The Phaedrus and the Symposium are Platonic works naturally compared with one another by virtue of their shared themes. Of these, the most important and obvious is that of love.

In comparing the two works' treatment of love, one cannot avoid the question of the theory of Forms, its application in the two works and the observation that its application differs: In the Symposium we find a progression from one physical beauty to all physical beauty and so on to a contemplation of true knowledge and wisdom, the Form of absolute beauty. But there is no such progression in the Phaedrus where one's contemplation of the true Forms results from recollection of a glimpse of them by the soul in the past, prompted by some earthly being which bears similarity.

Reconciliation of the two accounts requires little ingenuity. In both, a movement from the sensible to the non-sensible is implied and, it might be argued, the progression in the Symposium rests on the ability to realise that one Form of beauty resembles another (cf the role of recollection in the Phaedrus) and so one moves up the scale. But I do not think such a reconciliation should, or indeed can sensibly, be sought.

Support for this view can be found in the Republic. In Book 5 (475e–476; cf Book 7 523a–525b and Annas\cite{An} p. 218f) we find the so-called Argument from Opposites — Beauty is the opposite of Deformity and therefore we have two entities, Beauty and Deformity. The same argument allows there to be Forms of Injustice, Evil and so forth, and prepares the way for a contrast between Being and Not Being with something in between — such as opinion which is neither ignorance nor knowledge.

This conception of the Forms cannot easily be reconciled with the treatments of the Symposium and Phaedrus, where Forms can be nothing other than good, bad qualities representing a failure by a greater or lesser degree to attain the true and ultimate Form. And reconciliation is even less easy.
when one turns to the other treatment of Forms in the *Republic*, in Book
10 (596a–597e):

There the theory of Forms conflicts with the Argument from Opposites,
which cannot cope with the Form of a bed, for instance, having been de­
signed to deal with abstractions. There too, we have Forms being created
by God, whereas elsewhere they are eternal and uncreated. And while in
*Rep.* 10, Plato is willing to have Socrates acknowledge Forms for artefacts,
he is most unwilling in the *Parmenides* to have Forms for hair, mud and
dirt, which, like beds, do not admit of opposites.

Since Plato never tries to show that the role of the Forms is consistent,
nor has a 'full-scale, worked out overall theory'\(^4\) applicable in all circum­
stances, seeking to reconcile one application to another cannot be a valid
means of understanding what Plato was about. Rather, it seems reasonable
to conclude that each treatment of the theory of Forms should be studied in
isolation, and that one should not allow an understanding of some different
treatment elsewhere to contaminate one's appreciation of the treatment in
question.

Before this can be accepted fully, however, clarification of what Plato
understood by truth, and his procedure when representing it, is necessary.

Plato believed in absolute truth. About this there need be no question
or proof. But he was unable to define his cerebral conception of absolute
truth precisely by means of words, and so resorted to models. Models can
be no more than approximations to the truth, as Plato accepted (*Phaedr.*
246a4–5) and are therefore inevitably inaccurate. Consequently, just as
physicists find it convenient to use a wave theory to explain the behaviour
of light in one instance, a particle theory in another, so Plato adapts his
theory of Forms to cope with one aspect of the indefinable absolute truth
as opposed to another.

Thus it is that I think Anna comes close to the mark\(^5\) in saying that if
one comes to accept that a particular thesis is true, one is not saying 'Now
I have worked it out,' so much as 'Now I see the point/can look at things in
the right way.' In trying to work things out, there is a danger of becoming
distracted by contradictions or apparent flaws and inconsistencies in the
narrative from the truth that Plato is trying to express.

Having cleared the ground generally, we can now focus attention on the
*Phaedrus* and attempt to understand his model as applied here.

The philosophical content of the *Phaedrus* is sugared by its literary qual­
ities. In considering its presentation of the theory of Forms, however, un­
derstanding is perhaps easiest if the theory is set out with as little literary
adornment as possible.

