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The influence of Plato's *Phaedrus* on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*

Reading Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, one does not immediately think of the *Phaedrus*. In the opening line of his treatise, Aristotle indeed states that rhetoric is the 'counter-part' (ἀντίστροφος) of dialectic (*Rhetoric* I 1, 1354a1¹). For any reader of Plato, this statement echoes not the *Phaedrus*, but the *Gorgias*, more precisely Socrates' famous analogy according to which rhetoric is to justice what cookery is to medicine: not an art, but a part of flattery (*Gorgias* 464b1–465e1²). Beyond the first chapter of his treatise, it is the *Philebus* that Aristotle adds to the inter-textual space surrounding the *Rhetoric*. At *Rhetoric* I 11, Aristotle more or less restates Plato's definition of pleasure as the recovery of a natural harmony (compare I 11, 1369b33–35 and *Philebus* 42d5–7). At this point, no obvious trace of the *Phaedrus* or borrowing from this dialogue has struck the reader. This seeming absence of the *Phaedrus* is all the more surprising when one recalls that, besides the *Gorgias*, the second part of the *Phaedrus* (after 257b7) is one of the longest and philosophically most sophisticated treatments of rhetoric that one can find in Plato's dialogues. In his course on the *Sophist*, Heidegger notices the same problem and sees no way to clear up Aristotle's 'undeniably puzzling silence' concerning the *Phaedrus*.³

Besides Aristotle's silence, there is another problem for those interested in the influence of the *Phaedrus* on the *Rhetoric*. Despite the fact these two works both deal (at least in part in the case of the *Phaedrus*) with rhetoric, they seem to approach this topic from opposite points of view. Specialists of Aristotle sometimes suggest that, in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle *inverts* the priority of truth over the probable established by Plato in the *Phaedrus* in the field of rhetoric.⁴ Did not Plato famously subordinate the rhetorical use of probability to the dialectical search for truth in the second part of the *Phaedrus*? On the other hand, did not

1 On this "antistrophic" relation, see Brunshwig 1996 and Rapp 2016, 162–168. In this paper, I use the Greek text from Ross's edition of the *Rhetoric*, cf. Ross 1959.

2 I quote the Oxford Classical edition of Plato's texts, see Duke et al. 1995 for the first volume and Burnet 1901–1907 for the next ones. As Rapp 2016, 164 notes, Plato's own use of the expression ἀντίστροφος could be an allusion to Isocrates.

3 See Heidegger 1997, 234.

4 See e.g. Crubellier & Pellegrin 2002, 149.

Aristotle make the probable, rather than the necessary, the source of enthymemes, i.e. of rhetorical deductions (see e.g. I 2, 1357a30–33)? In this perspective, the influence of the *Phaedrus* is purely *negative*: in the *Rhetoric*, the down-to-earth Aristotle overturns his master’s impossibly demanding conception of rhetoric and proposes a type of logic suited for our human, all too human, needs.

While there is undeniably some truth in these readings, my objective in this chapter is to complicate the story of the relationship between the *Phaedrus* and the *Rhetoric*. I will argue that, although Aristotle himself does not say it in so many words, the *Phaedrus* has a deep influence over the *three books* of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. I will also show that this influence is not only negative, as some scholars believe, but that Aristotle draws and expands on some results and propositions of the *Phaedrus*. After demonstrating how influential the *Phaedrus* is for the *Rhetoric*, I will come back, in my conclusion, to the difference between these two works.

1 The Influence of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric* III

Even if it has an air of paradox, I will start my enquiry with the last book of the *Rhetoric*. Despite being the last book, scholars argue that *Rhetoric* III was composed before and/or separately from the first two books. Consequently, they maintain that *Rhetoric* III was attached to the first two books at a later date, perhaps not by Aristotle himself.⁵ In this paper, I will refrain from considerations about dates of composition. I will content myself with examining the influence of the *Phaedrus* on the *Rhetoric* as it was transmitted to us, i.e. as three books displaying a more or less consistent project. To put it very generally, according to this perspective, while the first two books are concerned with what is best to say in rhetorical arguments, the third deals with the best way to say it, that is, the style (λέξις) required for the presentation of the speech and the organisation of the speech itself (τάξις).⁶ In order to detect the influence of the *Phaedrus* on this project, I will start with Aristotle’s discussion of the organization of speech and style in book III, for it is in this discussion that the traces of the *Phaedrus* are the most obvious.⁷ I will organize the evidence of an influence of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric* III from the clearest case to the most speculative one.

⁵ See, for instance, Fortenbaugh 2006, 383–387.

⁶ See Rapp 2018.

⁷ Here I agree with Fortenbaugh 2006, 357 who contends that “(…) *Rhetoric* III is very much influenced by Plato”.

