

Book Section:

PHILOSOPHY AS DIALOGUE

Charles L. Griswold, Jr.'s
Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus.
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When he [Plato] was about to die, he saw in a dream that he had become a swan and was going from tree to tree, and in this manner he caused the greatest trouble for the bird-catchers. Simmias the Socratic judged that Plato would elude those after him who wished to interpret him. For the interpreters who attempt to hunt out what the ancients had in mind are similar to bird-catchers, but Plato is elusive because it is possible to hear and understand his words in many ways, both physically, and ethically, and theologically, and literally, just like those of Homer as well. - *Olympiodorus* ¹

The rumor about Heidegger put it quite simply: Thinking has come to life again; the cultural treasures of the past, believed to be dead, are being made to speak, in the course of which it turns out that they propose things altogether different from the familiar, worn-out trivialities they had been presumed to say. There exists a teacher; one can perhaps learn to think. - *Hannah Arendt* ²

1.

Olympiodorus and Hannah Arendt concur: writing and reading are not incidental to philosophic teaching and learning. Today, thinking and reading are intimately connected. In the seminar room, Heidegger showed that thinking comes to life when “dead” texts are made to speak by their readers. Such reading, however, is not equivalent to necromancy. To the contrary, the great texts - our “cultural treasures” - are implicitly alive; they are dead only insofar as their readers are able to hear in them merely the repetition of banalities. Bad reading kills good writing. Yet Arendt recalls us to the thrilling recognition that intelligent reading gives new life to philosophical authors: as we learn by thinking through their written memoranda, they are revived as our teachers.

In what does intelligent reading consist? Olympiodorus’ anecdote, which employs the avian imagery of the soul developed in the palinode of the *Phaedrus*, captures the simultaneous promise and challenge of the Platonic texts, and by extension of all of the written cultural treasures from which one may learn genuinely to think. The dialogues of Plato are beautiful and prophetic, yet their meaning is elusive; what is more, Plato’s authorial soul seems to rejoice in its ironic and evasive flight.³ To interpret a text is to speak about it, at least in thought and to oneself, often with others, and sometimes in the form of writing. Plato’s dream underscores the risks of interpretative discourse. It correctly predicts that in the hands of readers who proceed like hunters the dialogues will come to resemble dead swans, or be transformed by the reader’s speech into still and silent images that bear little resemblance to the living, moving originals for which they are mistaken. To hunt is to pursue with intent to grasp or pin down. Yet living swans can best be seen and heard without being touched. To put this point in the language of the *Phaedrus*, interpretation requires a combination of madness and sobriety that resembles Socratic self-knowledge: it is an erotic activity that must nevertheless be regulated by self-control or *sophrosyne*. Plato’s dream thus challenges the reader and would-be thinker to articulate what is “seen” and “heard” in the Platonic dialogues while preserving the “distance” that allows these texts to manifest their intrinsic natures.

2.

Charles Griswold explores and responds to the latter challenge in *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, for which he was granted the Matchette Prize (awarded biennially for the best book in philosophy by an author no older than forty) in 1988. The interpretative considerations sketched above are especially pertinent to the *Phaedrus*, a written text that records a spoken dialogue in which Socrates criticizes writing on philosophical grounds, and that therefore "contains within itself the possibility of reflection on its own status qua written work" (p. 219).⁴ Griswold argues that "the *Phaedrus*' development . . . suggests indirectly an intensely reflexive defense of dialogue" (p. 241), and more specifically of the claim that "dialogue (*dialegesthai*) . . . [is] the comprehensive and indispensable medium of philosophizing" (p. 61). *Self-Knowledge* provides precisely such a defense, and does so in the broadest possible terms. Griswold's reading of the *Phaedrus* shows not only that the quest for wisdom entails self-knowledge and so necessitates Socratic dialogue, but that pre-philosophical *eros* leads inevitably (through a "self-moving dialectic" that exhibits "the cunning of desire" [p.66]) to speech about the objects of desire and desire itself, and thereby opens up the philosophical problem of self-knowledge. What is more, Griswold connects the defense of philosophic dialogue with a defense of Plato's dialectical art of writing in a way that both exemplifies intelligent reading and suggests a reflexive justification of his own written treatise on the *Phaedrus*. These interlocking levels of argument constitute the basic components of Griswold's clear and forceful response to those who (like Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida) contend that putatively "philosophic" discourse cannot sustain its claim to be speech about the truth, but is instead self-enclosed (and so self-vitiating) speech about speech - "a never-ending exercise in self-commentary" (p. 234). In brief, *Self-Knowledge* is a book about the possibility of philosophy that Socratically seeks to measure itself against its strongest opponents. It is of value to anyone who reads or writes for the sake of thinking.

Self-Knowledge aims, in part, to make us more reflective and self-conscious as we speak, read, and write for philosophic purposes. Griswold's detailed attempt to show that the *Phaedrus* provokes us to pursue self-knowledge, however, presupposes that his own interpretative practice is from the outset more adequately self-conscious than rival modes of reading the Platonic dialogues. The reading set forth in *Self-Knowledge* is thus rooted in the claim that interpretation moves within a hermeneutical circle. This claim is consistent with Socrates' assertion, prior to the palinode's teaching concerning divine madness and our recollective pre-awareness of the Truth, that "the soul is somehow mantic" (*Phdr.* 242c), or that philosophic inquiry is itself

rooted in the partial accessibility of the truth within pre-philosophical experience (more on which below).⁵ The latter assertion, however, would be rejected by Plato's anti-Platonic readers.⁶ Furthermore, other readers who might accept Socrates' general characterization of our access to the truth would challenge some of Griswold's more specific interpretative assumptions. Can Griswold sustain his own implicit claim to interpretative self-knowledge?

Griswold's assertion of the philosophical priority of dialogue entails that no argument is by itself adequate to support the latter claim, precisely because no argument is fully intelligible "by itself," or considered independently of the rhetorical context within which it is advanced. It is a central contention of *Self-Knowledge* that all *logos* (speech) - including spoken or written philosophical arguments, as well as those advanced within the silent discourse of thought - is rhetorical in that it aims at persuading, or "leading souls through words" (*Phdr.* 261a).⁷ This contention, together with the indispensability of *logos* as a medium for the articulation and examination of our intuitions (pp. 104 ff.), has specific consequences for the practice of philosophizing. Most important, it validates the Socratic conception of philosophy as dialectical self-interrogation. Socrates prefers the city to the country from the standpoint of learning (*Phdr.* 230d) because self-knowledge requires "the mirrorlike presence of another soul" (cf. Plato, *Alc. I* 132c ff.) and thus "possesses an irremediably 'social' or (in the broadest sense) 'political' character" (p. 32). Philosophic dialogue is "a rhetoric that lets us compare our insights with those of others such that we can clarify or deepen them" and that thereby allows the soul to "look at itself through the eyes of others" (p. 108). The philosopher can never be satisfied, however, with the mere fact of agreement: his enduring challenge is "to distinguish, in any given situation, between intelligent and unfounded agreement," (p. 60), or, more generally, between reflections "that will cause one to move in the direction of self-knowledge" and those that "simply mirror what one is already or what one would vainly like to think of oneself as already being" (p. 32). The quest for self-knowledge therefore terminates only in death: the philosopher must unceasingly seek out "context[s] of disagreement for himself" so as to avoid the danger of "[being] persuaded that what reveals itself to him is true just because he sees it as true" (pp. 171-172).⁸

