When Plato argues in the *Phaedrus* that if rhetoric is to attain the status of *techne*, it must include dialectic, the question arises what the conjunction of rhetoric and dialectic means, especially given Plato’s well-known opposition to rhetoric. In the first section of the paper I consider why Socrates puts forward an account of rhetoric at all and how the account of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* differs from that in the *Gorgias*. In the second section I argue that Plato introduces dialectic into rhetoric because dialectic provides the material for arguments, and speeches must have arguments if they are to persuade. In the final section I consider the differences between rhetoric and philosophy in the light of Plato’s arguments on dialectic in the *Phaedrus*.

To step into the *Phaedrus* is to enter a dialogue so rich and multi-faceted that any one approach or concern seems inadequate in the face of the whole. With that caveat, I signal my awareness, and beg your indulgence, as I examine a single thread of this dialogue, namely, the attempt to consider what basis there is for making rhetoric into a *techne*, or art, and in particular, what role can be assigned to dialectic and argument in that process.

Dialectic refers to a method of arguing or reasoning. It takes a number of forms in Plato, but without regard for the different forms it takes, it always constitutes for Plato the primary method for the pursuit of knowledge. As the engine, so to speak, that enables philosophical endeavors to progress, dialectic is so closely associated with philosophy in Plato as to be almost identical to it. Hence, when Plato argues in the *Phaedrus* that if rhetoric is to attain the status of *techne*, it must include dialectic, questions arise: what does the conjunction of rhetoric and dialectic mean for rhetoric, especially given Plato’s well-known opposition to rhetoric? What kind of rhetoric is this which has dialectic at its heart? Is this rhetoric at all or is it rather philosophy in a different guise?

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1 I am grateful to the audience that heard this paper at Boston College for stimulating questions, and to Frédérique Woerther for invaluable criticism and assistance.

These questions seem to me crucial for understanding both the *Phaedrus* and Plato’s view of rhetoric more generally. But it does not seem to me that previous scholars have treated these questions clearly enough to reveal what Plato is actually arguing. As a result Plato’s purposes have remained to some extent obscure. In the first part of the paper I will consider some preliminary questions: why is it that in the *Phaedrus* Socrates puts forward an account of rhetoric at all? how does the account of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* differ from that in the *Gorgias*? and what does Plato’s approach to rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* reveal about his purpose in the dialogue? In the second part of the paper I will argue that Plato introduces dialectic into rhetoric because dialectic provides the material for arguments, and speeches must have arguments if they are to persuade. This use of dialectic constitutes the basis for turning rhetoric into an art of persuasive discourse. In the final section I will consider the differences between rhetoric and philosophy in the light of Plato’s arguments on dialectic in the *Phaedrus*.

I. Rhetoric in the Phaedrus

I pick up the argument in the middle in the dialogue, after Socrates has completed his second speech on *eros* (243e-257b), the great “palinode” (243b), which brings to a close the epideictic contest between Lysias and Socrates that has been staged privately by Phaedrus and for Phaedrus. Socrates’ first speech on *eros* (237a-241d) was already more compelling than the mildly entertaining but ultimately trivial production of Lysias (230e-234c); and the palinode is so powerful and original that Socrates has thoroughly vanquished his opponent. An exchange over the notion that Lysias might be reproached for being a speechwriter (257c-258d) leads Socrates and Phaedrus to linger under the plane tree and consider the following question: what constitutes good and bad discourse, that is, what makes discourse good or bad, whether written or spoken, in any genre, on any occasion (258d, 259e). Their investigation into this question, which occupies them until the end of the dialogue, is the impetus for Socrates to outline what rhetoric must consist in if it is to meet the exacting standards of a *techne*.

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3 The best treatments are Cooper 1985; Cole 1991, 115-38.
4 For reasons of space I will not give due consideration to another part of Plato’s project, namely, the *rhetor’s* ability to respond to audiences systematically on the basis of the properties of their souls (271a-272b). I have discussed this topic elsewhere (Yunis 1996, 201-7; Yunis 2005, 113-15), and do so here only insofar as it is necessary for clarity on the topic of rhetoric and dialectic.