The clearest case of influence is the only explicit quote of the *Phaedrus* in the entire treatise. In his discussion of style, at *Rhetoric* III 7, Aristotle explains that an enthusiastic style that triggers emotions in the hearers is mostly appropriate to poetry. He adds that it can also be used in a rhetorical speech, but only ironically *as Plato does* in the *Phaedrus* (see τὰ ἐν τῷ Φαίδρῳ at III 7, 1408b20). The allusion is to *Phaedrus* 238c5–d5 and 241e1–5 where Socrates justifies his dithyrambic and epic style by ironically attributing his inspiration to the Nymphs inhabiting the banks of Ilisos.⁸ Aristotle's reference here is very precise. It shows that Aristotle knew well the content of the *Phaedrus* and was interested not only by the second 'rhetorical part' of the dialogue, but also by the one containing the different speeches about *erōs* and the long Socratic palinode.

This first-hand knowledge of the *Phaedrus* is confirmed by a second borrowing, which, although not explicit, almost certainly refers back to the *Phaedrus*. A bit later in book III, Aristotle switches from a discussion of style to a discussion of the organisation of speech and of the different parts of speech. He starts by analyzing the introduction of speech (προοίμιον). After discussing the different functions of an introduction in two species of rhetorical speech (epideictic and forensic or judicial), Aristotle explains that formal introductions are needed only if the hearer is a man whose judgement is poor (φαῦλον). If the hearer is not such a person, formal introductions are not needed. What is needed is only a brief summary that gives its head to the body of the speech (see ἵνα ἔχη ὡς περ σῶμα κεφαλὴν at III 14, 1415b8–9). This comparison between a discourse and a living being has a Platonic origin. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates compares any *logos* to a living creature whose limbs fit each other and the whole (*Phaedrus* 264c1–5; the metaphor is resumed by Phaedrus at 268d3–5; see also 269c2–3). As is known, this metaphor did not only impress Aristotle, it also influenced the Neoplatonic interpreters who used it for elaborating their hermeneutic doctrine of the *skopos*. I cannot engage here on the importance of this passage for the doctrine of *skopos*,⁹ or even for our interpretation of Plato's dialogues, but I only note in passing that, *neither* in Aristotle's *nor* in Plato's versions, the metaphor of speech as a living being implies the idea of *unity* that will be so central for the Neoplatonic theory of the *skopos*. On the face of it, there seems to be no talk of organic *unity* in Plato and Aristotle's shared metaphor.¹⁰ Be that as it may, what is important in this context is that Plato and Aristotle do share this metaphor in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Rhetoric*.

⁸ Note that Socrates uses the same kind of rhetorical strategy at *Cratylus* 396d2–8 where he attributes tongue in cheek his etymological inspiration to Euthyphro.

⁹ See the contribution by Pieter d'Hoine in this volume and Coulter 1976, chapter 3.

¹⁰ This point is also made by Heath 1989, 18–19. On how the single *skopos* assumption can (and cannot) be justified from the Neoplatonic point of view, see Baltzly 2017.

The third trace of the influence of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric* III is less direct. Before analyzing the different parts of speech, Aristotle himself distinguishes two parts of speech: the presentation of the case (πρόθεσις) and the argument or the proof for the case (πίστις). For Aristotle, these two parts of speech are sufficient because other parts of speech can be reduced either to the presentation of the case or to the argument for the case (for instance, the so-called ‘refutation of the opponent’ (ἀντιδικός) is still part of the argument). Both are also necessary, for a proof must be a proof of something and no one presents a case if not for proving it. Aristotle complains that rhetoricians of his time do not understand this simple division and instead divide speech in an absurd (γελοῖως), pointless (κενός) and silly (ληρωδῶδες) way. He gives the example of Theodorus and his school, which distinguishes between ‘narration’ (διήγησις), ‘supplementary narration’ (ἐπιδιήγησις), ‘preliminary narration’ (προδιήγησις), ‘refutation’ (ἔλεγχος), and ‘supplementary refutation’ (ἐπεξέλεγχος) (see *Rhetoric* III 13, 1414b13–18). This text certainly parallels Plato’s criticism of rhetorical procedures at *Phaedrus* 266e2–267a2 where Socrates attributes similar far-fetched divisions of speech to Theodorus.¹¹

Moreover, both Aristotle’s and Plato’s criticisms of traditional rhetoric underline its randomness and its lack of systematisation. At III 13 for instance, Aristotle admits that narration belongs to the judicial species of the rhetorical speech, but notices that it does not belong to the epideictic and deliberative species of the rhetorical speech (III 13, 1414a37–38; for the difference between these three kinds of rhetorical speech, see *Rhetoric* I 3.). Therefore, narration does not belong to the rhetorical kind as such or *qua* rhetorical kind. At I 1, Aristotle’s criticism of logographers is slightly different, but not incompatible. His point there (see I 1, 1354b16–22) is that those who have composed treatises on the *Art of Speech* have focused on peripheral aspects of the topic (τὰ ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος) and have missed the authentic body of persuasion, i.e. the *enthymeme* or rhetorical syllogism.¹² If multiplying the parts of speech in order to convince the hearers is pointless, it is because people are mostly convinced when they think that something has been demonstrated (I 1, 1355a5–6). It is then on these convincing demonstrations and not on the parts of speech that logographers should have focused in order to develop a genuine rhetorical art.¹³

¹¹ As is noted by Cope & Sandys 1877, 160.

