuchês tropoi*) as there are characters of constitution with distinct forms (*politeiôn tropoi eidê echontes*, 445c9-10).<sup>viii</sup> If we view *problêma* as ‘a task set in front of a man’, then we can see that in the *Phaedrus* the task for Socrates is set by Phaedrus after the speech of Lysias as a challenge to deliver a better speech on the same subject (235b). This task is the *problêma* of the dialogue; in it the *tropos* of contentiousness, perceived by some as *meirakiôdes*, by Dicaearchus (in reference to Plato's own use of the term in the *Phaedrus*) as something *phortikon*, is inherent. Both the attribute of *meirakiôdes* and the attribute of *phortikon* are derived from the immediate context within which Phaedrus sets the *problêma* in the *Phaedrus*. At 235a Socrates criticizes Lysias for acting like a juvenile (*neanieuesthai*), showing off his ability to present the same things again and again in different ways. It is in response to this criticism that Phaedrus challenges Socrates to present a better speech on the same theme, and it is when Socrates wants to dodge the challenge that Phaedrus threatens him with the *phortikon* exchange of innuendo in the manner of the comic poets (*to tôn kômôidôn phortikon*, 236c2).

Two more *Lives* of Plato have been preserved, and they both report that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue. The *Anonymous Life* echoes Olympiodorus' *Life of Plato* on this point,<sup>ix</sup> so that we may limit our attention to Olympiodorus. Olympiodorus is taken by Hackforth as echoing Diogenes Laertius (Hackforth, p. 3), but this is not correct. Olympiodorus does not refer to the dialogue as *meirakiôdes*; he takes the received dating as an established fact in which he finds support for the ancient tradition according to which Plato wrote poetry before he started to write philosophy:

‘That Plato was practiced in dithyrambs as well is clear from the *Phaedrus*, the dialogue that plentifully breathes dithyrambs, for Plato wrote this dialogue as his first, as is reported’. (*Hoti de tous dithurambous ho Platôn êskêto dêlon ek tou Phaidrou tou dialogou panu pneontos tou dithurambôdous charaktêros, hate tou Platônos touton prôton grapsantos dialogon, hôs legetai.*)<sup>x</sup>

The very fact that Diogenes Laertius supports the ancient tradition concerning the dating of the *Phaedrus* by noting that the ancients saw in the dialogue something *meirakiôdes* makes it very unlikely that Diogenes was the main source on which Olympiodorus based his dating of the dialogue. Olympiodorus, like Hermias, was a Neoplatonist and the theory of the fall and ascent of the souls, which is central to the *Phaedrus*, is also at the heart of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the soul. This is why Hermias endeavoured to show that the *Phaedrus* was free from any marks of juvenility, without mentioning its dating as Plato's first dialogue; he argues that the character of contentiousness, viewed by the critics as juvenile, can equally well be ascribed to the *Republic*, where Plato argues against justice and for justice, or to the *Sophist*, where he argues both for being and for not-being, that is to dialogues that Plato wrote in his later years.<sup>xi</sup> If Olympiodorus could have placed the dialogue in the years of the *akmê* of Plato's creativity, he would have done so, just as Heidegger does within the framework of twentieth century Platonic scholarship.<sup>xii</sup> We may therefore presume that when Olympiodorus maintained that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue he did so on the basis of sources he viewed as trustworthy, and not on the basis of a remark about its juvenility, gleaned from Diogenes.

Diogenes Laertius and Olympiodorus wrote in the third and the sixth century A.D. respectively, and their testimony on the dating of the *Phaedrus* is believed to be

contradicted by Cicero, who lived in the first century B.C. and was an enthusiastic student of Plato. Cicero says in his *De re publica* that Socrates discarded the study of nature and so did Plato as long as Socrates lived, but that after Socrates' death Plato devoted himself to it under the influence of the Pythagoreans, whom he joined on his journey to Italy and Sicily, and then in his dialogues attributed to Socrates his own thoughts on the subject (i. 15-16). Towards the end of *De re publica* Cicero reproduces in full the Phaedran proof of the immortality of the soul amid the cosmological speculations derived from the *Timaeus*, and in doing so he apparently considers the *Phaedrus* to be one of Plato's late works written under the influence of the Pythagoreans. That Cicero did indeed believe at that time that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* relatively late comes to the fore explicitly in the *Orator*, written a few years after the *De re publica*, for in it he maintains that Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* when Isocrates was *senior* and Plato his *aequalis* (42). As Stallbaum points out, the Romans called *seniores* men between forty-five and sixty years of age.<sup>xiii</sup>

Cicero's *De re publica* was discovered by Cardinal Angelo Mai in 1820 and published in 1822;<sup>xiv</sup> its discovery induced Stallbaum, Hermann and under their influence the majority of Platonic scholars to abandon Schleiermacher's dating of the *Phaedrus* as Plato's first dialogue, written during Socrates' lifetime, and project its dating into the years that followed Plato's return from Sicily. This pivotal role of Cicero's *De re publica* in determining the modern late dating of the *Phaedrus* has nowadays been forgotten, and it is only his *Orator* that is referred to as an antidote to Diogenes' dating, as can be seen in Hackforth's 'Introduction' to his edition of the *Phaedrus* (Hackforth, p.3).

Scholars have failed to notice that after the *Orator* Cicero appears to have changed his view concerning the dating of the *Phaedrus*. In the *Tusculan Disputations* written after the *Orator* Cicero reproduces the Phaedran proof of the immortality of the soul (i.53,54), but now insists that Plato's views on immortality were Plato's own (i.39,49), that is not derived from the teachings of the Pythagoreans. He suggests that Plato derived the Phaedran proof from the Delphic maxim 'Know thyself' (i.52), adding that those who disagree with Plato and Socrates in this matter could neither solve this problem so neatly, nor appreciate the subtlety of the solution (i.55). Further on in the *Tusculan Disputations* he then adds to the Phaedran proof the notion of the soul's simplicity derived from the *Phaedo* and maintains that 'influenced by these and similar reasons Socrates sought out no advocate when on trial for his life, and did not humbly entreat his judges' (His et talibus rationibus adductus Socrates nec patronum quaesivit ad iudicium capitis nec iudicibus supplex fuit, i.71). Here Cicero speaks of the historical Socrates as a man who had been persuaded by Plato's arguments on the immortality of the soul and at his trial acted under the influence of Plato's arguments. This suggests that after having written the *Orator*, Cicero received reliable information that Plato conceived of his proofs of the immortality of the soul prior to Socrates' death. What else could have given Cicero this assurance if not the information according to which the *Phaedrus* was written by Plato during Socrates' lifetime? Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* provide a clue concerning the source of this information.

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 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 in the letter welcomes the suggestion, and asks Atticus to send him the books: 'I should like you to send me the books of Dicaearchus of which you write' (Dicaearchi, quos scribis, libros sane velim mi mittas, xiii. 31) He repeats his request in his next letter to him, of May 29: 'Please send me Dicaearchus' two books *On the soul*' (Dicaearchi *peri psuchês* utrosque velim mittas, xiii. 32), and finally acknowledges their receipt in the letter of June 3: 'I have received Dicaearchus' book' (Dicaearchi librum accepi, xiii. 33). The result of this reading is seen in the *Tusculan Disputations* written in the year 45 B.C. where Cicero refers to Dicaearchus repeatedly, invoking Plato and Socrates against Dicaearchus' view that 'the soul is nothing at all' (i.24); for Dicaearchus in his book 'argued most incisively against this immortality' (i.77). Unfortunately, none of Dicaearchus' books survive, but he undoubtedly discussed the *Phaedrus* in *On the Soul*, for mentioning the myth of the rape of Ganymede in the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero refers to Dicaearchus' criticism of Plato's notion of love (iv. 71,72); Plato makes the myth of Ganymede into an integral part of the Phaedran palinode (*Phaedrus* 255c). All this suggests that Cicero changed his view on the dating of the *Phaedrus* as a direct result of the impact of the information contained in Dicaearchus' book.