It is the desire of part of the soul to contemplate the Forms because it is
nourished in this way (248b5). Each soul has three parts, likened by Plato
to a charioteer and two horses. The horses of a god’s soul are both well-behaved (246a), in contrast to those of the human soul, where one horse is unruly (246b). Every mortal soul follows in the train of one or other of the gods (247a, 252c). When the gods rise up beyond the celestial sphere (at the time of feasting, we are told (247a)) they are followed by a train of mortal souls. While the gods contemplate the forms without difficulty, since both their horses behave, mortals are hindered to a greater or lesser extent, according to how much the unruly horse misbehaves. Thus some souls see more than others, and, in accordance with the extent of their vision, so the souls are ranked (248af), with the lover, or follower of the muses, or seeker after wisdom and beauty, at the top, the tyrant at the bottom.

At this point, it seems opportune to halt for a moment and consider Plato’s understanding of the Forms. It seems that he wanted a limited range of Forms, but it is often difficult to tell how extensive a range he was prepared to admit. In the Phaedrus, however, we can isolate those important to the construction of the argument.

The soul seeing the most goes ἐς γονήν ἀνδρός γεννησμένου φιλοσόφου ἢ φιλοκόλου ἢ μουσικοῦ τινὸς καὶ ἐρωτικοῦ (248d2). From this it may be inferred that the philosophos, the philokalos, the mousikos and the erotikos are one and the same person — see Rowe at 249a2 following Hackforth p85 n2. In consequence, since the lover of beauty and the lover of wisdom are one, it would appear that wisdom and beauty are at least of the same order, if not exact equivalents. (Note that wisdom (φρόνησις) cannot be seen (250d) and must be approached via the medium of beauty (κάλλος), or rather its earthly namesake, which, as well as leading to φρόνησις, leads πρὸς ἄρτα τὸ κάλλος (250e1). Note too that one striving for beauty is a lover (cf ἐρωτικοῦ 248d2 above) since κάλλος is ἔφοβος κατόν (250d8).

Just as souls are graded, however, according to the measure of their contemplation of the Forms, so presumably are lovers — the lower one is down the scale of souls, the more lustful a lover one is (248a–d). (Plato does not attempt a direct correlation between type of soul and degree of lust. This is not surprising, since he would have been hard put to support assertions that a gymnast, say, was more lustful than a prophet, but less so than a politician.) Presumably, also, the lower one is down the scale, the smaller the grasp one has of the truth — souls which fall short of the fullest view of the Forms feed on opinion (248b5). Again, however, direct correlation is impossible, and not tried.

One thing more remains to be noticed about love in relation to the theory of Forms. This is its educational function. Each soul searches out a soul similar to itself and tries to make that soul more like the god it follows (252ef). To do so, the loving soul (as opposed to the beloved soul) reaches out to the god it follows by way of memory (253a2). Thus a follower of Zeus
seeks out a soul like itself and tries to make it more like Zeus. Presumably, since the soul sought out would also have been a follower of Zeus, these efforts at shaping psychic dispositions would have been reciprocal. Thus both souls are increased in their likeness to the god they followed.

Since this shaping of dispositions depends on memory, just as contemplating the Forms depends on memory, Plato comes close to identifying the gods with the Forms.

Sensibly, again he does not attempt direct equation. For if he were to do so, here especially, his model would break down.

Followers of Zeus are philosophers, it would seem (250b7 — although who is meant by Ἑνεκίς is debated by commentators). If so, followers of other gods are presumably lower down the scale of occupations (248df). The implication of identifying gods and Forms is that Zeus sees more of the Forms than do the other gods. This implication in itself need not be bothersome — Zeus was, after all, the Lord of the Pantheon. But it conflicts with the notion of absolute Forms. If the gods are identified with Forms, and, while Zeus is followed by philosophical souls, lesser gods are followed by lesser souls, the inference is that there are true and absolute Forms represented by Zeus, and lesser Forms represented by lesser gods.

While conceding this difficulty, however, for I do not think that it can be explained away, what we can draw from Plato’s model is that philosophical souls differ from non-philosophical souls in that they feed on truth and that this is the basis of Love’s educational function for them. The others do not and their love is baser in consequence. Thus there is a valid distinction to be made between the first category of souls and categories two to nine collectively.