Griswold's reflections upon the fundamentally rhetorical character of *logos* also have consequences for our evaluation of his reading of the *Phaedrus*. *Self-Knowledge* implicitly asks to be judged not on the level of argumentation or *logos* alone but of *ergon* (deed) - most generally, in terms of the ability of its *logos* to provoke reflection in the soul of the reader. For the same reason, it would be inappropriate to evaluate Griswold's claim to interpretative self-knowledge apart from

the rhetorical context of contemporary approaches to Plato, and in relation to the important alternative strategies of reading against which he is concerned to argue.⁹

Griswold's reading of the *Phaedrus* is governed by the general maxim that "the form of the [Platonic] dialogue is as intrinsic to its meaning as the content" (p. 2). He argues that the reader must begin his study (but is not thereby forced to conclude) by assuming that Plato composed his dialogues with "logographic necessity" (*Phdr.* 264b), or "by granting the claim, definitive of philosophers, that the text articulates the truth and does so in the most precise manner allowed by the subject matter and by the level of the readers to whom the author wishes to address himself" (p. 11). The assumption that the text is coherent and possesses a unified meaning poses a special challenge in the case of the *Phaedrus*, which presents the appearance "of a tapestry that has come partially unraveled into a tangled skein of themes and images" and of "a colorful but poorly patched quilt" (p. 1). In seeking reasons for these features of the *Phaedrus* within the dialogue itself, Griswold embraces Platonic irony, understood as "a tension in the dialogues between the surface of the text and its context . . . that points to an underlying meaning" (p. 12). This interpretative strategy finds support in Socrates' claims in the *Phaedrus* and elsewhere (see above, n5) to the effect that the structure of ordinary experience is itself ironic, in that it is characterized by the presence of imaging relationships that enable the "prophetic" movement of learning.¹⁰

The approach to interpreting Plato exemplified in *Self-Knowledge* is in crucial respects similar to that of a number of scholars who were influenced by the example of Heidegger, including Leo Strauss, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jacob Klein. The most important alternatives to Griswold's approach are those represented by orthodox Anglo-American Plato scholarship on the one hand, and by Derrida - who was also influenced by Heidegger - on the other. (I omit mention of Rorty only because he is far less interesting on the subject of Plato than Derrida.) It will be useful to refer to these alternatives, respectively, as "Traditionalism" and "Skepticism." A third approach, championed by Martha Nussbaum, is a variant of Anglo-American Plato scholarship that I shall call "Neo-Traditionalism."¹¹ While each of these modes of interpretation is in certain respects unself-conscious, each also has significant virtues, and one, that of Nussbaum, suggests important new territory for Platonic studies.

The Traditionalist is defined by his claim that we possess at least a rough knowledge of the chronological order in which the Platonic dialogues were written, and that this information provides a key to the interpretation of Plato because it allows us to trace crucial changes in his thought. The Traditionalist has one great virtue: he reads Plato in the expectation that the dialogues might have something to teach him about the truth. In this respect, he sides with Griswold and against the Skeptic. In fact, the Traditionalist might claim to endorse most or even all of Griswold's interpretative assumptions, with one exception: Griswold's reading of Plato in no way rest upon hypotheses about Plato's putative development or the order of the dialogues' composition (as opposed to their internal, dramatic chronology). The Traditionalist might also claim that the inclusion of chronological considerations is compatible with Griswold's assumptions about the significance of the dialogue form, Plato's adherence to logographic necessity, and Platonic irony, so that his own interpretative practice is free to incorporate all of the virtues of Griswold's own approach.¹²

Traditionalism is open to two kinds of criticism. The first has been fully developed subsequent to the publication of *Self-Knowledge*, and concerns the vicious circularity of the arguments by which the Traditionalist attempts to establish his first and most crucial contention. In particular, it has recently been shown in detail that any attempt to ascertain the relative dates of the dialogues - including the statistical analysis of Plato's style, a putatively scientific technique long regarded as the most solid foundation for chronological hypotheses - must rely upon a selective and arbitrary interpretation of the ancient external evidence, as well as unfounded assumptions about the relevance of data extracted from the dialogues.¹³ Although he typically proceeds with an air of theoretical rigor, the Traditionalist is insufficiently reflective with regard to his own presuppositions, and so falls victim to the charms of pseudo-science.¹⁴

The second kind of criticism is developed by Griswold in *Self-Knowledge*: Traditionalism is incompatible with reading the Platonic dialogue as a dialogue. Griswold argues that each dialogue itself - and not "Plato's psychological history" - is "the primary whole relative to which the parts of the dialogue are to be judged" (p. 15). The key point here is that one cannot consistently appeal *both* to what Plato is alleged to have thought at a certain time *and* to features internal to a given dialogue (including its dramatic time and setting, narrative structure, the character of its interlocutors, literary and historical allusions, and the like) in order to explain the kinds or styles of argument one finds in it. The Traditionalist may claim to be sensitive to the fact that the dialogues, as written records of living conversations, must be

understood in terms of their rhetorical and dialectical dimensions, but he undercuts this claim precisely at the point where he appeals (as inevitably he must, given his fundamental interpretative presupposition) to putatively independent chronological considerations. Insofar as he bases his interpretation upon chronological hypotheses, the dialogue reveals itself as a concealed monologue that registers what Plato "actually" thought while maintaining the pretence of Socratic debate and critical self-examination. But if, on the other hand, he attempts to avoid this conclusion by admitting that the feature in question could equally well be explained in terms of the dialogue as a whole, chronological speculation becomes philosophically otiose (although it may retain some interest as the basis for imaginative psycho-biography). The Traditionalist cannot have it both ways.

