# LISTENING TO THE CICADAS

## A Study of Plato's *Phaedrus*

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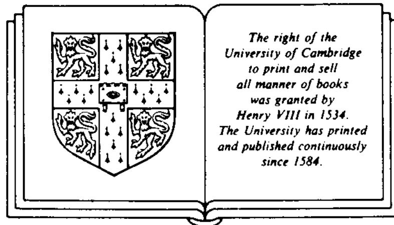


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CONTENTS


Preface *page* ix
Abbreviations xiii

**1 Orientation** 1

Two questions 1
Topic and topography 2
The impresario 4
Boreas and his interpreters 9
Professional and layman 12
The philosopher as artist 16
Walking into the background 21
What the cicadas sang 25
Apologia pro capitulo suo 34

**2 From argument to example** 37

A change of course 37
Teaching and practice 39
Lysias lambasted 45
The philosopher judges himself 59

**3 The critique of pure rhetoric** 68

Back to the orators 68
Wise words from Pericles 70
Symptoms and causes 74
Teisias at the bar 81

**4 The voice of reason?** 86

From rhetoric to erotics 86
Lysias against love 88
Socrates to compete 95

A manipulative affair 103

**5 Myth and understanding 113**

Socrates' preamble 113
Coping with contingency 119
Myth as explanation: the self-moving soul 123
Myth as explanation: gods and men 125
Myth as explanation: choice and chance 133

**6 Love among the philosophers 140**

The place of beauty 140
The love-mad philosopher: mixed pleasure 150
The love-mad philosopher: contingency and necessity 159
Lover and beloved: beauty distributed 167
Lover and beloved: the clarity of confidence 175
The struggle in the soul: sheep's clothing 185
The struggle in the soul: philosophic madness 190

**7 Writing the conversation 204**

Theme or epilogue? 204
The writing on the soul 222

Notes 232
Bibliography 286
Index 291

CHAPTER ONE

# ORIENTATION

## Two questions

Socrates' conversation with Phaedrus is rich in references to its own setting. As the dialogue opens Phaedrus is about to take the air outside the city walls when he happens upon Socrates, who readily agrees to accompany him in return for an account of his morning's entertainment by the orator Lysias. Their conversation in these opening pages is peripatetic, and much of it is directly concerned with the landscape in which they walk and talk. Where they should sit for Phaedrus to deliver Lysias' speech; what landmarks they pass on the way; and (when they get there) whose shrine they have stumbled upon – such are the questions that exercise them as they stage-manage the speechmaking of the dialogue's first part. Their theatre even has a resident chorus: the 'chorus (*khorōi*) of cicadas' (230c3) whose summery treble Socrates takes note of on arrival.[1] The cicadas' song will be heard to greatest effect later in the dialogue, at the outset of the critique of rhetoric that makes up its second part. Before launching fully into their discussion of rhetoric, Socrates and Phaedrus will break off to consider their physical environment once again, when Socrates – arresting the action, as it were, to let the chorus have its moment – warns Phaedrus against the potentially mesmerising effect of the droning cicadas overhead and tells him a parable in which they are the main characters (see 258e6–259d8).

Why has Plato written into this conversation such elaborate references to its scene? And why, having brought his players to their rustic theatre at the outset of the dialogue, is he at pains to bring its set once more to our notice as his topic apparently shifts from love to rhetoric?

In response to the first question I will argue that by con-

sidering how Socrates and Phaedrus orient themselves in their physical environment, and by recognising what this reveals of their characters, the reader is oriented to the dialogue's major concerns; for in its opening pages Socrates and Phaedrus exhibit in their behaviour or allude to much of what is then explicitly analysed in the remainder of the dialogue, both in the speeches on love and in the critique of rhetoric. In response to the second I will argue that Plato redirects our attention to the conversational ambience at the crucial juncture between the two parts of the dialogue in order to guide our reading of its curious structure. The admonitions to which Socrates is prompted by the presence of the cicadas extend not only to Phaedrus but also to the reader. What is more, this mode of exposition – Plato's device of orienting his readers by narrating how his characters orient themselves in their landscape – is no literary toy, I will urge, but, given the concerns of this dialogue, has philosophic purpose.

