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Plato’s critique of rhetoric and the transition from orality in ancient Greece: The “Gorgias” and the “Phaedrus” revisited

Holloway, Paul Andrew, M.A.

Rice University, 1991
PLATO'S CRITIQUE OF RHETORIC
AND THE TRANSITION FROM ORALITY IN ANCIENT GREECE:
THE GORGIAS AND THE PHAEDRUS REVISITED

by

PAUL A. HOLLOWAY

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

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Plato's Critique of Rhetoric
and the Transition from Orality in Ancient Greece:
the Gorgias and the Phaedrus Revisited
by
Paul A. Holloway

ABSTRACT

The political and cultural forces of Periclean Athens brought rhetoric to the fore as the master knowledge. Through the school of Isocrates this perspective continued into the fourth century. Read in this context Plato's degrading attack on rhetoric in the Gorgias can readily be reconciled with his surprisingly positive treatment of it in the Phaedrus. In the Gorgias he does not debunk rhetoric per se, but only rhetorical culture, that is, rhetoric as conceived by his contemporaries as chief among the arts, η καλλιστη των τεχνων. On the other hand, in the Phaedrus he recommends rhetoric conceived in a limited sense as simply one art among many. This is supported by the recent work of Robert Conners who interprets Plato's criticism of rhetorical culture in light of the transition from oral to literate culture in fourth-century Greece.
ΥΠΕΡ ΜΕΛΙΣΣΗΣ

ΙΔΕ ΔΗ ΟΤΙ ΕΙΔΟΝ
ΟΙ ΟΦΘΑΛΜΟΙ ΜΟΥ
ΟΤΙ ΕΓΕΥΣΑΜΗΝ ΒΡΑΧΥ
ΤΟΥ ΜΕΛΙΤΟΣ ΤΟΥΤΟΥ
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Though it has its roots in Professor Werner Kelber's seminar in Hermeneutics at Rice University, this project began formally as a thesis in ancient rhetoric for Professor Ed Hauser at The Center for Thomistic Studies, the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas. To my great disappointment, although the scope of the project had been approved from the beginning, and inspite of Professor Hauser's continued strong support, my work soon fell upon hard times because of departmental politics and what amounted to a small Kulturkampf within the Center's faculty. I decided to withdraw the thesis and to approach Professor Kelber with the idea of completing the thesis under him. The warm reception I personally received from Professor Kelber and from Professors John Stroup and Gerald McKenny, and their enthusiastic reception of my work--along with the continued support of Professor Hauser--was most encouraging. I am very grateful to all four.
**Abbreviations**

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<td>AJP</td>
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INTRODUCTION

Anyone who wishes to become a student of western rhetoric must come to terms with Plato. His reflections on (criticisms of) the art stand at the head of the textual tradition. This is not a simple matter, however, for to this day they leave us with a number of problems.

As a propaedeutic to future studies, this thesis investigates by far the most outstanding of these problems: the apparent contradiction between the Gorgias and the Phaedrus. Both of these dialogues ostensibly present Plato's views on rhetoric. But the former, writes Edwin Black, is "satirical, contentious and refutative," while the latter is "constructive" and presents a surprisingly "affirmative judgment."\(^1\)

One solution to this problem is that taken by Everett Lee Hunt in his now classic essay, "Plato and Aristotle on Rhetoric and Rhetoricians." Hunt simply denies that Plato was serious in his constructive account of rhetoric in the Phaedrus, discounting the theory of the Phaedrus as "ideal" and "as far from the possibilities of mankind as his Republic was from Athens."\(^2\) For Hunt Plato was always critical of
rhetoric. At the other end of the spectrum is Edwin Black himself, who denies that Plato was ever critical of rhetoric. For him, "Plato's attack [in the Gorgias] is limited only to a particular practice of rhetoric." Then there is the typical solution, a kind of via media between these two extremes, which posits some sort of change or development in Plato's thought from the time of the writing of the Gorgias to the writing of the Phaedrus. This, for example, is the position of Werner Jaeger who in volume three of his magnum opus writes, "Phaedrus can be understood only as a new stage in Plato's developing attitude to rhetoric," adding that "in Gorgias he hates the whole thing." 

There are, then, three basic approaches to the problem of Plato's attitude toward rhetoric: (1) that his attitude toward rhetoric in the Phaedrus is different than it seems (Hunt's position), or (2) that his attitude toward rhetoric in the Gorgias is different than it seems (Black's position), or (3) that his attitude in both dialogues is as it seems and he simply changed his mind from the writing of the one to the other (Jaeger's position). Each of these approaches, however, assumes that both the Gorgias and the Phaedrus are concerned with the same account of rhetoric. Yet it just may be that the question has been wrongly put, and that the differences between the two dialogues are not to be accounted
for in terms of a change in attitude, but rather a change in subject.\textsuperscript{5}

In this study I will argue that this is precisely the case: that "rhetoric" in the *Gorgias* is not the same as "rhetoric" in the *Phaedrus*. The case will be made that in the former it is conceived of as η καλλιστή των τεχνών,\textsuperscript{6} the discipline that, as Gorgias is made to say, "gathers to itself and holds sway over all other powers [viz. all other arts];"\textsuperscript{7} whereas in the latter it is simply one art among many, the art "of good and bad speaking and writing."\textsuperscript{8} In other words, in the *Gorgias* Plato is opposing rhetorical culture, while in the *Phaedrus* he is proposing a rhetoric understood as one art among many in the service of philosophy. Obviously, when rhetoric is conceived as the highest art, Plato can only oppose it. But this need not be the case when a more modest view is taken.

That Plato (if not his interpreters) had before his eyes two accounts of rhetoric, disapproving of the one and approving of the other, accords well with the recent work done by Robert Connors on rhetoric and the transition from orality in ancient Greece.\textsuperscript{9} Connors' thesis is that Plato wrote at a time in which Greek culture was undergoing a shift from orality to literacy—a shift that had significant implications for how rhetoric was conceived and practiced—and that this explains a great deal about Plato's attitude
toward rhetoric. Obviously, Connors' thesis is capable of broad application, and he suggested a number of lines of investigation himself in his original study. He did not, however, mention the problem of the Gorgias and the Phaedrus, to which he seems to take Jaeger's traditional approach.10

The present investigation begins with placing Plato and his dialogues in historical context: chapter 1 studies the account of rhetoric given by the Sophists of the fifth century, while chapter 2 carries this investigation into the fourth century with Plato's contemporary and competitor, Isocrates. These historical studies will show that a heuristic understanding of "rhetoric" in the Gorgias along the above lines is indeed justified. In light of these findings chapter 3 offers a fresh reading of the Gorgias--with special attention paid to the "rhetoric" attacked in the dialogue. A fourth chapter studies the Phaedrus for Plato's positive doctrine. In a final chapter the findings of chapters 1 through 4 are reviewed in light of Connor's study.
Notes to Introduction


3 Black, op. cit., 366.


5 This is not dissimilar to Black's position. For Black, however, the Gorgias attacks the contemporary notion of rhetoric for its poor ethical moorings.

6 Gorgias, 448C.

7 Gorgias, 456A.

8 Phaedrus, 259E.


I

DEMOCRACY, SCEPTICISM AND SOPHISTIC:
THE RISE OF RHETORIC IN 5TH CENTURY ATHENS

Fifth century Athens saw rhetorical culture claim for itself the postion of "master knowledge...for the guidance of [personal] life and [public] affairs." It became much more than a technique for persuasion, as it seems to have originally been in the judicial rhetoric of Tisias and Corax; it became "a way of life," offering a complete philosophy for the active or political life. This was due in part to certain aspects of Athenian political and intellectual life, but primarily to a group of professional educators known as σοφισταὶ that began to gather in Athens in the time of Pericles.

In this chapter I attempt to give an account of this ascendance of rhetoric. I first consider the political and intellectual climate that encouraged Sophistic, and then turn to the Sophists themselves and the direction and focus they gave to the contemporary currents of thought and practice. Of course, as Guthrie warns, "[to] determine the causes of an intellectual revolution is always a rash undertaking, and when a great many things are happening together it is not
always easy to distinguish cause from effect." But, as he continues, even in the most complex of circumstances "a few things may be mentioned as more likely to belong to the former [i.e., causal] category."\(^5\) For our purposes two principal causes will be pointed to: (1) the emergence and development of Athenian democratic institutions, and (2) a general scepticism stemming from the apparent failure and irrelevance of early cosmological speculation that gave way to the phenomenalism of the Sophists.\(^6\)

Athenian Democracy

The growth of democracy at Athens was a slow and interrupted process. Though many details of its origin are disputed,\(^7\) it probably began for real in the early sixth century with the reforms of Solon.\(^8\) Archon in 594 B.C., Solon was given by the Areopagus authority to initiate the major reforms needed to bring political stability and economic recovery to an Athens torn by blood feuds and heavily in debt.\(^9\) In addition to abolishing debt slavery, and opening citizenship to foreign craftsmen, he initiated a property-based, versus aristocratic, political order.\(^10\) Citizens whose annual income was equivalent to five hundred medimnoi (a medimnos being about one and a half bushels, considered equivalent to a drachma) could become archons.
And instead of being appointed to this office by the Areopagus, they were elected by the popular vote of the Assembly, of which every adult male citizen, regardless of property, was a member. A Council of Four Hundred was created and was open to citizens whose income was over two hundred medimnoi. Since under Solon the old four tribal system was preserved, it is likely that these councilmen were elected by their respective tribes, each of which could place one hundred members. Significant judicial reform took place under Solon as well, for the heliaea—a body of six thousand jurors from which popular courts and courts of appeal were formed—was chosen by lot from all the citizenry.

After the tyrannies of the wealthy Peisistratus and his son Hippias, democracy was further extended under Cleisthenes (chief archon in 507 B.C.—a position he wrested from the aristocrat Isogoras by coup). To break the power of tribal clans, he replaced the old four tribal system with ten artificial tribes gerrymandered to avoid geographical or occupational blocs. He also extended citizenship to all foreign freemen and instituted a new Council of Five Hundred (fifty determined by lot from each tribe) with no property restrictions. Legislation was initiated by the Council, but it had to be approved by the Assembly, and in important matters a quorum of six thousand was required. One such matter was ostracism whereby any powerful political figure
perceived to be a threat to the state could by vote of the Assembly be exiled for a period of ten years. As with Solon, under Cleisthenes the heliaea was open to all classes. With such reforms oratory and debate became integral parts of Athenian politics.  

When the Persian war came to an end, Athens, because of her leadership, emerged as the dominant power in the Greek world, and the newly formed Delian League (477 B.C.) soon became the Athenian Empire. Power in Athens became tempting as never before, and with the democratic faction strengthened by the war, struggles between the democratic and oligarchical factions in the Assembly increased. Eventually, in the archonship of Ephialtes (462 B.C.), the Areopagus was stripped of its remaining powers and these were handed over to the Assembly. In 461 B.C. Ephialtes was assassinated, and the leadership of the democratic party passed to Pericles.