On the basis of Cicero's writings alone we are thus led to the conclusion that the *Phaedrus* was written by Plato during Socrates' lifetime. This conclusion is in agreement with the ancient biographical tradition already mentioned, according to which the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue, and with another important piece of information preserved by the ancient biographers: Plato wrote and published dialogues during Socrates' lifetime.<sup>xv</sup> Concerning the *Phaedrus* this information can be corroborated on internal evidence. Socrates ends the Phaedran palinode with a prayer to Eros that Lysias may be turned to philosophy as his brother Polemarchus has been turned to it (257b). This follows Socrates' assertion that those who pursue philosophy live a blessed and harmonious life here on earth (256a-b). We know that Polemarchus died at the hands of the Thirty Tyrants in 404 B.C., five years before Socrates' death. Lysias gives a graphic description of his brother's death in *Against Eratosthenes* (17-20):

'Polemarchus received from the Thirty their accustomed order to drink hemlock, with no statement made as to the reason for his execution: so far did he come short of being tried and defending himself. And when he was being brought away dead from the prison, although we had three houses amongst us, they did not permit his funeral to be conducted from any of them, but they hired a small hut in which to lay him. We had plenty of cloaks, yet they refused our request of one for the funeral; but our friends gave either a cloak, or a pillow, or whatever each had to spare, for his internment ... some twisted gold earrings, which Polemarchus' wife chanced to have, were taken out of her ears by Melobius as soon as ever he entered the house.'<sup>xvi</sup>

In view of this testimony, to declare Polemarchus after his death an exemplary follower of philosophy (*Phaedr.* 257b), and as such endowed with blessedness here on earth (in the light of *Phaedr.* 256a-b), would be a mockery of philosophy in the eyes of Plato's readers, for the ancients believed that a man's life can be considered good only if he meets a good end. The death of a person was indicative of the nature and quality of that person's life, as can be seen from Herodotus (i. 30-31), Aeschylus (*Agamemnon* 928-9),

Sophocles (*Trach.* 1-3, *Oed. Tyr.* 1528-30), and Euripides (*Heraclidae* 863-6, *Andromache* 100-2, *Troïades* 509-10). I therefore date the composition of the *Phaedrus* prior to the death of Polemarchus.

It could be objected against my dating of the *Phaedrus* on these grounds that Plato's saying at 257b4 that Polemarchus has 'turned to philosophy' is a significantly weaker claim than that a philosopher will have led a life devoted to it as referred to at 256a-b, and that it is therefore an exaggeration to say that in the *Phaedrus* Polemarchus is presented as an 'exemplary follower of philosophy'. The crux of the matter is this: does the 256a-b passage about the blessedness of a philosopher's life here on earth have any bearing on what is said on the next page, at 257a3-b7, when the Palinode ends with the prayer to Eros in which Polemarchus is presented as a man turned to philosophy, who ought to be imitated? To answer this let us focus our attention on the relevant passages.

1. The first passage, in which Plato attributes blessedness to a philosopher, can be narrowed down to lines 256a7-b3:

'And so, if the victory be won by the higher elements of mind guiding them [the lover and his beloved] into the ordered rule of the philosophic life (*ean men dê oun eis tetagmenên te diaitan kai philosophian nikêsêi ta beltîô tês dianoiâs agagonta*), their life on earth is blessed with happiness and concord (*makarion men kai homonoêtikon ton enthade bion diagousin*): for they have won self-mastery and inward harmony (*enkrateis hautôn kai kosmioi ontes*) by subjugating that part of the soul in which evil was springing up and by liberating that part in which virtue was engendered' (*doulôsamenoi men hôi kakia psuchês enegigneto, eleutherôsantes de hôi aretê*).

2. The second passage, that is Socrates' prayer to Eros, is considerably longer; it comprises the last paragraph of the Palinode and encompasses not only the salient points of the Palinode, but brings into focus the preceding dialogue as a whole. Socrates begins the prayer by offering the Palinode to Eros as an atonement for anything that was wrong in his speech preceding it concerning love (257a3-6), asks Eros to grant him pardon for it, and to accept with favour his recantation. He prays that Eros will not deprive him of the art of love that Eros gave him, nor let it wither, but increase even more the esteem in which he stands in the eyes of the fair (257a6-9). The art of love of which Socrates here speaks is the art of love as dramatized and extolled in the Palinode. Next comes the following:

'And if you took offence in anything that Phaedrus and I said earlier, then lay the blame on Lysias, the father of that discourse, prevent him from making such discourses (*Lusian ton tou logou patera aitiômenos paue tôn toioutôn logôn*), and turn him towards philosophy even as his brother Polemarchus has been turned (*epi philosophian de, hôsper hadelphos autou Polemarchos tetraptai, trepson*), so that this lover of his here no longer halts between two opinions, as he does now (*hina kai ho erastês hode autou mêketi epamphoterizêi kathaper nun*), but devotes his life completely to Love with the aid of philosophic discourse (*all' haplôs pros Erôta meta philosophôn logôn ton bion poiêtai*, 257b2-6).

In this second part, the main part of the prayer, Socrates compresses into one thought all that preceded. He rejects Lysias' 'Eroticus', with which the whole discussion began, in

which a crafty seducer persuades a boy of his choice that having loveless sex with him is the most advantageous thing for the boy, and he asks for forgiveness for his own subsequent identification of Eros with erotic infatuation that is harmful both to the lover and the beloved. For all this he lays the blame squarely on Lysias, and prays Eros to stop Lysias from making such speeches and to bring about a profound change in Lysias. To make this perspective real, Socrates refers to Lysias' brother Polemarchus as a model: he prays that Eros should turn Lysias to philosophy as Lysias' brother Polemarchus has been turned to it. What this imports is clarified by the words that immediately follow: if Lysias follows his brother's example, then his lover Phaedrus can cease to be of two minds concerning their relationship and turn wholeheartedly towards love mediated by philosophic discourses. In the light of the preceding text of the *Palinode* this can only mean: Phaedrus and Lysias will enjoy their loving relationship with their minds focused on Being that truly is, that is on Forms, for only on that basis they can tame their base drives and desires.