Thus far, I have dealt with the theory of Forms as treated by Plato in the Phaedrus without tackling the perennial question of what the dialogue is primarily about and what principles, whether thematic or artistic, govern its unity. Specifically, how are the speeches concerning love in the first half of the work to be related to the discussion of rhetoric in the second?

Of the speeches in general, I propose to say little more than the obvious, that they provide illustrative material for the discussion which follows. Rather, it is to a more confined aspect of the problem that I propose now to turn, concentrating in particular on the theory of Forms in relating the first part of the Phaedrus to the second. For while the dialectic nature of Socrates’ second speech has long been acknowledged, the principles of dialectic, as illustrated by his treatment of the Forms and which emerge in the survey above — the division and gradation of souls and lovers, the implied correlation of the two and the educational function this underpins — have a significance for his theory of rhetoric which has not, I think, been fully exploited.
Socrates’ initial assertion in the second half of the *Phaedrus* is polemic, that if a speaker is to be good, he must know the truth concerning the matters he is to discuss (259e4), and Phaedrus is quick to respond that the sophists would disagree, regarding argument from probability rather than truth adequate in their efforts to persuade and even deceive.

Socrates’ reaction to this is not founded so much on the moral grounds we might expect (although there is an element of this — 260c8) as intellectual (260d2f). In developing his arguments, Socrates goes along with the sophistic view, concerning himself with the Gorgianic aim that λέγειν . . . δει ποιεῖν διανοώς (*Meno* 95c), although he differs in his opinion as to how this is to be achieved and by so doing demonstrates its inadequacy. He sets out to demonstrate that the τέχνη of speaking cannot be a τέχνη at all if it takes no account of the truth, and that a knowledge of truth is necessary for successful persuasion. This is contrary to the view of his imaginary opponent (260d2f) who regards it as being no more than highly desirable. (According to his opponent, persuasion depends on the art of rhetoric, and it is by means of persuasion that truth is promulgated.) And, since knowledge of the truth presupposes a philosophical nature or soul, philosophy is a prerequisite to rhetorical success, as is revealed by Socrates’ invocatory prayer and by his definition of rhetoric as τέχνη ψυχογονίας τίς διὰ λόγων (261a), a point which he expands on and substantiates in what follows.

Consequently, a sophist, since he has not seen the truth, but feeds on opinion, cannot be a rhetorician. Whatever the difficulties of the gradation of souls, it probably is relevant that the sophist is placed lowest, excepting the tyrant, in contrast with the philosopher. Therefore Socrates’ understanding of rhetoric agrees in this, at least, with the theory of Forms as expressed in his second speech. But there is more.

The substance of Socrates’ argument is easily summarised: leading someone from one point of view to another is easiest done by passing from one point to another, closely related to it, but different nonetheless (262b). Consequently, the prospective orator must know accurately the similarity and dissimilarity of things if he is to deceive others but not be taken in himself. This necessitates an ability to analyse and to define things accurately (263b), and this presupposes a knowledge of the truth.

While developing this argument, Socrates tacitly redefines the purpose of oratory as being not to persuade but to instruct (265d5; Rowe ad loc.) — although this is perhaps inherent in his saying that rhetoric can be employed when addressing an individual (261a9). In doing so, he is perhaps aligning his arguments here, very gently and unobtrusively, with the educational aspect of the theory of Forms.

Phaedrus’ response to Socrates’ thesis is that it is not rhetoric he is describing, but dialectic. In this he is correct; but he has not seen the force of Socrates’ arguments as they have developed, that successful rhetoric can
result in no way other than from a knowledge of dialectic, and that dialectic is impossible without a knowledge of the truth. It should be noted that, for Socrates, the dialectician and the philosopher come close to being one and the same thing.\textsuperscript{15}

Phaedrus' incomprehension of this represents the fundamental difference between Socrates' view of rhetoric and the way in which it was taught in the fourth and fifth centuries, a difference which is immediately illustrated by his mention of the rhetorical textbooks of the day.