Consider, for example, rival explanations of the appearance of the method of division and collection in the second half of the *Phaedrus*. The Traditionalist does not hesitate to account for Socrates' introduction of this method by means of an appeal to chronological arguments. As Griswold notes, chronologically-minded scholars regard the "meta-physical" conception of knowledge as recollection of the Ideas (which Griswold refers to as "Episteme") to be a distinctive feature of the "middle" Platonic dialogues, while the "methodological" approach to knowledge through division and collection ("episteme" in Griswold's terminology) is widely thought to characterize the "late" dialogues (p. 6). Since orthodox Plato scholarship situates the *Phaedrus* somewhere between the "middle" and "late" dialogues, the following kind of account finds ready acceptance among the Traditionalists:

It is generally admitted . . . that his [Plato's] thought . . . underwent a development during this period. The *Phaedrus* is apparently the first dialogue of a group that uses a new picture of dialectic, known as the Method of Division; one of the jobs of the second half of the dialogue is to announce and defend this method.¹⁵

In brief, the method appears in the *Phaedrus* because its author wants to tell us about a new idea. This claim does not, however, explain the context in which Plato chooses to announce his new idea. Yet Socrates' introduction of the method shortly after the conclusion of his great myth constitutes a major part of the famous problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus*, a problem exacerbated by Socrates' explanation of logographic necessity in terms of the requirement that a *logos* possess organic unity (*Phdr.* 264c). In particular, it is unclear why "the enthusiastic and erotic idiom of the first half [of the *Phaedrus*] seems replaced by a detached and analytic idiom" (p. 157). It is crucial to

see that this problem has to do with the structure that the *Phaedrus* possesses in its own right as a written image of a philosophic conversation, and independently of any of the circumstances of its composition. Chronological considerations are wholly irrelevant in this connection. Indeed, to rest content with the Traditionalist's "explanation" of the appearance of the method of division and collection in the *Phaedrus* is to concede that, considered as a dialogue, the *Phaedrus* is fundamentally incoherent. If in composing the dialogue Plato has followed the dictates of logographic necessity, however, the method of division and collection appears when and where it does because it has to.

Griswold's massive accomplishment in *Self-Knowledge*, precisely, is to show that the unity of the *Phaedrus* resides in the dialectical development of its Socratic discourse. In particular, Griswold is able to demonstrate that the method of division and collection plays a crucial role within the structure of the "living" conversation depicted in the *Phaedrus*, a conversation that involves a series of speeches and subsequent recantations, or odes and palinodes. Although the point is generally overlooked, it should not be irrelevant to the evaluation of chronological arguments about the *Phaedrus* that Socrates refers in the course of the dialogue to what Griswold calls his "knowledge of ignorance" about himself (*Phdr.* 229e-230a), a consistent theme of those dialogues conventionally regarded as "early" or "Socratic." Griswold relates Socrates' knowledge of ignorance to "a third sense of self-knowledge [besides 'Episteme' and 'episteme'] signaled by the term 'gignoskein'" (p. 6). *Gnosis* is "recognition" or "familiarity"; it describes the non-epistemic self-awareness commanded by the Delphic Oracle (*Gnothi Sauton*, "Know Thyself"; cf. *Phdr.* 229e). According to Griswold's reading, the dialectical development of the *Phaedrus* displays the priority of gnostic self-knowledge to its epistemic rivals: "gignoskein" signals "a sense of self-knowledge that tells us 'what it is to be human' without transforming the soul into a special type of abstract object (whether an Idea or a complex of forms and causes)" (p. 6; cf. p. 261, n23). Put succinctly, the method of division and collection, far from being "*the* method of dialectic and *the* occupation of the philosopher . . . [that] replaces (and is incompatible with) the hypothetical method of *Phaedo* and *Republic*" (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 470, n5, italics in original), is a self-qualifying, subsequently recanted moment in the reflective movement of gnostic self-knowledge.

In brief outline, the discourse of the *Phaedrus* develops as follows. Lysias' speech (read aloud by Phaedrus) depicts reason as an instrument for the fulfillment of physical needs, the satisfaction of the desire for pleasure, and the preservation of reputation. (Lysias fails to mention the soul.) Lysias' businesslike composition is notably deficient as a seduction speech, however, since it is wholly devoid of "the

rhetoric of love" (p. 46). Such a speech would fail miserably in practice because the beloved desires to be regarded as beautiful, noble, and so on; that is, he desires to be desired as more than an indiscriminate object of animal sexuality (cf. p. 126). The conflict between *logos* and *ergon* that is implicit in Lysias' composition anticipates Socrates' later criticism of writing ("the utter impersonality of Lysias' speech . . . seems to epitomize writing as such": p. 50) and recalls us to the original, erotic context of speech, within which context the Lysian "nonlover" is obliged to "transcend in his own rhetoric the level of his own intentions" (pp. 50-51). The "uplifting energy" of *eros* (p. 51) thus leads the nonlover to seek self-knowledge, at least to the extent that he begins to reflect upon the implications of his own rhetoric (even if only from the standpoint of efficacy). Socrates' first speech, that of the "concealed lover," displays its own conflict between *logos* and *ergon* (see pp. 57-58), but "expands our vocabulary and conception of *eros*" (p. 66) by proceeding in a more reflective and self-conscious fashion than Lysias' discourse, and by introducing rhetorically edifying terminology that is appropriate to the erotic aim of the speaker (including references to the soul, mania or "madness," *sophrosyne*, and "divine philosophy"). Socrates' speech thus succeeds in its goal of improving upon that of Lysias (*Phdr.* 235c ff.), but it is nonetheless unable in its own base terms to account for the edifying notions it introduces, for the desire of the beloved to regard himself in the light of such notions, or for the relationship between reason and desire manifested in the behavior of the speaker himself (pp. 62-65). It is also unable to provide "an account of *eros* that explains the desire of Phaedrus and Socrates to listen" to speeches such as Lysias' and Socrates' (pp. 68-69). These inadequacies are a source of shame (cf. *Phdr.* 237a), a pre-philosophical phenomenon to which "clever" demythologizers, but not the "wise," are perhaps insensitive (p. 83; cf. *Phdr.* 229d, 245c). Lysias' composition and Socrates' first speech lead to their recantation just insofar as they elicit shame and thereby remind us, through their very deficiencies, of our ordinary experiences of beauty, nobility, and the elevating character of *eros* - experiences of "what we are" that prophetically "contain something of the truth" (p. 38). This means that the transition to the palinode will not be persuasive to unprophetic, unmusical, erotically deficient, or shameless souls. (I shall return to this point below, in discussing the Skeptic.)¹⁶

Socrates' palinode attempts to articulate a framework that can account for our ability to recognize the inadequacy of the previous two speeches. The palinode exhibits gnostic self-knowledge in its teaching that "to know the soul is to understand its role in the cosmos," which amounts to understanding the soul's erotic openness to the Whole of things (p. 92; cf. p. 98). The myth in which most of the

palinode consists, however, connects Socrates' knowledge of *eros* with his knowledge of ignorance or of the limitations of his knowledge: "knowledge of *eros* is finally knowledge of being intermediate or, in the *Symposium's* language, 'in between' wisdom and ignorance" (p. 136).¹⁷ Socrates' knowledge of the soul's intermediacy, in turn, involves the understanding that divine *mania* is equivalent to true *sophrosyne*, a point that is metaphorically expressed in the relationship between the charioteer's recollection of his original vision of Beauty and *Sophrosyne* and his restraint of the dark horse in the presence of the beloved (*Phdr.* 254b-c). But precisely insofar as it teaches that the ascent of the soul involves the soul's regulation of madness by self-control, the palinode underscores the implicit conflict between its *logos* and its *ergon*. The first two speeches of the *Phaedrus* had to be recanted because they were excessively sober, or devoid of uplifting erotic madness. The palinode itself, however, is excessively "mad," or deficient in "philosophical self-possession" and therefore in *sophrosyne*, "in the sense that if it is true the person narrating it could not know it is true (given the criteria for knowledge presented within the myth itself)" (p. 152). Thus the palinode, in turn, partially "recants itself when we compare its *ergon* with its *logos*" (p. 153).