¹² I will come back to the *enthymeme* in the next section of this paper.

¹³ Note that even if Aristotle later extends (at I 2) artistic proofs to the state of mind of the hearers and to the character of the speaker, he remains critical of the strategy of traditional rhetoric, which focuses on producing emotions rather than on the different kinds of technical proofs such as rhetorical deductions. See I 2, 1356a16–17. On Aristotle’s criticism of handbook

The gist of Plato's attack on traditional rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* is also that all these rhetorical techniques alone do not make an art or a *technē*. For Socrates, it seems that there are 'some holes' in the fabric of rhetorical procedures (see διεσθηκός, 268a6). He argues that these lists of procedures are, at best, antecedents and preliminaries to the art of rhetoric (269b4–c5), exactly as the ability to make someone vomit or defecate, or to induce warmth and coolness in a body is nothing else than a preparation to the acquisition of medical art (268a8–c4). The actual possession of a rhetorical *technē* implies the ability to determine exactly how, when and to whom the different rhetorical procedures must be applied. It also implies that the person who uses the logographic techniques sees how they fit together in an organized whole. In absence of these conditions, one cannot speak of a genuine rhetorical *technē*. Both for Plato in the *Phaedrus* and for Aristotle in *Rhetoric* III (and I 1), then, traditional rhetoric is flawed because it fails to meet the criterion of a genuine *technē*.

As this discussion reveals, the influence of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric* III is diverse: Aristotle does not only refer to specific passages of the *Phaedrus* (the irony justifying a pathetic style; the metaphor of the speech as a living being), but also draws and expands on Plato's criticism according to which the divisions of speech by traditional logographers do not constitute a *technē*. Before examining the second book of Aristotle's treatise, I want to suggest a bolder hypothesis. I contend that the very existence of *Rhetoric* III, or at least the justification for the existence of this book, owes something to the *Phaedrus*.

In order to justify the transition from *Rhetoric* II to *Rhetoric* III, Aristotle – or whoever wrote the transition between these books¹⁴ – explains that after examining thought (διάνοια) in the first two books, one must deal with the style (λέξις) and the arrangement or organisation (τάξις) of speech (II 26, 1403a34–1403b3). Similarly, at the beginning of book III, Aristotle distinguishes between the study of the sources of persuasions (ἐκ τίνων αἱ πίστεις ἔσσονται), on the one hand, and the study of the style required in rhetoric and of the arrangement of the parts of speech (πῶς χρῆ τάξει τὰ μέρη τοῦ λόγου), on the other (III 1, 1403b6–8). While the former constitutes the core of book I and II, the latter is carried out in book III. I suggest that this distinction between the content and the form, the thought and the disposition of the rhetorical speech can be traced back to the categories mobilized by Socrates to assess Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus*. At 235e5–236a6, Socrates reasons that since the content of Lysias' speech about love necessarily derives from

writings in rhetoric and on his defence (or assumption) of a proof-centred conception of rhetoric, see Dow 2014a, 25–31.

14 Perhaps Andronicus of Rhodes, see Fortenbaugh 2006, 383, 386–387.

his standpoint (anyone who argues that the non-lover should be favoured over the lover will praise the prudence of the former and blame the foolishness of the latter), one must assess the quality of Lysias' arrangement (διάθεσις) not of his invention (εὕρεσις) (for invention, see also *Phaedrus* 278a7). This distinction between εὕρεσις and διάθεσις seems to match the one used at the beginning of *Rhetoric* III between the things to say and the right way to say them, between δίανοια and the couple λέξις/τάξις. For that matter, Aristotle himself sometimes uses the word διάθεσις for describing the type of topics he studies in *Rhetoric* III (see τὸ ταῦτα τῇ λέξει διαθέσθαι at III 1, 1403b20) and the verb εὕρισκω to describe the type of topics he studies in *Rhetoric* I and II (see the use of τὰ δὲ εὕρεῖν for referring to technical proofs at I 2, 1355b39). If I am right, then, Aristotle – or the person who wrote the transition between *Rhetoric* II and III after him – justifies the existence of *Rhetoric* III with conceptual distinctions also used by Plato in the *Phaedrus*.

2 The Influence of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric* II

After having reviewed the various influences of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric* III, let us turn to the second book of Aristotle's treatise. As I will maintain in this section, in *Rhetoric* II, Plato's influence is less scattered and more programmatic. With other commentators,¹⁵ I take it that, in chapters 2–17 of *Rhetoric* II, Aristotle develops the program exposed by Plato in the *Phaedrus* for transforming rhetoric into a genuine art. But what, exactly, is the program exposed by Plato and in which sense these chapters of *Rhetoric* II can be said to accomplish it?

