

Deception and Knowledge in the *Phaedrus*

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Phaedrus, and many readers, have been deceived by Socrates' argument in *Phaedrus* 261e6-262b9 that successful deception requires knowledge of how things really are. This argument, I show, is invalid.¹ Socrates argues that deception—effected by knowing what an audience takes as similarities, and linking together several such similarities—requires knowing whether those similarities are true similarities. But instead of explaining why, he simply says so. He does so under the cover of tight reasoning. He advances through a chain of five apparent similarities. These apparent but non-actual similarities are just the sort of things the argument discusses. This means that Socrates, talking about deceptive argumentation, has deceived Phaedrus in precisely the way he says such arguments deceive. He does so, I contend, to demonstrate to Phaedrus his susceptibility to densely logical as much as floridly epideictic speeches. Readers have been just as susceptible. But both Phaedrus and readers can be saved from their gullibility; as we will see, Socrates warns throughout the conversation against just such susceptibility.

What knowledge is needed for speaking well

The argument at 261e6-262b9 aims to contradict Phaedrus' beliefs about successful persuasion. Phaedrus starts out believing that speaking well (εὖ...καὶ καλῶς, 259e4) does not require knowing how things really are (ἀνάγκην...τῷ ὄντι, 259e4-6) but only what would seem the case to one's audience (ὅσα δόξει, 259e7-260a4). In his first attempt to counter this view, Socrates gives a thought-experiment about persuading someone confused about the difference between livestock-types to buy a horse (260b1-d2). Phaedrus comes to agree that knowing what seems the case to one's listener but being ignorant about how things really are could lead to ridiculous or unpleasant results. This conclusion does not show that knowing what an audience believes is irrelevant, just that it is insufficient. The livestock argument in fact assumes that one knows one's audience's beliefs.

¹ Non-critical summaries of the argument can be found in, e.g., Hackforth 1952, 129; Enos 1981; Murray 1988, 284, 286; White 1993, 199-201; Yunis 2009, 239; Werner 2010, 27-29, 40-41. Ferrari 1987, 43-45 reconstructs the argument as showing that rhetoric must be concerned with truth, but this is not the argument's conclusion. Yunis 2011, 178 does not assess the argument for validity, but insinuates that it may be problematic, referring to it as a 'tour de force of *psychagōgia*', having already spoken of *psychagōgia* as concerned with success rather than validity, and referring to the 'slippery manner in which Socrates...sometimes argues for the sake of acquiring his interlocutor's agreement' (187; cf. 14, 208). I believe I am first to exhibit the argument's invalidity.

The livestock story helps us see instead that ‘speaking well’ has two meanings, and that there are two kinds of knowledge that the good speaker might seek.

If speaking well simply means persuading one’s audience, knowledge of what the audience believes—what we may call ‘audience knowledge’—is necessary and sufficient. If it means persuading one’s audience and also ensuring the benefit of that persuasion, however, audience knowledge is now necessary but insufficient. One must also know how things really are, what we may call ‘objective knowledge’.

Socrates seems to want Phaedrus to seek objective knowledge. To get him to do so, if he is to start with Phaedrus’ belief that speaking well means persuading effectively, he has available to him two routes. He could define ‘speaking well’ as persuading plus benefiting, such that the acquisition of objective knowledge is definitional. Or he could accept Phaedrus’ casual understanding of ‘speaking well’ as persuading on the basis of audience knowledge, but argue that getting or using audience knowledge effectively in fact requires having objective knowledge. At this point, Socrates opts for the second route.² This second route treats speaking well as unconcerned with benefit but as nevertheless dependent on objective knowledge. This second route claims that while a deceiver depends on apparent similarities to lead a listener to a view opposite the one with which he began, construction of such similarities depends on objective knowledge of actual similarities.

Making similarities

The argument at 261e6-262b9 responds to Phaedrus’ confusion about the antilogicians’ purported breadth of scope and concern. Socrates’ compact first explanation—that an antilogician³ constructs his speeches from whatever potential similarities he can find—left ambiguous what counts as a potential similarity (261d10-e4).⁴ The text allows two possibilities. An antilogician could make things *seem* similar, whether or not they are actually similar. Or an antilogician could display the *actual* similarities, whether or not they seemed similar. Because Phaedrus believes that orators deal only with what seems so to his audience, he must believe that Socrates is saying that antilogicians make things *seem* similar. We can assume, then, that Phaedrus will think of similarities, in the fol-

² Later in the dialogue, Socrates pursues other routes to bring Phaedrus to take the art of speech seriously, for example advocating the hard work necessary to please the gods (273e4-8).

³ I leave *antilogikê* merely transliterated, though accepting Yunis 1996, 179 and n12, which translates it as ‘the practice of arguing opposing propositions’. The exact meaning is not important for my argument.