With Pericles Athenian democracy reached its high point. He finished the work of Ephialtes and gave the judicial powers of the archons to the Assembly, and he even opened up the archonship to citizens with only two hundred medimnoi. He also provided pay for members of the heliaea, allowing a broader economic spectrum to actually participate in the courts. All citizens, regardless of title or
property, claimed Ἰσονομία—equality at law—and Ἰσημορία—equality in the Assembly.

After Pericles Athenian democracy became a political free-for-all, with powerful and ambitious demagogues vying for power in the Assembly.24 The first of these, Cleon, was well known for his rhetorical innovations, as was Alcibiades, whose unequaled eloquence sustained an impetuous life style.25 It is no surprise that during this period Polus and Callicles equate rhetoric with political power (see chapter 3 below). During this period the courts too saw appreciable decline. Each citizen was required to plead his own case, and wealthy citizens often found themselves threatened by unscrupulous accusers (sycophants) who unless paid off in advance promised to bring them before the popular courts (biased against the rich) on trumped up charges. Isocrates can write:

I think that you all know that malicious prosecution (συκόφαντιν) is most generally attempted by those who are clever speakers but who possess nothing, whereas the defendants lack skill in speaking but are able to pay money.26

A class of rhetoricians (logographers) arose to compose speeches for the defense, and manuals were published promising the rich the protection of acquired eloquence.27
Scepticism

Another factor leading to the rise of rhetoric was the spirit of scepticism that colored the age. Several things contributed to this.

During this time there was considerable exposure to foreign cultures and values in Athens. The Solonic reforms and their expanded trade practices, the Persian wars and subsequent Athenian imperialism, peace in the Aegean and increased travel, all seem to have contributed to the cosmopolitan spirit of Periclean Athens.28 In and of itself, however, contact with other cultures is not a serious challenge to reigning traditions.29

More importantly, there was what Guthrie has termed a "reaction" to the bankruptcy of Presocratic nature-philosophies.30 First of all, these philosophies to a large degree undermined the traditional theological bases of natural phenomena, giving rational versus divine accounts. This can readily be seen in the early materialistic cosmologies of the Milesians. They are "a development of the genetic or genealogical approach to nature exemplified be the Hesiodic Theogony,"31 but they are notable for their absence of mythological explanation. Instead they seek to isolate the substratum underlying and explaining the existing cosmos. Of course, Thales did say that "all things are full of
gods,"\textsuperscript{32} but in the context of his whole philosophy, in which he consciously abandons mythological explanation, this is best read as a statement about the nature of matter itself, that it is somehow "alive"--for this quality he explains as the universal presence of \(\psi\nu\chi\eta\) (his example, according to Aristotle, is the magnet).\textsuperscript{33} In Anaximenes,\textsuperscript{34} and perhaps even in Anaximander,\textsuperscript{35} Thales' animism is replaced by the eternality of motion.

In later Presocratics rationalistic explanation became even more pronounced. Xenophanes, who because of his views on the limits of human knowledge and his suggestion that all things are actually one was considered by Plato to be one of the first of the "Eleatic tribe,"\textsuperscript{36} criticizes the anthropomorphic deities of Homer and Hesiod, postulating instead a single deity, a product of reason, that is "in no way similar to mortals either in body or in thought."\textsuperscript{37} Parmenides and Zeno carry the critique to the whole of human sensuous experience.\textsuperscript{38} Heraclitus emphasizes the structure (\(\lambda\omega\gamma\sigma\) of opposites in all things.\textsuperscript{39} And with the pluralists, Empedocles and Anaxagoras,\textsuperscript{40} and the Atomists, Leucippus and Democritus,\textsuperscript{41} accounts of the cosmos become increasingly mechanical.

But not only did the Presocratics substitute natural for divine causation--thus eliminating traditional wisdom based in myth--their own accounts were (1) far from obvious and (2)
contradictory to one another. In the Milesian physicists the search for unity brought about the distinction between what is (the Urstoff) and what appears, and after Parmenides this distinction was set in stone. Heraclitus could write: "nature loves to hide itself (φυσις κρυπτεσθαι φιλει)." In all cases the common man was told that he could not believe his own eyes. But he could not be expected to believe the cosmologists either, for one school (the Eleatics) said that reality is One and immovable, another (the Pluralists), that it is many and that motion is eternal. Thus Gorgias, making reference to what was a common criticism in his day, writes of

astronomers [i.e., the early cosmologists]...substituting opinion for opinion, taking away one but creating another... .

Presocratic cosmological speculation undermined traditional mythological wisdom and failed to replace it with a sure wisdom of its own.

Sophistic

As democracy took shape in Athens, new political opportunities continually presented themselves to talented and ambitious young men. Thus a need for professional
educators who could equip their students for leadership in the Assembly and Council and also in the popular courts was acutely felt. Answering this need were the Sophists, who claimed to be able to fit their students for public life. The chief subject they taught was rhetoric, public speaking, often referred to as ἀρθητὴ πολιτική, and given the spirit of scepticism that had come to characterize the age, it is little surprise that for them—concerned merely with opinion and not knowledge, persuasion and not demonstration—rhetoric was not handmaiden to a philosophically based political science, but itself the "master knowledge."

Sophistēs was not originally a negative term, though it clearly acquired this sense at the hands of Plato and Aristotle. (In many ways Plato and Aristotle reflect the common opinion of their time.) For prior to the fourth century Sophistēs was a term of approbation, connoting technical skill (used, for instance, of poets and musicians) or of general wisdom (the Seven Sages are referred to by Herodotus as Sophistai). With the advent of men like Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus, the term—still complementary—acquired a semi-technical usage for "professional teacher."

The professionalism (i.e., fee-taking) of the Sophists is not to be under emphasized, for properly conceived they were not a "school" owing its existence to a common doc-
trine—though Guthrie can speak of a "sophistic mentality"—but rather a group of professional educators answering to the need of political education in democratic Athens.\textsuperscript{48} Moreover, it was precisely for their professionalism that they were recognized and criticized.\textsuperscript{49} The problem, of course, was not that teaching was an unacceptable means of making a living in Athens, but rather that the Sophists offered to teach anyone who could pay (and more and more people could) the qualities of popular leadership in "the court, the Council, the Assembly or any other gathering."\textsuperscript{50} Or as Protagoras in Plato's dialogue by that name put it: "proper care of his personal affairs, so that he may best manage his own household, and also of the state's affairs, so that he may become a real power in the city, both as speaker and a man of action."\textsuperscript{51} Oligarchs could only oppose such a notion of ορητή πολιτική, which even in democratic Athens was still thought to be open only to the few and handed on by birth and class association.\textsuperscript{52}

But even though their professionalism set them apart, the Sophists should not be thought of as a guild of educators. They were individuals, and competition was serious. In Plato we have Protagoras openly criticizing the curricula of his colleagues,\textsuperscript{53} Hippias flaunting an unbeaten record in oratorical competition at Olympia,\textsuperscript{54} Gorgias boasting of his unequaled brevity in answering questions,\textsuperscript{55}
and reported as laughing at his competitors who claimed to teach virtue.\textsuperscript{56} In this regard the cooperative relationship of Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus is clearly without parallel.

\textbf{Protagoras} The first and the greatest of the Sophists was Protagoras of Abdera.\textsuperscript{57} Plato tells us\textsuperscript{58} that he was old enough to be the father of Socrates (b. 469), which puts his birth not later than 490, and that he died near the age of seventy,\textsuperscript{59} which puts his death around 420. Since in the latter passage we are also told that he practiced as a sophist for forty years, we may assume that this places his arrival in Athens around 460. There is no reason to doubt the reports of his death by drowning in a shipwreck while fleeing Athens.\textsuperscript{60}

Protagoras was accepted into Periclean society at Athens, and eventually became a trusted advisor to the great "aristocratic democrat".\textsuperscript{61} Plutarch tells of a day's conversation between the two men on a matter of law, and Heraclides Ponticus reports that when Athens in 443 founded the panhellenic colony at Thurii, it was Protagoras who was appointed to draft the laws for the city.\textsuperscript{62} After this the sophist seems to have stayed in Sicily, making a reputation for himself there as well,\textsuperscript{63} returning to Athens only in 433.\textsuperscript{64}
Protagoras was the first to openly declare himself to be a professional educator in political αρητη. His rates were high, but we are told that he did not require his pupils to pay him more than they themselves thought him to be worth. Though he has been credited with a number of works, because the practice was to attach titles to portions of larger works, we perhaps do best to assume two major works: Αληθεια (known to Sextus as Καταβαλλόντες) which began with the famous homo-mensura dictum, and Αντιλογοι (in two volumes), probably a collection of opposing arguments much like the Δισομοιολογοι. His chief invention seems to have been the practice of developing contradictory arguments (αντιλογοι) on common topics. For this reason he is credited by Cicero with inventing the rhetorical device of "common places", a ready source of arguments for any speech. His purpose in this exercise was to give the student the ability to argue any side of a question, that he might be able to "make the weaker argument stronger" should he be called upon in the court or the Assembly to argue it.

The opening sentence of his book (or portion of a book) Περὶ θεῶν, in which he denied knowledge of their (i.e., οἱ θεοὶ) existence, is said to have brought about his banishment from Athens (and ultimately his death). But by far the most provocative fragment preserved is the first sentence of his Αληθεια:
Παντων χρηματων μετρον εστιν ανθρωπος, των μην οντων ως εστιν, των δε ουκ οντων ως ουκ εστιν.

"Of all things man is the measure; of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not."72

Plato interprets this to refer to man in the singular, thus producing not just a relativism, but a subjectivism—truth being not just relative to perception, but relative to the perceiving subject. The obvious result is phenomenalism, and Guthrie is correct when he writes that in Protagoras there is "an extreme reaction to the Eleatic antithesis of knowledge and opinion, the one true the other false."73 If Parmenides was willing let go of appearances to preserve knowledge; Protagoras, was willing let go of knowledge to preserve appearances.

Such an anti-metaphysics must have formed the theoretical basis for Protagoras' rhetorical theory. For while he encouraged the production of contradictory arguments for every matter, even the practice of praising and blaming the same person, he went further and said that "contradiction was impossible (ουκ εστιν αντιλεγειν)"—both statements being equally true.74 He seems to have circumvented (according to Plato, who gives every impression that Protagoras was an upright man) the disastrous effects this would naturally
have on ethics, by arguing that while two opinions (about right and wrong) are equally true, they are not equally expedient. In the famous myth of origins he grounds this utilitarianism in basic communal values which he seems to have not questioned. Pursuing these values, however, the statesman is free to argue any side of an issue, such issues being thoroughly negotiable means to ends, not ends themselves.

His theory of education may well have been a compromise with the conservative doctrine of his day that ἀρνήθη was a property of birth and good rearing. For he wrote that education "requires natural endowment (ὦσις)" and that those who would learn must "start young." But he adds, that "practice [is] nothing without art (εχνή)," implying the need for more than just well-born associates.