As we have seen in the previous section, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates criticizes traditional logographic procedures for their lack of systematization. In order to establish a genuine rhetorical *technē*, Socrates suggests a three-way method:

- a) One must first determine the nature of the soul, i.e. say if it is one or many;
- b) One must then determine on what souls act and by what souls are acted upon;
- c) One must moreover classify (διαταξάμενος) the kinds of speeches and the kinds of souls in order to teach which speech is able to persuade which soul (271a4–c1).

At 271c10–272b4, Socrates repeats these points and adds a fourth one:

¹⁵ See for instance Havet 1846, 11; Gomperz 1907, 341; Dufour 1932, 16; Düring 1966, 141; Grimaldi 1972, 21–22; Schütrumpf 1994, 104.

- d) One must finally master the *kairos*, i.e. one must know when to use and when not to use such type of speech to influence such type of soul (271e2–272a8).

According to Socrates, then, studying the nature of hearers and the different types of souls is a necessary condition for establishing a genuine rhetorical *technē* (in addition to (b) and (c), see 273d7–e4). I propose to interpret the study of emotions (πάθη) such as anger, fear or shame at *Rhetoric* II 2–11 and the study of social and generational characters (ῥήθη) at *Rhetoric* II 12–17 as Aristotle's contributions to the enquiry on the nature of souls required by Plato. Someone who studies emotions knows how “souls are acted upon”, as Plato puts it (Aristotle's emotions involve *phantasia* and therefore the soul: see II 2, 1378b9–10 for anger and II 5, 1382a21–22 for fear). For instance, if I know the nature of anger, I am able to determine what kind of people or what kind of souls gets angry, for which reasons and against whom (II 1, 1378a22–24). Similarly, studying how – beyond emotions – age, social status and even political constitutions (see I 8) influence people's moral character contributes to a better understanding of the nature of the hearers of a rhetorical speech. To be sure, Aristotle does not say explicitly that he is elaborating on Socrates' program, but one can note that he presents his study of different emotions at 2–11 as a form of *division* (see διαφέρουσι at 1378a20 and διέλωμεν at 1378a28). For each emotion, he proposes to distinguish, (i) the state of mind of the person experiencing this emotion; (ii) the type of person towards which this emotion is directed; (iii) the reasons for which this emotion is experienced (II 1, 1378a22–24). This use of division for studying emotions in a rhetorical context might be a decisive clue of a Platonic heritage, for Socrates in the *Phaedrus* argues that dividing the object one wants to study is a necessary condition for speaking and thinking (265c5–266c5), and makes clear that applying division to the soul is a prerequisite for a genuine rhetoric (271c10–d4, 277b8–c1).

However, the thesis according to which, in *Rhetoric* II 2–17, Aristotle applies the program exposed by Plato in the *Phaedrus* for creating a genuine rhetorical *technē* is not uncontroversial. Some commentators argue that Aristotle's conception of rhetoric is too different from Plato's to have been influenced by the program of the *Phaedrus*.¹⁶ As such, this objection does not seem decisive: it might very well be the case that Plato and Aristotle have different views on rhetoric, but that does not in itself prevent Aristotle from recognizing that some parts of Plato's program for elaborating a genuine rhetoric (such as the study of the different types of souls) are valid and worthy of systematic development.

¹⁶ See Woerther 2007, 262–267.

Moreover, the often-alleged oppositions between Aristotle's and Plato's conceptions of rhetoric can be qualified.

To begin with, Plato does not completely dismiss probability in rhetoric, as one sometimes reads.¹⁷ As far as I can see, Socrates' point in the *Phaedrus* is rather that mastering the use of probability in a rhetorical speech requires mastering the art of using similarities, which in turn requires a knowledge of truth (261a7–262c4, cf. 273d2–8). Truth and persuasion based on probability cannot be separated, contrary to what traditional rhetoric suggests (259e7–260a4, 260d4–9).¹⁸ In the opening chapter of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle actually makes the same point: he contends that it is one and the same capacity that leads men to truth and to what is similar to truth (I 1, 1355a14–15).¹⁹ So, far from disagreeing on the use of probability in rhetoric, Plato and Aristotle both underline a relation of entailment between knowing what is true and knowing what is probable.²⁰

Regarding the so-called 'imprecision' of rhetorical deductions (or enthymemes) that would be irreconcilable with Plato's quest for precision and exactness,²¹ one can concede that Aristotle often highlights the poor intellectual skills of the hearers who judge the quality of a rhetorical speech (see I 2, 1357a11–12; III 1, 1404a7–8; III 14, 1415a25–26). However, strictly speaking, audience limitations impact less the precision of the enthymemes than the length of the deductive chains acceptable in rhetorical deductions (I 2, 1357a1–4; II 22, 1395b25–26). It is also true that, in enthymemes, a premise is often (πολλάκις) omitted (see I 2, 1357a16–17). But, here again, this omission increases the convincing power of an enthymeme rather than affecting its precision: when a member of an audience is able to provide the missing premise, she feels pleasure (see I 2, 1357a17–21; II 23,

¹⁷ Woerther 2007, 263: "(...) la définition que Platon prétend fournir de la rhétorique dans le *Phèdre* est en revanche tout entière fondée sur le vrai, et son rejet du vraisemblable est catégorique".