⁴ οὐκ ἄρα μόνον περὶ δικαστήριά τέ ἐστιν ἡ ἀντιλογικὴ καὶ περὶ δημηγορίαν, ἀλλ’, ὡς ἔοικε, περὶ πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα μία τις τέχνη, εἴπερ ἔστιν, αὕτη ἂν εἴη, ἣ τις οἴος τ’ ἔσται πᾶν παντὶ ὁμοιοῦν τῶν δυνατῶν καὶ οἷς δυνατόν, καὶ ἄλλου ὁμοιοῦντος καὶ ἀποκρυπτομένου εἰς φῶς ἄγειν ‘Thus antilogic is concerned not only with courts and assemblies, but, so it seems, concerning everything that is said there would be this one skill—if it even *is* a skill—by which someone will be able to make similar everything that’s able *to* everything that’s able, and when someone else makes such similarities and obscures it, to bring this to light.’ All Greek and lineation follows OCT.

lowing explanation, in these terms.

We may now turn to the main argument. It has six steps. The fallacy comes in at the third step, where the argument quietly replaces the objects of an orator's knowledge from the things an audience accepts as true to what is in reality true. The argument's first two steps prepare Phaedrus to overlook this quiet shift; the last three secure his conviction in the conclusion. In my analysis of Socrates' argument, I will show what, on the one hand, Phaedrus must hear at each step to accept it, and, on the other hand, what the argument must mean if it is to involve good reasons for the subsequent inferences. These come to diverge.

Analysis of the argument at 261e6-262b9

[1] *'Does deception come about more among things that differ a lot or a little?'*⁵
— *'Among the little.'*

Phaedrus is well aware that deception depends on slight, not blatant, differences. When two things are objectively very distinct, like midday and midnight, they will also *seem* very distinct. But where things are objectively less different, like midday and one in the afternoon, they may not seem distinct at all. Audience perspective may diverge from the objective perspective. Deception happens when the audience mistakes how things seem for how things really are, and so it is easier to deceive someone that it is one pm when it is in fact midday than that it is midnight.

[2] *'Well, at any rate it'd be more in passing along by small steps you'd come undetected to the opposite than by large ones?'*⁶ — *'No doubt.'*

The unfamiliar opening (ἀλλά γε δῆ, 'but at least indeed') has nebulous inferential force, presumably either concessive or supplementary, either rephrasing or adding what may seem to be the more significant point.⁷ Whatever the meaning or implication, the argument in fact presents a new thought. The first premise in the argument concerns the distance between the starting and ending positions in some deceptive maneuver. This second premise concerns instead the distance taken by each step between the starting and ending positions. Such steps are the apparent (but potentially not actual) similarities a listener would accept. From

⁵ ἀπάτη πότερον ἐν πολλῷ διαφέρουσι γίγνεται μάλλον ἢ ὀλίγον; 261e6-7.

⁶ ἀλλά γε δὴ κατὰ μικρὸν μεταβαίνων μάλλον λήσεις ἐλθὼν ἐπὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἢ κατὰ μέγα, 262a2-3.

⁷ A TLG search finds no identical structure until a quotation in Porphyry. LSJ s.v. ἀλλά A2, in reference to this passage, states that ἀλλά γε means something like 'still, at least', in juxtapositions; Dennison, *Greek Particles* s.v. ἀλλά IV(1) doubts with authorities the present reading (given that it is hapax) and does not define it; Smyth 1956, §2786 has, as the closest example, ἀλλά γέ τοι, 'yet at least'. Yunis 2011, ad loc., translates 'moreover', reasoning 'ἀλλά γε = "but still," δὴ stresses the importance of the coming point', but this analysis appears not to prove the aptness of 'moreover', which implies a new point rather than merely an improved formulation. Rowe 1987 simply translates 'now'. The alternative reading in MS T is ἀλλά δῆ, a weak connective 'well then', and by Galen, ἀλλά μὴν, 'but surely' (Smyth: 'often to introduce an objection, to reject an alternative, often merely to introduce a new idea').

Phaedrus' perspective, knowing which equivalences an audience would accept would require simply knowing the audience's beliefs, and so this is how he must understand 'small steps' (κατὰ μικρὸν μεταβαίνων). But the premise does not actually specify whether by small steps it means from the audience's perspective or objectively so. Either is possible; it is ambiguous between the two.

[3] *'Thus someone intending to deceive someone else, but not to be deceived himself, would have to discern precisely the similarities and dissimilarities in what there is?'*⁸ — *'Necessarily so.'*

This claim is presented as a consequence of the previous (ἄρα, 262a5). It is twice presented and accepted as a necessity claim (δεῖ, 262a5; ἀνάγκη, a8). It is thus saying that, on the basis of what preceded, we can be sure that in order to deceive and avoid deception one must know, about the things in the world, in exactly what ways they are similar and dissimilar. One must have a certain kind of objective knowledge: the audience-independent knowledge of the differences between things.