Gorgias. A contemporary of Protagoras was Gorgias of Leontini, Sicily. Born shortly before 480, he seems to have spent the first half of his life in the city of his birth, before he was sent as its ambassador to Athens in 427. He must have distinguished himself in oratory to have been chosen for this task, but it is generally held that his panhellenic popularity began with his mission to Athens in which he impressively and successfully argued the case of Leontini against the venerable Tisias of Syracuse. Isocrates, one of Gorgias' many illustrious students, tells
of his death at a very late age (reports vary from 105-109 years), and Philostratus adds that he was "sound of body to the end and with the mind of a young man."\textsuperscript{81} For his contributions to rhetoric Philostratus likens him to Aeschylus and calls him the father of the art.\textsuperscript{82}

Like Protagoras, Gorgias reacted to the Eleatic optimism—but as we shall see, he replaced it with an optimism of his own. His only known philosophical work, which bore the familiar title \textit{Περὶ φύσεως},\textsuperscript{83} was a parody of the Eleatic philosophy, and its "subtitle" (\textit{Περὶ τοῦ μὴ οντος}) stood in verbal contradiction with Melissus' recent publication (\textit{Περὶ φύσεως ἡ περὶ τοῦ οντος}). In it he argues that beyond appearance there is no reality (\textit{τὸ ὄν}); that even if there were, it could not be known; that even if could, it could not be communicated.\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Περὶ φύσεως} may or may not be a serious piece of philosophy—though we must remember that Gorgias studied with and even taught some of the doctrines of Empedocles\textsuperscript{85}—but either way it is a clear indication of Gorgias' phenomenalism.

However it is precisely here that Gorgias indulges in his own optimism, for while mind is not compelled by \textit{τὸ ὄν}, it is compelled, even enchanted by \textit{ὁ λόγος}. His doctrine of the power of Logos, which Isocrates will later take up and modify,\textsuperscript{86} is seen clearly in his famous \textit{Encomium on Helen}.\textsuperscript{87} A school exercise, composed for the purpose of example, the
Helen exonerates the wife of Menelaus arguing that in all cases she was without responsibility. There are, says Gorgias, four explanations for her going to Troy: (1) she was compelled by the force of Fate, or (2) by physical force, or (3) by force of Logos, or (4) by force of love. He quickly dispells the first two and spends the bulk of the speech on the third. When mixed with previously held opinion, Logos can enchant the soul as "by witchcraft,"\(^{88}\) and compel "against the will"\(^{89}\) no less than the "force of the mighty."\(^{90}\) Its effect on the soul is "comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of the body."\(^{91}\)

And yet it would be wrong to conclude from this that for Gorgias the power of Logos is simply rational persuasion from previous opinion. There is also its poetic quality. And it is here that he seems to have made his biggest impression on his hearers, both initially in 427, and throughout the rest of his panhellenic career. The contributions that Philostratus thought earned Gorgias patriarchial status were principally matters of "adorning":

He was an example of forcefulness to the sophists and of unexpected expression and of inspiration and of the grand style for great subjects and of detached phrases and transitions, by which speech becomes sweeter than it has been and more impressive, and he also introduced poetic words for ornament and dignity.\(^{92}\)
At first Athenian audiences, accustomed to a more austere style (or see Connor's thesis in chapter 5 below), were enchanted by Gorgias' extravagance. Later writers (Aristotle, Diodorus, Dionysius) became critical of his excessive style, and it seems even in his own life, Gorgias' verbosity became passe (cf. Lysias). Yet it was not completely despised, for Isocrates was in large part a follower of him.\(^93\)

It seems that Gorgias' method of teaching was to have his pupils memorize speeches he had written—a method that came to be criticized by both Plato and Isocrates for imparting technique without art.\(^94\) Given his claim to be able to speak on any subject impromptu, and his belief that the orator must be able to expand a speech to the length required by the occasion, he, like Protagoras, must have made frequent use of commonplaces with his students.

Though he made no claim to teach virtue (no doubt because he thought true \(\alpha\rho\nu\nu\) was persuasiveness), like Protagoras, Gorgias seems to have had genuine ethical concerns. He speaks in the Helen of the importance (because of the power of Logos) to praise the praiseworthy and the blame the unworthy.\(^95\) And in his Olympian Oration\(^96\) and in the Defence of Palamedes\(^97\) panhellenism is preached—though this is somewhat mitigated by his Funeral Oration,\(^98\) in which he irresponsibly praises Athens and her imperial aspirations.
But such an ethics of the moment is not surprising, for even Gorgias' philosophy eventually reduces to rhetoric. 99

**Prodicus.** The dates on Prodicus of Ceos are not given in the sources, however, by the dramatic date of the *Protagoras* (c.a. 432) he had become famous, and we know from the statement of Protagoras that he was young enough to be the venerable sophist's (born c.a. 490) son. This places his birth around 470. The time and circumstances of his death are unknown, but it is clear from *Apology* 19E that he was practicing his profession in 399.

Much more so than Gorgias, Prodicus gives indication of a kind of specialization (Socrates in the *Protagoras*, 337A speaks of his "special talent") among the Sophists. For while Gorgias had a clearly distinguishing style—one that shaped oratory, first positively, then negatively, for several generations—Prodicus, seems to have concentrated his studies on what he called οὐρομανων ὀρθοτής, "correctness of names." 100 Since Plato has Socrates say that he was himself a student of Prodicus and that when students do not seem to him ready for philosophy he sends them to him (presumably to learn a certain exactness about words), 101 it is likely that Prodicus had a significant influence on Socrates—and this all the more when we consider the latter's indefatigable pursuit of definition.
This is not, however, to suggest that Prodicus was not an active sophist, for he clearly was. Like Gorgias, he represented his country in Athens, and did so repeatedly, once speaking before the Council. And in addition to giving lecture courses on semantics (Socrates complained that he could not afford the fifty-drachma course and had to settle for the one-drachma synopsis), he taught oratory in the manner of Gorgias, having students memorize fair-example speeches and familiarize themselves with moral common-places. And there is the account in Philostratus of Xenophon, when he was a prisoner of war in Boeotia, paying his own bail in his eagerness to hear an ἐμπεδός of the sophist. His only extant speech, however—the famous Choice of Heracles, preserved in fact by Xenophon—only confirms the criticism of Plato (Rep. 493a) that the Sophists dispense as wisdom the moral platitudes of "common opinion." Prodicus' apparent ethical banality should not take away from his ground-breaking work in semantics.

Hippias. A contemporary of Prodicus, Hippias was his exact opposite in regard to specialization. A genuine polymath, he was criticized by Protagoras for burdening students with unnecessary knowledge. Though his studies, as Kerferd has shown, benefitted his age, he seems to have offered little that was original and is accordingly of little interest to us. It should be said, however, that his passion
for encyclopedic knowledge was a not without parallel among the Sophists.

**Thrasymachus.** A Native of Chalcedon in Bithynia, Thrasymachus flourished in the latter half of fifth century, and he taught by the common method of fair example and commonplace.\(^{110}\) He developed a terse style\(^{111}\)--perhaps a reaction to Gorgias--but called for a rhythmic quality in prose.\(^{112}\) His major contribution, however, seems to have been appealing to the emotions of the audience.\(^{113}\) Thus Plato speaks of his having "systematically mastered tearful and moving speeches,"\(^{114}\) and Aristotle of his having "made a start on the subject [of dramatization]" in a work on forensic oratory entitled Ελεος, *Appeals to Compassion*.\(^{115}\) Following this tradition, Quintillian says that he was the first to discuss emotion.\(^{116}\) In addition to taking recourse to commonplaces, he is said to have composed a number of Προοιμιων, introductions to speeches.\(^{117}\) His reputation from the Republic is that of an unethical verbal pugilist. Like so many in his day (Creon, Critias, Polus, Callicles), the "Might of Chalcedon" believed that justice was the interest of the stronger and that in the hands of such rhetoric was the most powerful means to the end.
Conclusion

If the rise of democracy in fifth century Athens brought rhetoric into the center of public life, the intellectual climate of the day made a way for its ascendance to the place of the primary integrative discipline, the master knowledge. It was this way that the Sophists took. Several, perhaps more than our sources indicate, undertook to articulate the philosophical basis for such a rhetoric. Others concentrated on more practical concerns: a battery of contrary arguments, a powerful and intoxicating style, an ethos of encyclopedic knowledge, a store of ready-made topics for embellishment, devices playing on the pathos of the audience. But in each case, in so far as there was integration in their approaches to teaching political prowess, rhetoric was the integrating feature.

The ethical and political intuitions of the Sophists were, for the most part, enlightened, and on this point even Plato seems to agree. But what they taught in principle differed substantially from what they were in fact, and their doctrines were inadequate to sustain their better sensibilities. The generation that followed saw a decadence not only in style but in moral purpose. For many, though by no means all, rhetoric was no longer a means to an end, but
an end in itself. In Eristic, exemplified in Euthydymus and Diodorus and heavily criticized in Isocrates, argument was for the sake of argument. For certain logographers (for example, Lysias, who defended both democrats and oligarchs, and Isaeus, whose arguments all admit to be sophistic¹¹⁹), it was technique for the sake of technique.

This brings us to Isocrates, a student of Gorgias and in principle committed to rhetoric as master knowledge, but a repentant logographer who sought to restore sophistic to its former respectability.
Notes to Chapter I


3 Hunt, op. cit., 24-25.


6 See Guthrie, op. cit., 14-21 for a discussion of these two and several other causes.

7 For example, see the discussion on Solon by Raphael Sealy, A History of the Greek City States ca. 700-338 B.C. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 107-123.

8 Plutarch, "Solon". Aristotle, Constitution 2 and 5-12. But see Sealy (op. cit.), who holds that the so-called Solonic reforms were already in place.


10 Plutarch, op. cit., 18; Aristotle, Constitution 7.


13 Herodotus 5.66-81 and 89-94.

14 Op. cit. 5.66; 5. 69. See also Aristotle, Constitution 21.


16 It is not without significance that Herodotus describes the reforms as leading to ισημορία, a term connoting equality in speaking.

17 See in particular Thucydides' famous Pentecontaetia (1.89-118), in which he traces the growth of Athenian power up to the out break of Peloponnesian War.
18 Plutarch, "Pericles," 7, 9; Plato, Republic, 562c; Aristotle, Constitution, 25.


20 Thucydides 2.65. Of Pericles, Durant writes: "Under him Athens, while enjoying all the proviliges of democracy, acquired also the advantages of aristocracy...good government and cultural patronage...with full and annually renewed consent of a free citizenship" (2:248).


22 Aristotle, Constitution, 28.

23 Plutarch, "Pericles," 9; Plato, Gorgias, 515; Aristotle, Constitution, 27.

24 Not to be under estimated, however, was the continued positive function of oratory in the Greek city-state; see Kane, F., "Peitho and Polis," PR (1986), pp. 99-124. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Thirty Tyrants outlawed instruction in rhetoric (Xen. Mem., I, 2.31).

25 On Cleon, see Aristotle, Constitution, 28. On Alcibiades, see Plutarch, "Alcibiades." On the general "decadence" of sophistic oratory, see Kennedy, op. cit., 167-173; also Isocrates, Against the Sophists, 1.