¹⁸ Whether or not one finds Socrates' reasoning convincing does not directly affect the issue: for Plato, it seems that knowing what is true implies knowing what is probable.

¹⁹ See particularly Aristotle's τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ἀληθεῖ at *Rhetoric* I 1, 1355a14, which seems to point to Plato's ὁμοιότητα τοῦ ἀληθοῦς at *Phaedrus* 273d4.

²⁰ Note also that *both* Plato *and* Aristotle criticize the use of probability in the earlier rhetorical tradition: compare the criticism of Tisias' use of probability at *Phaedrus* 273b3–d8 and of Corax's use of probability at *Rhetoric* II 24, 1402a17–23 (Tisias and Corax might actually be the same person, see Cole 1991). While the details of Plato's and Aristotle's accounts may differ, they are not incompatible and offer a complementary (critical) vision of probability in the earlier traditional rhetoric, see Goebel 1989, 51.

²¹ See Woerther 2007, 266.

1400b29–33) and is therefore more complacent towards the speech presented (see I 2, 1356a15–16).²²

One might retort that since, for Aristotle, rhetoric is concerned with what happens for the most part, it follows that the premises of enthymemes are not always necessary (although they can be necessary) but are mostly true for the most part (I 2, 1357a23–33).²³ This contingency characterizing the field of rhetoric and of rhetorical deductions in Aristotle's treatise would then be a decisive departure from Plato's view in the *Phaedrus* in which rhetoric is conceived as an *epistēmē* concerned with what is necessarily true. However, as we have seen, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato does not dismiss the field of what is probable, but rather argues that knowing what is true is a condition for knowing what is probable. Moreover, Plato is perfectly aware that efficient persuasion requires the ability to adapt to a given situation: Socrates lists the mastery of *kairos* among the necessary conditions of the mastery of rhetoric (see (d) above and *Statesman* 304d4–10). Much like a doctor (see the comparison between the doctor's and the rhetorician's skills at 268a8–c4 and 270b1–10), a true rhetorician does not automatically apply a scientific deduction but is able to adjust her acquired knowledge to the situation at hand (which is of course contingent), even if that means refraining from speaking (271e2–272a8). This ability to adapt one's knowledge to the situation at hand means that rhetoric is not only a science based on dialectic, but also a *practice* that goes with a specific nature (cf. εἰ μὲν σοι ὑπάρχει φύσει ῥητορικῶ εἶναι, ἔση ῥήτωρ ἐλλόγιμος, προσλαβὼν ἐπιστήμην τε καὶ μελέτην, 269d4–5). So, rather than ignoring the contingency of the field of rhetorical persuasion and of the type of hearers that must be persuaded, Plato gives it an important place in the establishment of his true art and practice of speaking.

Since Plato's rhetoric does not simply dismiss the contingency of the rhetorical field, there is no relevant difference between Plato and Aristotle's view of rhetoric that prevents the study of emotions and characters in *Rhetoric* II 2–17 from being an elaboration of the program exposed by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. The traditional view that detects an influence of the *Phaedrus* on the psychology of the *Rhetoric* is therefore warranted.

²² As Burnyeat 1996, 101 notes: "(...) the fact that brevity is a virtue in enthymemes tells us nothing about the standards of validity to be expected of a rhetorical speech, nor does Aristotle ever suggest that it does. A premise suppressed is still a premise of the argument."

²³ Since certain premises in rhetorical arguments are true for the most part, it is possible that, for Aristotle, the inference from these premises to a conclusion also holds for the most part rather than necessary. In this sense, enthymemes could be conceived as "relaxed" deductions. For discussion, see Burnyeat 1996, 101–105.

3 The Influence of the *Phaedrus* on *Rhetoric I*

Rhetoric I is dense and complex. An exhaustive study of this book is outside the scope of this paper. In this section, I only want to call attention to a passage where Aristotle conceives of the relation between rhetoric and dialectic in a way similar to Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, as I will argue.

