

We find one with color TV, heated swimming pool, a coffee maker for the next morning, soap, white towels, a shower all tiled and clean beds.

We lie down on the clean beds and Chris just bounces on his for a while. Bouncing on beds, I remember from childhood, is a great depression reliever.

Tomorrow, somehow, all this can be worked out, maybe. Not now. Chris goes down for a heated swim while I lie quietly on the clean bed and put everything out of mind.

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In the process of taking stuff out of the saddlebags and cramming it back ever since Bozeman, and doing the same with the backpacks, we've acquired some exceptionally beat-up gear. Spread out all over the floor in the morning light it looks a mess. The plastic bag with the oily stuff in it has broken and oil has gotten onto the roll of toilet paper. The clothes have been so squashed they look as if they have permanent, built-in wrinkles. The soft metal tube of sunburn ointment has burst, leaving white crud all over the machete scabbard and a fragrant smell everywhere. The tube of ignition grease has burst too. What a mess. In my shirt-pocket notebook I write down: "Buy tackle box for squeezed stuff" and then add "Do laundry." Then, "Buy toenail scissors, sunburn cream, ignition grease, chain guard, toilet paper." This is a lot of things to do before checkout time, so I wake up Chris and tell him to get up. We have to do the laundry.

At the Laundromat I instruct Chris on how to operate the drier, start the washing machines and take off for the other items.

I get everything but a chain guard. The parts man says they don't have one and don't expect to get one. I think about riding without the chain guard for what little time is left but that will throw crud all over and could be dangerous. Also, I don't want to do things with that presumption. That commits me to it.

Down the street I find a welder's sign and enter.

Cleanest welding place I've ever seen. Great high trees and deep grass line an open space in back, giving a kind of village-smithy appearance. All the tools are hung up with care, everything tidy, but no one is home. I'll come back later.

I wheel back and stop for Chris, check the laundry he's put in the drier and putt along through the cheerful streets looking for a restaurant. Traffic everywhere, alert, well-maintained cars, most of them. West Coast. Hazy clean sunlight of a town out of the range of the coal vendors.

At the edge of town we find a restaurant and sit and wait at a red and white tableclothed table. Chris unfolds a copy of Motorcycle News, which I bought at the cycle shop, and reads out loud who has won all the races, and an item about cross-country cycling. The waitress looks at him, a little curiously, and then at me, then at my cycle boots, then jots down our order. She goes back into the kitchen and comes out again and looks at us. I guess that she's paying so much attention to us because we're alone here. While we wait she puts some coins in the jukebox and when breakfast comes...waffles, syrup and sausages, ah...we have music with it. Chris and I talk about what he sees in Motorcycle News and we are talking over the noise of the record in the relaxed way people talk who have been many days on the road together and out of the corner of my eye I see that this is watched with a steady gaze. After a while Chris has to ask me some questions a second time because that gaze kind of beats on me, and it's hard to think of what he's saying. The record is a country western about a truck driver.—I finish the conversation with Chris.

As we leave and go out and start up the cycle, there she is in the door watching us. Lonely. She probably doesn't understand that with a look like that she isn't going to be lonely long. I kick the starter and gun the engine too hard, frustrated by something, and as we ride for the welder again, it takes a while to snap out.

The welder is in, an old man in his sixties or seventies, and he looks at me disdainfully...a complete reversal from the waitress. I

explain about the chain guard and after a while he says, "I'm not taking it off for you. You'll have to take it off."

I do this and show it to him, and he says, "It's full of grease."

I find a stick out in back under the spreading chestnut tree and scrape all the grease into a trash barrel. From a distance he says, "There's some solvent in that pan over there." I see the flat pan and get out the remaining grease with some leaves and the solvent.

When I show it to him he nods and slowly goes over and sets the regulators for his gas torch. Then he looks at the tip and selects another one. Absolutely no hurry. He picks up a steel filler rod and I wonder if he's actually going to try to weld that thin metal. Sheet metal I don't weld. I braze it with a brass rod. When I try to weld it I punch holes in it and then have to patch them up with huge blobs of filler rod. "Aren't you going to braze it?" I ask.

"No," he says. Talkative fellow.

He sparks the torch, and sets a tiny little blue flame and then, it's hard to describe, actually dances the torch and the rod in separate little rhythms over the thin sheet metal, the whole spot a uniform luminous orange-yellow, dropping the torch and filler rod down at the exact right moment and then removing them. No holes. You can hardly see the weld. "That's beautiful," I say.

"One dollar," he says, without smiling. Then I catch a funny quizzical look within his glance. Does he wonder if he's overcharged? No, something else—lonely, same as the waitress. Probably he thinks I'm bullshitting him. Who appreciates work like this anymore?

We're packed and out of the motel at just about check-out time and are soon into the coastal redwood forest, across out of Oregon into California. The traffic is so heavy we don't have time to look up. It's turning cold and grey and we stop and put on sweaters and jackets. It's still cold, somewhere in the low fifties, and we think winter thoughts.

Lonely people back in town. I saw it in the supermarket and at the Laundromat and when we checked out from the motel. These pickup campers through the redwoods, full of lonely retired people looking at trees on their way to look at the ocean. You catch it in the first fraction of a glance from a new face...that searching look...then it's gone.

We see much more of this loneliness now. It's paradoxical that where people are the most closely crowded, in the big coastal cities in the East and West, the loneliness is the greatest. Back where people were so spread out in western Oregon and Idaho and Montana and the Dakotas you'd think the loneliness would have been greater, but we didn't see it so much.

The explanation, I suppose, is that the physical distance between people has nothing to do with loneliness. It's psychic distance, and in Montana and Idaho the physical distances are big but the psychic distances between people are small, and here it's reversed.

It's the primary America we're in. It hit the night before last in Prineville Junction and it's been with us ever since. There's this primary America of freeways and jet flights and TV and movie spectaculars. And people caught up in this primary America seem to go through huge portions of their lives without much consciousness of what's immediately around them. The media have convinced them that what's right around them is unimportant. And that's why they're lonely. You see it in their faces. First the little flicker of searching, and then when they look at you, you're just a kind of an object. You don't count. You're not what they're looking for. You're not on TV.