So much by way of introduction to this chapter; let us turn now to appreciate the scenery.

## Topic and topography

The first point to be established is how the manner of reference to the dramatic background in the *Phaedrus* differs from that of certain dialogues which have otherwise comparably vivid stage-sets. Often enough, of course, Plato furnishes his dialogues with only the sparest indications of time and place, sometimes none.[2] In a few cases, however, he embroiders the backcloth with as much care as in the *Phaedrus*. The strongest candidates for comparison are the *Protagoras* (think of the scholarly cacophony at the house of Callias), the *Phaedo* (with its descriptions of prison regime as prologue and epilogue), and the *Symposium* (which brings alive the dinner party at Agathon's). But in all three the scene is described by a narrator.[3] Through this expository device Plato formally distinguishes the voice describing the scene from the voices that conduct the conversation taking place within the scene described. The *Phaedrus*, by contrast, has no narrator; it is

written as direct speech. Our only access to the background against which Socrates and Phaedrus walk and speak is through their comments on it.

When the narrator of a Platonic dialogue describes the background to the conversation of its characters (even if one of those characters is himself),[4] we conventionally read that description as a means of establishing the fictional world of the dialogue; but when those who describe the background are taking part directly in the dialogue's action, the same conventions of reading demand that we take their description as a spontaneous reaction to their fictional environment (rather than – as with a narrator – a premeditated manipulation of that environment). Of course, the effect need not be very different in practice. If the characters' reactions to their ambience are sufficiently casual and muted, they can map the coordinates of their fictional world almost as discreetly as any narrative voice could manage. But Plato has written the opening scene of the *Phaedrus* quite otherwise, exploiting the special possibilities of direct speech to full effect. Topography becomes the topic of conversation in a highly obtrusive manner. The diversion along the Ilissus prompts a discussion of the myth associated with the nearby shrine of Boreas (229b4–230a6), and Phaedrus' choice of shady arbour in which to sit spurs Socrates, on arrival, to such exaggerated transports of appreciation that Phaedrus cannot forbear commenting on how absurd he seems (230a6–d2). Later in the dialogue the local nymphs will emerge from the background to interfere directly with the action, causing Socrates to forget his intention simply to listen to a speech and inspiring him to deliver speeches himself, and speeches of unusual intensity at that (see 238c5–d7, 241e1–5); and as we have seen, when the speeches are over the action will be further prolonged by the obtrusive presence of the cicadas, whose surveillance Socrates cites as a stimulus to continued talk (258e6–259d8; and notice that he later adds the cicadas to his list of local divinities and sources of inspiration, at 262d2–6).

In short, what is particularly striking about this dialogue is that the background will not stay where it belongs. It becomes

a prominent topic of discussion and a direct cause of the conversational action rather than, as one would expect, at most an indirect influence on its course. This in turn should prompt us as readers to scrutinise it more closely than we might otherwise have done.

## The impresario

Let us consider, then, how Socrates and Phaedrus interact with their landscape. Having secured Phaedrus' agreement to sit and read aloud the text of Lysias' speech, Socrates suggests that they cut off along the Ilissus, but leaves to Phaedrus the choice of a quiet spot in which to settle themselves (228e3–229a2). Phaedrus, his attention directed to the environment, begins to fuss over questions of fit and suitability. How 'appropriate' (*eis kairon*), he declares, that he came out barefoot for his stroll (for they are to paddle along the river-bed); and how apt a plan this is for the time of year and day (229a5–6 – high summer and around noon respectively, as we learn from 230c2 and 242a4–5). He takes pains to select a suitable place for reading. A tall plane-tree nearby marks a zone of shelter from the sun, he judges, 'just the right breeze' (*pneuma metrion*), and soft grass to accommodate whichever posture they prefer, whether sitting or lying down (229a8–b2). On the way to this bower he speculates that they are passing the very spot where according to story Boreas the wind-god snatched off the princess Oreithyia. What fuels his conjecture is, again, the recognition of fit: that the alluring purity of the water at this point makes it suitable (*epitēdeia*) for girls to play in (229b4–9). Furthermore, had Phaedrus not been struck at the outset of the dialogue by how especially 'appropriate' (*prosēkousa*) Lysias' speech on love would be for the notoriously 'erotic' Socrates to hear (227c3–5)[5] he would not now be applying to the environment this ability to recognise fit.