Griswold's insight is that the technical discussion of speech that follows the palinode, and within which Socrates offers his account of the method of division and collection, provides precisely the kind of sober and self-conscious "talk about one's talk" that is demanded by the myth's mad *logos*.

The myth's teaching marks off the limits of human knowledge and in so doing presupposes a standpoint beyond them. That standpoint in turn shows itself in the need for limitation, a limit realized by the turn from myth to *techne*. (p. 153)

The "putative incoherence of the *Phaedrus* " is thus "an intentionally generated step in the development of the self-knowledge theme" (p. 154). The method of division and collection is a moment in a "dialectic [that] fluctuates between madness and sobriety"; the method "comes alive" only "when viewed relative to its context - the whole of which it is a part" (pp. 153, 182). In clumsily cutting the method out of this context and treating it as though it possesses independent philosophical significance, the Traditionalist butchers the whole and disfigures the part.¹⁸ The *Phaedrus* as a whole argues against Dogmatic assumptions: to identify the method with "the occupation of the philosopher" would be to fall prey to the madness of excessive sobriety, and therefore to fail to understand the nature of one's own soul. For "the

dialectic of the myth's self-limitation is the dialectic of self-knowledge"; *mania* and *sophrosyne* - the "desire for a comprehensive and beautiful mythos about the soul" and the "desire for detached analysis" - both "animate the philosopher's soul," and can be combined only dialectically, in the alternately self-transcending and self-qualifying medium of dialogue (pp. 154, 155).

Griswold clinches the latter point by showing that the development of the second half of the *Phaedrus* (which in important respects begins on the rhetorical and ontological level of Socrates' first speech) parallels that of the first half: Socrates' ode to episteme is recanted in the palinode of the Theuth/Thamus myth, which teaches that technical knowledge must be subordinated to the recollective awareness of the ends of human life (pp. 161-163, 202 ff.) The parallelism of the two halves of the *Phaedrus* does not, however, imply a lack of progress: the criticism of writing set forth in the Theuth/Thamus myth presupposes the notion of recollection that Socrates developed in his earlier myth, a notion that is now connected with the activity of dialectical discourse (p. 207 ff.). This criticism of writing, in turn, is partially recanted by Plato's deed of authoring the dialogues, a form of writing of which Socrates seems not to have conceived (p. 210). The dialogues, finally, recant themselves by returning us to the indispensable context of ordinary experience within which the live activity of philosophizing takes place - an activity that "must ultimately focus on the knowledge of oneself as *this* individual in this time and place and in these circumstances" (p. 223, italics in original).¹⁹

4.

Neo-Traditionalism can be treated in briefer compass. This interpretative approach shares the definitive characteristics of Traditionalism: its : its chronological vice and truth - seeking virtue. What is new and important about Neo-Traditionalism is its insistence - albeit necessarily a rather schizophrenic insistence - upon the philosophical significance of the dialogue form, particularly insofar as this form invites reflection upon the place of Plato's writings within the context of the Greek literary tradition. In *The Fragility of Goodness*, Martha Nussbaum positions herself among the "very few moral philosophers . . . in the Anglo-American tradition" who "have welcomed stories, particulars, and images into their writing on value," and who have "showed a responsiveness to metaphorical and emotive language" (*Fragility*, pp. 187, 394). Nussbaum's sensitivity to these same elements in the Platonic texts leads her to formulate the following criticism of her Traditionalist peers:

All too often, when we ask, 'Why did Plato write in dialogues?', we ask ourselves why the dialogues are not philosophical treatises, not like Mill, say, or Sidgwick, or even Aristotle - rather than, why they are not poetic dramas, not like Sophocles or Aeschylus. We can recover the philosophical thrust of his decisions as he planned them only by approaching them historically, asking how his project is defined by differentiation from its surroundings. (*Fragility*, p. 122)

Nussbaum adds that "Plato acknowledges the influence . . . of at least six different kinds of texts: epic, lyric, tragic, and comic poetry; the prose scientific or historical treatise; and oratory" (*Fragility*, p. 123). These observations, together with Nussbaum's thoughtful discussion of points of resemblance between the dialogues and tragic drama (*Fragility*, pp. 126-129), open up the exciting prospect of a reading of the Platonic dialogues that would bring to them the virtues appropriate to the interpretation of other genres of Greek literature - including sensitivity to the details of characterization, dramatic and rhetorical context, metaphor, symbolic imagery, tragic ambiguity, comic irony, and narrative and mythical structure - while simultaneously exploring the various ways in which these philosophic texts themselves engage in a "meta-dialogue" with their most challenging literary competitors. Neo-Traditionalism's distinctive virtue lies in its ability to visualize such an interpretative agenda, even though its own adherence to Traditionalist preconceptions about Plato's development - preconceptions that arbitrarily narrow the horizons of legitimate interpretation - prohibits the adequate realization of this agenda.²⁰

Of special interest in this connection is the relationship between the writings of Aristophanes and Plato. Although there is evidence both external and internal to the dialogues that points toward the significance of this relationship, it has remained almost wholly unexplored by ancient philosophers, classicists, and political theorists.²¹ It would be difficult, in particular, to overestimate the significance Plato attaches to Aristophanes' criticisms of Socratic philosophizing; insofar as every Platonic dialogue constitutes an attempt to distinguish between philosophy and sophistry, every dialogue is arguably a response to the *Clouds*.²² Reflections of this nature lead to an insight about Plato's use of myth that is not formulated in *Self-Knowledge*, but that is implied by Griswold's analysis and suggested by Neo-Traditionalism. In an "Excursus" on the significance of myth in the dialogues, Griswold notes that the "intentional ambiguity" of Platonic myths "lead[s] the reader to engage in a complex hermeneutic task whose result is philo-

sophic reflection," that the provocative combination of simplicity and complexity in Plato's myths "does not seem translatable into a conceptual idiom," and that myth is an idiom appropriate to discourse about the soul (pp. 141, 149, 150). Especially in the light of the latter observation, one feels compelled to add that in employing the language of myth Plato appropriates, reshapes, and thus reflectively responds to pre-existing mythical articulations of the soul and its experiences.²³ In the case of the *Phaedrus*, Plato seems in particular to be responding to the implicit challenge of Aristophanes' *Birds*.