This claim is false and does not follow from the previous premises. Neither deceiving nor avoiding deception requires objective knowledge of the similarities and differences among things in reality.

What one needs to know to deceive is what the audience believes. This was agreed upon two pages before, in the livestock story. Neither Socrates nor Phaedrus ever doubt this. One may also need to know how to be persuasive, but Socrates distinguishes this technical knowledge from knowledge of content (260d7-9, 266d5-267d9, 271c10-272a8). And on some definitions of deception, one may need to know the falsehood of the conclusion; but this dialogue never provides a consistent definition of deception,⁹ and it makes little of it anyway. Even if it did, knowing the truth of the conclusion would not itself require precisely discerned knowledge about the similarities and dissimilarities among what really is; nor would knowing that a conclusion is false require knowing the truth or falsity of any of the steps of the deceptive argument.¹⁰

What one needs to know to avoid deception (αὐτὸν δὲ μὴ ἀπατήσεσθαι) is even less.¹¹ A person can simply not listen, knowing that his opponent wants to

⁸ δεῖ ἄρα τὸν μέλλοντα ἀπατήσιν μὲν ἄλλον, αὐτὸν δὲ μὴ ἀπατήσεσθαι, τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἀνομοιότητα ἀκριβῶς διειδέναι.

⁹ At one point the argument suggests that deception would mean intentionally bringing someone to the opposite conclusion irrespective of the truth (λήσεις ἐλθὼν ἐπὶ τὸ ἐναντίον, 262a3), but at another intentionally bringing someone to a false conclusion (παρὰ τὰ ὄντα, 262b2).

¹⁰ The argument at *Hippias Minor* 366e-367a5, that the more knowledgeable one is, the better one is at lying, is irrelevant to this context, contrary to the implication by Yunis 2011, 187 and Cole 1991, 10. In the *Hippias*, Socrates tries to get Hippias to see that one will be less likely accidentally to tell the truth, if one intends to lie, if one has knowledge. Lying differs from deception: the first is concerned primarily with being false; the second with being believed.

¹¹ Grammatically this means 'not being deceived by another', since ἀπατήσεσθαι is middle in form but passive in meaning (Yunis 2011 ad loc, following Cooper ed. 1998, 52.6.1), not 'avoiding accidentally being deceived by oneself in the process of deceiving one's opponent'. This makes better

deceive him and undermine his claims.¹² He can avoid affirming the argument's steps and thus the conclusion. The *Phaedrus* often suggests ways to withhold commitment to something said. These two procedures—not listening, or not affirming what one hears—are completely effective. A person could also test each step against his other views about similarities, allowing through only those he or she does have knowledge about (e.g., 242c7-d2).¹³

Because one does not need precise knowledge of similarities and dissimilarities either to deceive or avoid deception, this premise is false. Why then does Phaedrus accept it, and what is its importance to the overall argument?

Phaedrus seems to take *σμικρόν* ('small steps') and *τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῶν ὄντων* ('the similarity between things') as sharing referents, warranting the inference from [2] to [3]. Phaedrus seems to think that if one needs to *use* small steps—apparent similarities—to deceive someone, one obviously needs to *discern* (*διειδέναί*)—be thoroughly familiar with—those apparent similarities.

But the argument cannot be taking 'the similarity between things' as referring to the audience's beliefs, and cannot be treating the object of discernment as the audience's beliefs. After all, the argument intends to establish, over the course of [1]-[6], that changing people's minds, and avoiding having one's own mind changed, requires objective knowledge. Yet it must start out with Phaedrus' belief that this takes audience knowledge. So it must show that while persuasion takes having audience knowledge (Phaedrus' position), having audience knowledge itself requires—somehow—having impersonal knowledge. A demonstration of this would take some step that shows that some explicit linkage. But neither the first nor second steps ([1]-[2]) express any relationship between the two kinds of knowledge; they presumably simply articulate Phaedrus' ideas about audience knowledge. The fourth, fifth, and sixth steps ([4]-[6]), as we will see, speak exclusively in terms of the qualities of objective knowledge, and so they too do not express any relationship between two kinds of knowledge. This leaves [3] for the interchange. It is here that the argument introduces for the first time the object of objective knowledge, *τῶν ὄντων* ('what [really] is'). But this object of objective knowledge is not related in any inferential way to the object

contextual sense as well, given the counter-deceiver implied in the earlier clause, *τὸν μέλλοντα ἀπατήσῃν μὲν ἄλλον*. It also recognizes that being a successful deceptive speaker requires both offensive and defensive maneuvers. And, it is unlikely that an orator would need to worry about accidental self-deception. Since orators are always saying one thing one time, another thing another time (261d1, d3-4, d6-8), they would be practiced at distancing themselves from their statements. Since they are often not even in the position to judge, but only to advise, they should not even be open to persuasion.