Phaedrus' careful matching of audience to performance and performance to environment shows him turning from the mere consumption of others' art[6] to the exercise of the art to

which he is peculiarly devoted. Having spent his morning in admiration of a master of the rhetorical art, he intends to spend his midday break as the obedient patient of a master of the medical art; for it is on the orders of doctor Acumenus that he takes his constitutional in the countryside rather than within the city limits (227a1–b1). As for the art that he himself practises – a short detour will prove instructive here.

When Socrates comes to his critique of rhetoric in the second part of the dialogue, he too evinces a combined appreciation of the rhetorical and medical arts (see 270b1–2 and cf. 268a–269c), and in the course of discussion Socrates and Phaedrus jointly stress the importance in the exercise of both disciplines of the ability to discern what is fitting or appropriate to each situation. No doctor worth the title knows only which drugs in his pharmacopoeia have which effects; he must also be able to recognise to which patients these drugs are suited, and when and in what dose their application is appropriate in each case (268a8–b8; notice that Acumenus' name reappears in conjunction with this point). Similarly, the truly competent orator would not simply know in the abstract which types of speech have what effect on which types of character, but would in addition be capable of recognising, as each situation confronts him, which items of knowledge from his technical storehouse are the appropriate ones to apply (271e2–272a8).[7]

This pattern could be readily generalised to less technical spheres of human behaviour, and is notably exhibited by Phaedrus as he recognises in his chance encounter with Socrates and in the particular features of the Ilissan landscape the opportunity to apply certain precepts – mostly the matter of common sense, of course, rather than of arcane art – about what audience and what venue is appropriate for what kind of performance.[8] His skill, to dignify it for convenience with a title, is that of intellectual 'impresario'. Phaedrus attaches himself to leading thinkers, spurs them to perform, and propagates the latest arguments and trends. Anachronistically put, he is literary journalist, publisher, and ubiquitous *salon* presence rolled together. In the course of the dialogue his

talents are not only displayed but also explicitly brought to our attention more than once. When he prevails on Socrates not to leave after the débâcle of his first speech, Socrates declares himself awed by Phaedrus' ability to promote discourses, whether delivering them himself or milking them from others – an ability in which only Simmias of Thebes has the edge over him (242a7–b4); and his promise to compel Lysias to write a rejoinder to Socrates' second speech is capped by Socrates with the comment: '*That* I believe, so long as you are who you are' (243e2). It is worth noting also that Phaedrus is the instigator and moderator of the round of speeches in the *Symposium*, as well as opening speaker in the series (*Smp*. 177a–178a; 194d).

Clearly, the craft of intellectual impresario is not a formal discipline on the order of medicine or rhetoric. Indeed, it might seem frivolous to make much of the parallel between Phaedrus' behaviour in the opening scene and the exercise of an established art. However, the comparison has a serious complexion in so far as it points to a serious danger for philosophy. Socrates' cross-reference to another of his conversational partners, Simmias (one of the interlocutors in the *Phaedo*), suggests that, even if the eliciting of intellectual talk is not a profession, it is a role to be reckoned with in Socratic dialogue. In fact, as we shall see (especially in the section 'What the cicadas sang' later in this chapter), it represents a capital danger endemic to the philosophic life: namely that the practice of philosophic argument over how to live the good life, together with the recognition that such argument is not just prefatory to but actually constitutive of the good life, should degenerate into the production of intellectual talk as an end in itself, a life of mere words. For this reason we must sharpen our awareness of Phaedrus' intellectual practice in order not to confuse it with true philosophy, a task made all the more imperative because the two are so close. After all, Socrates is only able to puncture Phaedrus' show of reluctance to retail Lysias' speech at the outset of the dialogue because he understands him like a second self ('If I don't know Phaedrus, I've forgotten who I am myself', 228a5–6);

and he touts himself as equally fanatical and sick with love of such discourse (228b6–c2; 230d5–e1).