But in the secondary America we've been through, of back roads, and Chinaman's ditches, and Appaloosa horses, and sweeping mountain ranges, and meditative thoughts, and kids with pinecones and bumblebees and open sky above us mile after mile after mile, all through that, what was real, what was around us dominated. And so there wasn't much feeling of loneliness. That's the way it must have been a hundred or two hundred years ago. Hardly any people and hardly any loneliness. I'm undoubtedly over-generalizing, but if the proper qualifications were introduced it would be true.

Technology is blamed for a lot of this loneliness, since the loneliness is certainly associated with the newer technological devices...TV, jets, freeways and so on...but I hope it's been made plain that the real evil isn't the objects of technology but the tendency of technology to isolate people into lonely attitudes of objectivity. It's the objectivity, the dualistic way of looking at things underlying technology, that produces the evil. That's why I went to so much trouble to show how technology could be used to destroy the evil. A person who knows how to fix motorcycles...with Quality...is less likely to run short of friends than one who doesn't. And they aren't going to see him as some kind of object either. Quality destroys objectivity every time.

Or if he takes whatever dull job he's stuck with...and they are all, sooner or later, dull...and, just to keep himself amused, starts to look for options of Quality, and secretly pursues these options, just for their own sake, thus making an art out of what he is doing, he's likely to discover that he becomes a much more interesting person and much less of an object to the people around him because his Quality decisions change him too. And not only the job and him, but others too because the Quality tends to fan out like waves. The Quality job he didn't think anyone was going to see is seen, and the person who sees it feels a little better because of it, and is likely to pass that feeling on to others, and in that way the Quality tends to keep on going.

My personal feeling is that this is how any further improvement of the world will be done: by individuals making Quality decisions and that's all. God, I don't want to have any more enthusiasm for big programs full of social planning for big masses of people that leave individual Quality out. These can be left alone for a while. There's a place for them but they've got to be built on a foundation of Quality within the individuals involved. We've had that individual Quality in the past, exploited it as a natural resource without knowing it, and now it's just about depleted. Everyone's just about out of gumption. And I think it's about time to return to the rebuilding of this American resource...individual worth. There are political reactionaries who've been saying something close to this for years. I'm not one of them, but to the extent they're talking about real individual worth and not just an excuse for giving more money to the rich, they're right. We do need a return to individual integrity, self-reliance and old-fashioned gumption. We really do. I hope that in this Chautauqua some directions have been pointed to.

Phædrus went a different path from the idea of individual, personal Quality decisions. I think it was a wrong one, but perhaps if I were in his circumstances I would go his way too. He felt that the solution started with a new philosophy, or he saw it as even broader than that...a new spiritual rationality...in which the ugliness and the loneliness and the spiritual blankness of dualistic technological reason would become illogical. Reason was no longer to be "value free." Reason was to be subordinate, logically, to Quality, and he was sure he would find the cause of its not being so back among the ancient Greeks, whose mythos had endowed our culture with the tendency underlying all the evil of our technology, the tendency to do what is "reasonable" even when it isn't any good. That was the root of the whole thing. Right there. I said a long time ago that he was in pursuit of the ghost of reason. This is what I meant. Reason and Quality had become separated and in conflict with each other and Quality had been forced under and reason made supreme somewhere back then.

It's begun to rain a little. Not so much we have to stop though. Just the faint beginnings of a drizzle.

The road leads out of the tall forests now and into open grey skies. Along the road are many billboards. Schenley's in warm-painted colors goes on forever, but one gets the feeling that Irma's gives tired, mediocre permanents because of the way the paint is cracking on her sign.

I have since read Aristotle again, looking for the massive evil that appears in the fragments from Phædrus, but have not found it there. What I find in Aristotle is mainly a quite dull collection of generalizations, many of which seem impossible to justify in the light of modern knowledge, whose organization appears extremely poor, and which seems primitive in the way old Greek pottery in the museums seems primitive. I'm sure if I knew a lot more about it I would see a lot more and not find it primitive at all. But without knowing all that I can't see that it lives up either to the raves of the Great Books group or the rages of Phædrus. I certainly don't see Aristotle's works as a major source of either positive or negative values. But the raves of the Great Books group are well known and published. Phædrus' rages aren't, and it becomes part of my obligation to dwell on these.

Rhetoric is an art, Aristotle began, because it can be reduced to a rational system of order.

That just left Phædrus aghast. Stopped. He'd been prepared to decode messages of great subtlety, systems of great complexity in order to understand the deeper inner meaning of Aristotle, claimed by many to be the greatest philosopher of all time. And then to get hit, right off, straight in the face, with an asshole statement like that! It really shook him.

He read on:

Rhetoric can be subdivided into particular proofs and topics on the one hand and common proofs on the other. The particular proofs can be subdivided into methods of proof and kinds of proof. The methods of proofs are the artificial proofs and the inartificial proofs. Of the artificial proofs there are ethical proofs, emotional proofs and logical proofs. Of the ethical proofs there are practical wisdom, virtue and good will. The particular methods employing artificial proofs of the ethical kind involving good will require a knowledge of the emotions, and for those who have forgotten what these are, Aristotle provides a list. They are anger, slight (subdivisible into contempt, spite and insolence), mildness, love or friendship, fear, confidence, shame, shamelessness, favor, benevolence, pity, virtuous indignation, envy, emulation and contempt.

Remember the description of the motorcycle given way back in South Dakota? The one which carefully enumerated all the motorcycle parts and functions? Recognize the similarity? Here, Phædrus was convinced, was the originator of that style of discourse. For page after page Aristotle went on like this. Like some third-rate technical instructor, naming everything, showing the relationships among the things named, cleverly inventing an occasional new relationship among the things named, and then waiting for the bell so he can get on to repeat the lecture for the next class.