¹² Phaedrus is familiar with the rhetorical techniques of 'refutation and counter-refutation' (*ἔλεγχόν...καὶ ἐπεξέλεγχον*, 267a1) and 'undermining slanders' (*ἀπολύσασθαι διαβολάς*, 267d2); cf. 235b6-9.

¹³ Socrates says not to accept what one has not tested, even if it is spoken by the wise (260a5-7), and suggests thinking about what someone you admire would say (243c2-d4) the consequences of too readily accepting the conclusion (243a5-6). According to Aristotle, *Topics* 160a18 (cf. Castelnérac and Marion 2009, at rule (v)) all participants in speech should know they should ask for clarification to obscure or ambiguous claims before accepting them.

of audience knowledge. Therefore, the introduction is illicit. It has been smuggled in.

Why did Phaedrus not notice this? The argument has introduced the τῶν ὄντων subtly. It enters without emphasis, in the middle of the clause, as a genitive object of ‘similarity’. This unmarked term is obscured by being squeezed among three pairs of new, rhetorically substantive words: a pair of verbs (ἀπατήσῃν...ἀπατήσεσθαι), a pair of superlatives concerning similarity (ὁμοιότητα...ἀνομοιότητα), and a pair of words pertaining to knowing (ἀκριβῶς διειδέναι). These antithetical constructions and pleadings of precision make the question appear to focus on the way to deceive and avoid deception, namely, with an excellent grasp on how things differ and does not differ. With the emphasis on ‘doing what’ and ‘how’, it is easy to forget the ‘what things’.

It had seemed obvious to Phaedrus that persuasion requires knowing what people believe. He now takes himself as accepting that such knowledge is specifically about similarities and differences, and that such knowledge would be relevant both to deception and the avoidance of deception, and that such knowledge should be precise and not casual. But the key fact Phaedrus had disagreed about earlier on, whether this knowledge is either of what people think is the case, or what really is the case, is here merely posited. For Phaedrus to have accepted this *as an inference*, he must have ignored the very possibility of that difference in kinds of object of knowledge. The first two premises prepared him to forget this possibility. He does not notice that the insertion of the two words τῶν ὄντων is the most important part of the whole argument.

[4] *‘Then will someone, ignorant of the truth about each thing, be able to determine the degree of similarity, either small or large, between anything and that of which he’s ignorant?’*¹⁴ — *‘That’d be impossible.’*

Phaedrus is right to agree with this question; knowing what something is may involve knowing how it is like and unlike other things, and vice versa (cf. Hackforth 1952, 129). But under the cover of stating something obviously true, the argument again shifts slyly toward objective knowledge. Since at [3] Phaedrus was still thinking about audience knowledge—for he was doing so also at [1] and [2]—if Socrates is to get Phaedrus’ assent to [4], the premise must once again be worded in a way that makes sense from the same (audience-knowledge) perspective. It does so by retaining language relevant to talk about audiences. It speaks of ‘that of which one is ignorant’ (τοῦ ἀγνοουμένου). This epistemological specification is gratuitous from the objective perspective: one just needs to know the similarities and dissimilarities between things relevant to the conversation. But from the audience perspective it does matter. A speaker is concerned with what his listener fails to know. The premise also speaks of knowing the ἀλήθειαν (‘truth’) of each thing; though this regularly means ‘objective’ truth, it

¹⁴ ἢ οὐν οἶός τε ἔσται, ἀλήθειαν ἀγνοῶν ἐκάστου, τὴν τοῦ ἀγνοουμένου ὁμοιότητα μικρὰν τε καὶ μεγάλην ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις διαγιγνώσκειν;

has a history of meaning something more anthropocentric or subjective (cf. Cherubin 2009; Long 2010, 26-33).

[5] *'So then, those deceived into believing what's contrary to what is obviously fall into this sort of condition through certain similarities.'*¹⁵ — *'It does come about like that.'*

This statement relates successful deception to 'certain' (τινῶν) similarities. But in exactly the place in the argument where it should distinguish between audience-relative and objective similarities, specifying the objective similarities, it elides all such distinction. It provides only an indefinite qualifier.

This indefinite article here plays, of course, no indefinite role. The ambiguity speaks simultaneously to Phaedrus' understanding of the situation and to the argument's sequence of inferences. From the audience perspective, deception will indeed succeed because a speaker deployed a sequence of propositions his listener took to be relevantly similar. These 'certain' similarities are these audience-relative ones. Phaedrus had already accepted this sort of claim at [2] and [3]. But since the argument needs to establish that the avoidance of deception requires impersonal knowledge of similarities, [5] helps the argument only if taken from the objective perspective. These are also 'certain' similarities, though a categorically different set of them. The confident 'obviously' (δήλον) obscures this ambivalence about the main assumption of the argument.