At the beginning of his treatise (I 1, 1355a3–18), Aristotle explains that, since an enthymeme is a kind of deduction and that studying deduction is the business of dialectic – or at least of one of its parts²⁴ – the person who is the most able to perceive the sources of deductions, i.e. the dialectician, is also the most able to construct enthymemes. Hence, for Aristotle, being a dialectician seems to be a sufficient condition for being a rhetorician.²⁵ It is not completely clear from the text whether or not it is also a necessary condition, but Aristotle seems to hint that it is: he says that it is exactly the same ability that leads men to truth (in deductions in general) and to what is probable (in rhetorical deductions), so that it is difficult to imagine someone who is able to construct an enthymeme but not a deduction. Moreover, even when orators use examples for supplying the lack of argument, Aristotle suggests that philosophical skills are still involved in their rhetorical persuasion (see II 20, 1394a4–5). Therefore, for Aristotle, the skills required for rhetorical persuasion are the same as the one required for philosophical enquiries and dialectical deductions.²⁶

24 Perhaps Aristotle refers here to the “peirastic”, agonistic and didactic uses of dialectic distinguished at *Topics* VIII 5, 159a25–36 and at *Sophistical Refutations* 2, 165a38–165b11. On this distinction between parts of dialectic, see Moraux 1968, 287–290. Another option is that Aristotle refers here to a “logical branch” of dialectic that goes beyond the discovery of dialectical topoi and is concerned with the analysis of deductive arguments as such: see Rapp 2016, 183–189.

25 Provided that the dialectician is aware of the contingency of the topics treated in rhetoric (on this contingency, see section II above). This relation of entailment between dialectical skills and rhetorical skills can explain why Diogenes Laërtius recounts that Aristotle taught his pupils dialectic and rhetoric simultaneously (see *Vit.* V 3: καὶ πρὸς θέσιν συνεγύμναζε τοὺς μαθητὰς, ἅμα καὶ ῥητορικῶς ἐπασκῶν). If being skilled at dialectic implies being skilled at rhetoric, to train someone in dialectic is also to train this person in rhetoric.

26 I do not mean to suggest here that ‘rhetoric’ and ‘dialectic’ are two names for the same thing. As Aristotle says in the first line of the treatise, the relation between rhetoric and dialectic is ‘antistrophic’ or one of analogy. For most commentators, the main difference between rhetoric and dialectic is that rhetoric is practised in public places, whereas dialectic is not (cf. Crubellier & Pellegrin 2002, 142–143; Chiron 2007, 60). However, at different points of his treatise (e.g. I 3, 1358b9–10 and II 18, 1391b8–12), Aristotle seems to consider that deliberative rhetoric can be private (Plato in the *Phaedrus* makes the same remark for rhetoric in general, see 261a7–9 and Pernot 2002, 231). The specificity of rhetorical contexts has less to do with them

Now, even if the argument of the second part of the *Phaedrus* is particularly intricate, I take it that Plato argues for a similar relation between the dialectician and the rhetorician. At 269b5–7, Socrates suggests that it is impossible to define rhetoric without knowing what dialectic is. As we learn shortly afterwards (271a4–272b4), this requirement means applying the method of division, i.e. dialectic²⁷, to the different types of souls and to the different types of speeches.²⁸ In the summaries of 273d2–274a5 and 277b5–c6, Socrates repeats the point: applying the method of division to the soul and to the subject matter at hand is a necessary prerequisite for the aspiring orator. To become an orator, the dialectician only needs to add the mastery of *kairos* and a good deal of practice (269d4–5 and section II above). For Plato, then, dialectical skills are the basis of a genuine rhetorical *technē* and of every art of writing (276e4–277a4).

My exegetical suggestion is that Aristotle endorses Plato's position when he argues in *Rhetoric* I that the rhetorical ability is the same as the dialectical one.

An important objection to my reading must be discussed in some detail. Even if we grant that rhetorical skills and dialectical skills are the same in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Rhetoric*, it remains possible that 'dialectic' actually means two completely different things. For instance, it could be the case that, for Plato, the dialectical skill is the ability to reach the truth about the subject matter, whereas for Aristotle, dialectical skill only means the ability to draw good inferences from plausible starting points. In this case, the different understandings of the word 'dialectic' between the two authors would be such as to reduce the parallel noted between *Rhetoric* I and the second part of the *Phaedrus* to a mere verbal echo or even to an implicit Aristotelian criticism.²⁹

However, let us focus on the passage of *Rhetoric* I where Aristotle discusses the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric (I 1, 1355a3–18). In this passage, Aristotle does not seem to restrict dialectic deductions to deductions with plausible or accepted starting points as he does elsewhere: rather, he seems to understand dialectic as the study of deductions *in general* (see *περὶ δὲ συλλογισμοῦ ὁμοίως ἅπαντος τῆς διαλεκτικῆς ἐστὶν ἰδεῖν* at 1355a8–9), including, then, deductions that

being private than with the fact that they are *exoteric*, so to say. By contrast with dialectic, which broaches every topic (*Top.* I 1, 100a19) but not with everyone (*Top.* VIII 14, 164b8), rhetoric broaches only certain topics (deliberative, epideictic and judiciary) with everyone, even if the judge is a simple person (I 2, 1357a11–12; III 1, 1404a7–8; III 14, 1415a25–26). For other differences between dialectic and rhetoric, see Rapp 2018.

²⁷ For the identification between the method of division and dialectic in the *Phaedrus*, see 265c5–266c5.