The existence of these textbooks epitomised the sophistic and usual view of rhetoric, that it was something that could be learned, that successful speaking depended on a knowledge of rhetorical commonplaces and devices which could be employed where expedient or necessary in what amounted to a variety of formulaic expression.\textsuperscript{16}

To deny the power of such rhetorical devices would be foolish, and Socrates readily admits their influence (268a1–2), but without conceding any of the points he has made so far. On the contrary, he incorporates Phaedrus' mention of rhetorical textbooks and the devices they contain to further his thesis:

Such devices do not amount to rhetoric on their own. Rather, they are τὰ πρὸ τῆς τέχνης ἀναγκαῖα μαθήματα (269b8). And one cannot learn rhetoric merely by acquiring these principles, without knowing also when they are to be applied. In short, if rhetoric is to be a τέχνη ψυχαγωγίας διὰ λόγων, the rhetorician must have an intimate knowledge of the soul in addition to his knowledge of rhetorical devices, and he must be able to classify both kinds of soul and ways of speaking, and know which is best suited to which — further statement of the dialectic qualifications needed for successful rhetoric.

Again, this ability to recognise souls can be linked with Socrates' exposition of the theory of Forms: we noticed there that each soul sought out a soul similar to itself and strove to liken it further to the god it followed. This implies a knowledge of and an ability to recognise souls. Again, however, we meet the problem of grading each soul specifically — we cannot say that the soul of a gymnast has a lesser ability to recognise souls than that of a prophet, but a greater ability than that of a politician. All that we can say is that the philosophical souls, the followers of Zeus, differ from the others in that they have the greatest knowledge of truth and are therefore better equipped to assess other souls generally than those in categories two to nine. We probably can say, however, that the sophists, as appearing lowest on the scale, bar tyrants, are intended to be recognised as having very little knowledge of souls in comparison with philosophers.

To revert, with this in mind, to the discussion of rhetoric, the section to concentrate on is 277c1f ... τὸ προσαρμόττον ἐκάστη φύσης ἐδός ἀνευρίσκον ὁὕτω τιθῇ καὶ διακοσμή τὸν λόγον, ποικίλη μὲν ποικίλους ψυχῆν···
... δύο λόγους, ἀπλοὺς δὲ ἀπλῷ — unless one does this, one will not be able to speak with τέχνη.

If we are able to equate this distinction between complex and simple souls with the distinction between philosophical souls, those of the followers of Zeus, and of the rest combined, which we have seen is necessary for the exposition of the theory of Forms to hold firm, we must look closely at the meanings of ποικίλους and ἄπλούς. Rowe (ad loc.) argues that they cannot mean merely 'complex' and 'simple' respectively, maintaining their usual sense, since all souls, according to Socrates' second speech, are complex. Rather, the 'simple' soul is the soul dominated by the charioteer and the good horse, the 'complex' soul being that in which the two horses conflict. If Rowe is correct, as I think he must be, the correlation is valid and Plato is consistent within the Phaedrus on this point.

We must go further, however. Presumably, one philosopher cannot deceive another (262a6). Consequently, the philosopher should address his soulmate 'simply', without trying to deceive or persuade, and together they would seek the truth. But the 'complex' soul can be led wherever the philosopher wants, by means of 'complex', that is varied and expedient arguments, but not necessarily true ones, since these souls feed on opinion. Thus the 'non-philosophical' souls are fair game for rhetorical devices.

To condense Socrates' arguments into their most basic form, then: If a rhetorician is to succeed in his task of νομογραφία, wherever applied (261a9f), he must have knowledge both of the truth and the nature of the soul and the ability to classify both, whether his motive in practising the art be honourable or not. That is, he must have the makings of a dialectician and of a philosopher.

In developing his arguments, as I observed earlier, Socrates suppresses moral issues, arguing, as it were, from the point of view of the sophists in his efforts to confute them. But at the end of his argument, he ceases to identify himself with the sophistical aim of instructing rhetoricians. For a man does not become a philosopher ἀνευ πολλῆς προγματείας (273e5), nor does he take the trouble to become one in order merely to become a successful rhetorician. If a philosopher speaks convincingly and persuasively, it is incidental to his real intention which is to find favour not amongst men, but with the gods (273e8f).