26 Against Euthynus, 5 (trans., van Hook)

28 A spirit exemplified in one of Athen's famous would-be citizens, Herodotus.

29 Simply consider the unflagging realism of the Ionian physicists who were exposed to foreign cultures every bit as much as Periclean Athens.


34 Kirk and Raven, pp. 126-128.


36 *Sophist*, 242d.


38 Kirk and Raven, 239-279. For Parmenides opinion of common sense, see especially line 30 of the proem of his hexameter poem. For Zeno's even more radical attack on common sense, see Kirk and Raven, pp. 277-279.

39 Kirk and Raven, nos. 194-196
For Empedocles, see his Περὶ Φυσι as reconstructed by Kirk and Raven, pp. 284-313, especially nos. 348-9 (Frag. 17). For Anaxagoras, see Kirk and Raven, pp. 357-378.

See Aristotle's account of the Atomists in Kirk and Raven, nos. 583-4.

Guthrie, op. cit., p. 15.

DK, 22 B123.

Helen, 13 (DK, 82 B11).

The case for rhetoric as the central curriculum of the sophists was made in detail by H. Gomperz in his Sophistik und Rhetorik (Berlin, 1912).


Kerferd, op. cit., p. 25.

Plato, Gorgias, 452e.

Plato, Protagoras, 318e, but see also Meno, 91e.

53 Plato, *Protagoras*, 318e.


56 Plato, *Meno*, 95c.


58 Plato, *Protagoras*, 317c.

59 Plato, *Meno*, 91e.

60 DK, 80 A1, A2, A3, A12.

61 Morrison, op. cit.


63 DK, 80 A9.

64 See Morrison's discussion (op. cit., pp. 2-3) of *Protagoras* 309d.
65 DK, 80 A2.

66 DK, 80 A6.

67 Guthrie, op. cit., p. 264.

68 Ibid.

69 DK, 80 B6.

70 DK, 80 B6b.

71 DK, 80 A1.


73 Guthrie, op. cit., p. 267.


75 DK, 80 A21; See also the discussion by Guthrie in op. cit., pp. 267-268.

76 Plato, Protagoras 320c-322d.

77 DK, 80 B3.

78 DK, 80 B10.
79 DK, 82 A4.

80 DK, 82 A7.

81 DK, 82 A1.

82 DK, 82 A1.

83 DK, 82 B2, B3.

84 DK, 82 B3.


86 See chapter two below, but also Ijsseling, "Isocrates and the Power of Logos" (?), pp. 18-25, who traces the doctrine all the way through to Heidegger.


89 Helen 12.

90 Helen 12.
91 Helen 14.

92 DK, 82 A1.

93 See the discussion of Isocrates' style by G. Norlin in his introduction to Loeb edition, pp. xiii-xvi.

94 The Helen would be a case in point, as would be the Defense of Palamedes.

95 Helen 1-2.

96 See DK, 82 B7, B8.

97 DK, 82 B11a.

98 DK, 82 B5a.

99 Helen 13-14.

100 See DK, 84 A13, A15, A17, A18.

101 Plato, Theatetus 151b.

102 DK, 84 A3.

103 Plato, Cratylus 384b.

104 DK, 84 A10.

105 DK, 84 A19.

106 DK, 84 B2.
107 Marcellinus, in his *Life of Thucydides* attributes the latter's precise use of words specifically to Prodicus (DK, 84 A9).


110 DK, 85 A1.

111 DK, 85 A3, A13.

112 DK, 85 A1, A11, B1.

113 DK, 85 B5, B6.

114 DK, 85 B6.

115 DK, 85 B5.

116 III, iii, 4.

117 DK, 85 B4.

118 As a careful reading of the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* show.

II

ISOCRATES: THE DEFENSE OF RHETORIC

IN 4TH CENTURY ATHENS

Isocrates—"the post-war representative of the sophistic and rhetorical culture which had flourished in the Periclean period"—was born in Athens in 436/5 B.C., five years before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and died in 338/7, just after the battle of Chaeronea. His father was a successful manufacturer of flutes—successful enough to have been choregus—and Isocrates, though one of five children, was able to be educated by some of the greatest teachers of the day, most notably Prodicus, Socrates, and Gorgias. However, that portion of his his patrimony he did not spend on education, he lost in the Peloponnesian War, and as a result he had to turn to logography, the writing of judicial speeches for hire, to sustain himself. This more or less profitable profession he practiced for ten years, before opening a school of political oratory around 390, after which time he tirelessly disparaged his former trade. His school flourished for over fifty years, his last work, the
Panathenaicus, being published just one year before his death.8

Having neither the constitution9 nor the desire10 for public debate, Isocrates refrained from public speaking and published his speeches as political pamphlets that at the same time advertised his school. Six speeches (orations xvi-xxi) from his time as a logographer are preserved; and from his school period fifteen speeches (orations i-xv) and nine letters survive.11 His letters, Norlin writes, are "less personal than general in tone and subject matter."12

In the following analysis a study will be made of those works of Isocrates most relevant to his account of rhetoric as ποιήσις. First, we will consider his early essay on education, Against the Sophists (ca. 390), and the proemium from another early school exercise, the Encomium on Helen (ca. 385), in both of which Isocrates makes an effort to separate himself from other educators. Then, we will look at Isocrates' Cyprian orations, in particular his famous eulogy of rhetoric in the second of his Cyprian orations, Nicocles (ca. 374), as well as the conclusion to Evagoras (ca. 370). Next, portions of a later work, On the Peace (ca. 355), will be examined, from which a case can be made that Isocrates' ideal of rhetoric is non-flattering (one of Plato's principal charges against rhetoric, as we shall see). Finally, we will take up a close study of the Antidosis (354/3), Isocrates
second essay on education, which pulls together all the elements of his educational system in an apologia pro vita sua.

Against the Sophists

In what is likely the first of his school orations, Against the Sophists, Isocrates attempts to distinguish himself from the "common herd" sophists with whom he could easily be confused. The speech apparently was in two parts,\(^13\) the first polemical, in which he was on the attack criticizing the claims of others, the second, apologetic, in which he gave a positive presentation of his own view of education. Of these two parts, only the first is preserved for us.

The tract begins with an explanation of why professional educators have come to be in "bad repute with the lay-public."\(^14\) In a word, it is because they "do not scruple to vaunt their powers with utter disregard of the truth."\(^15\) Three groups of unscrupulous educators can be singled out.

The first group Isocrates criticizes as those "who devote themselves to disputation (των περὶ τὰς ερίδας διατριβοντῶν)."\(^16\) It is not clear who Isocrates is including in this group, but it is surely not just those eristics who pursued argument for argument's sake, as exemplified in
Plato’s *Euthydemus*. For the claim attributed to them is to teach a science (ἐπιστήμη) of eudaimonia. Such a science is tantamount to divine foreknowledge, says Isocrates, and belies their claim to be teachers of truth.\(^{17}\) It is likely that he included the young Plato in this group, as it is also likely that Plato wrote the *Euthydemus*—in which Socrates’ dialectic is distinguished from eristic—as a counter.\(^{18}\)

The second group criticized are "those who profess to teach political discourse (πολιτικοὺς λόγους)."\(^{19}\) Their success is also due to their deceptive claims and good prices. They claim to teach "the science of discourse (τὴν τῶν λόγων ἐπιστήμην)," which allegedly can be imparted independent of a student’s practice and experience or natural ability, like one might impart a knowledge of the letters of the alphabet.\(^{20}\) Thus they fail to recognize that they are "applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules (τεταχμενήν τεχνὴν) to a creative process (ποιητικὸν πρᾶγμα)."\(^{21}\) But clearly this is the greatest possible mistake, for precisely what makes for effective discourse is that which distinguishes it from an art that "remains fixed and unchanged (ακίνετος ἔχει καὶ μένει κατὰ ταύτων)": "fitness for the occasion (τῶν καιρῶν)" and "propriety of style (του πρεποντῶς)", "originality of treatment (του καινῶς)."\(^{22}\) Such a mistake, concludes Isocrates, clearly places one in the class of those who should pay fees, not receive them.\(^{23}\)
At this point in the tract Isocrates digresses for a moment to contrast his own position on the art of political discourse with that of his contemporaries. To begin with, he makes no claim that formal training (παιδευσις) can compensate for natural aptitude. Rather, training begins with nature and perfects it; for considerable ability is found among those well endowed by nature and schooled simply by practical experience. Second, the real benefits from such training are not what is commonly thought. For a precise knowledge (ἐπιστημη) of the formal elements (ἰδεα) of oratory are actually easily acquired. But as for learning (1) how to choose from among these elements what is appropriate to a subject, and (2) how to fit them together in a proper manner, and (3) how to fit the whole discourse to the occasion, and (4) how to finish it with impressive thoughts, and (5) how to adorn it with the necessary eloquent verbiage and phrasiology—this takes much tutelage. Finally, as to the actual process of education, the student must, for his part, learn the various types of discourse and then practice in them; while the teacher, for his part, must impart an exact a knowledge of the art as possible, being careful to provide the student with many fair copy examples. It is obvious that Isocrates' programme is in no way as naive or as facile as that of his opponents.
A third group that requires critique is those who in previous generations "did not scruple to write the so-called arts of oratory (τέχναι)." Their oratory turned on name-calling (το δυσχερεστατον των ονοματων), and their subject matter, forensic oratory, made them worse even than the first group criticized, those "who devote themselves to disputation" (eristic). For while those who give themselves to moral disputation become in the process utterly irrelevant (thus it is not so much contentiousness but irrelevance that marks the first group), they at least concern themselves with noble subjects. But those who concentrate on legal debate, have no such lofty aim, and become "nothing more than professors of meddlesomeness and greed."

The tract breaks off with Isocrates' claim that those who would excel in judicial debate will be greatly helped in his school of political oratory. For they will not only learn the general art of discourse, but they will avoid the aforementioned corruption by treating lofty subjects which, in so far as possible, elevate the soul. The promise is not, of course, that they will necessarily become just men, for "there does not exist an art that can implant sobriety and justice in depraved natures." Yet he does hold out that "the study of political discourse can help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character." In what is unfortunately the last sentence preserved,
Isocrates announces his intention to now give his reasons for this.

To sum up, it is clear that for Isocrates, there is no science (ἐπιστήμη) of moral and political action in the strictest sense, because knowledge of the future results of present actions is beyond human ability. In this area one is confined to the probable and hence to the debatable and thus to rhetoric.\textsuperscript{32} In addition to this, rhetoric is not to be conceived of as a more or less mechanical art taught like the alphabet and easily acquired, but one that only those gifted by nature can hope to learn and only then with much practice (ideally, guided practice coupled with hard study). Finally, the proper object of rhetorical study is political discourse which because of its lofty ideals not only demands profundity from the orator—for the orator's speech must fit his subject—but can, in the right nature, "stimulate and form" virtue.\textsuperscript{33}

Helen

An early school exercise on a rather common theme, the \textit{Encomium on Helen} would hold little value for our purposes, except for the prooemium,\textsuperscript{34} in which Isocrates takes up again the contrast he began in \textit{Against the Sophists} between himself and his competitors. Three groups again are singled out, but
not the same three. The Eristics are mentioned (though he may by this time have refined his conception), but those concerned with judicial rhetoric are not mentioned, and neither are those who speak on political matters.