A full exploration of the relationship between the *Phaedrus* and the *Birds* would begin with Aristophanes' myth of the circle-people in the *Symposium* (189c-193d), a dialogue that, as Griswold notes, precedes the *Phaedrus* in dramatic chronology and is linked to the latter through the theme of *eros* and the character of Phaedrus (pp. 19-21). Although it is certainly a Platonic invention, the myth of the circle-people provides a synopsis of certain central themes of Aristophanes' comic dramas. In particular, the myth distinguishes between two fundamental aspects of human erotic longing: the "upward," spirited striving to become divine that expresses itself in politics and philosophy, and "horizontal" sexual desire and affection. The fate of the circle-people teaches that upward-directed striving is hubristic, and does violence to the integrity of human life as well as the Whole. The myth thus implicitly reflects the judgment of philosophy that Aristophanes sets forth in the *Clouds*, in which Socrates, the corrupter of young and old alike, is portrayed as despising or looking down upon the human things as well as the gods (*Clouds*, 226, 1399-1400). While Socrates attempts in the *Symposium* to respond to Aristophanes' challenge by depicting *eros* (and philosophy, as the perfection of upward erotic striving) not as a force that sunders the Whole but as a bond that binds together its parts (*Symp.* 201d ff.), the dialogue concludes with a renewal of Aristophanes' charge in Alcibiades' unmasking of Socratic philosophizing as the cruel and overweening desire for mastery, a desire that refuses to restrain itself even before the gods themselves (*Symp.* 214d). If the treatment of *eros* in the *Symposium* is ultimately inadequate, as Griswold suggests (p. 19), it is because the *Symposium* fails to defend philosophic *eros* against the calumnies of Aristophanes and Alcibiades.

At the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates raises the issue of the nature of *eros* within the context of his quest for self-knowledge, and formulates this issue in terms that recall the problematic of the *Symposium*. In particular, Socrates wonders aloud whether he is a beast more complex and more puffed up with pride than Typhon, or a tamer and simpler being who participates in some untyphonic and divine lot (*Phdr.* 230a). *In imagining a beast more typhonic than*

Typhon, Griswold writes, *Socrates envisions an "unnatural creature" whose "extreme hubris . . . must be equivalent to an irrational desire (cf. [Phdr.] 238a1-2 and context, where eros is a species of hubris) to be master of the universe"* (pp. 40-41). Typhon is described by Apollodorus as part man, part beast, and winged all over (pp. 39 and 253, n26); this mythical figure thus anticipates Socrates' "much more edifying and beautiful, but nonetheless equally monstrous and unnatural, image of the soul's idea" as a charioteer and two horses, all of which are winged (p. 95; cf. p. 93). Socrates' allusion to Typhon, the theme of *hubris*, and the avian imagery of *eros* also help to specify the Aristophanean subtext of the *Phaedrus*. The aforementioned elements of the dialogue, together with its dramatic setting (two Athenians engage in conversation outside of the walls of Athens), the danger that the dialogue might degenerate into an affair of "poor comedians" (*Phdr.* 236c), and the pervasiveness of the theme of rhetoric, all bring to mind Aristophanes' *Birds*, a comic drama in which two Athenians (following in the footsteps of the typhonic character of Tereus, who was turned into a bird after raping his sister-in-law and cutting out her tongue) leave the city of Athens and are subsequently transformed into winged men/beasts. One of these Athenians, Peisthetaerus ("Persuasive Companion"), talks his way into ruling the birds, whereupon he formulates a plan that effectively bisects the cosmos by cutting off all intercourse between gods and men, thereby allowing him to seize the supreme power that once belonged to Zeus. In brief, the *Birds* - in which *eros* is itself represented as a bird (*Birds* 696) - is a fantasy of unrestrained desire that reiterates the teaching of the *Symposium's* myth of the circle-people.²⁴

The great myth of the *Phaedrus* is itself a fantasy of *eros* (cf. p. 73). Griswold notes that "the comic interchange of roles between Socrates and Phaedrus does not continue past the interlude between Socrates' two speeches" (p. 67; cf. pp. 1, 8, 30), but the palinode represents the overcoming of comedy in several other senses as well. While in the *Birds* upward erotic striving seeks to overthrow Zeus, in the *Phaedrus* the "highest achievement" of the human soul that "aspires to the divine . . . is to follow Zeus, not to usurp him" (p. 42; *Phdr.* 246e ff.). And while the rhetorical speech of Peisthetaerus leads to the political silence of absolute tyrannical mastery and thus, in a manner reminiscent of Tereus, to the loss of the distinctively human capacity of *logos* (cf. the reference to the cutting out of the tongue at *Birds* 1705), Socrates' myth teaches that persuasive philosophical *logos* alone enables the soul recollectively to reunite "the hyper- and hypouranian places, that is, images with their originals, opinions with their grounds," and thereby to recapture "the wholeness of self" (p. 112).²⁵ In brief, while Aristophanes teaches that upward erotic striv-

ing threatens to fragment and debase human existence, Socrates indicates that only upward-directed *eros*, or *eros* properly understood, can preserve our humanity. As Griswold puts this point:

The gods . . . have no need for self-knowledge. The entire problematic of self-knowledge is thus deeply revealing of what it means to be human. To ignore the problematic is to become either sub- or superhuman. Socrates will mention that no incarnate soul can hope to be superhuman in this life; hence the price of failing to know oneself is that one approaches the bestial. (pp. 105-106)

5.

Kierkegaard begins the third chapter of his *Philosophical Fragments* by reflecting on the fact that Socrates, "a connoisseur of human nature," was unsure whether he was "a more curious monster than Typhon or a friendlier and simpler being, by nature sharing something divine." "This seems to be a paradox," he continues. "But one must not think ill of the paradox, for the paradox is the passion of thought, and the thinker without the paradox is like the lover without passion: a mediocre fellow."²⁶ Elsewhere, Kierkegaard turns this insight upon the academy:

Take the paradox away from a thinker - and you have a professor. A professor has at his disposal a whole line of thinkers from Greece to modern times; it appears as if the professor stood above all of them. Well, many thanks - he is, of course, the infinitely inferior.²⁷

Kierkegaard's Socratic appreciation of the passion of thought gives us a way to express the peculiarity of Derrida's approach to Plato (as exemplified in "Plato's Pharmacy")²⁸: the Skeptic is a professor masquerading as a thinker with a paradox. I mean by this that "Plato's Pharmacy" manifests a profound sense of the provocative tension and ambiguity of the Platonic dialogues - so much so that one is astonished, to borrow Griswold's words (p. 211), that the permanence of the erotic search for wisdom is not written in the soul of its author. Yet the Skeptic is defined, in part, by his insistence that "wisdom" and the "soul" are merely self-negating constructions of discourse.