One can therefore say in summary that Socrates' second speech, in addition to providing illustrative material for the rhetorical discussion in the second half of the Phaedrus, also serves to instruct the reader in the philosophical conceptions which underlie his view of rhetoric. Socrates' theory of rhetoric is not a restatement of the theory of Forms, however, but, as it were, an offshoot to be understood by reference to it.

In this paper, my interest has been primarily to advance a fairly specific argument for the unity of the Phaedrus, and this I believe I have done. But
broader issues are difficult to suppress. One, the problem of inconsistency and flawed logic, has already, I hope, been dealt with as sufficiently as is possible. A second remains.

In the course of my arguments, I have mentioned, but not stressed, the educational theme embodied by Socrates’ account of the Forms and picked up in the discussion of rhetoric. This educational theme occurs once more in the *Phaedrus*, at 274b–278e. Here it is argued that dialectic is superior to the written word in the process of education — that is in a mutual seeking after the truth between partners. The ramifications of this, for the unity of the *Phaedrus* and for Platonic interpretation generally, must be given at least brief attention.

The speech by Lysias was written down. It was in reaction to that speech and as a palinode of his first speech that Socrates delivers his second. The second speech, as seen above, espouses dialectic in its treatment of the Forms. This dialectic finds sanction in the discussion of rhetoric that follows, and a relationship between the dialectician and the philosopher becomes apparent. Now we find a statement of the inferiority of the written word to spoken words written by means of dialectic argument on the living soul, and *Phaedrus* being sent to report to this effect to Lysias and other writers (278b7f). Thus a broader unity emerges.

A broader unity, however, with implications — which have attracted lengthy discussions17 — for the value Plato set by his own written work.

A brief statement of my position seems a not inappropriate conclusion. I do not believe that the *Phaedrus* passage on the value of writing can be used as clear proof of the existence of the ‘esoteric Plato’, as has been thought by some, for instance Krämer.18 Nevertheless, while it is conceivable, indeed, perhaps probable, that Plato did give oral instruction, and that he considered this of greater importance than his written work, I find it difficult to concede that he thought his written work without any value,19 and, given the paradoxical impossibility of conveying something orally in writing, am inclined to admit that Plato intended his dialogues and dialectic to be images of the same, while admitting that this could never be other than an inadequate compromise. The *Phaedrus*, I think, is an expression of this. For while its unity must necessarily help assert the validity of written dialogue, it also furthers the case against writing.

**Notes**

1. Dr M. Winterbottom saw an early version of this; Miss L.J. Coventry saw it later. I am grateful to both for their criticism, and also to the referees appointed by *Acta Classica*. In forming my ideas, I was helped by a series of graduate classes on the *Phaedrus* held at All Soul’s College, Oxford, under the auspices of Prof M.C. Nussbaum and Dr R.B. Rutherford during the Trinity term of 1987. Needless to say,
however, my views are not necessarily in agreement with those held or expressed by
the people named above.

2. I equate knowledge, beauty and wisdom here, although Plato does not do so explicitly. But see my arguments below with regard to Phaedr. 248d2.


5. Annas, *ibid.* p.239.


7. Other forms mentioned are Justice and Temperance: 247d; 250b; 254b.

8. Zeus-like male seeks suitable soulmate for fun and friendship.

9. This is implied by the account of 'counterlove' (255cd).


11. Hackforth, *ibid* p.23 n.2; de Vries (Amsterdam 1969) and C.J. Rowe (Aris & Phillips 1986) ad loc. Following Rowe, I think Socrates must be included by ἀνακεφαλαίωσις and that the word is more likely to refer to him than to Plato. But I do not think, if this is the case, that it necessarily divorces Plato entirely from what is being said.

12. Although see further p93 below.

13. The commentators define the problem of Phaedran unity in their introductions. The literature on the matter is exhaustive — I refer the reader to the list in Charles L. Griswold's *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, Yale 1986, which claims to be the most complete *Phaedrus* bibliography yet available (J.E. Beare's article appeared in 1913, not 1891). To it should be added C.J. Rowe 'The Argument and Structure of Plato's Phaedrus', PCPhS 212 (1986) 106-125 and also G.R.F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus*, Cambridge 1987.


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