Between the lines Phædrus read no doubts, no sense of awe, only the eternal smugness of the professional academician. Did Aristotle really think his students would be better rhetoricians for having learned all these endless names and relationships? And if not, did he really think he was teaching rhetoric? Phædrus thought that he really did. There was nothing in his style to indicate that Aristotle was ever one to doubt Aristotle. Phædrus saw Aristotle as tremendously satisfied with this neat little stunt of naming and classifying everything. His world began and ended with this stunt. The reason why, if he were not more than two thousand years dead, he would have gladly rubbed him out is that he saw him as a prototype for the many millions of self-satisfied and truly ignorant teachers throughout history who have smugly and callously killed the creative spirit of their students with this dumb ritual of analysis, this blind, rote, eternal naming of things. Walk into any of a hundred thousand classrooms today and hear the teachers divide and subdivide and interrelate and establish "principles" and study "methods" and what you will hear is the ghost of Aristotle speaking down through the centuries...the desiccating lifeless voice of dualistic reason.

The sessions on Aristotle were round an enormous wooden round table in a dreary room across the street from a hospital, where the late-afternoon sun from over the hospital roof hardly penetrated the window dirt and polluted city air beyond. Wan and pale and depressing. During the middle of the hour he noticed that this enormous table had a huge crack that ran right across it near the middle. It looked as though it had been there for years, but that no one had thought to repair it. Too busy, no doubt, with more important things. At the end of the hour he finally asked, "May questions about Aristotle's rhetoric be asked?"

"If you have read the material," he was told. He noticed in the eye of the Professor of Philosophy the same set he had seen the first day of registration. He took warning from it that he had better read the material very thoroughly, and did so.

The rain comes down more heavily now and we stop to snap on the face mask to the helmet. Then we go again at moderate speed. I watch for chuckholes, sand and grease slicks.

The next week Phædrus had read the material and was prepared to take apart the statement that rhetoric is an art because it can be reduced to a rational system of order. By this criterion General Motors produced pure art, whereas Picasso did not. If there were deeper meanings to Aristotle than met the eye this would be as good a place as any to make them visible.

But the question never got raised. Phædrus put up his hand to do so, caught a microsecond flash of malice from the teacher's eye, but then another student said, almost as an interruption, "I think there are some very dubious statements here."

That was all he got out.

"Sir, we are not here to learn what you think!" hissed the Professor of Philosophy. Like acid. "We are here to learn what Aristotle thinks!" Straight in the face. "When we wish to learn what you think we will assign a course in the subject!"

Silence. The student is stunned. So is everyone else.

But the Professor of Philosophy is not done. He points his finger at the student and demands, "According to Aristotle: What are the three kinds of particular rhetoric according to subject matter discussed?"

More silence. The student doesn't know. "Then you haven't read it, have you?"

And now, with a gleam that indicates he has intended this all along, the Professor of Philosophy swings his finger around and points it at Phædrus.

"You, sir, what are the three kinds of particular rhetoric according to subject matter discussed?"

But Phædrus is prepared. "Forensic, deliberative and epideictic," he answers calmly.

"What are the epideictic techniques?"

"The technique of identifying likenesses, the technique of praise, that of encomium and that of amplification."

"Yaaas—" says the Professor of Philosophy slowly. Then all is silent.

The other students looked shocked. They wonder what has happened. Only Phædrus knows, and perhaps the Professor of Philosophy. An innocent student has caught blows intended for him.

Now everyone's face becomes carefully composed in defense against more of this sort of questioning. The Professor of Philosophy has made a mistake. He's wasted his disciplinary authority on an innocent student while Phædrus, the guilty one, the hostile one, is still at large. And getting larger and larger. Since he has asked no questions there is now no way to cut him down. And now that he sees how the questions will be answered he's certainly not about to ask them.

The innocent student stares down at the table, face red, hands shrouding his eyes. His shame becomes Phædrus' anger. In all his classes he never once talked to a student like that. So that's how they teach classics at the University of Chicago. Phædrus knows the Professor of Philosophy now. But the Professor of Philosophy doesn't know Phædrus.

The grey rainy skies and sign-strewn road descend to Crescent City, California, grey and cold and wet, and Chris and I look and see the water, the ocean, in the distance beyond piers and grey buildings. I remember this was our great goal all these days. We enter a restaurant with a fancy red carpet and fancy menus with extremely high prices. We are the only people here. We eat silently, pay and are on the road again, south now, cold and misty.

In the next sessions the shamed student is no longer present. No surprise. The class is completely frozen, as is inevitable when an incident like that has taken place. Each session, just one person does all the talking, the Professor of Philosophy, and he talks and talks and talks to faces that have turned into masks of neutrality.

The Professor of Philosophy seems quite aware of what has happened. His previous little eye-flick of malice toward Phædrus has turned to a little eye-flick of fear. He seems to understand that within the present classroom situation, when the time comes, he can get exactly the same treatment he gave, and there will be no sympathy from any of the faces before him. He's thrown away his right to courtesy. There's no way to prevent retaliation now except to keep covered.

But to keep covered he must work hard, and say things exactly right. Phædrus understands this too. By remaining silent he can now learn under what are very advantageous circumstances.

Phædrus studied hard during this period, and learned extremely fast, and kept his mouth shut, but it would be wrong to give the least impression that he was any sort of good student. A good student seeks knowledge fairly and impartially. Phædrus did not. He had an axe to grind and all he sought were those things that helped him grind it, and the means of knocking down anything which prevented him from grinding it. He had no time for or interest in other people's Great Books. He was there solely to write a Great Book of his own. His attitude toward Aristotle was grossly unfair for the same reason Aristotle was unfair to his predecessors. They fouled up what he wanted to say.