Derrida's reading of Plato exhibits a host of interpretative virtues not shared by Traditionalism or Neo-Traditionalism. Derrida sensibly regards the Platonic texts as intricate (albeit always unraveling) tapes-

tries that are connected with one another by a subtle network of filaments. The interpreter is therefore free "to slip away from the recognized models of commentary, from the genealogical or structural reconstitution of a system" and to follow these filaments throughout the Platonic corpus ("Pharmacy," p. 104). Derrida exhibits a thorough appreciation of Plato's employment of "philosophemes," his name for Plato's philosophical appropriation of the mythical units of meaning that Claude Levi-Strauss calls "mythemes" ("Pharmacy," p. 86), and his interpretation of these philosophemes makes extensive use of scholarship in a wide range of areas, including the excellent work of French cultural historians such as Jean-Pierre Vernant. "Plato's Pharmacy" is guided in particular by the keen insight that one such filament, the notion of the *pharmakon* ("drug," "poison," "charm," "dye"), provides a sure point of entry for an exploration of the problematic (and for Derrida, unsustainable) distinction between philosophy and sophistry. In developing this insight, Derrida assembles and analyzes numerous Platonic texts within which philosophy is presented as a *pharmakon* or "antidote" that "must be opposed to the *pharmakon* of the Sophists and to the bewitching fear of death" as "a pharmaceutical force opposed to another pharmaceutical force" ("Pharmacy," pp. 124, 138). In my view, "Plato's Pharmacy" possesses enduring value as a fascinating and provocative demonstration of the thesis that within the Platonic dialogues "the parties and the party lines [in the battle between philosophy and sophistry] frequently exchange their respective places, imitating the forms and borrowing the paths of the opponent" ("Pharmacy," p. 108).

Yet for all of its virtues, Derrida's approach to reading Plato in significant respects resembles the "recognized modes of commentary" from which he claims to slip away. Like other, less brilliant professors, "Derrida does not ask why Plato wrote *dialogues*" (p. 235, italics in original). He does not reflect upon the specific rhetorical contexts of the passages he analyzes, in part because he refuses to grant, as a heuristic assumption, that each text is a distinct whole constructed in accordance with logographic necessity. This refusal is connected with his insistence that neither the written nor the spoken word has a "father" - that no one stands for or behind a *logos*. The notion that *logos* can be made to say what one wants is in Derrida's view rooted in an illusory distinction between speaker and speech, between signifier and signified, that springs from the play of *logos* itself.²⁹

It is important to notice that the latter are assumptions Derrida brings to the study of Plato. "The strategy of Rorty and Derrida," Griswold notes in another context, is ostensibly that of the "classical" (as opposed to the "dogmatic") skeptic, who "limits himself to showing on his opponent's ground that his opponent's claims fail."³⁰ But Der-

rida's "Socratic," internal critique of Plato fails in its own terms just insofar as Derrida refuses at the outset to occupy Plato's own ground, that is, to begin "by taking seriously the text's claim to articulate the truth" (p. 239). Such a beginning, unlike Derrida's, maximizes one's opportunity to learn from the text (if indeed there is anything to learn) but does not prejudice one's reading: "it may still turn out that the text is incoherent" (p. 240). Derrida is, after all, dogmatic about his skepticism. The counter-argument I have just sketched admittedly does not "refute" the Skeptic, since the very notion of argumentative refutation presupposes a framework of philosophical dialogue that he rejects.³¹ *Logos* alone cannot settle this dispute, because what divides the Skeptic from his philosophical opponents is *eros*, which is prior to *logos*. As Griswold says, the dispute takes place "not between positions, but between the persons who hold them" ("Plato's Metaphilosophy," p. 156). The Skeptic is a person like Phaedrus: he is a lover of speeches who "has completely forgotten himself in the World of the Text," and whose "passion for beautiful speeches ignores the Delphic 'Know thyself'" (pp. 237, 238). More strongly, the Skeptic is closed to "the everyday" and to the prophetic character of pre-philosophical experience, experience that "is not just preparatory for philosophy but regulative of it." The "Derridean and Rortean deconstruction of philosophy" is thus "also a deconstruction of prephilosophic life, and this is why their playful palinodes finally resemble merely sophisticated poems of the 'clever'" (pp. 238-239).³²

6.

Although the Skeptic cannot be refuted, there remains hope that he can be persuaded. Because he does not succeed in formulating an internal critique of Plato, he concedes rhetorical space to the defenders of philosophic dialogue. But because he denies the possibility of philosophic discourse, this space cannot effectively be occupied by a philosophic speech. It must instead be occupied by a philosophic deed. The Skeptic will not give up his dogmatism - will not read, write, or speak with the intent to learn - unless the *eros* for wisdom can be awakened in him. The Platonic strategy for awakening philosophic *eros* is to try to *show* (rather than merely to assert) that learning is possible. This is the strategy of the *Phaedrus* itself (cf. p. 120), and it is the strategy Griswold follows in his explication of the *Phaedrus*. Perhaps the most that can be said in conclusion is this: those with eyes to see and ears to hear will agree that in their own ways both Plato and Griswold succeed admirably in dramatically displaying the *ergon* of learning.³³

1. *Olympiodorus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1956), 2.156-162.
2. Hannah Arendt, "Martin Heidegger at Eighty," *New York Review of Books* 17.5 (Oct. 21, 1971), p. 51.
3. Swans belong to Apollo and so are endowed with prophetic powers: Olympiodorus (cited above, n. 1), 2.29-31; Plato, *Phd.* 84e-85b. On Plato's Apollonian nature, see *Olympiodorus*, 2.24-26, 2.164-167.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, all page numbers cited parenthetically in the text refer to Griswold's *Self-Knowledge*.
5. Socrates' assertion is repeated in similar contexts in other dialogues. In the *Republic*, Socrates speaks of the prophetic character of the soul's awareness of the Good just prior to introducing the images of Sun, Line, and Cave (*Resp.* 505d, 506a). Socrates' account in the *Symposium* of his initiation by a prophetess into the Mysteries of *eros*, which is itself a *daimon* that interprets (*hermeneuei*) for human beings that which is divine (*Symp.* 201d ff.), is anticipated by Aristophanes' remark that the erotic soul "is not able to say, but divines and speaks oracles about what it wants" (*Symp.* 192c-d).
6. Rorty, for example (in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979], p. 34), maintains that "an intuition is never anything more or less than familiarity with a language-game." Griswold cites this and similar remarks on p. 290, n3.
7. Cf. *Phdr.* 271c: "the *dynamis* ['power'] of *logos* is *psychagogia* ['the leading of souls']." On p. 172 Griswold observes that "speaking (and writing) is always a matter of a soul's leading or following, even if it is only leading or following itself. *Logos* and persuasion are inseparable." Consider in this connection the private experience of writing and revising an academic essay.
8. A highly compelling statement of this point that is compatible with Griswold's argument may be found in Alexandre Kojève's "Tyranny and Wisdom," in Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny* (1963), revised and expanded edition, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 135-176. On p. 155, Kojève writes: "Philosophy is, by definition, something other than Wisdom: it necessarily involves 'subjective certainties' that are not *the* Truth, in other words 'prejudices.' The philosopher's duty is to turn away from these prejudices as quickly and as completely as possible. Now, any closed society that adopts a doctrine, any 'elite' selected in terms of a doctrinal teaching, tends to consolidate the prejudices entailed by that doctrine. The philosopher who shuns prejudices therefore has to try to live in the wide world (in the 'market place' or 'in the street,' like Socrates) rather than in a 'cloister' of any kind, 'republican' or 'aristocratic.'" Kojève, however, endorses the view that "Being itself is essentially temporal (Being=Becoming) and creates itself insofar as it is discursively revealed in the course of history" (*On Tyranny*, p. 152). One could argue that this "radical Hegelian atheism" forecloses the possibility of self-knowledge insofar as it eliminates, in Kojève's own analysis, any essential distinction between the philosophic search for self-knowledge and the tyrannical quest for "recognition."
9. Similarly, Griswold's decision to write about the *Phaedrus*, and in particular to write a treatise, must be understood as an appropriate response to the rhetorical context of contemporary scholarly discourse. The importance of this context is reflected also in the structure of *Self-Knowledge*, which begins with an Introduction that addresses methodological issues and concludes with an Epilogue that aims to defend philosophic dialogue against the anti-philosophic attacks of Derrida and Rorty.
10. "Anamnesis ['recollection'] heavily depends on seeing the world as saturated by images of the divine" (p. 180). Image-saturated experience points beyond itself, and thus incorporates - originally, as it were - the tension that Plato, as mimetic artist, imitates within the ironic structure of the dialogues. With regard to the connection between irony and prophecy, consider Griswold's observation that "two components of irony - the pre-