This gives the *Palinode* with its philosophic assent to true Being a profoundly new turn and new significance. We know from Lysias' *Against Eratosthenes* that Polemarchus was a married man (xii. 19), so that when Plato says that Lysias should turn to philosophy as his brother has been turned, he is not giving him Polemarchus as an example of an ideal lover in a homosexual relationship, but rather as an example of a philosopher as such. In other words, it is philosophy that provides the key to true Love as it is presented in the *Palinode*, and the ideal homosexual relationship between the philosopher and his beloved is not the only way in which philosophy can be pursued and the Recollection of Forms attained. By presenting Polemarchus as a man turned to philosophy at the close of the *Palinode* Plato does not negate its central point: what enables a philosopher to enter into and sustain a chaste loving relationship with his beloved is the Recollection of Forms, in particular the Recollection of Beauty and of Temperance. There thus can be only one explanation for Plato's introducing Polemarchus at the end of the *Palinode* as an exemplary follower of philosophy: Polemarchus had embraced Plato's theory of Forms, or at least had allowed Plato to believe that he did so. In making this point, I must reiterate that on Aristotle's testimony Plato conceived the Theory of Forms at the beginning of his philosophic intercourse with Socrates, that is some four years before he began writing the *Phaedrus*.<sup>xvii</sup>

In speaking of Polemarchus' 'having been turned to philosophy' (*epi philosophian Polemarchos tetraptai*) Plato uses the perfect *tetraptai*, which means that Polemarchus' turning to philosophy has been accomplished. In order to see the full force of this term as Plato uses it, we must turn to *Republic* vii where he fully explains its pregnant use. Having described at length the realm of true being, the Forms, and the Form of the Good beyond it as its ultimate source, Plato delineates true education and true philosophy. It does not consist in putting knowledge into the soul of a disciple, which was not there before; his whole soul must be turned from the world of becoming into that of being (518c8-9); his sight (*to horan*), which has been turned in the wrong direction (*ouk orthôs de tetrammenôî*, 518d6), will be turned in the right direction (*metastraphêsetai*, 518d5). In the light of the *Republic* passage in which the concept of turning the sight of the soul towards the realm of true being is fully elucidated, it becomes clear that when Plato wrote the *Phaedrus*, Polemarchus in his view had recollected true being and thus achieved 'the victory won by the higher elements of his soul guiding him into the ordered rule of the philosophic life' (*Phdr.* 256a-b).

Within the framework of the *Phaedrus* Polemarchus is given to his brother Lysias as an example worth imitating, but since Plato wrote the dialogue for a broader public, he is presented as a model for the reader. Lysias' account of Polemarchus in *Against Eratosthenes* enables us to see why Plato chose him for the role of an example of 'a blessed life lived here on earth'. Concerning 'the orderly life' (*kosmioi ontes*, *Phdr.* 256b2) specified by Plato as a precondition of blissful happiness, Lysias says 'we showed ourselves men of orderly life (*kosmious d' hēmas autous parechontas*), and performed every duty laid upon us (*kai pan to prostattomenon poiountas*)', and 'we had made not a single enemy' (*echthron d' oudena kektēmenous*). Speaking of the charitable functions of the family, he says: 'we equipped a chorus for dramatic performances of all dramas (*pasas tas chorēgias chorēgēsantes*), and contributed to many special levies (*pollas d' eisphoras eisenenkontas*)... we had ransomed many Athenians from the foe (*pollous d' Athēnaiōn ek tōn polemiōn lusamenous*, xii. 20)'. Polemarchus was a great benefactor of the city; he was the eldest son and heir of Cephalus,<sup>xviii</sup> and the charitable activities of the family were ultimately his activities. Plato's praise of Polemarchus at the end of the *Palinode* is thus in tune with the end of the *Phaedrus* with its emphasis on moderation concerning the possession of wealth (*to de chrusou plēthos eiē moi hoson mēte pherein mēte agein dunaito allos ē ho sōphrōn*, 279c2-3) and on the sharing of everything with others: 'for friends share all things in common' (*koina gar ta tōn philōn*, 279c6-7).

Plato crowned his *Phaedran Palinode* with Polemarchus as an example of a man whose life has been turned to philosophy in patent disregard of Solon's cautionary dictum that one should not ascribe happiness to a man while he is alive, but only after his life has reached its end,<sup>xix</sup> for he was convinced that nothing bad can happen to a true philosopher, that is a man who lives the life of one who is truly good. This conviction he shared with Aeschylus, in whose *Agamemnon* the chorus says:

'I alone hold a view that differs from that of the others (*dicha d' allōn monophrōn eimi*). For it is an impious deed that breeds more sinful deeds that are of a kind (*to dussebes gar ergon meta men pleiona tiktei, spheterai d' eikota gennai*). The house that follows righteousness is always blessed with good fortune, its beautiful child' (*oikōn gar euthudikōn kallipais potmos aiei*, 757-762).

In Aeschylus' footsteps, Plato had the courage to point to Polemarchus as a man who practiced philosophy, and had thus secured blissful happiness for himself. Plato did so, for he viewed Polemarchus' house as the house that followed righteousness and therefore was to be always blessed with good fortune. The conviction that no wrong can be done to a man who follows the righteous path was firmly held by the historical Socrates, who says in the *Apology*: 'Neither Meletus nor Anytus can injure me in any way – they cannot do so – for I believe that a bad man is not permitted to injure a better man than himself' (*ou gar oiomai themiton einai ameinoni andri hupo cheironos blaptesthai*, 30c8-d1).

So does then this moral conviction of Socrates and Plato not then provide the strongest possible ground for rejecting my dating of the *Phaedrus* prior to the death of Polemarchus? Polemarchus ended his life drinking hemlock as Socrates did, which did not prevent Plato from presenting the latter as a model philosopher, the former as a model follower. To this I must answer that the circumstances of their death were very different. Socrates in his Defence challenged his accusers and turned his defence into a

defence not only of his own life, but of philosophy itself, and he ended his life surrounded by friends, crowned with the best and most profound philosophic discourse of his whole life. Socrates in the *Phaedo* compares himself to swans who are sacred to Apollo, prophetic birds that on the day of their approaching death ‘sing much better and rejoice more than ever before’ (*aidousi kai terpontai ekeinên tèn hêmèran diapherontôs ê en tôi emprosthen chronôi*, 85b3-4). His last day was a very blessed and happy day for him. *Phaedo* at the beginning of his narrative of Socrates’ last discourse emphasizes this point: ‘the man seemed to me happy, both in his manner and in his words, so fearlessly and nobly was he meeting his end’ (*eudaimôn gar moi hanêr ephaineto, kai tou tropou kai tôn logôn, hôs adeôs kai gennaiôs eteleuta*, 58e3-4). To the celebration of Socrates’ last days Plato devoted the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology*, the *Crito*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Theaetetus*.

Compare Plato’s celebration of Socrates’ happy end with Lysias’ description of Polemarchus’ capture and death in *Against Eratosthenes* as mentioned above. Plato not only abstained from any attempt to challenge Lysias’ description of Polemarchus’ end as a very bad and sordid affair, but in the *Republic* he presented us with Polemarchus engaged in a philosophic discussion in which he took away any philosophic credentials that a reader of the *Phaedrus* might attribute to him. In *Republic* I Polemarchus is shown to be unable to defend his proposed definition of justice, even to keep track of his own answers to Socrates. ‘I don’t know any more what I have said,’ he complains (*all’ ouketi oida egôge hoti elegon*, 334b7). His performance is simply abominable if judged according to the criterion laid down in the *Phaedrus*: a philosopher is a master of dialectic and can therefore always defend his knowledge with valid arguments (*Phdr.* 276e-277a). Since Polemarchus, as he is depicted in the *Republic*, could not possibly stand as an example of a man crowning the *Phaedran* Palinode, something must have happened that caused Plato to profoundly change his mind concerning him. But how could Polemarchus’ untimely death have caused such a change, if Plato’s challenge to the Solonian dictum sprang from a firmly held moral conviction?