Aristotle fouled up what Phædrus wanted to say by placing rhetoric in an outrageously minor category in his hierarchic order of things. It was a branch of Practical Science, a kind of shirttail relation to the other category, Theoretical Science, which Aristotle was mainly involved in. As a branch of Practical Science it was isolated from any concern with Truth or Good or Beauty, except as devices to throw into an argument. Thus Quality, in Aristotle's system, is totally divorced from rhetoric. This contempt for rhetoric, combined with Aristotle's own atrocious quality of rhetoric, so completely alienated Phædrus he couldn't read anything Aristotle said without seeking ways to despise it and attack it.

This was no problem. Aristotle has always been eminently attackable and eminently attacked throughout history, and shooting down Aristotle's patent absurdities, like shooting fish in a barrel, didn't afford much satisfaction. If he hadn't been so partial Phædrus might have learned some valuable Aristotelian techniques of bootstrapping oneself into new areas of knowledge, which was what the committee was really set up for. But if he hadn't been so partial in his search for a place to launch his work on Quality, he wouldn't have been there in the first place, so it really didn't have any chance to work out at all.

The Professor of Philosophy lectured, and Phædrus listened to both the classic form and romantic surface of what was said. The Professor of Philosophy seemed most ill at ease on the subject of "dialectic." Although Phædrus couldn't figure out why in terms of classic form, his growing romantic sensitivity told him he was on the scent of something...a quarry.

Dialectic, eh?

Aristotle's book had begun with it, in a most mystifying way. Rhetoric is a counterpart of dialectic, it had said, as if this were of the greatest importance, yet why this was so important was never explained. It was followed with a number of other disjointed statements, which gave the impression that a great deal had been left out, or the material had been assembled wrongly, or the printer had left something out, because no matter how many times he read it nothing jelled. The only thing that was clear was that Aristotle was very much concerned about the relation of rhetoric to dialectic. To Phædrus' ear, the same ill ease he had observed in the Professor of Philosophy appeared here.

The Professor of Philosophy had defined dialectic, and Phædrus had listened carefully, but it was in one ear and out the other, a characteristic that philosophic statements often have when something is left out. In a later class another student who seemed to be having the same trouble asked the Professor of Philosophy to redefine dialectic and this time the Professor had glanced at Phædrus with another quick flicker of fear and become very edgy. Phædrus began to wonder if "dialectic" had some special meaning that made it a fulcrum word...one that can shift the balance of an argument, depending on how it's placed. It was.

Dialectic generally means "of the nature of the dialogue," which is a conversation between two persons. Nowadays it means logical argumentation. It involves a technique of cross-examination, by which truth is arrived at. It's the mode of discourse of Socrates in the Dialogues of Plato. Plato believed the dialectic was the sole method by which the truth was arrived at. The only one.

That's why it's a fulcrum word. Aristotle attacked this belief, saying that the dialectic was only suitable for some purposes...to enquire into men's beliefs, to arrive at truths about eternal forms of things, known as Ideas, which were fixed and unchanging and constituted reality for Plato. Aristotle said there is also the method of science, or "physical" method, which observes physical facts and arrives at truths about substances, which undergo change. This duality of form and substance and the scientific method of arriving at facts about substances were central to Aristotle's philosophy. Thus the dethronement of dialectic from what Socrates and Plato held it to be was absolutely essential for Aristotle, and "dialectic" was and still is a fulcrum word.

Phædrus guessed that Aristotle's diminution of dialectic, from Plato's sole method of arriving at truth to a "counterpart of rhetoric," might be as infuriating to modern Platonists as it would have been to Plato. Since the Professor of Philosophy didn't know what Phædrus' "position" was, this was what was making him edgy. He might be afraid that Phædrus the Platonist was going to jump him. If so, he certainly had nothing to worry about. Phædrus wasn't insulted that dialectic had been brought down to the level of rhetoric. He was outraged that rhetoric had been brought down to the level of dialectic. Such was the confusion at the time.

The person to clear all this up, of course, was Plato, and fortunately he was the next to appear at the round table with the crack running across the middle in the dim dreary room across from the hospital building in South Chicago.

We follow the coast now, cold, wet and depressed. The rain has let up, temporarily, but the sky shows no hope. At one point I see a beach and some people walking on it in the wet sand. I'm tired and so I stop.

As he gets off, Chris says, "What are we stopping for?"

"I'm tired," I say. The wind blows cold off the ocean and where it has formed dunes, now wet and dark from the rain that must just have ended here, I find a place to lie down, and this makes me a little warmer.

I don't sleep though. A little girl appears over the top of the dune looking as though she wants me to come and play. After a while she goes away.

In time Chris comes back and wants to go. He says he has found some funny plants out on the rocks that have feelers which pull in when you touch them. I go with him and see between rises of waves on the rocks that they are sea anemones, which are not plants but animals. I tell him the tentacles can paralyze small fish. The tide must be all the way out or we wouldn't see these, I say. From the corner of my eye I see the little girl on the other side of the rocks has picked up a starfish. Her parents are carrying some starfish too.

We get on the motorcycle and move south. Sometimes the rain gets heavy and I snap on the bubble so it doesn't sting my face, but I don't like this and take it off when the rain dies away. We should reach Arcata before dark but I don't want to go too fast on this wet

road.

I think it was Coleridge who said everyone is either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. People who can't stand Aristotle's endless specificity of detail are natural lovers of Plato's soaring generalities. People who can't stand the eternal lofty idealism of Plato welcome the down-to-earth facts of Aristotle. Plato is the essential Buddha-seeker who appears again and again in each generation, moving onward and upward toward the "one." Aristotle is the eternal motorcycle mechanic who prefers the "many." I myself am pretty much Aristotelian in this sense, preferring to find the Buddha in the quality of the facts around me, but Phædrus was clearly a Platonist by temperament and when the classes shifted to Plato he was greatly relieved. His Quality and Plato's Good were so similar that if it hadn't been for some notes Phædrus left I might have thought they were identical. But he denied it, and in time I came to see how important this denial was.

The course in the Analysis of Ideas and Study of Methods was not concerned with Plato's notion of the Good, however; it was concerned with Plato's notion of rhetoric. Rhetoric, Plato spells out very clearly, is in no way connected with the Good; rhetoric is "the Bad." The people Plato hates most, next to tyrants, are rhetoricians.