Isocrates is aware that since he has undertaken to write in praise of Helen, an infamous figure in Greek mythology, he has chosen to write a discourse that at first glance seems to share a genre with other less than worthy compositions. "There are some," he begins, "who are much pleased with themselves if, after setting up an absurd and self-contradictory subject, they succeed in discussing it in tolerable fashion"\(^{35}\)--and, of course, those who write in praise of Helen could easily be placed in this group. But this, Isocrates will claim, would be inappropriate.

Those who presently write in this genre fall into three groups: (1) those who take up the old theme of the impossibility of contradiction (\(\alpha\nu\tau\iota\lambda\varepsilon\gamma\iota\nu\)) of multiple opinion on the same subject, (2) those who collapse all the virtues into one and who claim that one science (\(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta\)) covers them all--an obvious reference to Plato, and (3) those who only can be classified as verbal quibblers (eristic).\(^{36}\) But for Isocrates they are all the same. For while it must be admitted that this is an old and venerable genre--used with profit, for example, by such as Protagoras, Gorgias, Zeno of Elea and Melissus\(^{37}\)--at the same time, however, it
must now be recognized that its sole purpose was to show
"that it is easy to contrive false statements on any subject
that may be proposed," and this has once and for all been
done by these illustrious writers. This purpose having been
served, it is now time to move beyond "verbal quibbles" to
matters of substance, to the pressing and practical matters
of civic life.

This obviously has significant implications for
Isocrates' παιδεία. Since the outstanding minds of the
previous generation have already made it plain that it is
possible to discuss a subject--"any subject that may be
proposed"--to death, to a point of utter irrelevance, it
follows that any pursuit of "exact knowledge" takes one into
the realm of the trivial and useless. Before an investiga-
tion yields knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), it reduces to irrelevant
quibbling. "Exact knowledge," which can only be trivial,
must therefore be abandoned in favor of "likely conjecture"
that remains in the realm of the relevant. For Isocrates,
those who pursue ἐπιστήμη to the point of petty distinction
are, practically speaking, no different than those who simply
quibble with words.

What in particular irritates Isocrates about these
"quibblers" is their claim that they could easily leave their
hairsplitting irrelevancies to discourse--with the accepted
inexactitude--on more profound matters. But if they would
show this, they must actually take up these subjects and not merely appeal to their success "in fields neglected by everybody else."41 At present they resemble "an athlete who, although pretending to be the best of all athletes, enters a contest in which no one would condescend to meet him."42 It is "easy by eloquence to overdo the trivial themes."43 But on themes that are profound and consequently well-discussed, it is quite a different matter. In Helen Isocrates thinks he has chosen such a theme.

The Cyprian Orations

Isocrates' most eloquent and concise defense (actually a eulogy) of speech comes in the second of his Cyprian orations. In the first of these, To Nicocles, a compendium of advice to the young king of Cyprus who had just ascended to his father's throne, Isocrates a number of times makes mention of one aspect or another of his educational theory.44 But it is in the proemium to the second oration, entitled simply Nicocles,45 that we find his famous eulogy. It bears repeating at length.

The oration is written as if delivered by Nicocles to his subjects. Mention is made of the first oration written on "how a ruler should act" and that the second is thus as one might expect on "what his subjects must do."46 The
proemium is concerned to allay the fears of those who
distrust royal propaganda, and is to this end a defence of
speech:

There are people who frown upon eloquence and
censure men who study philosophy (φιλοσοφούντας),
asserting that those who engage in such occupations
do so, not for the sake of virtue, but for their
own advantage....

I am astonished that those who hold the view
to which I have just referred do not rail also
against wealth and strength and courage; for if
they are really hostile to eloquence because there
are men who do wrong and speak falsehood, they
ought to disparage as well all other good things;
for there will be found also among men who possess
these some who do wrong and use these advantages to
the injury of many....

But the fact is that since they have not taken
the trouble to make distinctions after this
manner...they have gone so far astray as not to
perceive that they are hostile to that power which
of all the faculties that belong to the nature of
man is the source of most of our
blessings....[B]ecause there has been implanted in
us the power to persuade each other and to make
clear to each other whatever we desire, not only
have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we
have come together and founded cities and made laws
and invented arts.... For this it is which has
laid down laws concerning things just and unjust,
and things base and honourable; and if it were not
for these ordinances we should not be able to live
with one another. It is by this also that we confute the bad and extol the good. Through this we educate the ignorant and appraise the wise; for the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul. With this faculty we both contend against others on matters which are open to dispute and seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown; for the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts; and while we call eloquent those who are able to speak before a crowd, we regard as sage those who most skillfully debate their problems in their own minds. And if there is need to speak in brief summary of this power, we shall find that none of the things which are done with intelligence take place without the help of speech, but that in all our actions as well as in all our thoughts speech is our guide, and is most employed by those who have the most wisdom. Therefore, those who dare to speak with disrespect of educators and teachers of philosophy deserve our opprobrium no less than those who profane the sanctuaries of the gods.47

As early as Against the Sophists,48 Isocrates identified his paideia as "philosophy", but in this eulogy not only is his equation of the two plain, so are his reasons (which unfortunately were given in the part of that oration that is lost). They are three. To begin with, the faculty of speech
(λόγος) entails the ability "to persuade each other" (πειθεῖν αλλήλους) and "to make clear (δηλοῦν) to each other whatever we desire." Thus it is the very basis of civilization: by this ability that we "have escaped the life of wild beasts" and have "founded cities and made laws and invented arts." (The extraordinary claim made here that speech is the basis of πολις, νόμος and τέχνη is not to be missed). Second, speech is the basis of education: both public education (through epideictic oratory: "by it we also confute the bad and extol the good") and private. As such it is also the sign of wisdom and character. Finally, it is the basis of all deliberation, again, both public and private: "with this faculty we both contend against others in matters open to disputation and seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown." For indeed, "the same arguments we use in persuading (πειθομέν) others when we speak in public, we employ when we deliberate in our own thoughts (βουλευομένοι)."

It is clear that for Isocrates' η τῶν λόγων παιδεία is not merely one art among many (it is instead the basis of all other arts), but a "master knowledge" extending to all that is distinctively human in life, both public and private. There simply is no intellectual activity apart from λόγος: "none of the things which are done with intelligence (φρονίμος) take place without the help of speech (αλόγος)."

It could even be said that if in the Platonic tradition man
is the "rational animal", for Isocrates he is in a very strict sense of the word the "linguistic animal". It is clear then how for Isocrates to learn to speak well is to learn to think well. It is also clear that speaking well does not equate with flatterous persuasion.

Mention should also be made of the last of Isocrates' Cyprian Orations, Evagoras. In the last lines of the encomium of the late king of Cyprus, Isocrates discusses the pedagogical aim of the ἐπιθετικὸς. His point is to encourage the new king (Nicocles) to philosophy (φιλοσοφία). What becomes obvious in the process is that for Isocrates φιλοσοφία is decidedly humanistic. The object of philosophic meditation is foremost the lives of the wise who have gone before: "we exhort young men to the study of philosophy by praising others in order that they, emulating those who are eulogized, may adopt the same pursuits." Ἐπιθετικὸς is particularly suited to this task, since it achieves a "likeness" (ἐικών) of the deeds and character of the wise. Isocrates writes:

...while no one can make the (i.e., their) bodily nature resemble moulded statues and protraits in painting, yet for those who do not choose to be slothful, but desire to be good men, it is easy to imitate the character of their fellow-men and their thoughts and purposes--those, I mean, that are embodied in the spoken word.
If it can be said that in *Nicocles* speech is the producer of all that is distinctively human, in *Evagoras* it can be said that speech is able also to capture and preserve it. Isocrates' debt to Sophistic culture (especially that of Protagoras and Gorgias) is nowhere more obvious than in his enthusiasm about λόγος.

On the Peace

No oration of Isocrates better exemplifies his distinction between speaking well and flattery, than his *On the Peace*. Written toward the end of the Social War (357-355 B.C.) between Athens and her former allies, Chios, Cos, Rhodes and Byzantium, who were fighting for their independence from the Second Athenian Confederacy, *On the Peace* argues not just for an end to the social war, but for a long-needed change in Athenian foreign policy of imperialism—"I maintain, then, that we should make peace, not only with the Chians, the Rhodians, the Byzantines and the Coans, but with all mankind." The call for such an about-face was not likely to be well received, and so Isocrates devotes the proemium to distinguishing those orators that seek the welfare of the state, and those that build careers on telling the people what they want to hear.
He begins with a rebuke to the Assembly. Given the "magnitude of the question" they have come together to decide, it is of utmost importance that deliberation be careful and as objective as possible. But this is not likely to be the case, because the Athenians "have formed the habit of driving all orators from the platform except those who support [their] desires." Isocrates does not mince words, such counselors are to be seen for what they are, "flatters (κολάκευοντες)." And yet one must not lay the blame only on these orators; the Athenian people themselves, by such practices, "have caused the orators to practice and study, not what will be advantageous to the state, but how they may discourse in a manner [that is] pleasing." Some orators may indeed flatter, but it is they (the people) who "crave (ἐπιθυμεῖν) great possessions contrary to justice."

The most glaring shortcoming of the Athenians, however, is their gathering together to deliberate with their minds already made up. They gather together "to select the best course from all that are proposed," but they listen only to those who support a particular course of action as if they had "clear knowledge of what must be done." It is only common sense that we stand to benefit most from those who oppose our views, and that we are most objective when we "examine and compare the arguments of opposing speakers" and
give "an unbiased hearing to both sides." This is the most significant benefit of "freedom of speech (παρρησία)".

In the rest of the oration Isocrates continues in the spirit of his prefatory comments and refuses to flatter his audience. He likens Athens in her unjust craving for power to an animal lured into a trap by bait. He speaks of Athenian "depravity" in seeking to enslave other Greeks, and of her desire "not to rule but to dominate," and of the "arrogance and insolence" that have caused all her misfortunes.

Antidosis

The last work of Isocrates that we will consider is his famous apologia pro vita sua, the Antidosis. It gives a complete account of his paideia and calls for a more or less detailed study.

In Athens a wealthy citizen could be called upon to underwrite certain public services, one of which was the trierarchy, the fitting out of a ship of war. A citizen assigned such a task could challenge a wealthier citizen to accept the expense or else to exchange property with him—a sign that he really was less able than his substitute. This challenge was called an antidosis, and was, if necessary, settled in court. It seems that Isocrates was at some point
challenged to undertake a trierarchy and lost in court, the plaintiff winning by misrepresenting to a misinformed public. Isocrates' paideia and the wealth he had acquired in his profession. The Antidosis is Isocrates' published response to a public that had apparently misunderstood him. Though its title makes reference to the case for public service, the actual work assumes that a capital charge has been leveled: "that I corrupt young men by teaching them to speak and gain their own advantage in the courts contrary to justice,... and that I have received form them and am now receiving enormous sums of money." In this way Isocrates can defend his paideia while walking in the shadow of Socrates, whose Apology at many other points is echoed.