Phaedrus loves to arrange talk. Even when he talks himself, it is as much for the excitement of provoking further talk as for the value of what he has to say. His enthusiasm for Lysias' speech is based no less on the claim that one could hardly say *more* on the topic than Lysias has said than on the claim that what he said was worth saying (234e3–4; 235b2–5); and no sooner has Socrates objected that he could add to Lysias' speech fresh points that would be 'no worse' (*mē kheirō*, 235c6) than Phaedrus has transferred his enthusiasm to the prospect of a further speech, picking up on Socrates' promise that what he says will be as much worth saying as was Lysias' speech but adding his own characteristic requirement that Socrates must not just add new points but say *more* overall than Lysias (235d6–7; 236b2).[9] Similarly, when Socrates subsequently disavows the content of both Lysias' and his own first speech and prepares to issue a rebuttal, Phaedrus expresses far less concern for the impugned worth of the speeches he had so recently espoused than an emphatic pleasure at the prospect of Socrates' delivering yet another speech in the series (243b8–9 – in contrast to the casual passivity with which he accedes to Socrates' disavowal: 242d8, 10; 243d2). It is notable too that when Socrates voices his amazement at Phaedrus' Simmias-like ability to induce intellectual talk, he mentions only the quantity and not the quality of that talk: no one has caused *more* speeches and talks to come about than Phaedrus (*pleious*, 242b1). Phaedrus, then, has a tendency to consider intellectual talk good just because it is intellectual talk, rather than because it is good talk. As a cultural impresario, he devotes himself to promoting the discourse of the mind as an end in itself, rather than evaluating it. Consequently, his recognition of the appropriate audience and site for a performance of Lysias' speech is predicated primarily on the disinterested pleasure such a performance will bring. Phaedrus himself derives pleasure from discovering a fellow enthusiast ('he was delighted to have a companion in Corybantism', 228b7); and he picks out the

plane-tree pergola for its comfort, as Socrates' exaggerated praise of its sensual delights makes apparent (230b2–c5).[10]

But Phaedrus is not after pleasure at all costs. This becomes clear when, for example, he is affronted, after completing his performance of Lysias' speech, by Socrates' admission that what he enjoyed most about it was the spectacle of Phaedrus' beaming face as he read (234d1–7). Phaedrus' efforts as an impresario and performer can be successful only in so far as they pass unnoticed; for Socrates must take pleasure in Lysias' speech for its own sake: that is, for suitable and not just any reasons. If the physical arrangements for the performance become the focus of audience attention, those arrangements have failed in their purpose; and Phaedrus understands that his arrangements will give pleasure to the extent that they are appropriate, but must not be declared appropriate merely because they give pleasure. In this he has a fair grasp of his art as impresario. But he is far less secure in his understanding that the social appropriateness of his arrangements depends in turn on the goodness of what is arranged. It is not that he has no concern for how good or bad is the content of Lysias' speech; but his best shot at assessing its worth is the claim that it has said 'everything on the subject that is worth saying' (235b2–3). For Phaedrus, there are a certain number of appropriate topics in any field that ought to come to language. It is good that they should come to language; and if Socrates finds yet further suitable things to say, so much the better. However, Phaedrus gives every sign of not appreciating that these topics are not good because they are suitable, but suitable because they are good. In this he fails as a philosopher.

Indeed, he may even be thought to fail as an impresario. After all, if Socrates pays too much attention to Phaedrus' arrangements for their theatrical event, this is surely Phaedrus' fault, at least in part (it is also due in part to Socrates' own character: a topic I shall broach presently, in the section 'Professional and layman'). I have mentioned that when the pair arrive at the arbour which Phaedrus had designated Socrates launches into an encomium of its delights