The first of the Platonic Dialogues assigned is the Gorgias, and Phædrus has a sense of having arrived. This at last is where he wants to be.

All along he has had a feeling of being swept forward by forces he doesn't understand...Messianic forces. October has come and gone. Days have become phantasmal and incoherent, except in terms of Quality. Nothing matters except that he has a new and shattering and world-shaking truth about to be born, and like it or not, the world is morally obligated to accept it.

In the dialogue, Gorgias is the name of a Sophist whom Socrates cross-examines. Socrates knows very well what Gorgias does for a living and how he does it, but he starts his Twenty Questions dialectic by asking Gorgias with what rhetoric is concerned. Gorgias answers that it is concerned with discourse. In answer to another question he says that its end is to persuade. In answer to another question he says its place is in the law courts and other assemblies. And in answer to still another question he says its subject is the just and the unjust. All this, which is simply Gorgias' description of what people called Sophists have tended to do, now becomes subtly rendered by Socrates' dialectic into something else. Rhetoric has become an object, and as an object has parts. And the parts have relationships to one another and these relations are immutable. One sees quite clearly in this dialogue how the analytic knife of Socrates hacks Gorgias' art into pieces. What is even more important, one sees that the pieces are the basis of Aristotle's art of rhetoric.

Socrates had been one of Phædrus' childhood heroes and it shocked and angered him to see this dialogue taking place. He filled the margins of the text with answers of his own. These must have frustrated him greatly, because there was no way of knowing how the dialogue would have gone if these answers had been made. At one place Socrates asks to what class of things do the words which Rhetoric uses relate. Gorgias answers, "The Greatest and the Best." Phædrus, no doubt recognizing Quality in this answer, has written "True!" in the margin. But Socrates responds that this answer is ambiguous. He is still in the dark. "Liar!" writes Phædrus in the margin, and he cross-references a page in another dialogue where Socrates makes it clear he could not have been "in the dark."

Socrates is not using dialectic to understand rhetoric, he is using it to destroy it, or at least to bring it into disrepute, and so his questions are not real questions at all...they are just word-traps which Gorgias and his fellow rhetoricians fall into. Phædrus is quite incensed by all this and wishes he were there.

In class, the Professor of Philosophy, noting Phædrus' apparent good behavior and diligence, has decided he may not be such a bad student after all. This is a second mistake. He has decided to play a little game with Phædrus by asking him what he thinks of cookery. Socrates has demonstrated to Gorgias that both rhetoric and cooking are branches of pandering...pimping...because they appeal to the emotions rather than true knowledge.

In response to the Professor's question, Phædrus gives Socrates' answer that cookery is a branch of pandering.

There's a titter from one of the women in the class which displeases Phædrus because he knows the Professor is trying for a dialectical hold on him similar to the kind Socrates gets on his opponents, and his answer is not intended to be funny but simply to throw off the dialectical hold the Professor is trying to get. Phædrus is quite ready to recite in detail the exact arguments Socrates uses to establish this view.

But that isn't what the Professor wants. He wants to have a dialectical discussion in class in which he, Phædrus, is the rhetorician and is thrown by the force of dialectic. The Professor frowns and tries again. "No. I mean, do you really think that a well-cooked meal served in the best of restaurants is really something that we should turn down?"

Phædrus asks, "You mean my personal opinion?" For months now, since the innocent student disappeared, there have been no personal opinions ventured in this class.

"Yaaas," the Professor says.

Phædrus is silent and tries to work out an answer. Everyone is waiting. His thoughts move up to lightning speed, winnowing through the dialectic, playing one argumentative chess opening after another, seeing that each one loses, and moving to the next one, faster and faster...but all the class witnesses is silence. Finally, in embarrassment, the Professor drops the question and begins the lecture.

But Phædrus doesn't hear the lecture. His mind races on and on, through the permutations of the dialectic, on and on, hitting things, finding new branches and sub-branches, exploding with anger at each new discovery of the viciousness and meanness and lowness of this "art" called dialectic. The Professor, looking at his expression, becomes quite alarmed, and continues the lecture in a kind of panic. Phædrus' mind races on and on and then on further, seeing now at last a kind of evil thing, an evil deeply entrenched in himself, which pretends to try to understand love and beauty and truth and wisdom but whose real purpose is never to understand them, whose real purpose is always to usurp them and enthrone itself. Dialectic...the usurper. That is what he sees. The parvenu, muscling in on all that is Good and seeking to contain it and control it. Evil. The Professor calls the lecture to an early end and leaves the room hurriedly.

After the students have filed out silently Phædrus sits alone at the huge round table until the sun through the sooty air beyond the window disappears and the room becomes grey and then dark.

The next day he is at the library waiting for it to open and when it does he begins to read furiously, back behind Plato for the first time, into what little is known of those rhetoricians he so despised. And what he discovers begins to confirm what he has already intuited from his thoughts the evening before.

Plato's condemnation of the Sophists is one which many scholars have already taken with great misgivings. The Chairman of the committee himself has suggested that critics who are not certain what Plato meant should be equally uncertain of what Socrates' antagonists in the dialogues meant. When it is known that Plato put his own words in Socrates' mouth (Aristotle says this) there should be no reason to doubt that he could have put his own words into other mouths too.

Fragments by other ancients seemed to lead to other evaluations of the Sophists. Many of the older Sophists were selected as "ambassadors" of their cities, certainly no office of disrespect. The name Sophist was even applied without disparagement to Socrates and Plato themselves. It has even been suggested by some later historians that the reason Plato hated the Sophists so was that they could not compare with his master, Socrates, who was in actuality the greatest Sophist of them all. This last explanation is interesting, Phædrus thinks, but unsatisfactory. You don't abhor a school of which your master is a member. What was Plato's real purpose in this? Phædrus reads further and further into pre-Socratic Greek thought to find out, and eventually comes to the view that Plato's hatred of the rhetoricians was part of a much larger struggle in which the reality of the Good, represented by the Sophists, and the reality of the True, represented by the dialecticians, were engaged in a huge struggle for the future mind of man. Truth won, the Good lost, and that is why today we have so little difficulty accepting the reality of truth and so much difficulty accepting the reality of Quality, even though there is no more agreement in one area than in the other.