The speech falls into two parts: the first part (up to 167) aimed at distinguishing Isocrates from the generally disdained teachers of judicial rhetoric, of which he is alleged to be one, the second (167 to the end), at setting forth his positive doctrine. As for his difference from the logographers, this can be demonstrated from three sources, the first and most compelling being his discourses themselves.

To begin with, he is distinct in that he has chosen "to write discourses, not for private disputes (ιδιων συμβολαιων), but which deal with the world of Hellas, with affairs of state, and are appropriate to be delivered at the Pan-
Hellenic assemblies."\(^7\) In addition to this, his discourses "are more akin to works composed in rhythm and set to music than to the speeches which are made in court."\(^7\) He is thus to be distinguished from the logographers as "the devotees of philosophy" are to be distinguished from those who have merely become "adept in court procedure."\(^7\) This can best be seen by considering several extracts from his previous orations, of which he excerpts three: \textit{Panegyricus} 51-99, \textit{On the Peace} 25-56 and 132-145, and \textit{To Nicocles} 14-39. His point is to prove that his speeches, far from simply not being harmful to youth, are "incomparable"\(^7\) in both form and content. In the \textit{Panegyricus} he had masterfully recounted the glories of Athens in an attempt "to inspire [the young] to a life of valour and of dangers endured for their country."\(^7\) In \textit{On the Peace} he had done just the opposite and boldly called Athens to task for her "dominion over the Hellenes...showing that it is no whit different, either in its conduct or in its results, form tyranny."\(^7\) Finally, in the \textit{To Nicocles}, a compendium of advice to the young king of Cyprus, he had spoken with impressive frankness as "an Athenian should, not paying court to his wealth nor to his power, but pleading the cause of his subjects."\(^7\)

The case for Isocrates' distinctness from the logographers and his positive value to the youth of Athens can also be made from his pupils, and their exemplary records
constitute his second major defense (93-139). He mentions briefly Eunomus, Lysitheides, Callippus, early associates, and then Onetor, Anticles, Philonides Philomelus and Charmantides—all of whom "were crowned by Athens with chaplets of gold." His focus, however, is on Timotheus, one of the brightest of his pupils, and at the time of the Antidosis, one of the most controversial. A brilliant admiral and statesman in the second naval confederacy, he was impeached and fined and died in voluntary exile because of charges brought against him in connection with the Social War. This was so, Isocrates explains, not because he was as alleged an "anti-democrat ", but because of a certain natural "proud bearing " that made him incapable of the flattery the public desires. Of course, such a "fault" on the part of Timotheus places the real blame on the Athenian populace, and exonerates both the general and his teacher.

Isocrates had warned Timotheus of the consequences of his character, of his inability to compromise or to seek favor from the popular assemblies. He relates that advice in detail (130-39), and in so doing reveals his understanding of the relationship between the orator's goals of "justice and virtue" and the realistic need to please and persuade. It does no good for one to hope for "justice itself (αυτοτο δικαιον, that is"absolute justice")" in his reward from the state, he says. The statesman must be realistic and "make
allowance for the ignorance which possesses all mankind, for the feelings of envy that are aroused in us, and, furthermore, for the confusion and turmoil in which we live."81 Thus, "men who are in public life and desire to be in favour must adopt the principle of doing what is most serviceable and noble and of saying what is most true and just, yet they must at the same time not neglect to study and consider well how in everything they say and do they may convince the people of their graciousness and human sympathy."82 And in addition to this he must court the favor of other less noble orators who seek only to flatter the masses and yet "who are from time to time the most influential."83 While the wise and good statesman, then, does not make flattery the end--thus distinguishing himself from the common herd--he is realistic and recognizes the fact that in from time to time flattery is a necessary means to his staying in the public favor.

For a third and final reason he is to be distinguished from logographers, Isocrates turns briefly to his finances. Typically, sophistry, when compared to other professions, does not pay very well.84 Actors, for example, receive much higher pay.85 Yet among the sophists, Isocrates has made an impressive living--a sign, he says, of the his "competence" and the "superiority" of his teaching.86 Moreover, since this income--over half of which he has spent in public
service—has been primarily from foreign sources (versus the "domestic sources" of the sycophants!), he has performed the additional service to his city of "getting means from abroad."  

This brings us to the second part of the oration. Having given "a sufficient answer" to his accuser, Isocrates turns from defense to the positive exposition of his παιδεία. The subject matter he is about to treat is of utmost importance, for "as is the education of our youth so from generation to generation will be the fortune of the state."  

Those who oppose him should be duly censured for trifling with such a matter.

Education falls into two parts according to the two parts of man: body and soul. For physical development, there is gymnastic; for mental development, there is what Isocrates terms "philosophy". These "twin arts" are "parallel and complementary." They both begin with the natural aptitude of the pupil and then work to perfect nature through guided exercise. Thus "the physical trainers instruct their followers in the postures which have been devised for bodily contests, while the teachers of philosophy impart all the forms of discourse in which the mind expresses itself." Then, when the students have learned these basics, the teachers "set them at exercises, habituate them
to work, and require them to combine in practice the particular things which they have learned."^{93}

Such practice is essential to the learning process for two reasons. First, it allows the student to gain an even firmer grasp of the basic elements of the art. Second, and most importantly for Isocrates' account of the learning process, it brings their initial understandings of the art into closer contact with experience—and it is experience that is the final teacher. This is so because no conceptualizing on our part can anticipate all the complexities of experience. Knowledge does not circumscribe (περιλαβεῖν) reality, but only approximates it; it remains always "opinion" or "theory" (δοξα), for the concrete experiences of life "in all cases elude our science (ἐπιστήμη)."^{94} Practice, then, is not simply that a student might gain facility in the fundamentals of the discipline. It is for the further shaping of knowledge, its non-theoretical, non-conceptual adequation to what is in an otherwise elusive reality.

As in his early pamphlet, Against the Sophists, so now at the end of his career Isocrates holds to three elements in the process of education: nature, instruction and practice. And he holds that in this process master and pupil each has his place; no one but the pupil can furnish the necessary capacity; no one but the master, the ability to impart
knowledge; while both have a part in the exercises of practical application: for the master must painstakingly direct his pupil, and the latter must rigidly follow the master's instruction.\textsuperscript{95}

But he wishes now to make plain that of the three elements and the two agents involved in the educational process the student's "natural ability is paramount and comes before all else."\textsuperscript{96} Next in importance is practice, for "men who are less generously endowed by nature but excel in practice, not only improve upon themselves, but surpass others who, though highly gifted, have been negligent of their talents."\textsuperscript{97} Instruction comes last, after natural ability and practice. Here Isocrates appears to take himself as a case in point. "For if one should take lessons in all the principles of oratory and [by practice] master them with the greatest thoroughness, he might, perhaps, become a more pleasing speaker than most, but let him stand up before the crowd and lack one thing only, namely, assurance [a matter of \textit{φυσις}, and he would not be able to utter a word."\textsuperscript{98}

It is clear that Isocrates is making reasonable claims for his paideia, but even so two arguments will be made against his position: first, that paideia leading to effective and constructive political oratory does not exist, "that those who excel in these respects owe their superiority to natural gifts:"\textsuperscript{99} second, that while training in oratory
is effective, "men who take this training...are corrupted and demoralized by it."\textsuperscript{100} Those leveling the first charge deny the efficacy of such training because they set up unrealistic requirements: they expect impressive results immediately and independent of the natural ability or industriousness of the student. This is an impossible standard, and one that is applied to no other art.\textsuperscript{101}

The second group, which alleges that training, while effective, is detrimental, poses a much more substantial problem: for there are indeed those who claim to educate the young whose students become corrupted. These, however, are not true educators. There is a difference between "those who pretend to be able to educate the young" and "those who have justly earned this reputation."\textsuperscript{102} True educators are those who have chosen to rest their reputation on their students, and they take an interest in their moral development. They realize that that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by sending out students of "evil repute."\textsuperscript{103} And as for the power of speech itself (i.e., the good will of the teacher notwithstanding) being a corrupting influence, history simply does not bear this out: Solon, Cleisthenes, Themistocles and Pericles, to name a few, prove the contrary.\textsuperscript{104} Of course, like any other art, oratory can be abused.\textsuperscript{105} However, more so than any other art, speech is the source of those things we value most. At this point
Isocrates quotes at length the eulogy of speech from the proemium of Nicocles.106

This powerful eulogy returns Isocrates to the exposition of his παιδεία. To begin with, he must admit that he does not hold the popular prejudice that "the teachers who are skilled in disputation and those who are occupied with astronomy and geometry and studies of that sort" injure their students.107 Of course, they are not as beneficial as they advertise, but they do offer their students to be "sharpened and exercised on these disciplines." They provide a kind of "gymnastic of the mind and a preparation for philosophy."108

With this the time has come for Isocrates to explain "what philosophy, properly conceived, really is."109 It is not what some think. "[F]or it is simply beyond the nature of man to attain to a science (ἐπιστημή) by the possession of which we can know positively (ἐπιθέμεν) what we should do or what we should say." Rather "that man [is] wise who is able by his powers of conjecture (τοῖς δοξαῖς) to arrive generally (ἐπιτυχανεὶς) at the best course, and...that man [is] a philosopher who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight."110 In other words, φιλοσοφία (lit. love of wisdom) is a modest term (denoting not the attainment of knowledge, ἐπιστημή, but the pursuit and approximation of it, δοξα), and is rightly applied to Isocrates' more modest παιδεία.111
And it is precisely his paideia that brings wisdom thus conceived. For concerned as it is with the ability (1) "to speak well," (2) "to persuade," and (3) to gain the "advantage" ("in the true meaning of that term"), it necessarily inclines a student to a life full of just words and deeds. In regard to speaking well, it is clear that one is most readily praised for one's speech when "great and honourable" causes are supported, and when one selects "from all the actions of men which bear upon his subject those most illustrious and edifying."\textsuperscript{112} But such themes and such examples not only hold power over those who hear the discourse, but they also hold power over the one who writes it, one who had to contemplate them often in the process of composition. As for the ability to persuade, it is well known that "the argument that is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by his words." For this reason, "the stronger a man's desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously he will strive to be honourable."\textsuperscript{113} Finally, there is the matter of gaining the advantage. Granted that in common parlance one can speak of sycophants "getting the advantage", the fact is that those who so conduct themselves "are at a greater disadvantage throughout their lives." Those who are most securely in a position of advantage with respect to the gods in the future and with respect to men in this life, are those who dili-
gently and skillfully pursue what is good. Studies leading to noble, persuasive, advantageous speech are precisely that paideia that leads the pupil—so far as possible—to just words and deeds.