sence of a meaning 'beyond' the obvious one and the tension between these two levels of meaning - seem . . . to be very much like enthusiasm or madness itself" (p. 156). A detailed exploration of Socrates' account in the *Republic* of the relationship between the imagistic structure of experience and the prophetic character of philosophy may be found in ch. 9 of my *Plato's Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy* (New York: Twayne, 1993).

11. See Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Hereafter cited parenthetically in text. Although my assessment of Neo-Traditionalism and Skepticism is based only on the work of Nussbaum and Derrida, respectively, these authors establish interpretative paradigms that rival those exemplified in the work of both Griswold and the Traditionalists.

12. A strategy rather like the one outlined above is pursued by Terence Irwin, a leading figure of Anglo-American Plato scholarship, in his debate with David L. Roochnik in *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, ed. Charles L. Griswold, Jr. (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 183-199. Roochnik identifies seven principles that "are implicit in Irwin's interpretive strategy" (p. 184). Irwin accepts the first two principles, including the claims that "Plato's thought underwent significant transformations as he matured" and that "The interpreter should articulate the pivotal transitions of this development and outline the chronological development of the philosophical content of the dialogues," but he rejects the other five, including the claim that "The context that surrounds . . . arguments, be it dramatic, rhetorical, mythic, or humorous, should be dismissed in the search for correct analysis of isolated arguments" (pp. 184-185, 194). (Irwin also "deprecates the use of the term *Anglo-American* to refer to a philosophical school or outlook" [p. 195]. Nussbaum, however, speaks without qualms of "our Anglo-American tradition" [*Fragility*, p. 12].)

13. Jacob Howland, "Re-reading Plato: The Problem of Platonic Chronology," *Phoenix* 45.3 (1991), pp. 189-214. This article also argues that the application of ostensive chronological distinctions to the interpretation of the dialogues requires one to make assumptions that are both intrinsically paradoxical and incongruous with the dialogues themselves, including in particular the assumption that Plato was an unself-conscious, unreflective philosopher who fundamentally misunderstood the nature of his own writings (see esp. pp. 203-205). Insofar as he brings this ungenerous and self-defeating presupposition to the study of the Platonic texts, the Traditionalist resembles the Skeptic. "Re-reading Plato" also discuss an ancient interpretative tradition that anticipates Griswold's attention to Plato's literary artfulness and provocative, Socratic pedagogy.

14. It is worth noting as well that Traditionalism involves a number of questionable, characteristically modern preconceptions about the *psyche* (including the "unconscious") and psychological evolution, about the nature of philosophical writing, and about the relationship between the psychology of the philosopher and the activity of writing (see "Re-reading Plato," esp. pp. 195-205). Because Traditionalism has long reigned in Plato scholarship (and has run, I might add, something of a closed shop), the Traditionalist has never been required to shoulder the burden of proof for these preconceptions.

15. Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 228. Cf. pp. 470-471, n5, where Nussbaum discusses the methods used to determine the relative date of the *Phaedrus*. The reader will note that while Nussbaum adverts to suppositions about the relative date of the dialogue to explain Socrates' introduction of the method of division and collection, she finds that the presence of the method in the *Phaedrus* is the "most striking" piece of evidence for its relatively late date. She does, however, preface this remark with the admission that, whereas "doctrinal considerations are most probative" in dating the *Phaedrus*, they are "difficult for us to use here without suspicion of circularity[!]"

16. Cf. p. 72: "Self-knowledge and an understanding of the noble are inseparable. . . . In sum, an inner voice, madness, the power of edifying opinion, the example of noble character, the sayings of the poets (some based on musical knowledge), respect for the

divine, and the feeling of shame in the face of blasphemy are the pivots on which the transition from the low to the high discourses turns." On p. 78, Griswold adds: "The palinode is in part a phenomenology of love. Those who see nothing familiar in the phenomenology will feel quite unpersuaded."

17. The following passage from "What is Political Philosophy?" (in Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies*, 1959 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], pp. 38-39) offers a striking characterization of Socrates' non-epistemic self-knowledge that illuminates the kind of mythical cosmology he offers in the *Phaedrus*: "Socrates was so far from being committed to a specific cosmology that his knowledge was knowledge of ignorance. Knowledge of ignorance is not ignorance. It is knowledge of the elusive character of the truth, of the whole. Socrates, then, viewed man in the light of the mysterious character of the whole. He held therefore that we are more familiar with the situation of man as man than with the ultimate causes of that situation. We may also say that he viewed man in the light of the unchangeable ideas, i.e. of the fundamental and permanent problems. For to articulate the situation of man means to articulate man's openness to the whole. This understanding of the situation of man which includes, then, the quest for cosmology rather than a solution to the cosmological problem, was the foundation of classical political philosophy."

18. Cf. Mitchell H. Miller's sensitive and unusual attempt (in Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980]) to understand the Eleatic Stranger's method of diaeresis within the context of the *Statesman* as a whole.

19. Griswold argues convincingly that Socrates' model of the written work as a living animal (*Phdr.* 264c) "fits the artfully written treatise perfectly": "Such a work . . . should have an introduction in which key terms are defined (the 'head' of the work), then should continue with an analysis of its theme (the 'body' of the argument) . . . and finally conclude with an apt summary" (p. 212, italics in original). To the extent that the dialogues overcome Socrates' criticisms of writing, they are able to do so in part because they lack the specious air of authority conveyed by this artful structure. This is true of the corpus as a whole as well as the individual dialogues: "There is no preface or conclusion to Plato's thought within the corpus - no head, middle, or extremities" (p. 220). Traditionalism masks this fact by trying, through its chronological speculations, to give the Platonic corpus the beginning, middle, and end - the "head" and "feet" - it lacks.