To understand how Phædrus arrives at this requires some explanation:

One must first get over the idea that the time span between the last caveman and the first Greek philosophers was short. The absence of any history for this period sometimes gives this illusion. But before the Greek philosophers arrived on the scene, for a period of at least five times all our recorded history since the Greek philosophers, there existed civilizations in an advanced state of development. They had villages and cities, vehicles, houses, marketplaces, bounded fields, agricultural implements and domestic animals, and led a life quite as rich and varied as that in most rural areas of the world today. And like people in those areas today they saw no reason to write it all down, or if they did, they wrote it on materials that have never been found. Thus we know nothing about them. The "Dark Ages" were merely the resumption of a natural way of life that had been momentarily interrupted by the Greeks.

Early Greek philosophy represented the first conscious search for what was imperishable in the affairs of men. Up to then what was imperishable was within the domain of the Gods, the myths. But now, as a result of the growing impartiality of the Greeks to the world around them, there was an increasing power of abstraction which permitted them to regard the old Greek mythos not as revealed truth but as imaginative creations of art. This consciousness, which had never existed anywhere before in the world, spelled a whole new level of transcendence for the Greek civilization.

But the mythos goes on, and that which destroys the old mythos becomes the new mythos, and the new mythos under the first Ionian philosophers became transmuted into philosophy, which enshrined permanence in a new way. Permanence was no longer the exclusive domain of the Immortal Gods. It was also to be found within Immortal Principles, of which our current law of gravity has become one.

The Immortal Principle was first called water by Thales. Anaximenes called it air. The Pythagoreans called it number and were thus the first to see the Immortal Principle as something nonmaterial. Heraclitus called the Immortal Principle fire and introduced change as part of the Principle. He said the world exists as a conflict and tension of opposites. He said there is a One and there is a Many and the One is the universal law which is immanent in all things. Anaxagoras was the first to identify the One as nous, meaning "mind."



Parmenides made it clear for the first time that the Immortal Principle, the One, Truth, God, is separate from appearance and from opinion, and the importance of this separation and its effect upon subsequent history cannot be overstated. It's here that the classic mind, for the first time, took leave of its romantic origins and said, "The Good and the True are not necessarily the same," and goes its separate way. Anaxagoras and Parmenides had a listener named Socrates who carried their ideas into full fruition.

What is essential to understand at this point is that until now there was no such thing as mind and matter, subject and object, form and substance. Those divisions are just dialectical inventions that came later. The modern mind sometimes tends to balk at the thought of these dichotomies being inventions and says, "Well, the divisions were there for the Greeks to discover," and you have to say, "Where were they? Point to them!" And the modern mind gets a little confused and wonders what this is all about anyway, and still believes the divisions were there.

But they weren't, as Phædrus said. They are just ghosts, immortal gods of the modern mythos which appear to us to be real because we are in that mythos. But in reality they are just as much an artistic creation as the anthropomorphic Gods they replaced.

The pre-Socratic philosophers mentioned so far all sought to establish a universal Immortal Principle in the external world they found around them. Their common effort united them into a group that may be called Cosmologists. They all agreed that such a principle existed but their disagreements as to what it was seemed irresolvable. The followers of Heraclitus insisted the Immortal Principle was change and motion. But Parmenides' disciple, Zeno, proved through a series of paradoxes that any perception of motion and change is illusory. Reality had to be motionless.

The resolution of the arguments of the Cosmologists came from a new direction entirely, from a group Phædrus seemed to feel were early humanists. They were teachers, but what they sought to teach was not principles, but beliefs of men. Their object was not any single absolute truth, but the improvement of men. All principles, all truths, are relative, they said. "Man is the measure of all things." These were the famous teachers of "wisdom," the Sophists of ancient Greece.

To Phædrus, this backlight from the conflict between the Sophists and the Cosmologists adds an entirely new dimension to the Dialogues of Plato. Socrates is not just expounding noble ideas in a vacuum. He is in the middle of a war between those who think truth is absolute and those who think truth is relative. He is fighting that war with everything he has. The Sophists are the enemy.

Now Plato's hatred of the Sophists makes sense. He and Socrates are defending the Immortal Principle of the Cosmologists against what they consider to be the decadence of the Sophists. Truth. Knowledge. That which is independent of what anyone thinks about it. The ideal that Socrates died for. The ideal that Greece alone possesses for the first time in the history of the world. It is still a very fragile thing. It can disappear completely. Plato abhors and damns the Sophists without restraint, not because they are low and immoral people...there are obviously much lower and more immoral people in Greece he completely ignores. He damns them because they threaten mankind's first beginning grasp of the idea of truth. That's what it is all about.

The results of Socrates' martyrdom and Plato's unexcelled prose that followed are nothing less than the whole world of Western man as we know it. If the idea of truth had been allowed to perish undiscovered by the Renaissance it's unlikely that we would be much beyond the level of prehistoric man today. The ideas of science and technology and other systematically organized efforts of man are dead-centered on it. It is the nucleus of it all.

And yet, Phædrus understands, what he is saying about Quality is somehow opposed to all this. It seems to agree much more closely with the Sophists.

"Man is the measure of all things." Yes, that's what he is saying about Quality. Man is not the source of all things, as the subjective idealists would say. Nor is he the passive observer of all things, as the objective idealists and materialists would say. The Quality which creates the world emerges as a relationship between man and his experience. He is a participant in the creation of all things. The measure of all things...it fits. And they taught rhetoric...that fits.