The answer can be found in Lysias’ *Against Eratosthenes*, where in his attempt to portray the greed of the Thirty Lysias divulged that the wealth of his brother Polemarchus was much greater than what people had been led to believe:

‘They [the Thirty] had seven hundred shields of ours, they had all that silver and gold, with copper, jewellery, furniture and women’s apparel *beyond what they ever expected to get*; also a hundred and twenty slaves, of whom they took the ablest, delivering the rest to the Treasury’ (19). (Tr. W. R. M. Lamb)

It was against this background that Plato in the first book of the *Republic* introduced Polemarchus’ father Cephalus with his mind all preoccupied with religious matters and with his own self-righteousness, his ‘moderate’ interest in wealth, his insistence that the greatest benefit of wealth is that one can approach death in good conscience, with no debts left unpaid (328c5-331b7). All those who heard Lysias giving his speech *Against Eratosthenes*, and all those who read it, would have immediately known that Cephalus’ lack of interest in wealth and in further enrichment was a carefully cultivated dissimulation. Asked by Socrates whether he inherited property or acquired most of it himself, he answered: ‘Acquired?! ... I shall be glad if I leave to these my sons not less but a little more than I received’ (330a-b). Asked further, what was the greatest good that

he derived from his great wealth, he replied that it was the sweet consciousness that he lived his life in accordance to justice and piety (*dikaiôs kai hosiôs*, 331a4):

‘The great blessing of riches, I do not say to every man, but to a good man, is, that he has had no occasion to deceive or defraud others, either intentionally or unintentionally; and when he departs to the world below he is not in any apprehension about offerings due to the gods or debts which he owes to men.’ (331a11-b5). (Tr. B. Jowett)

Asked by Socrates to clarify the concept of justice involved in his musing about the greatest good that he derived from his wealth, Cephalus passes his argument over to Polemarchus, his heir in every respect, and retires to make the religious sacrifices. Polemarchus begins the defence of his father’s argument by defining justice as ‘giving every man his due’ (331e3-4), which he understands as ‘friends doing good to friends, but no evil’ (332a9-10) and ‘as an enemy doing evil to an enemy’ (332b7-8). Unable to defend his own and his father’s conception of justice, Polemarchus renounces his thesis and embraces Socrates’ view that it is unjust to harm anybody under any circumstances (*oudamou gar dikaion oudena hêmin ephanê on blaptein*, 335e5).

Significantly, all this discussion takes place in the presence of Lysias, who is named at the beginning as a member of the audience (328b4). Even if after Lysias’ *Against Eratosthenes* Plato could not give Polemarchus as an example to anyone of a man turned to philosophy, he nevertheless retrospectively found a way in which he could present him as an example to Lysias. For Lysias in his speech at the trial addressed Eratosthenes as follows:

‘Even to discuss this man with another I consider to be an impiety (*asebes*), if it were to benefit him (*epi men toutou ôpheliai*, xii. 24). But I consider it as a holy and pious action (*hosion kai eusebes*) to address this man himself, when it is to harm him (*epi de têi toutou blabêi*, xii. 24).’

The correspondence between the principle of harming enemies that Lysias puts forth in his speech and the original understanding of justice with which Polemarchus begins his discussion with Socrates in the *Republic* is emphasized by Socrates’ echoing Lysias’ words when he quotes Polemarchus’ definition back at him as ‘benefiting friends’ (*ep’ ôpheliai tôn philôn*) and ‘harming enemies’ (*epi blabêi tôn echthrôn*, 334b5). By presenting Polemarchus in the *Republic* as a man who under the pressure of Socrates’ questioning renounced the conception of justice adopted by Lysias, Plato gave retrospectively at least some positive meaning to the end of the Phaedran Palinode in which Socrates prays to *Eros* that Lysias may follow Polemarchus’ example.<sup>xx</sup>

Lysias’ role as a silent listener to Socrates’ upbraiding of Polemarchus in *Republic* i acquires its full political poignancy if we compare certain passages of Lysias’ *Against Eratosthenes* with Socrates’ rejection of Polemarchus’ notion of justice in *Republic* i. Addressing the jury, Lysias says:

‘Many foreigners as well as townfolk have come here to know what is to be your judgement on these men. The latter sort, your fellow-citizens, will have learnt before they leave, either that they will be punished for their offences, or that, if they succeed in their aims, they will be despots in the city (*turannoi tês poleôs esontai*).’ (xii. 35).

‘As they would have been unable to do what they did without the cooperation of others, so they would not now have ventured into court unless they expected to be saved by those same persons; who have come here not to support these men, but in the belief that there will be a general indemnity for their past actions and for whatever they may want to do in the future ... But you may well wonder, besides, whether those who intend to take part will petition you in the character of loyal citizens (*hōs kaloī kagathoi*), making out that their own virtue outweighs the villainy of these men (*tên hautôn aretên pleionos axian apophainontes tês toutôn ponêrias*) ... or whether they will rely on their skilful oratory and making out that the actions of their friends are estimable’. (xii. 85-86).

‘Then is it not monstrous ... since so many are making efforts to shield them?’ (*hopote boêthein tosoutoi paraskeuazontai*;) (xii. 88). (Tr. W. R. M. Lamb)

There can be little doubt that Lysias viewed Plato as one of the *kaloikagathoi* who, relying on their *arete*, sympathized with the moderate men among the Thirty, and aspired to political power.<sup>xxi</sup> In *Republic* I Plato returned the compliment. Compare Lysias’ passages with Socrates’ characterization of Polemarchus’ view of justice as befitting a tyrant (Periander, Perdiccas or Xerxes), a man who treacherously enriched himself by stirring up war among Greek states (Ismenias the Theban), ‘or some other rich man who had a great opinion of his own power’ (*ê tinos allou mega oiomenou dunasthai plousiou andros*, 336a5-7), in the first book of the *Republic*. Lysias’ failure to obtain the conviction of Eratosthenes undoubtedly played an important role in kindling Plato’s hope of pursuing a political career within the framework of the restored democracy, for it demonstrated the firm determination of the democrats not to allow any further political recriminations against the adherents of the aristocrats.<sup>xxii</sup>

The adage ‘friends have all things in common’ (*koina ta tôn philôn*, 279c6-7), with which the *Phaedrus* ends, acquires its full historical meaning only if we specify even further its date of publication. Plato himself comes here to our aid. For in the *Phaedrus*, after presenting his first speech on love, Socrates is about to leave, but Phaedrus implores him to stay and discuss with him both the speech of Lysias and Socrates’ own speech. Socrates praises Phaedrus’ love of discourse:

‘Phaedrus, your enthusiasm for discourse is sublime, and really moves me to admiration. Of the discourses pronounced during your lifetime no one, I fancy, has been responsible for more than you, whether by delivering them yourself or by compelling others to do so by one means or another – with one exception, Simmias of Thebes – you are well ahead of all the rest. And now it seems that once more you are the cause of my having to deliver one myself.’ (242a7-b5, tr. Hackforth)

Simmias is called a youngster in the *Phaedo* (*neaniskos*, 89a3), and since he is from Thebes, which fought against Athens in the Peloponnesian War, he could not have had discussions with Socrates before the end of the war at 404 B.C.<sup>xxiii</sup> The remark concerning Simmias in the *Phaedrus* is an obvious anachronism, for the dialogue is dramatically staged before 415 B.C., that is before Phaedrus was exiled for his involvement in profaning the Eleusinian mysteries.<sup>xxiv</sup> In the text the remark stands out as unconnected to what precedes or follows, indicating that apart from making a compliment to Simmias, Plato thus marked the date of the composition of the dialogue. The publication of the dialogue therefore can be assigned to the early stages of the aristocratic revolution of 404 B.C.