Conclusion

The παιδεία of Isocrates was indeed a revival of the rhetorical culture of Periclean Athens. And as was the case with the great sophists, it was his theory of knowledge, his philosophical scepticism, that gave rhetoric the principal place in his system. As early as Against the Sophists, he denies any "science" of eudamonìa. And when almost 40 years later he writes the Antidosis, he still champions his belief that human knowledge cannot "circumscribe" (περιλαβεῖν) reality, that life's concrete experiences "in all cases elude our science."

This is not to say that Isocrates was satisfied with a less than rigorous rationality, for he saw some redemptive value even in eristic (for which he had little use) precisely in that it strengthened one's powers of reason. It was just that for him certainty was available only in trivial matters, and that in those things that really count in life, matters of politics, "it is simply beyond the nature of man to attain
to a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say."

As with the sophists, so with Isocrates, a respectable rhetoric is put forth as the "master knowledge." It is in this context, the fourth century revival of rhetorical culture, that Plato composes the Gorgias.
Notes to Chapter II


4 XV, 161.

5 A period inferred from the dating of his (six) extant forensic speeches; Jebb, op. cit., 2:7.

6 Sometime between the last forensic speech, *Aegineticus* (XIX) in 394/93 (Jebb, op. cit., 2:7), and shortly before what was undoubtedly his first school oration, *Against the Sophists*, 390/89 (Jebb, op. cit., 2:124-25).
7 Cf. IV, 11, 188, and esp. XV, 36ff, and 49.

8 The *Panathenaicus* was Isocrates last major effort. It was begun in his 94th year but was not finished until three years later: XII, 3 and 267-8.

9 V, 81; XII, 10.

10 XV, 151.

11 Jebb, op. cit., 2:76-80.

12 "Introduction," xxxi.

13 XIII, 22.

14 XIII, 1 (All translations of Isocrates are from LCL, though from time to time I have changed a word or so.)

15 XIII, 1.

16 XIII, 1.

17 XIII, 2. Norlin's comment is apropos: "There is, according to Isocrates, no 'science' which can teach us to do under all circumstances the things which will insure our happiness and success. Life is too complicated for that, and no man can foresee exactly the consequences of his acts.... All that education can do is to develop a sound judgement (as opposed to knowledge) which will meet the contingencies of life with resourcefulness and, in most cases, with success." (2:162-3, n. d).

19 XIII, 9.

20 XIII, 10.

21 XIII, 12.

22 XIII, 13.

23 XIII, 13.

24 XIII, 14-18; an important segment, since it gives us a glimpse of the early Isocrates' positive doctrine.


26 XIII, 16; cf. Plato's similar attitude in the Phaedrus, 266C-269C.

27 XIII, 16-17.

28 XIII, 18.

29 XIII, 19.

30 XIII, 20. Perhaps the first reference to Isocrates' claim that ἐπιστήμη can only be had in trivial matters; cf. X, 4.
31 XIII, 21. There is, to be sure, an aristocratic assumption in Isocrates doctrine of φυσις. On this point he follows Protagoras. Cf. IX, 81.

32 It is here that Isocrates reduces what since Plato has come to be called philosophy to rhetoric. On his use of φιλοσοφία, see Norlin, "Introduction," xxvi-xxvii.

33 XIII, 21.

34 X, 1-15.

35 X, 1.

36 X, 1.

37 X, 3.

38 X, 4.

39 X, 4.

40 X, 5.

41 X, 9.

42 X, 9-10.

43 X, 13.

44 For example: the goal of education being action, II, 51; the impossibility of sure knowledge in human affairs, II, 33; the subsequent importance of always presenting both sides
of an issue, II, 28, 39; the power of political discourse to shape the mind, II, 38.

45 Oration III; sometimes referred to as *Nicomcles or the Cyprians*.

46 III, 11.


48 XIII, 16.

49 IX, 73-81.

50 IX, 77.

51 IX, 73.

52 IX, 75.

53 VIII, 16.


55 VIII, 1-2.

56 VIII, 3.


58 VIII, 5.

59 VIII, 6.
60 VIII, 9.

61 VIII, 10.

62 VIII, 11.

63 VIII, 14.

64 VIII, 34.

65 VIII, 41.

66 VIII, 91.

67 VIII, 119.

68 XV, 3-5.

69 XV, 30.


71 XV, 46.

style, see W. Johnson, "Isocrates' Flowering: the Rhetoric of Augustine, PR 9 (1976), pp. 217-231.

73 XV, 49.

74 XV, 75.

75 XV, 60.

76 XV, 64.

77 XV, 70.

78 XV, 93-4.


80 XV, 131.

81 XV, 130.

82 XV, 132.

83 XV, 136.

84 XV, 155.

85 XV, 157.

86 XV, 162.

87 XV, 158.
88 XV, 165.

89 XV, 174.

90 XV, 180.

91 XV, 182. Cf. Plato's Gorgias, 464B-466A.

92 XV, 183.

93 XV, 184.

94 XV, 184.

95 XV, 188.

96 XV, 189.

97 XV, 191.

98 XV, 192.

99 XV, 197.

100 XV, 198.

101 XV, 199-215. Cf. XIII, 21. This would seem to be Isocrates' answer to the famous question, Can αρημη be taught?

102 XV, 216.

103 XV, 218-19.
104 XV, 232-36.

105 XV, 252.

106 XV, 253-257 are quoted from III, 5-9. See above, pp. 10-11.

107 XV, 261.

108 XV, 265-66.

109 XV, 270.

110 XV, 271.


112 XV, 276-77.

113 XV, 278.

114 XV, 281-82.
PLATO'S CRITIQUE OF "RHETORIC" IN THE GORGIAS

From all indications, the Gorgias was written at a strategic point in Plato's career. Styometric considerations place it among his early dialogues, while its Pythagorean themes suggest a date after the first visit to Italy and place it late in this early group. When the fact that it was upon his return from Italy in 387 that Plato founded the Academy is added to this, it is not unreasonable to see the Gorgias as one of the first, and perhaps the first, publication from the new school. It was with this in mind that Lamb suggested that the Gorgias holds a place in the Platonic corpus similar to Isocrates' Against the Sophists: a kind of school "manifesto" in which Plato sets forth his πανσέια over against the rhetorical schools of the day. At the same time, since it was with the founding of the Academy that Plato turned his back on his early political aspirations, the Gorgias can be seen as the philosopher's own "Apology".
The *Gorgias* is Plato's harshest criticism of the rhetoric of his day, and to this day it is held up as the classic case against rhetoric. As is often the case with such a historically significant document, the broad lines of interpretation are often set in stone—lines not infrequently established by the subsequent debate more so than by the historical circumstances that originally gave rise to the work. Thus Edwin Black writes: "The interpretive controversy of twenty-three centuries has so encrusted his [viz. Plato's] ideas [on rhetoric] that, though we seldom seem to see them in the same way, it must be even more seldom that we really see them at all." A fresh and more or less detailed reading of the dialogue—one that in particular questions the received opinion that "in *Gorgias* he hates the whole thing [viz. rhetoric]" is in order.

**Prologue (447-448):**

* Socrates, Late to a Fray...But Not Too Late

The dialogue opens with Socrates and his disciple Chaerephon just missing a rhetorical exhibition by Gorgias. Socrates politely expresses his regrets at missing the display (*ἐπιθεῖσι*), but confesses that his real desire was not to hear a speech but to dialogue with Gorgias (*ἡμιν διαλέξθηναι*) about the nature of his art. To use his own terms, he is
concerned to learn "the power of his art (τις η δύναμις της τεχνης του ανδρος)," what it is able to do, and "what claims Gorgias makes (τι εστιν ο επαγγελλεται)" as to his own proficiency.\textsuperscript{10}

Fortunately for Socrates, one of the claims Gorgias has just been making is to be able to answer any question put to him, and to do so with unequaled brevity.\textsuperscript{11} However, when Socrates encourages Chaerephon try his hand at questioning Gorgias on these matters, it is Polus, Gorgias' protege, who steps in to answer. The veneer of civility, which had already shown signs of wear between Socrates and Callicles, wears even thinner as the respective students of the two masters try for a discussion.\textsuperscript{12} In the process it becomes obvious that whatever Gorgias' own abilities in question and answer, he has schooled Polus in "what is commonly called 'rhetoric' (την καλουμενην ρητορικην)"—lengthy and evasive discourse—"rather than in dialogue (μαλλον...η διαλεγοσθαι)."\textsuperscript{13} Even so, his attempted definition of Gorgias' art as "the noblest of the arts (η καλλιστη των τεχνων)" is seminal to the exchanges that follow.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus from the very outset of the dialogue Plato presses for a distinction between his method of dialectic and that of the rhetorical schools, and in the Polus-Chaerephon rencontre it is made clear that title of η καλλιστη των τεχνων is what is at stake. The stage is now set to see if Gorgias (unlike his
student, Polus) is, as advertized, accomplished at question and answer.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Part I (449-460): Socrates and Gorgias}

At this point Socrates takes up the questioning and directs his inquiries to Gorgias. Gorgias understands his art to be rhetoric and himself to be a skilled rhetorian.\textsuperscript{16} He claims (ἐπαγγέλλομαι) also to be able to reproduce this art in others.\textsuperscript{17} For Plato Gorgias stands as the expert rhetorician. But the question remains as to his ability in dialectic, his ability in close and disciplined question and answer. To be sure he claims competence; his claim is, in fact, to excell all others.\textsuperscript{18} Yet he immediately experiences difficulty in trying to answer Socrates as to the precise object of his art.

His first answer, that his art has to do "with speech (περι λογος),"\textsuperscript{19} proves too general, as does his second answer, that it has to do with those matters accomplished solely by speech,\textsuperscript{20} and his third attempt, that rhetoric has as its object speech concerned with "the greatest of human affairs and the most worthy (τα μεγιστα των ανθρωπουν πραγματων...και αριστα)"\textsuperscript{21} smacks of Polus' earlier "rhetorical" evasion. It is only with the fourth attempt at an answer that Gorgias seems to satisfy Socrates.
SOCRATES. Come on, Gorgias...answer what this thing is that you say is the greatest good for men, and which you claim to be able to produce in others.

GORGIAS. That which really is the greatest good, Socrates, and a cause not merely of freedom for men themselves, but also of their dominion over others in their own cities.