The one thing that doesn't fit what he says and what Plato said about the Sophists is their profession of teaching virtue. All accounts indicate this was absolutely central to their teaching, but how are you going to teach virtue if you teach the relativity of all ethical ideas? Virtue, if it implies anything at all, implies an ethical absolute. A person whose idea of what is proper varies from day to day can be admired for his broadmindedness, but not for his virtue. Not, at least, as Phædrus understands the word. And how could they get virtue out of rhetoric? This is never explained anywhere. Something is missing.

His search for it takes him through a number of histories of ancient Greece, which as usual he reads detective style, looking only for facts that may help him and discarding all those that don't fit. And he is reading H. D. F. Kitto's *The Greeks*, a blue and white paperback which he has bought for fifty cents, and he has reached a passage that describes "the very soul of the Homeric hero," the legendary figure of predecadent, pre-Socratic Greece. The flash of illumination that follows these pages is so intense the heroes are never erased and I can see them with little effort of recall.

The Iliad is the story of the siege of Troy, which will fall in the dust, and of its defenders who will be killed in battle. The wife of Hector, the leader, says to him: "Your strength will be your destruction; and you have no pity either for your infant son or for your unhappy wife who will soon be your widow. For soon the Achaeans will set upon you and kill you; and if I lose you it would be better for me to die."

Her husband replies:

"Well do I know this, and I am sure of it: that day is coming when the holy city of Troy will perish, and Priam and the people of wealthy Priam. But my grief is not so much for the Trojans, nor for Hecuba herself, nor for Priam the King, nor for my many noble brothers, who will be slain by the foe and will lie in the dust, as for you, when one of the bronze-clad Achaeans will carry you away in tears and end your days of freedom. Then you may live in Argos, and work at the loom in another woman's house, or perhaps carry water for a woman of Messene or Hyperia, sore against your will: but hard compulsion will lie upon you. And then a man will say as he sees you weeping, 'This was the wife of Hector, who was the noblest in battle of the horse-taming Trojans, when they were fighting around Ilion.' This is what they will say: and it will be fresh grief for you, to fight against slavery bereft of a husband like that. But may I be dead, may the earth be heaped over my grave before I hear your cries, and of the violence done to you."

So spake shining Hector and held out his arms to his son. But the child screamed and shrank back into the bosom of the well-girdled nurse, for he took fright at the sight of his dear father...at the bronze and the crest of the horsehair which he saw swaying terribly from the top of the helmet. His father laughed aloud, and his lady mother too. At once shining Hector took the helmet off his head and laid it on the ground, and when he had kissed his dear son and dandled him in his arms, he prayed to Zeus and to the other Gods: Zeus and ye other Gods, grant that this my son may be, as I am, most glorious among the Trojans and a man of might, and greatly rule in Ilion. And may they say, as he returns from war, 'He is far better than his father.'

"What moves the Greek warrior to deeds of heroism," Kitto comments, "is not a sense of duty as we understand it...duty towards others: it is rather duty towards himself. He strives after that which we translate 'virtue' but is in Greek areté, 'excellence'—we shall have much to say about areté. It runs through Greek life."

There, Phædrus thinks, is a definition of Quality that had existed a thousand years before the dialecticians ever thought to put it to word-traps. Anyone who cannot understand this meaning without logical definiens and definendum and differentia is either lying or so out of touch with the common lot of humanity as to be unworthy of receiving any reply whatsoever. Phædrus is fascinated too by the description of the motive of "duty toward self" which is an almost exact translation of the Sanskrit word dharma, sometimes described as the "one" of the Hindus. Can the dharma of the Hindus and the "virtue" of the ancient Greeks be identical?

Then Phædrus feels a tugging to read the passage again, and he does so and then—what's this?! -- "That which we translate 'virtue' but is in Greek 'excellence.'"

Lightning hits!

Quality! Virtue! Dharma! That is what the Sophists were teaching! Not ethical relativism. Not pristine "virtue." But areté. Excellence. Dharma! Before the Church of Reason. Before substance. Before form. Before mind and matter. Before dialectic itself. Quality had been absolute. Those first teachers of the Western world were teaching Quality, and the medium they had chosen was that of rhetoric. He has been doing it right all along.

The rain has lifted enough so that we can see the horizon now, a sharp line demarking the light grey of the sky and the darker grey of the water.

Kitto had more to say about this areté of the ancient Greeks. "When we meet areté in Plato," he said, "we translate it 'virtue' and consequently miss all the flavour of it. 'Virtue,' at least in modern English, is almost entirely a moral word; areté, on the other hand, is used indifferently in all the categories, and simply means excellence."

Thus the hero of the Odyssey is a great fighter, a wily schemer, a ready speaker, a man of stout heart and broad wisdom who knows that he must endure without too much complaining what the gods send; and he can both build and sail a boat, drive a furrow as straight as anyone, beat a young braggart at throwing the discus, challenge the Pheacian youth at boxing, wrestling or running; flay, skin, cut up and cook an ox, and be moved to tears by a song. He is in fact an excellent all-rounder; he has surpassing areté.

Areté implies a respect for the wholeness or oneness of life, and a consequent dislike of specialization. It implies a contempt for efficiency...or rather a much higher idea of efficiency, an efficiency which exists not in one department of life but in life itself.

Phædrus remembered a line from Thoreau: "You never gain something but that you lose something." And now he began to see for the first time the unbelievable magnitude of what man, when he gained power to understand and rule the world in terms of dialectic truths, had lost. He had built empires of scientific capability to manipulate the phenomena of nature into enormous manifestations of his own dreams of power and wealth...but for this he had exchanged an empire of understanding of equal magnitude: an understanding of what it is to be a part of the world, and not an enemy of it.

One can acquire some peace of mind from just watching that horizon. It's a geometer's line—completely flat, steady and known. Perhaps it's the original line that gave rise to Euclid's understanding of liness; a reference line from which was derived the original calculations of the first astronomers that charted the stars.

Phædrus knew, with the same mathematical assurance Poincaré had felt when he resolved the Fuchsian equations, that this Greek areté was the missing piece that completed the pattern, but he read on now for completion.