The adage ‘friends have all things in common’ thus acquires a meaning that far transcends Phaedrus’ wish that Socrates includes him in his prayer. The main import of the prayer, that one should consider as truly rich only a wise man, and that one should possess only so much gold as only a temperate man might bear is a passionate appeal to the ruling aristocrats to moderate their craving for riches (279c1-3), and Polemarchus’ self-identification with Socrates’ prayer with his words full of approval ‘for friends share all their things’ (*koina gar ta tôn philôn*, 279c6-7) equally strongly appeal to Lysias and Polemarchus to be even more liberal with their riches. Plato’s appeal fell on deaf ears, and he treated in his later writings Lysias, Polemarchus and the Thirty accordingly.

Lysias’ name reappears in two dialogues, the *Clitopho* and the *Republic*, in neither of which he is given an opportunity to speak. In the *Clitopho* he is reported to have spread rumours that Clitopho was disparaging Socrates’ pursuit of philosophy (406a1-4). The rumour he spreads is a half-truth, for we learn that Clitopho highly appreciates Socrates’ ability to interest people in philosophy and is critical only of his unwillingness or inability to say how to reach the goal to which philosophy points (406a5-410d5). A comparison of the *Clitopho* with the *Republic* would in itself explain Lysias’ presence in the latter, for in it Socrates’ philosophic positivity, his ability to show the goal to which philosophy points and the road towards it, impugned in the former, is vindicated.

Polemarchus, after his poor performance in *Republic* i. re-enters the discussion in the fifth book. His intervention is eye-catching; he grabs the garment of Adeimantus and whispers something to him, of which Socrates can hear only the words ‘Shall we let him off, or what shall we do?’ (449b6). What Polemarchus is after is then explained by Adeimantus, Plato’s brother. In the fourth book Socrates had proclaimed that as far as marriages and children are concerned, these matters will be regulated on the strict adherence to the principle that ‘friends have all things in common’ (*panta hoti malista koina ta philôn poieisthai*, 424a1-2). Polemarchus wants him to explain the principle, but he is given no opportunity to speak to Socrates directly; Adeimantus reproduces his wish. Polemarchus’ poignant exclusion from directly re-entering the dialogue – as well as not allowing Lysias a single word – is in itself significant, for Plato says in *Republic* iii that a just and decent man would not willingly introduce into his narrative an unworthy person, except only briefly when the latter performs something good (396c-d), as Polemarchus in *Republic* i. is allowed to speak briefly so that he may renounce his and his father’s concept of justice.

In the fifth book of the *Republic* the principle of sharing of property is presented as a test by which a man’s fitness for philosophy is judged; philosophers will not tear the city to pieces by differing about ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’, each man dragging his acquisitions into a separate house of his own (464c-d). But this is precisely what Polemarchus, Lysias, and their father did in the course of accumulating their wealth, and this is what the Thirty did in appropriating as many riches as they possibly could. Historically, the fates of Lysias, Polemarchus and of the Thirty were closely interwoven, and Plato’s disappointment with them all in the wake of his publication of the *Phaedrus* deeply influenced his utopian political thought, as it comes to the fore in the fifth book of the *Republic*.<sup>xxv</sup> Plato undoubtedly thinks of the Thirty, and their leader Critias in particular, when he scorns as truly *meirakiôdes* the disastrous belief of a would be guardian of the city that he could attain happiness by using his power to appropriate the

whole state to himself: ‘then he will learn (*gnôsetai*) that Hesiod was truly wise when he said that “half” is in a sense “more than the whole”’ (466b7-c3).<sup>xxvi</sup>

The Thirty were as much on Plato’s mind as Lysias and Polemarchus when in *Republic* v. he formulated the notion of true philosophers and true rulers ‘meeting in one’:

‘Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside (*ex anankês apokleisthôsîn*), cities will never have rest from their evils.’ (473c11-d5, tr. Jowett)

Only those who pass the test of sharing property in common may be allowed to touch philosophy (*haptesthai philosophias*, 474c1), whereas those who do not pass it are not allowed even to touch it (*mête haptesthai*, 474c2). Plato in *Republic* v. formulated the criteria that a man must fulfil in order to deserve the name of a philosopher and ruler in connection with Polemarchus explicitly, the Thirty implicitly, and he did so to the exclusion of both.

It may be asked, why did Plato locate his best and most ambitious work in the house of Polemarchus, if by the time he wrote the *Republic* he must have detested both him and his brother Lysias? My answer to this question is as follows: Plato reached the insight upon which he built the *Republic* as a result of his disenchantment with Athenian politics, having realized that there was no place for his political aspirations within its framework.<sup>xxvii</sup> Polemarchus’ fate was inextricably linked with the moral and political decline of the Thirty, Lysias’ fate with the restoration of democracy that killed Socrates. In Plato’s view, Polemarchus’ house symbolized everything that was wrong with the political life in Athens; it was the right place for negating it radically.

Plato’s Phaedran appreciation of Polemarchus as a man turned to philosophy and therefore blessed, which turned into a misjudgement in readers’ eyes as a consequence of Polemarchus’ death, and in the eyes of Plato as a consequence of Lysias’ revelation concerning their family wealth in *Against Eratosthenes*, continued to rankle even after Plato exorcised it in the *Republic*. In the *Laws* Plato proposed a law according to which any alien found to possess more property than that which is allowed to third class citizens has to leave the city within thirty days, and if he does not, his property is to be confiscated and he himself sentenced to death (915b-c); it is difficult to believe that when Plato conceived of this law, he refrained from thinking of the two prominent aliens Polemarchus and Lysias.<sup>xxviii</sup> In the *Laws* Plato directs another ray of light on his misjudgement of Polemarchus when he says that ‘to honour with hymns and panegyrics those who are still alive is not *safe*; a man should run his course, and make a fair ending, and then we will praise him’ (*Tous ge mên eti zôntas enkômiois te kai humnois timan ouk asphales, prin an hapanta tis ton bion diadramôn telos epistêsêtai kalon*, 802a1-3). The Phaedran Palinode is Plato’s hymn on Love, and his praise of Polemarchus with which it closes proved to be ‘unsafe’.

The notion of ‘not being *safe*’ is part and parcel of Herodotus’ rendering of Solon’s view of life, for after Croesus explained to Cyrus’ messengers why he called ‘Solon, Solon, Solon’, as the pyre on which he stood began to burn, Cyrus freed him from the

pyre, for he himself had realized ‘that nothing concerning human lives is *safe*’ (*hôs ouden eiê tôn en anthrôpoisi asphaleôs echon*, i.86).<sup>xxix</sup> Does this then mean that in his old age, reflecting on the *Phaedrus* Plato rejected Aeschylus’ and Socrates’ view that no ill can befall a truly good and righteous man, and joined the prevailing view by embracing the Solonian view of life with its unpredictable vicissitudes? Not in the least, for there is a major shift between the Solonian ‘unsafe’ and Plato’s ‘unsafe’. In Herodotus Cyrus refers to uncertainties *in human lives*, but Plato in the *Laws* says that what is ‘unsafe’ is *praising* someone’s life as happy and blessed while a man still lives. Plato in the *Laws* is not abandoning his conviction that nothing truly bad can occur to a truly good man; he is merely reflecting on the difficulty involved in recognizing a truly good man.

Concerning Polemarchus and the Thirty, in the wake of the *Phaedrus*, Plato made an important realization how difficult, if not impossible it is to form a correct opinion about a man’s character. This realization had profound theoretical consequences; he had to abandon his Phaedran conception of philosophic rhetoric that relied on a philosopher’s knowledge of all types of human souls (*psuchês genê*, 271b1-2). The Phaedran rhetorician knows what kind of soul is affected by what kind of speech, what kind of speech he must use to persuade the audience to which he speaks in the way he wants to. All this knowledge he acquires by virtue of mastering the art of dialectic, that is the art of conceptual synthesis – ‘seeing many dispersed aspects all together and comprehending them in one form’ (*eis mian idean sunorônta agein ta pollachêi diesparmena*, 265d3-4) – and analysis – ‘and, in turn, to be able to divide according to forms in conformity with natural articulation’ (*to palin kat’ eidê dunasthai diatemnein kat’ arthra hêi pephuken*, 265e1-2). In the *Gorgias*, where Plato rejects any pretensions of rhetoric to be a science, he denies the very possibility of knowing individual souls, for in living humans with their embodied souls the body both of the perceiver and of the one perceived stands in the way of any such knowledge (523c-d).