²⁸ The use of the word *διηρημένων* at 271d4 makes clear that the classification of souls and speeches is an application of the method of division and of dialectic.

²⁹ In this perspective, see Dow 2014a, 34–35.

start from true starting points.³⁰ In addition, he makes clear that he understands dialectic as the ability to identify the source of deductions and the way they come about (ἐκ τίνων καὶ πῶς γίνεται συλλογισμός, at 1355a11) – a description that strongly recalls the project of the *Analytics* (see e.g. *Prior Analytics* I 4, 25b26–27; I 26, 43a16–24; I 31, 46b38–40), which of course encompasses the study of and the ability to generate any type of deductions, not only deductions that start from plausible starting points.³¹ The type of dialectic that enables one to be a good rhetorician according to Aristotle seems then closer to the study of deductions carried out in the *Analytics* than to the study of deductions with plausible starting points carried out in the *Topics*.³² Finally, note how Aristotle justifies (see γὰρ at 1355a14) his claim according to which it is the same person who studies the sources of deduction (the dialectician) and who constructs enthymemes (the rhetorician): by saying that the same ability enables one to see the truth and what it is similar to the truth. But that is very close if not identical to Plato’s understanding of the relationship between what is true and what is probable in the *Phaedrus* (see section II above).

Perhaps one might retort that Aristotle uses dialectic in a broad sense in this passage of *Rhetoric* I. Perhaps what he really means is that the rhetorician and the dialectician are the same person because they both start from accepted opinions or *endoxai* (and no more than that). This understanding of what dialectic means in the *Rhetoric* would be in keeping with Aristotle’s conception of dialectic in the *Topics* (which is cited shortly afterwards at *Rhetoric* I 1, 1355a26–29). For the sake of the argument, let us grant that Aristotle’s conception of dialectic in *Rhetoric* I is the same as that presented in the *Topics* and that both deduce from acceptable

30 In connection to dialectic, Aristotle also speaks of ‘logical’ deductions (τοὺς λογικοὺς συλλογισμούς, 1355a13–14). This last expression is controversial. Some (e.g. Grimaldi 1980, 22; Chiron 2007, 119, n. 23) suggest that, in this context where “logical” deductions are meant to discriminate dialectic ability that reaches the truth from rhetorical ability that reaches what is similar to the truth, ‘logical’ deductions are deductions with true starting points, or even scientific demonstrations; others (see Dow 2014a, 34, n. 66) suggest that ‘logical’ deductions imply, more than enthymemes, a focus on the validity of the argument. A good study of the “logical” argument in the Aristotelian *corpus* (see Mosquera 1998) concludes that Aristotle calls ‘logical’ the type of topic broached not by his own dialectic (as it is described in the *Topics*) but by *Plato’s dialectic* or by his own science of being *qua* being (for instance, whether or not there is one single science of a pair of contraries is a ‘logical’ topic).

31 I cannot see on which grounds Dow 2014, 17 interprets ἐκ τίνων at 1355a11 as referring to the ability to select premises that are acceptable to the listener (rather than referring to the ability to find any type of premise for a given conclusion). Compare Aristotle’s method for finding premises for a given conclusion at *Prior Analytics* I 27–29.

32 This is why Rapp 2016, 191 believes that there was “an elementary pre-syllogistic logical theory quietly at work in the background of both the *Topics* and the *Rhetoric*” and that this logical theory belonged to dialectic: see n. 24.

premises. Since Plato's conception of dialectic in the *Phaedrus* implies the actual knowledge of the subject matter rather than a good deduction from premises that are merely acceptable, one can be led to believe that Aristotle actually does *not* agree with Plato's position in the *Phaedrus* when he argues in *Rhetoric* I that the rhetorical ability is the same as the dialectical one. But in fact, the difference between Aristotle's conception of dialectic in the *Topics* and perhaps in the *Rhetoric*, on the one hand, and Plato's conception of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*, on the other, might not be as important as it seems at first glance.

Different commentators of the *Topics* interpret the *Topics* as a “methodology for establishing definition”.³³ They mean that dialectical discussions enable to assess the generic status of some candidate properties that could belong to the essence of the subject considered in a given dialectical problem (see e.g. *Top.* I 6, 102b27–35). The conjunction of the generic properties that pass the different dialectical tests then provides the definition of the subject at hand.³⁴ According to this interpretation of the dialectic in the *Topics*, dialectic helps to establish definitions. Now, even if in the *Phaedrus*, the method of division has classificatory purposes, Plato also says that it enables to provide a *definition of the subject* about which one might want to say something.³⁵ More importantly, Plato says that this definition *might be right or wrong*, as long as the criterion of consistency is fulfilled.³⁶ The method of division or dialectic does not even need to provide definitions that are true in the sense of correctly describing the empirical world. It only needs to provide definitions that are consistent and enable one to talk and think. In this interpretation of the dialectical method in the *Phaedrus*, one goal of dialectic is to provide consistent definitions. But that is also the goal of the “methodology for reaching definition” that we have seen is taking place in the *Topics* according to some commentators. Therefore, even if we understand dialectic in *Rhetoric* I as concerned with deductions that start from acceptable

³³ See De Pater 1965; Brunschwig 1967, XLVIII–I; Delcomminette 2018.