[6] *'Then is there any way an expert will be always able to pass by small steps by means of similarities from how things are and drawing away to the opposite, or escape this himself, unless he has recognized what each thing really is?'*¹⁶ — *'Not at all.'*

The argument makes explicit its having brought Phaedrus to a claim about impersonal knowledge by twice stressing the impersonal perspective of its conclusion: ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος ἐκάστοτε ('from how things are') and ὃ ἔστιν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ('what each thing really is'). The stress comes from the repetition of talk about reality, the emphatic 'each', and the prominent positions, the latter clause at the statement's conclusion. No ambiguity remains; Phaedrus' initial audience perspective is gone.

Discussion of the argument

Phaedrus accepts the inferences of the argument because he fails to realize it has surreptitiously smuggled in exactly the difference between the two objects of knowledge it had the burden to relate. The argument had to change tracks from talk of audience knowledge (to engage Phaedrus) to talk of objective knowledge

¹⁵ οὐκοῦν τοῖς παρὰ τὰ ὄντα δοξάζουσι καὶ ἀπατωμένοις δήλον ὡς τὸ πάθος τοῦτο δι' ὁμοιοτήτων τινῶν εἰσερῶν.

¹⁶ ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως τεχνικὸς ἔσται μεταβιβάζειν κατὰ σμικρὸν διὰ τῶν ὁμοιοτήτων ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος ἐκάστοτε ἐπὶ τούναντίον ἀπάγων, ἢ αὐτὸς τοῦτο διαφεύγειν, ὃ μὴ ἐγνωρικῶς ὃ ἔστιν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων;

(to substantiate its claim). It did so by stringing together enough equivalences Phaedrus could accept to bring him to a position opposite the one with which he began. In doing so, the argument used exactly the kind of deceptive practice it describes. Further, the condition of their success confirms our criticism of their argument. Socrates succeeded at deceiving Phaedrus without having to know anything really precise about how things are, only about Phaedrus' beliefs (cf. 228a5).

Naturally, objective knowledge is not irrelevant to speaking. As Aristotle points out, if you are persuading your city about military endeavors, you should know how many ships and men are at the city's disposal (*Rhet.* 1359b35). When talking to experts about their field, since they will have much relevant knowledge, a speaker will need to know what they know (cf. *Rhet.* 1355a16; Cooper 2004, 70). But in both these cases knowledge is *useful*, not *necessary*: either to be helpful to one's society, or to get quicker access to what one's audience probably believes. Knowledge is also useful when trying to make a career as a τεχνικός ('expert') out of persuasive speaking. Jobs do not go to those with a bad track record.

But the argument of 261d10-262b9 speaks of necessity and of one-off deceptive events, and so does not appeal to such considerations. We cannot even say that knowledge, because it is knowledge, is *more likely* to persuade or deceive an audience (or more likely to prevent one from being persuaded or deceived, as Werner 2010, 26n11, seems to assume). Whether something is knowledge will have no effect on an audience, for example by making it more compelling, because the very condition of persuasive discussion—why we ever listen to others' suggestions—is our admitted lack of knowledge. Something can *sound right*, but not because it bears the label 'knowledge' but because it fits better with what we already believe.

Audience and objective knowledge are, of course, conceptually related. What one's audience accepts is what it takes to be objectively so. And so if one wants to persuade a geometer about geometry, one may be able to discover her beliefs by doing geometry as she would, and this would require seeking the geometrical truths of the world. So it might seem that one could get audience knowledge through objective knowledge. But this is a misleading formulation. It is not the objective knowledge that tells the speaker which equivalences to draw. It is the process of coming upon it in the way that the audience would that does. For friends, like Socrates and Phaedrus, it is adequate to ask what the other believes, or infer their beliefs from their actions. Among strangers, a speaker may need to fit the audience into a demographic category. Whichever it is, though, it is inadequate simply to know what is true.

Why it is right for Socrates to use this deceptive argument

Why would Socrates voice an argument about the role of knowledge in deception that he surely knows is wrong and could expect Phaedrus, upon reflection, also to realize is wrong?

One reason to argue fallaciously is to show someone his susceptibility to accepting fallacious or otherwise problematic arguments.¹⁷ Phaedrus seems to have exactly this problem, esteeming talk and speeches uncritically (234e5-235a6, 243c1-d1). It is good to esteem speech in general (cf. 258e1-259d9), but not without reflection on its content and consequence. Phaedrus needs to live more reflectively with respect to his engagement with speech. It might, however, be insufficient to say, ‘Here are some general reasons for believing you should do division-and-collection.’ It might be more effective to demonstrate: ‘You need to take seriously how susceptible you are to deceptive or dubious claims; observe how you yourself can see that you just were susceptible to such claims.’¹⁸

Socrates, it is true, never tells Phaedrus that he just duped him. Why should we think Phaedrus could figure this out, or even *should*? The reasons are overwhelming.