In the *Republic*, constructing his ideal state, Plato had to face anew the problem of the knowability of the souls of individual citizens, so as to give to each his or her proper place in the social structures of the state, as well as the right education, and to assign to each the task for which he or she is best suited. He discusses the matter when he tackles the problem of judges, for they must be able to obtain knowledge of the souls of malefactors in order to pass correct judgement on them, so that they can either cure them or relieve society of their existence. He says that a young man of noble character is totally unfit for this task, for he has no paradigms of vices in his soul. Since a judge cannot be recruited from people of corrupt characters, ‘he cannot be young but must be quite old’ (*ou neon alla geronta dei ton agathon dikastên einai*, 409b4-5); he must use knowledge of injustice, which he cannot acquire by experiencing it in himself; only from very long observation of injustice as an alien thing in alien souls can he perceive what an evil it is (409b6-c1). These lines, if viewed against the background of the Phaedran outline of philosophic rhetoric with its emphasis on perfectly knowing the souls of men in any given audience, corroborate the ancient dating of the *Phaedrus* as Plato’s first dialogue, and justify the appended critical remark of Diogenes’ source that there was something *meirakiôdes* about the dialogue.

In the *Laws* Plato comes back to the problem of acquiring knowledge of human souls, this time the souls of those from among whom the future guardians of the city are to be chosen. He contrives well-regulated symposia for this task,

in which a sober and wise guardian encourages the participants to drink alcohol (*nêphonta te kai sophon archonta methuontôn dei kathistanai*, 640d4-5) so that the guardian may observe their true character. Plato remarks: 'And this knowledge of the natures and habits of men's souls (*to gnônai tas phuseis te kai hexeis tôn psuchôn*, 650b7) will be of the greatest use in the art which has the management of them; and that art, if we are not mistaken, is politics' (650b6-9). In the *Phaedrus* no such artificial contrivances can be found.

The question remains: if Plato wrote the *Phaedrus* during Socrates' life-time, what was it that prompted him to do so? The dialogue ends with a discourse on the spoken and the written word in which Socrates strongly deprecates the latter as the illegitimate brother of the former, which is detrimental to the souls of those who are learning as it provides them with a mere semblance of wisdom (274e-275b). The *Phaedrus* itself is an obvious challenge to Socrates' negative view of the written word, to which Plato himself subscribed within the framework of the dialogue. What was it that occasioned this challenge? The proposed dating of the *Phaedrus* prior to the death of Polemarchus, who died in 404 B.C., allows us to find an answer, for we can view the dialogue as Plato's response to Aristophanes' biting remarks on Socrates and his disciples in the *Frogs*, staged to great acclaim in 405 B.C., that is six years before Socrates' death and just a year before the military and political collapse of the democratic Athens.

The *Frogs* is full of forebodings; if the city is to survive and prosper again, Aeschylus must be brought back from the dead; what the citizens need most is good education and intelligent decision-making. In parting with Aeschylus, Pluto exhorts him: 'Save the city by your good advice (*gnômâis agathais*), and educate the fools (*paideuson tous anoêtous*, 1503-4).' With Aeschylus on his way to save Athens from impending doom, the chorus sings: 'It is very pleasant not to sit at Socrates' feet in idle talk having thrown away art (*apobalonta mousikên*) and abandoned that which is greatest in the art of tragedy' (*ta te megista tês tragôidikês technês*, 1491-5). In the *Symposium* Plato shows us Aristophanes sitting at Socrates' feet and listening to Socrates' lecturing him on art, and in particular on the art of comedy and tragedy; the *Symposium* is situated dramatically in 416, eleven years prior to Aristophanes' staging of the *Frogs*. In fact, the taunts of the chorus were very flattering concerning Socrates, for only a man of Aeschylus' stature could relieve the chorus from sitting at Socrates' feet, but they were not so concerning Socrates' followers and disciples, depicted as men who threw away all art under his influence.

Apart from being provoked by Aristophanes' attack simply as a disciple of Socrates, Plato had a particular reason for viewing the song of the chorus as a provocation and a challenge directed specifically at himself. According to Diogenes Laertius Plato at the age of twenty wrote a tragedy and was about to compete with it, but in front of the theatre of Dionysus he encountered Socrates discussing philosophy and was so struck by it that he burnt his tragedy (iii. 5-6). Diogenes Laertius does not specify the source of this story, but since the *Frogs* was written not long after the incident described in the story - born in 429, Plato was 24 years old when it was staged - and appears to reflect on that incident, so it is quite probable that the story is true. By the time that

Aristophanes staged the *Frogs* Plato would therefore have abandoned his writing of poetry for some four years, and did so under the influence of Socrates' dismissive attitude to the art of writing. For Plato's 'writing of poems, first dithyrambs, afterwards lyric poems and tragedies' prior to his encounter with Socrates is referred by Diogenes to an excellent source, Dicaearchus' first book *On Lives* (iii. 4-5). Plato was therefore bound to be personally very sensitive to Aristophanes' attack on Socrates because of the way in which it was expressed.

How can Platonic scholars, after reading the *Frogs*, suppose that Plato remained silent face to face with such a personal attack on his friend and teacher, and on himself? The *Phaedrus* culminates in Plato's emphasizing the task and the ability of a true disciple to defend (*amunasthai, boêthêsai*, 275e5) his philosopher-teacher, for the true philosopher chooses the right soul (*labôn psuchên prosêkousan*, 276e6) and implants in it words founded on knowledge, which can defend both themselves and him who planted them (*hoi heautois tôi te phuteusanti boêthein hikanoi*, 276e7-277a1). By writing the *Phaedrus*, Plato had shown that his soul was the right soul; in him Socrates had obtained a worthy follower, a philosopher whose discourse was capable of defending itself (*dunatos men amunai heautôi*, 276a6). For him it was simply his duty as a philosopher to defend philosophic discourse against its detractors, especially such a famous and influential detractor as Aristophanes.

The *Frogs* was Aristophanes' most powerful and most patriotic comedy. Its author's endeavour to awaken, promote, and call into action forces that could save the city at the brink of disaster radiate from its lines. The ancient scholiasts inform us that 'the play was so greatly admired that it was produced a second time' (something rarely done), and they refer this information to a very reliable testimony: 'as says Dicaearchus'. No wonder the play elicited from Plato an answer worthy of such noble provocation. In the *Phaedrus* Plato on the one hand negated Aristophanes' criticism of Socrates but on the other he endeavoured to provide a positive response to the deep concerns and yearnings expressed in the comedy.