The halo around the heads of Plato and Socrates is now gone. He sees that they consistently are doing exactly that which they accuse the Sophists of doing...using emotionally persuasive language for the ulterior purpose of making the weaker argument, the case for dialectic, appear the stronger. We always condemn most in others, he thought, that which we most fear in ourselves.

But why? Phædrus wondered. Why destroy areté? And no sooner had he asked the question than the answer came to him. Plato hadn't tried to destroy areté. He had encapsulated it; made a permanent, fixed Idea out of it; had converted it to a rigid, immobile Immortal Truth. He made areté the Good, the highest form, the highest Idea of all. It was subordinate only to Truth itself, in a synthesis of all that had gone before.

That was why the Quality that Phædrus had arrived at in the classroom had seemed so close to Plato's Good. Plato's Good was taken from the rhetoricians. Phædrus searched, but could find no previous cosmologists who had talked about the Good. That was from the Sophists. The difference was that Plato's Good was a fixed and eternal and unmoving Idea, whereas for the rhetoricians it was not an Idea at all. The Good was not a form of reality. It was reality itself, ever changing, ultimately unknowable in any kind of fixed, rigid way.

Why had Plato done this? Phædrus saw Plato's philosophy as a result of two syntheses.

The first synthesis tried to resolve differences between the Heraclitans and the followers of Parmenides. Both Cosmological schools upheld Immortal Truth. In order to win the battle for Truth in which areté is subordinate, against his enemies who would teach areté in which truth is subordinate, Plato must first resolve the internal conflict among the Truth-believers. To do this he says that Immortal Truth is not just change, as the followers of Heraclitus said. It is not just changeless being, as the followers of Parmenides said. Both these Immortal Truths coexist as Ideas, which are changeless, and Appearance, which changes. This is why Plato finds it necessary to separate, for example, "horseness" from "horse" and say that horseness is real and fixed and true and unmoving, while the horse is a mere, unimportant, transitory phenomenon. Horseness is pure Idea. The horse that one sees is a collection of changing Appearances, a horse that can flux and move around all it wants to and even die on the spot without disturbing horseness, which is the Immortal Principle and can go on forever in the path of the Gods of old.

Plato's second synthesis is the incorporation of the Sophists' areté into this dichotomy of Ideas and Appearance. He gives it the position of highest honor, subordinate only to Truth itself and the method by which Truth is arrived at, the dialectic. But in his attempt to unite the Good and the True by making the Good the highest Idea of all, Plato is nevertheless usurping areté's place with dialectically determined truth. Once the Good has been contained as a dialectical idea it is no trouble for another philosopher to come along and show by dialectical methods that areté, the Good, can be more advantageously demoted to a lower position within a "true" order of things, more compatible with the inner workings of dialectic. Such a philosopher was not long in coming. His name was

Aristotle.

Aristotle felt that the mortal horse of Appearance which ate grass and took people places and gave birth to little horses deserved far more attention than Plato was giving it. He said that the horse is not mere Appearance. The Appearances cling to something which is independent of them and which, like Ideas, is unchanging. The "something" that Appearances cling to he named "substance." And at that moment, and not until that moment, our modern scientific understanding of reality was born.

Under Aristotle the "Reader," whose knowledge of Trojan areté seems conspicuously absent, forms and substances dominate all. The Good is a relatively minor branch of knowledge called ethics; reason, logic, knowledge are his primary concerns. Areté is dead and science, logic and the University as we know it today have been given their founding charter: to find and invent an endless proliferation of forms about the substantive elements of the world and call these forms knowledge, and transmit these forms to future generations. As "the system."

And rhetoric. Poor rhetoric, once "learning" itself, now becomes reduced to the teaching of mannerisms and forms, Aristotelian forms, for writing, as if these mattered. Five spelling errors, Phædrus remembered, or one error of sentence completeness, or three misplaced modifiers, or—it went on and on. Any of these was sufficient to inform a student that he did not know rhetoric. After all, that's what rhetoric is, isn't it? Of course there's "empty rhetoric," that is, rhetoric that has emotional appeal without proper subservience to dialectical truth, but we don't want any of that, do we? That would make us like those liars and cheats and defilers of ancient Greece, the Sophists...remember them? We'll learn the Truth in our other academic courses, and then learn a little rhetoric so that we can write it nicely and impress our bosses who will advance us to higher positions.

Forms and mannerisms...hated by the best, loved by the worst. Year after year, decade after decade of little front-row "readers," mimics with pretty smiles and neat pens, out to get their Aristotelian A's while those who possess the real areté sit silently in back of them wondering what is wrong with themselves that they cannot like this subject.

And today in those few Universities that bother to teach classic ethics anymore, students, following the lead of Aristotle and Plato, endlessly play around with the question that in ancient Greece never needed to be asked: "What is the Good? And how do we define it? Since different people have defined it differently, how can we know there is any good? Some say the good is found in happiness, but how do we know what happiness is? And how can happiness be defined? Happiness and good are not objective terms. We cannot deal with them scientifically. And since they aren't objective they just exist in your mind. So if you want to be happy just change your mind. Ha-ha, ha-ha."

Aristotelian ethics, Aristotelian definitions, Aristotelian logic, Aristotelian forms, Aristotelian substances, Aristotelian rhetoric, Aristotelian laughter—ha-ha, ha-ha.

And the bones of the Sophists long ago turned to dust and what they said turned to dust with them and the dust was buried under the rubble of declining Athens through its fall and Macedonia through its decline and fall. Through the decline and death of ancient Rome and Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire and the modern states...buried so deep and with such ceremoniousness and such unction and such evil that only a madman centuries later could discover the clues needed to uncover them, and see with horror what had been done.—

The road has become so dark I have to turn on my headlight now to follow it through these mists and rain.

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At Arcata we enter a small diner, cold and wet, and eat chili and beans and drink coffee.

Then we are back on the road again, freeway now, fast and wet. We'll go to within an easy day's distance from San Francisco and then stop.