Most directly, the argument spells out what to watch out for. Speakers deploy sequences of illicit, untested, and confusing equivalences or inferences with the end of convincing the audience of what they wish, and often do so with deceptive motives. Moreover, if *Dissoi Logoi* 8 is from the end of the fifth century, we would know that people gave and reflected on specious arguments for the kinds of knowledge necessary and sufficient for successful speech.¹⁹

Phaedrus would not even need to be generally aware of this. Socrates had prefaced this section (261a7-262c3) by telling the upcoming arguments (λόγοι) to ‘persuade (πείθετε) Phaedrus...that unless he philosophizes adequately he will never be an adequate speaker either’ (261a3-5). But Phaedrus had just reported that being an ‘orator’ requires ‘persuasion’ (τὸ πείθειν, 260a4), what people take to be so as opposed to what really is so. So Phaedrus could realize that he was presented with something that aims to manipulate his beliefs rather than indicate what is true.

It is in the voice of these personified λόγοι that Socrates gives this ‘deception’ argument.²⁰ Doing so has several functions that contribute to Phaedrus’ future reflection on this exchange as deceptive. It sets this passage off from the rest of

¹⁷ This is a different way of looking at Socrates’ (or Plato’s) use of fallacy than that found in Sprague 1962, xi-xiii and 86-87. Sprague claims that Plato’s use of fallacy helps bring out fundamental philosophical points. As the above analysis attests, understanding a fallacy does require careful philosophical analysis, but Sprague’s analysis, focused on Plato’s audience alone, does not explain within the dramatic framework why Socrates deploys a fallacy against Phaedrus. Klosko 1983, 363-374, argues that Socrates would feel little compunction to argue fallaciously when in publicly-recognizable settings of eristic or contentious (game) argumentation; though this seems true, Socrates’ conversation with Phaedrus under the plane tree does not meet the criteria set out by Klosko.

¹⁸ It is helpful that the conclusion Phaedrus comes to is, even if not warranted by the preceding argument, edifying, and one that could help bring him eventually, hopefully, to a more proper understanding of rhetoric.

¹⁹ See Robinson 1979, 34-41 on a likely date of 403-395 BC and 221-237 on the speciousness of the argument.

²⁰ In English translations only Rowe 2005 attributes these lines to ‘Socrates/Arguments’, but not in Rowe 1986; but it is not unusual at least to treat this page-and-a-half as a discrete argumentative unit (see Reale 1998).

the conversation. It releases Phaedrus from having to infer that since Socrates would want to help him, the exchange cannot be insincere. And it encourages Phaedrus to see that what follows is *simply* an argument, meant to get him to believe something, not meant to establish the truth.

The personification of the *logoi*, and the attribution of a dubious argument to *them* rather than to the Socrates talking to Phaedrus at just that moment, is signaled by the three imaginative exchanges of personification and attribution that immediately precede it. Socrates imagines a case of his ignorantly persuading Phaedrus to buy a donkey (260b1-c5). Then he imagines another case of an orator's persuading a city to do evil rather than good (260c6-d1). Finally, he introduces a personified Skill of Speech who speaks (εἴποι, 260d4; λέγουσα, e1) in her self-defense but fails to provide any reasons for accepting her defense, and in granting the importance of objective knowledge misses the point of the livestock argument (260d3-e1).

It is to respond to this imagined proponent of rhetoric that Socrates introduces the 'arguments' (λόγοι, 260e2). He says they approach (ἐπιόντες, 260e2) and testify (μαρτυροῦσιν, 260e2)—but not that they argue—that this so-called Skill is not a skill at all.²¹ Phaedrus tells Socrates to bring the argument near and examine what they say (λέγουσιν, 261a2). Socrates then tells the arguments to come near (ἄριτε, 261a3), invokes them as 'noble creatures' (θρέμματα γενναῖα, 261a3), and commands them to persuade Phaedrus.²² The end of the discussion and the reversion to Socrates' own voice is signaled by Socrates' reference to the speech that Lysias made—the *logoi*, having just approached, would not know about it—and twice in an emphatic first-person singular to the speeches he himself made (262c5-6).²³ Phaedrus refers to this entire passage as a unit

²¹ The terminology of testifying (μαρτυροῦσιν), solemnly swearing (διαμαρτυρομένων), and approaching [i.e., the court] (προσιόντων) (Rowe 1986 trans.), puts the exchange in a judicial setting, with the worry of 'merely forensic' arguments. The verb διαμαρτύρομαι is etymologically linked to διαμαρτυρέω, 'to submit a διαμαρτυρία', the way by which one would preempt a case by appeal to procedural incorrectness (presumably including problems of standing). Some litigants found this action undemocratic or in bad faith because it preempted the complete airing of the dispute. See Christ 1998, 212-216, and Wallace 2001, 96-98.

²² Phaedrus himself addresses them, telling them to ask their questions (ἐρωτᾶτε, 261a6).