To appreciate more fully Aristophanes' attack on Socrates in the *Frogs* and the effect it had on Plato, we must consider what the notion of art (*mousikê*) meant for Socrates; for this we must turn to the dream concerning *mousikê*, which Socrates recalled on his last day. In the *Phaedo* he says that the dream visited him in different guises repeatedly in his life, always saying the same thing: 'make *mousikê* and cultivate it.' (*mousikên poiei kai ergazou*, 60e6-7.) Socrates believed that the dream was urging him to do philosophy, for he considered philosophy to be the greatest *mousikê* (*hôs philosophias men ousês megistês mousikês*, 61a3-4). Socrates' interpretation of *mousikê* as philosophy helps us to understand both Aristophanes' need to shake off Socrates' views concerning art and Plato's need to vigorously defend Socrates against Aristophanes' disparaging remarks. Challenged by the taunts of the chorus of frogs, Plato in the *Phaedrus* defends philosophy and Socrates, and thus he defends Socrates' followers, and himself in the first place. For in the *Phaedran* palinode, which is itself a piece of exquisite art, Plato's Socrates identifies a man of philosophy (*anêr philosophos*) with a man of art (*anêr mousikos*, 248d), and in the scene that follows the palinode we find Socrates engaged in philosophic discussion, thus honouring *mousikê* (259d4-5).

The chorus of the *Frogs* begins its song in praise of Aeschylus and dismissal of Socrates by proclaiming that a man is blessed (*makarios g' anêr*) if his intelligence is accurate (*echôn xunesin êkribômenên*, 1482-3). Plato ripostes in the *Phaedrus* that the blessed life (*makarion bion*, 256a8-b1) is enjoyed only by those who are devoted to philosophy and order their lives accordingly, for only they can enjoy the blissful spectacle of truth (249d-250c) and pass true happiness to others (276e-277a). And just as Aristophanes in the *Frogs* emphasizes 'accuracy of thought' (*xunesin êkribômenên*, 1483) as a precondition of one's being able to be blessed, so does Socrates in the *Phaedrus* bring forth the notion of 'accuracy' as being prerequisite; a rhetorician steeped in philosophy must 'accurately show' (*deixei akribôs*, 270e3) and 'with all accuracy describe' (*pasêi akribeiai grapsei*, 271a5) the nature of the human soul. Aristophanes criticizes Socrates for abandoning *mousikê* and that which is greatest in the art of tragedy. Plato in the *Phaedrus* does not play down or apologize for Socrates' derogatory view of poetry; he explicitly includes poetry in his criticism of the written word (278c), which even at its best is but a pale shadow of the living word of a philosopher that truly elevates the soul. The authentic living word is the domain of philosophy (277e-278e), in which Socrates and his followers are at home. The *Phaedrus* is a comprehensive answer to the Aristophanic challenge, for it outlines the principles of moral transformation achieved by moral discipline induced by true philosophy, and proposes philosophic rhetoric as the unfailing art of persuasion, which is needed if any positive political transformation of society is to be achieved and Athens saved.

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<sup>i</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, with an English translation by R.D. Hicks, 1980, The Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>ii</sup> W. G. Tennemann, *System der Platonischen Philosophie*, Leipzig, J. A. Barth, 1792, vol. i. pp. 117-18. Tennemann himself does not try to substantiate his suggestion that the theme of love, which is central to the *Phaedrus*, made the ancients perceive something youthful in the dialogue. I have found the only attempt to do so in Krische's work, in which he drew on Aristotle for support. (A. B. Krische, *Platons Phaedrus*, 1848, p.5.) But in the text to which he refers, that is *Nicomachean Ethics* 1156a31-b4, Aristotle notes that the young are amorous because they are emotional and indulge in pleasure: 'they fall quickly in and out of love, changing often within a single day'. This kind of juvenile love has nothing to do with the love discussed by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, and the ancients could hardly have been mistaken on this. (Cf. W. H. Thompson, *The Phaedrus of Plato*, 1868, p. xxiv, n. 8.)

<sup>iii</sup> Guthrie translates 'because there was something youthful about the theme' Guthrie, *op. cit.* p. 43.

<sup>iv</sup> Liddell & Scott render the term *meirakieia* felicitously as 'boyish mischief'.

<sup>v</sup> Cf. J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1954, p. lii.

<sup>vi</sup> This syntactic function of *kai gar* can be studied in any Greek author. I have noted down this type of *kai gar* wherever I came across it, in Homer, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, Isocrates, Aristotle, and Diogenes Laertius. To give an example, let me point to those *kai gar* passages that I noted in the *Apology* and

in which I find the ratio of the causal and non-causal use of *kai gar* to be fairly representative. The non-causal use: 18d7-e3, 22b8-c3, 38e5-39b1, 39c1-3; *kai gar* can be interpreted as causal in 40e2-4.

<sup>vii</sup> Hermias in his *Commentary on the Phaedrus* reproduces the ancient criticism raised against the *Phaedrus* as follows: *Ta de enklêmata nun legômen ha tines katêgorousi Platônos epi toutôi tôi sungrammati ... Phasi gar prôton men ou deontôs kat' erôtos kai huper erôtos pepoiêsthai auton ton logon, hôsper meirakion philotimoumenon eis hekateron, epeita to antigraphein tôi Lusiou logôi kai hamillasthai baskanou tinos kai philoneikou neou eoiken einai, kômôidountos ton rhêtora kai eis atechnian auton diaballontos.* (Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, ed. Couvreur, Paris 1901, p. 9.) 'Let us now present the critical remarks that some persons raise against Plato concerning this writing [i.e. the *Phaedrus*] ... In the first place they say that he did not work out appropriately the discourse against *eros* and for *eros*, like a youngling ambitiously contending on each side. Then they say that writing against the discourse of Lysias and competing with him, lampooning the rhetorician in the manner befitting the writers of comedy and accusing him of artlessness, appears like the work of a malign and contentious youngster.'

<sup>viii</sup> It may seem that Hicks' interpretation of *tropos* finds sufficient support in Plato's *tropos tês lexeôs* in *Republic* 400d, where Liddell and Scott take it to mean 'style', but in fact *tropos* means here something much more comprehensive. It comprises both what is said and how it is said; the laudable *tropos* is *eulogia* (400d11), its opposite being *kakologia* (401a6), which correspond to the good and bad character (*êthos*, 400e2) of soul respectively. Liddell and Scott refer to Isocrates' *Antidosis* 45 to support their rendering of *tropos*, and the passage is indeed instructive, but it goes against their interpretation. For Isocrates enumerates *tropoi tôn logôn* as follows: 'some men have devoted their lives to research in genealogies of the demigods; others have made studies in poets; others have chosen to compose histories of wars; while still others have occupied themselves with questions and answers, whom people call controversialists' (*antilogikous*). Incidentally, the last *tropos* applies to the *Phaedrus* as the ancient critics of Plato saw it.

<sup>ix</sup> L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, Amsterdam, North-Holland Publishing, 1962, pp. 2-3.)

<sup>x</sup> Olympiodorus, *Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L. G. Westerink, Amsterdam, North-Holland Publishing, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>xi</sup> See Hermias, p. 9: *eiôthe Platôn tôn antikeimenôn logôn exetasin poieisthai pros heuresin kai basanon tês alêtheias, houtôs kai en Politeiai kata dikaiosunês kai huper dikaiosunês, <kai> en Sophistêi peri tou ontos kai tou mê ontos.* 'Plato constantly examined contradictory arguments for the sake of finding and testing the truth; thus in the *Republic* against justice and for justice, and in the *Sophist* concerning being and not-being.'

<sup>xii</sup> Thus M. Heidegger writes concerning the *Phaedrus*: 'dieses Gespräch nach allen wesentlichen Hinsichten als das vollendeste angesprochen werden muß. Es kann daher auch nicht, wie Schleiermacher wollte, als das früheste Werk gelten; ebensowenig gehört es in die späteste Zeit, sondern in die Jahre der *akmê* des Platonischen schaffens.' (*Nietzsche*, Vol. I, ed. Neske, 1961, p. 222.)