which leaves his companion nonplussed by its extravagance. But Phaedrus was not thinking carefully enough; he chose a spot that was just too perfect. If his mind were truly set on directing Socrates' attention to the merits of Lysias' speech, he should not have selected for the performance a pastoral bower of such dazzling rightness that Socrates could hardly help but be distracted towards the virtues of the performance itself, to the detriment of what was performed (as his subsequent comment on Phaedrus' beaming face duly attests).[11] We must ask, however, whether this is Phaedrus' personal failure as impresario, or if it is not rather an inadequacy in the very art of the impresario as such. For it is an art which focuses primarily on presentation, and only secondarily on the goodness of what is presented. Phaedrus had not intended to swamp Lysias' speech, but that is what he does; and this not so much because he is a bad impresario (although the result of his actions makes him seem one), as because, being a true impresario, he looks primarily to set up the perfect performance – of intellectual talk, in his case – and then leave the play of the intellect to take care of itself. He cannot conceive that the values of performance might actually prove a danger to the well-being of intellectual talk; cannot conceive, in other words, that he should aim to be a philosopher first, and an impresario only second.

In the course of the dialogue Phaedrus' inadequacy is a spring-board for exploration of how the talk of the true philosopher is indeed appropriate just to the extent that it is good. And our next step towards appreciating this difference must be to relate the philosopher's notion of the good to his notion of truth; we must be oriented and warmed to what truth means for Socrates. To this end I return to my scrutiny of Socrates' and Phaedrus' behaviour as they find their way along the Ilissus.

## Boreas and his interpreters

So far I have shown how in the opening scene of the dialogue Phaedrus reveals his ability as cultural impresario, and I have

suggested both the peculiar danger of this skill – that it passes itself off as philosophy – and its inadequacy – that its criterion is the fitting rather than the good.

Another episode in Socrates' and Phaedrus' progress towards the arbour points up a disparity, not between the fitting and the good, but between the fitting and the true. I have mentioned already how Phaedrus speculates that, since the delightfully pure waters of the Ilissus seem so apt for girlish play, he may be at the very spot from which Boreas snatched the unsuspecting Oreithyia (229b4–9). I did not mention that the speculation is false. Socrates gives the required correction: the actual site is two or three stades downstream, where it is marked by an altar to Boreas (229c1–3). A simple lesson is suggested: appropriateness is not a sufficient condition for truth. Immediately, however, the lesson is rendered less banal and more edifying by an elaboration to show that, in a certain sense of truth, truth is not what matters.

Since Socrates' confident location of the site of Oreithyia's rape by the wind-god implies that he believes it a fact, Phaedrus presses him: does he really think the myth is true (229c4–5)? In reply Socrates backs down from any commitment to topographic certainty, casually mentioning that an alternative story locates the incident on the Areopagus (229d1–2). Yet he is also cautious about adopting holus-bolus a sceptical attitude towards this and other myths. Given the fashion for demythologising the traditional tales that is current among 'intellectuals' (*hoi sophoi*, 229c6), he asserts, such scepticism on his part would not seem at all unusual or out of place.[12] He could safely strip the tale of its fantastic lumber and explain it away as having developed around a straightforward incident: say, that the daughter of Erechtheus was caught by a violent gust of wind while playing on the rocks by the river (229c6–d2). For such intellectuals, myth is a distorted record of what actually happened; its truth is historical truth. But Socrates has no time to waste on the enquiry into this sort of truth. Not that he is contemptuous of facts; after all, we have seen him quick to point out when Phaedrus has his topographic facts wrong. Rather, he is pain-

fully aware of the contingent limitations on our knowledge of historical truth, distorted as it must be by hearsay. He demonstrated these limitations when he admitted that some claim the Areopagus rather than the Ilissus as the spot where Boreas came to ground. In such circumstances, those intent on reducing the myths to their kernel of fact, not being themselves eyewitnesses to these facts, can at best issue what Socrates calls merely 'plausible' speculations (*kata to eikos*, 229e2).[13] Their ostensible search for the truth behind the tales will degenerate into speculation on the tales as hearsay. Mere antiquarians, for whom completeness is as or more important than enlightenment, they will laboriously add to their collection such exotic specimens as Centaurs, Gorgons, the Chimaera and Pegasus for no better reason than that their stories are bruited about (229d2–e4). But the truth of events is not what matters for Socrates; what does matter to him, he goes on to say, is the truth about himself (229e4–6).