²³ The two apparent difficulties with this view are easily resolved. First, Socrates does not carry through explicit reference to the *logoi* as he did to the personified Laws of Athens in *Crito* 50a6-54d1. But it may be a rhetorical strategy to admit at the start of a speech that the following discussion will be fictional or hypothetical and then hope the audience forgets that it need not be committed to the conclusion. In any event, in a spoken exchange, the fiction of another speaker can be maintained without explicit reference to that speaker. Second, though the *logoi* are multiple, in one exchange the speaker is twice treated as singular. Phaedrus, confused halfway through this length of argument at question about making the assimilable things similar (261d10-e4), asks whoever questions him, 'What do you (s.) mean (λέγεις) by that?' The response, 'Searching in this way I think (δοκῶ) will make it clear', is also in the singular (261e5-6). But this use of the first-person does not mean that the *logoi* are no longer responsible for the argument. One possibility is that Phaedrus' confusion has momentarily startled him out of the game he and Socrates were playing—that he was talking to some *logoi*—and that Socrates preferred to maintain the flow of conversation rather than make a jarring correction. There is no hint of a change in tone of voice, or special reference to Socrates, in what fol-

when he complains that it was devoid of illustration (262c8-9). The only other time in the dialogue Phaedrus complains about anything Socrates has said is when he thinks the first speech competing with Lysias' (237a7-241d1) is cut prematurely in half (241d4); this is another Socrates-voiced but disowned passage (242e1, 244a1).

So it is clear that Socrates has separated this passage from the rest of the conversation, making it identifiable and memorable as a unit. It also insulates Socrates from responsibility and prevents Phaedrus from believing it simply because Socrates said it. Socrates does this frequently through the dialogue.²⁴ We readers have serious reasons to doubt the plausibility or seriousness of most of these myths, speeches, and stories. A theme of this conversation is obviously the importance of evaluating speeches on their own terms. Attributing the entire 261a7-262c3 exchange to some 'arguments' is the simplest and most direct way to neutralize Socrates' accountability for what they say and to suggest that what they say needs independent testing. It would be clear to Phaedrus, a lover of speeches (228a7, 242b1), that *logoi* of this sort could be contentious for the sake of contention or refutation-practice, not for the sake of reporting their presenter's serious beliefs. To speak as *logoi*, rather than simply to speak, would indicate a change in sincerity and purpose in talking (cf. 242e1, 243a8). And by calling these arguments 'beasts', and 'true to their birth', Socrates further stresses the need to query their claims.

This argument is not the only deceptive one the *logoi* have attempted. They have just deployed two dubious arguments, one about the *relationship* between deception and speaking well (261a4-262a4-5), the other about *where* rhetoric, and thus deceptive practices, occur (261a7-e4). In these two cases, the *logoi* use the deceptive method they described: casually assuming a series of equivalences that may not actually be equivalences. If one realizes they did so twice, one might suspect they would have done so a third time.

Besides having reason to worry about deception in this case, Phaedrus should

lows until after 262c5. A second possibility is that the *logoi* have been unified by Phaedrus and Socrates. They could be addressed by and address Phaedrus, the sole time each happens, by a choral first-person, as by a spokesperson (Cf. Aristophanes *Wasps* 156-157, Sophocles *Philoctetes* 369, 466, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1102, 1104). The third and most likely possibility is that Socrates acts as the spokesperson for the *logoi*'s arguments (thanks to Christopher Rowe for this latter suggestion).

²⁴ He did something similar when he set out the Myth of Boreas, claiming that it is what people say (λέγεται, 229b6) and is what is commonly believed (πειθόμενος δὲ τῷ νομιζομένῳ περὶ αὐτῶν, 230a2). He did this when he gave the first response to Lysias' speech, which he says he has heard from some old poet or prose-writer (235c3-4), has been forced to give (237a9, 242d5, cf. 243e9-e1), and can give only because he is nearly channeling the Nymphs (241e4), and is indeed the mere mouthpiece for it (242d11-e1, 244a1). The Palinode is attributed to Stesichorus (244a2) and to the Nymphs (263d5-6), and the truth of it is qualified (265b8-c1, c8-9). The speech to Thrasymachus informing him how to teach a *technê* of speech (271d1-272b4) is attributed to a writer (ὁ συγγραφεύς, 272b2-3). The speech to Tisias, about his *eikos*-argumentation (273d2-274a5), is presented as a set-text for Phaedrus to accept or reject (viz., ὅτι ὦ τεισιᾶ, 273d2). Socrates says he heard the Myth of Theuth (274a5-275b2) from their predecessors (27c1, c5) and reminds Phaedrus about the separability of speeches and speakers (275b3-c2).

worry that Socrates intends to examine him (cf. 258d7-10). He knows Socrates. Thus he should know what Socratic examination involves: having his beliefs and commitments exposed, for him eventually to see whether he affirms them. Because the questions the *logoi* ask reveal what Phaedrus is willing to affirm, the *logoi* passage will have to be a locus of that examination.