20. In "The Tragic Philosopher: A Critique of Martha Nussbaum," *Ancient Philosophy* 8 (Fall, 1988), pp. 285-295, David L. Roochnik observes that Nussbaum "isolates various Socratic statements without making reference to the ongoing discussion of which they are a part . . . and then uses them as support for the interpretation she proposes" (p. 290). Nussbaum's failure to appreciate Platonic and Socratic irony is evidenced in her claim that "Plato embodies important features of his own earlier view in the first two speeches [of the *Phaedrus*]," so that Socrates' palinode "is a serious recantation of something that Plato had seriously endorsed" (*Fragility*, p. 202). In partial support of this claim, Nussbaum recalls her earlier finding that Plato denigrates *eros* and *mania* in the *Republic*. Yet that finding is itself rooted in a failure to appreciate the comic and mythical subtexts of Socrates' treatment of *eros* in the *Republic*; in a striking omission, Nussbaum mentions neither comic drama nor epic poetry in her reading of the *Republic* in *Fragility*. Especially when viewed in the light of the *Republic's* Homeric and Aristophanean subtexts, Socrates' remark at the beginning of Book 5 that he is prostrating himself before Adrasteia (*Resp.* 451a) appears to be a recantation, in advance, of the speeches to follow. (Readers interested in these matters should consult the studies cited below, in n22.) It is hard to avoid the conclusion Griswold reaches in his review of *Fragility* (*The American Scholar* 57.2 [1988]: 314-319): "Nussbaum pays insufficient attention to Platonic anonymity and its crucial consequences, as well as to the dramatic or rhetorical situation of the discourses uttered by Plato's dramatis personae. In sum, Nussbaum does not take

the dialogues seriously enough as works of literature. She thus fails to be true to her own thesis about the close proximity of philosophy to literature" (p. 317).

21. Plato is said to have sent Dionysius of Syracuse a work or works of Aristophanes in response to his request for material that would teach him about Athenian political life (this anecdote is cited in Alan H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Acharnians*, vol. 1 of *The Comedies of Aristophanes* [Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1980], p. 8), and to have written the following epigram on the occasion of Aristophanes' death: "The Graces, seeking to grasp some sacred ground that would not fall, discovered the soul of Aristophanes" (Olympiodorus [cited above, n. 1], 2.71-72). Internal evidence includes Socrates' reference to the *Clouds* in the *Apology*, the speech of Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, allusions to several Aristophanean dramas in the *Republic*, the crucial political metaphor of weaving in the *Statesman*, which is taken directly from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, and the relationship between the *Phaedrus* and the *Birds* that I discuss below.

22. I make the case for reading the *Republic* as a sophisticated and respectful response to the *Clouds* in my *Plato's Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy* (cited above, in n10). The importance of viewing the *Republic* in the light of the writings of Aristophanes has been virtually unnoticed in the secondary literature; one should consult also Arlene W. Saxenhouse, "Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the *Republic*," *American Political Science Review* (1972), pp. 888-901, and Allan Bloom, "Aristophanes and Plato: Response to Hall," reprinted from *Political Theory* 5.3 in Bloom, *Giants and Dwarfs* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 162-176.

23. A thoughtful elucidation of this insight may be found in Charles Segal, "'The Myth Was Saved': Reflections on Homer and the Mythology of Plato's *Republic*," *Hermes* 106.2 (1978): 315-336.

24. The myth of Tereus and its sources are given in *Aristophanes: Birds*, vol. 6 of *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, ed. and trans. Alan H. Sommerstein (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1987), p. 202, note to lines 15-16. The Athenian companions Peisthetaerus and Euelpides ("Son of Good-Hope") together represent the upward-directed and horizontal aspects of *eros*. Like the men of political ambition of whom Plato's Aristophanes speaks in the myth of the circle-people (*Symp.* 191e-192b), *Peisthetaerus' sexual preference is homoerotic (Birds 137-142); Euelpides, however, is associated with the desire for food, drink, and conviviality (Birds 128-134). (The reader should be warned that Sommerstein regularly reverses the traditional and almost certainly correct assignment of the speeches of the two Athenians in the first 161 lines of the Birds. See Sommerstein's explanatory note on p. 201.)*

25. As Sommerstein observes in his note to *Birds* 1705 (p. 309), the tongue was traditionally cut out of animals during sacrifice. Peisthetaerus also resembles Tereus in that he threatens to rape the goddess Iris (*Birds* 1253-1255) and eats his fellow birds. As Leo Strauss notes (in *Strauss, Socrates and Aristophanes*[1966][Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], p. 187), this is arguably worse than cannibalism, insofar as the birds are now Peisthetaerus' gods.

26. Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 37.

27. Quoted in the Hong edition of *Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus*, p. 287, n3.

28. This essay, a translation of "La pharmacie de Platon," is available in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 61-171. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text.

29. "Plato does not make a show of the chain of significations we are trying progressively to dig up. If there were any sense in asking such a question, which we don't believe, it would be impossible to say to what extent he manipulates it voluntarily or consciously, and at what point he is subject to constraints weighing upon his discourse

from 'language'" ("Pharmacy, p. 129; cf. p. 73). On p. 130, Derrida writes: "In a word, we do not believe that there exists, in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and outside."

30. Griswold, "Plato's Metaphilosophy: Why Plato Wrote Dialogues" (in *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* [cited above, n12], pp. 143-167), p. 290, n26. In this essay (henceforth cited parenthetically in the text), Griswold justifies the dialogue form on meta-philosophical grounds. He maintains that Plato's fundamental argument was with "the hordes of anti-philosophers" (p. 152), among whom we must now include Derrida and Rorty. Anti-philosophers are of importance to philosophers because the philosopher "cannot 'justify' or 'demonstrate' his own activity except by coming across or finding someone who is *not* already persuaded by its possibility and worth" (pp. 156-157, italics in original). Griswold concludes that Plato's philosophic dramas respond to the challenge of the anti-philosophic horde on the level of *ergon* rather than of *logos*, i.e., by attempting to *display* the deed of learning.

31. "Plato's Metaphilosophy" is helpful on this point. Griswold notes that Derrida and Rorty are engaged in attempting to persuade the philosopher that "philosophy is a hopeless, Sisyphean task." "This persuasion is not, in the final analysis, an argument. It is a rhetorical effort to shake the philosopher's faith in reason by raising ever more difficult metaphilosophical questions that the philosopher cannot yet answer and soon despairs of ever answering" (p. 155). As Griswold observes in *Self-Knowledge*, "the Derridean's participation in a discussion with the philosopher . . . contains an element of ruse and dissembling" (p. 236), because the Derridean rejects the very notion of philosophical discussion.

32. Criticisms of Derrida similar to Griswold's may be found in "Platonic Reconstruction," ch. 2 of Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 50-86. Rosen argues that Plato is "entirely superfluous" to Derrida's enterprise, that Derrida ignores "the stabilities of pretheoretical or everyday life," and that he has "a tin ear for theology" and "trivializes prophecy" (pp. 66, 70, 73, 74).

33. I would like to thank my colleague Paul A. Rahe for reading a draft of this essay and offering a number of helpful suggestions.