It is the antiquarians' obsession with historical fact as an end in itself rather than their focus on myth as such that earns Socrates' disapproval; for though his curt insistence that he has no time to demythologise the corpus might seem a blanket dismissal of myth, it is important to see how he reinstates the value of myth in describing the truth that does matter to him. In taking not myth but himself as the object of study he hopes to discover whether he is a simple creature or 'a beast more complex and puffed up than Typhon' (230a3–5). That mythological monsters should continue to stalk Socrates' phraseology even after he has 'said goodbye' to myth (230a1–2) is not just a pleasant irony, but anticipates and exhibits a situation of epistemological significance. When Socrates, in the second of his speeches on love, offers his most sustained account of the human and especially the philosophic soul (that is, when he delivers the psychological analysis here promised), he finds himself incapable of describing it 'as it is', and compelled to resort to the simile of a chariot with winged horses and charioteer (246a3–7) – a simile which grows into a full mythical allegory as the chariot plies its way among the Olympian gods (246e4–249d3).[14] In turning eventually to the

study here recommended, Socrates seems to return willy-nilly to considering the sort of composite mythical monster here rejected as unworthy of attention.

This ironic similarity of approach is only superficial, however, and serves rather to bring out a deep difference between Socrates and the antiquarians. For them, myth is the object of analysis; hence they are concerned only with the corpus already in existence. For Socrates, myth is a tool to be used in the analysis of himself as person and philosopher; hence he readily becomes a producer and re-creator of new myths – albeit within the existing tradition – rather than simply a commentator on the old. And this difference is connected with the different kinds of truth pursued by the two parties. It is because Socrates seeks general truths about his human nature rather than the truth of particular events that he finds myth an appropriate tool of expression.[15] We may compare Aristotle's well known statement in the *Poetics* that poetry is more philosophical than history because 'poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts' (*Poetics*, 1451b).[16] And clearly, if such truths about his nature as a human are what Socrates seeks, he cannot properly conduct his search without concerning himself with what it is to live the good life. In this broad sense, the investigation of the true and of the good is one enterprise for him. But such answers as he arrives at will require delicate unravelling over the entire course of this book. At present, more needs to be said about the similarities and differences between Socrates and the intellectuals.

## Professional and layman

What more there is to say emerges when Socrates breaks off his comments on the demythologisers to remark that he and Phaedrus have reached their destination, the plane-tree's shade (230a6–7). Phaedrus, we saw, had chosen the natural gazebo for its virtues as a background for high-brow talk, picking it out from the surrounding landscape precisely for its unobtrusiveness. To be sure, the plane-tree that he pointed

out to Socrates is a distinctive marker (229a8); but what it marks off, according to Phaedrus' way of seeing it (229b1–2), is an area of green and breezy shade where two people can talk, as Socrates had requested, 'in peace' (229a2). Here, nature will not announce herself through the discomforts of bright sun, hard ground, or stifling air. In short, the place fits their purposes well precisely because they need not remark on how well it fits their purposes (and we have seen that as an 'impresario' Phaedrus would not want to have his manipulations upstage the performance). Yet remark on it Socrates proceeds to do. This we have seen to be partly Phaedrus' fault, but let us consider now how Socrates' distinctive personality is also a factor. What Phaedrus had concisely presented as simple virtues Socrates sauces with extravagant and detailed praise, noting every self-effacing trait as a distinct embellishment and a stimulus for the senses (230b2–c5). He concludes: 'So, my dear Phaedrus, you have been the stranger's perfect guide' (230c5). Phaedrus can only concur: 'Well, you, my amazing friend, strike me as the oddest of men (*atopōtatos tis*). Anyone would take you, as you say, for a stranger being shown the sights instead of a native. That's what comes of never leaving town to visit places over the border; I really believe you don't ever so much as set foot outside the walls' (230c5–d2).