It is true that Phaedrus does not realize right away that he has been duped, even though he seems uncertain about the argument's conclusion (*κινδυνεύει*, 262c4) and seems unsatisfied without any examples (262c8-9).²⁵ We are given at least four reasons, however, to believe that Socrates intends for Phaedrus to be able to remember this exchange and have the competence to reflect on it. First, we see that Phaedrus has the leisure to engage in this reflection, and that Socrates implies that he should use his leisure to improve his understanding of speech. Phaedrus has spent his morning, as he presumably has spent many mornings, studying speeches.²⁶ The references to 'leisure' and 'whiling away time' throughout the dialogue focus our attention on this (e.g., 227b6, b10, 228a1, 258e6). Second, Socrates models in his conversation many of the ways one might engage in critical reflection, and deploys much critical vocabulary; this shows Phaedrus what exactly he can do. Third, Socrates turns the conversation, we might say, into an oral version of 'a garden of letters...laying up for oneself and for others a store of reminders' (276d1-5) for Phaedrus later to tend (cf. Burger 1980, 2; Ferrari 1987, 5-6; Nightingale 1995, 148 with n29). For a reader of a written dialogue, any part of a conversation depicted is open to closer reading. This is not so for a person actually in some conversation. Much of a conversation will pass by unnoticed. How does one recall any part of it in particular? Phaedrus admits to working on memorizing, even 'internalizing' (*ἐξεπιστάμενος*, 228b4), 'practicing' (*μελετώη*, 228b6), and 'partitioning' (*διαφέρειν*, 228d4) set-speeches, in particular on the most important or interesting parts (228d4), and he gives evidence of remembering pithy exchanges and pieces of poetry (e.g., 236c5, d2). What Phaedrus seems best able to remember are 'texts': exchanges or words that have meaning outside the specific occasion of the conversation.²⁷ Just as the intrusion of a new speaker into a conversation is memorable, though not necessarily disruptive, the intrusion of a new speech is memorable. Fourth, Phaedrus seems able to diagnose other people's confusions, and acquire significant familiarity with topics in which he is interested (e.g., 268b6-8, c2-4, d3-5, 270c3-5, 276a9-10). This suggests he could turn his diagnostic powers on himself if he thinks it interesting to do so.

²⁵ Socrates does not use Lysias' speech to illustrate the 'similarities' theory of deception (262d10-264e3). Lysias' speech exemplifies deception on the basis of controversy rather than on sequential minute dissimilarities.

²⁶ We can infer that Phaedrus makes a habit of it from Socrates' apparently accurate guess about Phaedrus' morning.

²⁷ That what Phaedrus has apparently memorized—Lysias' speech—is actually still on a scroll (228d7; cf. 258c5, 264c8, 275a4) hints that we should see all memorized set-pieces, anecdotes, and other *legomena* as texts (see Moore 2012).

Conclusion

The argument at 261e6-262b9 is central to the *Phaedrus* for several reasons. It is about the main epistemological relation, between belief and knowledge. It appears to give backing to the charioteer myth that vaunted knowledge of the real (247c6-e2). It serves as the primary support the later criticism of Tisias' *eikos* ('plausibility') strategy (273d5), and thus of the argument for 'true rhetoric' in general. It provides this dialogue about the value of dialectic (per 265c8-266c1) its most elaborated sequence of reasoning and thus its best example of step-by-step question-and-answer examination. If the argument does not go through, though, what does the *Phaedrus* teach the reader?

The dialogue provides no shortage of examples of Socrates articulating useful concepts, analyzing and criticizing claims, and theorizing in imaginative ways. It shows Socrates leading Phaedrus—and thus those of us liable to share his weaknesses—to a better way of thinking about himself and his desires to become a good speaker.²⁸ Little of the quest to 'speak well and finely' appears to depend on systematic knowledge of how things really are or of the types and dispositions of soul.²⁹ This is not to say it does not appear to depend on a commitment to truth and to valid reasoning, or even to appropriate distinctions and divisions (cf. 266b3-8, 278b2-4, 279c1). But the possession of certain kinds of technical knowledge is not a prerequisite for adequate persuasive speech. Such speech requires following arguments whither they lead, and remembering and assessing the claims people make.³⁰

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²⁸ This is the thesis of Yunis 2011, which identifies and explains many of Socrates' efforts to turn Phaedrus toward him and toward philosophy and away from Lysias and from uncritical attention to speech.

²⁹ Socrates denies knowing much (cf. 246a1), having dialectical skill (265c9, 266b3), sharing in the art of speech (οὐ...που ἔγωγε τέχνης τινὸς τοῦ λέγειν μέτοχος, 262d5-6), or being a philosopher properly so called (278b2-4).

³⁰ I gratefully acknowledge significant criticism and help from Bernard Clark, Elizabeth Belfiore, Sandra Peterson, Josh Kortbein, Harvey Yunis, Kathlene Baldanza, audiences at the University of Texas (Euthyphrones) and at Penn State, a patient anonymous referee, and the Editor of this journal.

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