³⁴ See Delcomminette 2018, 238, who adds that, for Aristotle, “l’articulation et la formulation rigoureuse de celle-ci [i.e. of the definition] requièrent en plus l’usage de la méthode de division”.

³⁵ See 265d4–5: “(..) the purpose [of the first procedure of dialectic, i.e. collection] being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition (ἵνα ἕκαστον ὀριζόμενος δηλον ποιῆι περί οὗ ἂν αἰεὶ διδάσκειν ἐθέλη).” (The translation is from Hackforth 1972, 132).

³⁶ See 265d5–7: “For example, take the definition given just now of love: whether it was right or wrong, at all events it was that which enabled our discourse to achieve lucidity and consistency (ὡσπερ τὸ νυνδὴ περί Ἔρωτος ὃ ἔστιν ὀρισθέν εἶτ' εὖ εἶτε κακῶς ἐλέχθη, τὸ γούν σαφές καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ ὁμολογούμενον διὰ ταῦτα ἔσχεν εἰπεῖν ὁ λόγος).” (I am again quoting Hackforth's translation and the text he translates).

premises (as consistency with the *Topics* suggests), there exist interpretations of Aristotle's dialectic and Plato's dialectic that allow one to read Aristotle's view on the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric in *Rhetoric* I as an endorsement (rather than a criticism) of Plato's view in the *Phaedrus*.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that *Rhetoric* III is full of explicit and implicit references to the *Phaedrus* (the metaphor of speech as a living being, the criticism of the parts of speech, the distinction between form and content, etc.). I have explained and defended the position according to which the psycho-sociology of *Rhetoric* II 2–17 develops the program exposed by Socrates in the second part of the *Phaedrus* after his criticism of the traditional logographers. Finally, I have argued that in *Rhetoric* I.1, Aristotle endorses rather than criticises Plato's view on the relation between dialectic and rhetoric. If I am correct on these points, it follows that Plato's *Phaedrus* has a deep, various and positive influence on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, contrary to what it is often argued.

To conclude, I would like to pause and reflect on the exact nature of the difference between the two perspectives. The first difference that might strike the reader is that while Plato reduces the empirical diversity of rhetorical contexts to the mastery of similarities (261a7–e4), Aristotle not only maintains a distinction between deliberative, juridical and epideictic rhetoric but also studies separately their argumentative *topoi* (see I 4–15). Nevertheless, this difference is probably a red herring, since, after the study of emotions and characters in book II, Aristotle also reduces the empirical diversity of rhetorical contexts to argumentative *topoi* that are common to the three kinds of rhetoric and, for that matter, to dialectic (see II 18–26 and singularly II 23–24).

The real difference between Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions of rhetoric rather lies in the goal of rhetoric according to each author.

For Plato and for Aristotle, rhetoric is meant to convince souls. But whereas Aristotle focuses on the verb: 'to convince', Plato focuses on its object: 'soul'. At *Phaedrus* 270e4–271a1, he identifies souls as the genuine object of rhetoric. A bit later, he characterizes rhetoric as a way to lead souls, a *psychagogy* (see 271c10 and already 261a7–9). Finally, at 273e5–8, he makes explicit that this psychagogy enables one to speak and to behave in a way that suits not the other men, but the gods themselves. This brief allusion to theology at the end of the dialogue must remind us that the 'rhetorical' part of the *Phaedrus* belongs to a whole that also contains a long Socratic palinode revealing the mythical destiny of human souls

and their relationship to the gods. Speaking correctly is for Plato essentially a way to lead a *good* life, a life that is divine rather than tyrannical or bestial.

By contrast, in Aristotle's treatise, the finality of rhetoric is very different: rhetoric is above anything else a way to convince, that is, a way to win over the judgment of the hearer (I 3, 1358b1–2; II 1, 1377b20–21; II 18, 1391b7–8). That is why, according to Aristotle, rhetoric is not in itself oriented towards a good life as it is in Plato's *Phaedrus*, but is morally neutral.³⁷ Used unjustly, rhetoric can inflict the greatest harm. Nevertheless, like strength, health, wealth and power, rhetoric can be useful provided that it is used with a sense of justice (I 1, 1355b2–7). At any rate, rhetoric remains the only systematic tool that enables one to convey science, truth and justice in an exoteric context (I 1, 1355a21–29). With some indulgence for the specificity of this exoteric context, the Socrates of the *Apology* would probably not have been condemned and executed.³⁸

³⁷ Which does not prevent rhetorical proofs to incorporate some norms, but these are epistemic, not ethical, see Dow 2014a and Dow 2014b.

³⁸ I would like to thank Simon Fortier for polishing my English.