<sup>xiii</sup> See G. Stallbaum, *Platonis Phaedrus*, 2nd ed. Gotha, Sumptibus Hennings, 1857, pp. cxiii, cxvii, cxx. Cf. e.g. Hackforth, *op. cit.* p.3, G. J. De Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato*, Amsterdam, 1969, p.8.

<sup>xiv</sup> See Cicero, *De re publica*, The Loeb Classical Library edition of Cicero's works, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1977, vol. xvi, p.9.

<sup>xv</sup> See Diog. Laert. iii. 35: *phasi de kai Sôkratên akousanta ton Lusin anagnôskontos Platônos "Hêrakleis," eipein, "hôs polla mou katapseudeth' ho neaniskos."* Hicks translates: "They say that, on hearing Plato read the *Lysis*, Socrates exclaimed, "By Heracles", what a number of lies this young man is telling about me!"

Cf. *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, edited L. G. Westerink, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam 1962, p. 9, l. 27-8: [*Platôn*] *sungrammata exetheto, ha eti zôntos Sôkratous eis cheiras autou êlthon*. '[Plato] published writings that came into the hands of Socrates while he was still alive'.

<sup>xvi</sup> Tr. W. R. M. Lamb. The speech *Against Eratosthenes* was delivered by Lysias after the restoration of democracy in 403 B.C., that is four years prior to the trial and death of Socrates. Cf. W. R. Lamb's 'Chronological summary' in *Lysias*, The Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976, p. xxiv.

<sup>xvii</sup> Concerning this point see Ch. 1.

<sup>xviii</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic* 331d8-9.

<sup>xix</sup> Aristotle says in *Ethica Eudemia* ii. 10 that 'Solon is right when he says' (*to Solônos echei kalôs*) 'that one should not ascribe happiness to a man while he is alive, but only after his life has reached its end' (*to mê zônt' eudaimonizein, all' hotan labêi to telos*, 1219b6-7).

<sup>xx</sup> There would have been many citizens in Athens even among staunch democrats, let alone Plato's readers, who on reading *Republic* I would have recollected Lysias' *Against Eratosthenes* and agreed with Plato that it would have been better for Lysias to follow Polemarchus' example as enacted in the *Republic*, that is to listen to Socrates and renounce the principle of 'harming enemies' as a model of justice, for in *Against Eratosthenes* Lysias attempted to reopen the wounds caused during the rule of the Thirty Tyrants, and thus threatened to undermine the recently restored democracy.

As Plato recalls in *The Seventh Letter*, with the exception of a few bent on revenge against their enemies (*timôrias echthrôn gignesthai tinôn tisi*), the victorious democrats who then returned from exile showed great forbearance (*pollêi ge echrêsanto hoi tote katelthontes epieikeiai*, 325b3-5). And thus there are reasons to believe that Lysias lost his cause against Eratosthenes, irreparably harming his political prospects. For he had obtained Athenian citizenship as a reward for his deserts in rearming the democrats, but instead of joining the others in their exemplary forbearance he 'at once impeached Eratosthenes, one of the Thirty, for the murder of Polemarchus. Shortly afterwards, owing to a technical irregularity in Thrasybulus' procedure, Lysias lost his citizenship.' (W. R. M.

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Lamb, 'Introduction' to his edition of Lysias, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1976, p. xiv.) All this must have made Lysias' silent presence in the *Republic*, his listening to Socrates' upbraiding of Polemarchus, particularly poignant in the eyes of Plato's contemporary readers.

<sup>xxi</sup> Lysias says 'We are told, indeed, that of the Thirty Eratosthenes has done the least harm, and it is claimed that on this ground he should escape.' He does not dispute the claim of Eratosthenes' supporters – the *kaloï kagathoi* present at the trial – that Eratosthenes 'has done the least harm' from among the Thirty, but he maintains that he has committed more offences against the Athenians than all the other Greeks (*hoti de tôn allôn Hellênôn pleista eis humas hêmarten*) and that this is why he ought not to be exculpated but destroyed (xii. 89).

<sup>xxii</sup> Cf. Plato, *Seventh Letter* 325a-b.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Cf. Thompson, *op. cit.* n. on *Phaedrus* 242b3.

<sup>xxiv</sup> See B. D. Meritt, 'Greek Inscriptions', *Hesperia* 8, 1939, p. 76.

<sup>xxv</sup> Plato says in the *Seventh Letter* that at the beginning of the aristocratic revolution, because of his youth (*hupo neotêtos*) he believed that the aristocrats would govern the city so as to bring men out of their life of injustice into a life of justice (*ôiêthên gar autous ek tinos adikou biou epi dikaion tropon agontas dioikêsein tèn polin*), but that he soon realized how badly he misjudged them, 'seeing that these men in a short time proved the former government to have been precious as gold by comparison' (*horôn dêpou tous andras en chronôi oligôi chruson apodeiknuntas tèn emprosten politeian*, 324d4-7).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Plato quotes from Hesiod's *Opera et Dies* 40.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Plato, *Seventh Letter* 324b-326b.

<sup>xxviii</sup> E. B. England in his commentary *The Laws of Plato* (Manchester, 1921) says aptly *ad loc*: 'This restriction of the property of *xenoi* and freedmen seems to have been Plato's own [as opposed to other laws that Plato in England's view derived from Athenian law]. He apparently disapproved of the generous treatment accorded to *metoikoi* by the Athenians. In this his relatives Critias and Charmides would have agreed with him.'

<sup>xxix</sup> In Herodotus i.30-33 we learn that Solon, a great Athenian philosopher, statesman, lawgiver, and poet, arrived at the court of Croesus, the powerful and wealthy King of Lydia in Asia Minor. Croesus asked him whether in his travels devoted to philosophy (*philosopheôn*) he saw a man whom he regarded as being most happy and blessed (*ei tina êdê pantôn eides olbiôtaton*). Croesus expected that Solon would answer that Croesus was the most happy and blessed man that he had seen, but Solon 'tells him the truth as it is' (*tôi eonti chrêsamenos legei*). He names Tellos, an Athenian under whose leadership the city did well, who had noble and good children, whose children in their turn had children of whom none had died as long as Tellos lived. Tellos ended his life most gloriously (*teleutê tou biou lamprotatê epegeneto*). There was a battle between the Athenians and their

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neighbours in Eleusis, Tellos won the battle and found a most noble death on the battlefield (*tropên poiêsas polemiôn apethane kallista*). The Athenians gave him a public funeral, buried him at the spot where he fell and honoured him greatly (*kai etimêsan megalôs*).

The disappointed Croesus asks who would Solon think the second most happy and blessed man. Solon names two young men from Argos, Cleobis and Biton, describes the deed that made them famous and admired by all the people of their country and ends by describing their blessed death at the height of their fame.

Solon explains that even a very rich man is in no way more happy and blessed than a man who has just enough for a day, unless he lived a good life and ended his life well (*ei mê panta kala echonta eu teleutêsai ton bion*). Croesus dismisses Solon as a worthless man. In the next 58 chapters Herodotus describes the subsequent fate of Croesus that fully corroborates Solon's view of life. Defeated by Cyrus - at i.86 - standing on a pyre on which he is to be burnt alive, Croesus realises how right Solon was when he maintained that no living man is happy and blessed (*to mêdena einai tôn zôontôn olbion*), and so he shouts three times 'Solon Solon Solon', having realized that Solon did not have him in particular in mind, but that he spoke of all men, and especially of those men who thought of themselves as being happy and blessed.