This exchange is connected with Socrates' criticism of the demythologisers in an indirect but telling manner, which Plato marks by his careful positioning of the term *atopos*, 'strange', 'odd', or – paying more attention to etymology – 'out of place' (thus he does a little friendly guiding of his own for the reader). Socrates was confident that, were he to disencumber Boreas and Oreithyia of their fabulous mystique, he would not be thought at all 'odd' (*atopos*, 229c6); oddness here would rather be an attribute of the Chimaera and Gorgons whose claws the demythologiser is out to pull (called 'oddities', *atopiai*, at 229e1). But Socrates, we saw, had canvassed the idea that he might be psychologically akin to just such a mythical mongrel: Typhon (230a3–5); and now he seems to have provided evidence in favour of some such con-

clusion, for his outburst at the arbour provokes Phaedrus to declare him 'the oddest of men' (*atopōtatos tis*, 230c6). The nub of this strangeness is that Socrates is acting like a stranger even though he is a native Athenian (230c6–d2); for he refuses to allow Phaedrus to take for granted his skill in providing for the comfort and entertainment of his companion. The ultimate target of praise in his description of the arbour is less the physical features of the place than Phaedrus' achievement as tourist-guide in selecting them ('*So*, you've been the stranger's *perfect* guide', *hōste arista soi exenagetai*, 230c5). In this he confronts Phaedrus with what he would not normally notice: Phaedrus' quite ordinary ability (at least as Phaedrus himself sees it) to get successfully and appropriately oriented in his environment (a basic component of his more sophisticated skill as impresario).[17] By making a fuss over what Phaedrus designed to be a quiet background, Socrates brings into relief the basic skill that makes possible Phaedrus' design; a skill which would itself normally remain, as it were, in the background. Phaedrus was not thinking of himself as guide to strangers; but Socrates, through the very act of stressing this skill, has *made* him a guide to strangers; for he has made himself look strange. He is a 'stranger' (*atopos*) because he is alive to what it takes to be ordinary and native.

Surely, however, something similar could be said of the intellectuals who take it on themselves to historicise myth? In ritual and in the casual allusions of everyday talk these stories would be used unthinkingly, without special regard for the conditions under which they were generated as stories; so that these intellectuals, no less than Socrates, would be stirring up thought about what would normally pass unnoticed. Yet they are not, according to Socrates, considered 'odd' (*atopos*), while Socrates is (and Socrates holds that they ought indeed to be considered odd; for he calls their project 'absurd', *geloion*, 229e6). We must ask, then: why not? And the answer, I think, is this: that the intellectuals to whom Socrates refers puncture propriety as professionals, while Socrates does so as a private individual.

Burgeoning professionalism among sophists, rhetoricians,

and the like permits Socrates to label them simply (and with some irony) 'the wise' (*hoi sophoi*, 229c6) and expect to have his reference understood.[18] Moreover, Phaedrus had early brought the issue to our attention when he complained that as a 'layman' (*idiōtes*) he could not hope to retail Lysias' speech in a manner worthy of that 'most clever of present-day writers'; especially since Lysias had had time to compose the piece 'at his leisure' (*kata skholēn*) (227d6–228a3). Compare the 'leisure' (*skholēs*, 229e3) that Socrates says the demythologisers will need if they are to tackle the whole of the traditional bestiary, and contrast the 'leisure' he exhibited at the very outset of the dialogue when asked by Phaedrus if he had the time (*skholē* again, 227b8) to come and hear what Lysias had said. 'What?', he replies, 'Don't you think I'd make it, as Pindar says, something "above all business" to hear what happened with you and Lysias?' (227b9–11). Socrates is always free for a good talk; his 'leisure' is a constant improvisatory readiness to seize the moment and create free time even where there was none before. He has the flexible timetable of the layman. (Notice that while Phaedrus only happens to have come out barefoot today, Socrates is always without sandals – as Phaedrus remarks at 229a3–4. He is ready for anything.) Both Lysias and the demythologisers, by contrast, require the carefully budgeted scholastic 'leisure' (that is, time free from banausic cares) of the professional who works with his mind.[19] I am suggesting, then, that 'the wise' do not seem out of place in their rather intense speculation on everyday myths because the public actually expects them to exercise an unusually fine discernment on the web of social practice. This expectation is based in turn on their claim as professionals to have an expertise worth paying for, most especially in the art of public speaking but by extension in the analysis of all the varieties of discourse and story on which life in the society of the time depended.[20] Socrates' behaviour on arrival at the arbour, by contrast, exhibits for us how a philosopher differs from professionals in general and rhetoricians in particular. But let us look more closely at this display.