SOCRATES. OK, but what do you call it?! GORGIAS. I call it the ability to persuade with words jurymen in the jury-court, councilmen in the Council Chamber, assembly-men in the Assembly—and in any other gathering, whatever political gathering it might be.22

With this Socrates and Gorgias agree upon the tenative definition of rhetoric as "producer of persuasion (πειθόν τον δημιουργόν εστιν η ρητορική)."23

Ready to stop this tedious process of clarification, Gorgias assures Socrates that the definition they have arrived at is adequate.24 Socrates, however, is not convinced; there are other producers of persuasion than rhetoric. In fact, producers of persuasion are of two sorts (differentiated according to the kind of persuasion they produce): those that persuade by imparting belief without knowledge and those that persuade by imparting knowledge it-
Obviously, rhetoric, which deals with persuading a crowd, must fall into the former less illustrious category.26 Provoked by this account, Gorgias does not hesitate to remind Socrates that this is not, however, a grounds for despising rhetoric; for while technical expertise has its place, it is not the skilled craftsman who advises or leads the state, or for that matter even decides when and where to practice his own discipline, but the rhetor.27 In leading the state it is the rhetor that has power over the experts. In fact, if the truth were known—Gorgias continues, encouraged by Socrates' affected wonderment at the rhetoric's almost supernatural (δαιμονια) power—rhetoric "gathers to itself and holds sway over all other powers (απασας τας δυναμεις συλλαβουσα υψ' ουτη εχει)."28 It is clear that for Gorgias, whatever the cognitive deficiency of rhetoric, it is nonetheless η καλλιστη των τεχνων, in that it controls all other arts. This is "the true power of rhetoric (την της ρητορικης δυναμιν απασαν)."29 Sensing that he has perhaps gone too far in speaking of the "demonic" power of rhetoric that is so easily abused, Gorgias quickly adds that the fact that an art, say boxing, can be abused says nothing of the art itself, nor of its teachers. It is with this that Socrates, who up to now has skillfully been drawing Gorgias out, finally objects. If rhetoric is concerned with speech on political matters, it
must have knowledge on what is "right and wrong, base and noble, good and bad (τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀδίκον καὶ τὸ σιγχρον καὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν)," subjects proper to politics. (On this point Gorgias agrees, saying that if a student comes to him and lacks this knowledge he will have to teach it to him.) But if this is the case, Socrates continues, then the rhetor (viz., the true rhetor), who now by definition is an expert in goodness and justice, and thus presumably a good and just man, is precisely the kind who will not abuse his power—which Gorgias just said is not the case with the actual rhetors in Athens, many of whom he had trained. It looks as if there is something seriously wrong with Gorgias' account of rhetoric, and Socrates concludes: "Now as to what possible way these problems are to be answered--by the dog, Gorgias, that is going to take no short sitting for us to sort through."  

With this Polus abruptly interrupts the conversation, and the first movement of the Gorgias comes to an end. The claim of Gorgianic rhetoric has, nonetheless, been made plain: it is not just one art among many, but the master art, the one that controls all others. Particularly damaging to this claim, however, is the fact that its creator can give no consistent account of the art. But even more revealing is his marked inability to engage in a serious question-and-answer search for truth—a deficiency that will become even
more pronounced in the coming exchange between Socrates and Gorgias' accomplished student Polus, in which it is "the true power" not of rhetoric but of dialectic that is dramatically portrayed.

Part II (461b-481b): Socrates and Polus

The discussion with Gorgias focused on the question of definition and on the method of question and answer. Yet, when toward the end of this discussion Gorgias is encouraged to express his true feelings about his art, it is not its substance that he praises, but its power. As Polus takes center stage, the hesitating, elder sophist of "bourgeois respectability" is eclipsed by the "young realist," and the modesties of convention are thrown aside and the power of rhetoric itself becomes the topic.32

Polus enters the discussion with both feet. He is exasperated. Socrates simply has behaved in bad taste, leading the discussion in such a way that Gorgias had to contradict himself or else give what would be for him an embarrassing answer.33 And as for his insistence on short answers, that is tantamount to inhibiting "freedom of speech (εξεσται λέγειν)."34 Socrates winces at these accusations and suggests that if it pleases Polus, this time he will give the answers. But if Gorgias had difficulty delivering on his
claim to answer questions well, Polus will have even more difficulty in effectively asking them.

After helping Polus formulate his first question, Socrates immediately provokes him by asserting that rhetoric, far from being "the noblest of the arts [ἡ καλλίστη τῶν τεχνῶν]", is no art at all, but rather a "knack (ἐμπειρία)" for producing gratification,\textsuperscript{35} on a par with "pastry cheffing (οψοποιία),"\textsuperscript{36} and with nothing "noble (καλὸς)"\textsuperscript{37} about it. It is a form of "pandering" or "flattery" (κολάκεια).\textsuperscript{38} To substantiate this claim he develops the famous analogy of the true and false humanistic arts (463e-466a).

Man is divided into two parts, soul and body, and answering to each part there is an art concerned with its health. With respect to the soul there is "politics (πολιτική)" and with respect to the body there is, for lack of a better term, "care of the body (ἡ τοῦ σώματος θεραπεία)."

Each art is further divided according to the need either to maintain health or to restore it. Thus concerning the body there is "gymnastic (γυμναστική)," which maintains health, and "medicine (ωρατική)," which restores it. And for the maintenance of spiritual health there is "legislation ( νομοθετική)," and for its restoration, "administrative justice (δικαιοσύνη)." In addition to these true arts which aim at the good of body and soul, there is a collection of false arts which imitate the true and which aim not at what is
"best (βελτιστος)" but at what is "most pleasant (ηδιστος)."
They are various forms of "flattery (κολακεια)," and they give
no account (no λογος) of the nature of their object (just as
Gorgias could not do). Thus, corresponding to gymnastic
there is "cosmetics (κομμωτικη)," to medicine, "pastry cookery
(οψοποια)." And in regard to the soul, for legislation there
is "sophistry (σοφιστικη)," and for administrative justice
there is "rhetoric (ρητορικη)." From this it follows,
Socrates concludes, that rhetoric is a imitation-art, a type
of flattery or pandering, and "the counterpart of pastry
cheffing in the soul (αντιστροφοσ ωψοποιας εν ψυχη)."

This degrading analogy has its intended effect and
immediately draws Polus out. He cannot conceive of rhetors
being viewed so lowly: "Do they not have unequaled (μεγαστον)
power in their cities?!" he retorts. Gorgias had made
reference to the power that rhetoric bestows on the orator,
but was unwilling to rest his case squarely upon it. His
student has no such scruples. "Accomplished orators (οι αγαθοι
ρητορες)" are "like tyrants, executing whomever they desire,
confiscating goods and exiling as they think fit." But
Socrates only continues his provocation, takes precisely the
opposite position. From his perspective orators actually
"have the least (ελαχιστον) power in their city."

Polus had said that orators were like tyrants putting to
death whomever "they desire (βουλονται)" and exiling whomever
"they think fit (αν δοκη αυτοι)." In the discussion that follows, however, Socrates draws a significant distinction between these two terms. First, and briefly, he shows that to do what "one thinks (αν δοκη αυτω)" to be best "without genuine insight (νοον μη έχων)" is not power in the true sense. Then—and here the discussion is more protracted—he argues that the proper object of "desire" (βουλομαι) is not the means but the end, so that those who do what they think fit but not what leads to their true interests—which is always the end in view—do not actually do what they desire and so again are found to be without power in the true sense.

At this point Polus becomes flustered with Socrates' method, and he takes the argument into his own hands and begins to employ his own methods. He asks rhetorically if Socrates does not really envy the ruler of unlimited power. And when Socrates answers with his famous paradox that it is better to suffer injustice than to act unjustly, he parodies the Socratic principle, recounting Archelaus' (then ruler of Macedon) rise to power as a fall into misery, and arguing that no one in the world sees that matter as does Socrates. With this the discussion turns to the respective methods of Socrates and Polus.

Criticizing Polus' education in rhetoric and his neglect of dialectic, Socrates complains: "You do not convince
(αναγκαζει) me, but rather, by amassing many false witnesses against me, attempt to oust (εκβαλλειν) me from what is really the case."46 This may be effective in the courtroom, but such a method "is of no value in the pursuit of truth (οὐδενὸς αξίου εστὶ πρὸς τὴν αληθείαν)."47 It is better to produce just one key witness to one's position, namely, one's interlocutor, which is precisely the point of dialectic. The two methods need to be compared:

Let us therefore carefully consider these two methods side by side (παραβαλοντες ουν παρ' αλληλους σκεψώμεθα).... For it happens that the issues that we are presently debating are not minor, but are for all practical purposes those issues on which to have insight is most commendable and to have ignorance most shameful, for in essence they determine whether or not we can discern who indeed is happy and who is not (το γαρ κεφαλιον αυτων εστιν η γνωσκειν η αγνοειν, οστις τε ευδαιμων εστι και οστις μη). 48

As if Polus' method of refutation were not already clear enough, Plato has him continue with it as Socrates works to set forth the points at issue for the planned discussion. That those who do wrong and suffer are better off than those who do wrong and get away with it Polus considers preposterous. Why that would mean, he says, that a man discovered plotting to make himself a tyrant and immediately put on the rack, castrated, blinded, tortured, and killed, while observing his wife and children endure the same, would
be better off than the one who succeeds in his plot and becomes tyrant! But this is just more of the same from Polus: "This time (αυ), my well-bred Polus, you are trying to scare me," says Socrates, "...still you do not refute me (οὐκ ἔλεγχες)." Finally Polus resorts to ridicule: "What is this, Polus? Are you laughing? Is this yet another (ἀλλὸ αὐ) kind of refutation—whenever a point is made, to ridicule it, instead of answering it?" Once more Socrates must rehearse the goal of convincing one's opponent, and not simply silencing him.

It is now time for Plato to portray "the true power" of dialectic, and in the discussion that follows Socrates finally produces that "one witness for his position." Two issues are at stake: whether it is worse to suffer injustice or to act unjustly (474C-475E), and whether it is better to pay the penalty for injustice or to escape it (476A-479D). In discussing the first Polus twice hesitates to answer when it counts against his position, but is eventually compelled by the argument. By the time the second issue comes to the floor he is much more docile. In both cases he comes to affirm the position of Socrates.

As the discussion between Socrates and Polus draws to an end, Plato portrays what can only be regarded as the ultimate triumph of dialectic over rhetoric. In two quick series of question and answer, Socrates brings Polus a full 180
degrees. Not only is he compelled to now prefer dialectic to rhetoric, but the young admirer of *tyrannus rhetoricus* is forced to concede that "the chief good of rhetoric (ἡ μεγάλη χειρεια της ρητορικης)" is in arguing (1) for one's own punishment—since it is better to be punished for a wrong than to go unpunished—and (2) for the acquitting of one's enemy—since to do wrong and go unpunished is the greatest possible harm!

Part III (481b-527e): Socrates and Callicles

The ethical implications of rhetoric were raised as early as 454b where Gorgias identifies it with persuasive public speech "about what is just and unjust." And, of course, it was precisely in regard to these implications that Gorgias found himself in a contradiction. But it is not until the exchange with Callicles that the ethical dimension of rhetoric becomes focal. With him "the contrast between the two methods...enlarges into a dispute over two fundamentally different ways of life."53

It is no accident, therefore, that Plato has Callicles enter the discussion on this very point:

"If you are serious, and it turns out that these things you say are true, would not life (ἡμων ὁ βίος...των ἀνθρώπων) as we now live it be upside
down, and we be doing just the opposite, so it would seem, of what we should (παντα τα εναντια πρατομεν...α δει)?" 54

Nor is it without significance that in his response Socrates notes a certain similarity between himself and Callicles, that they share a certain kind of fundamental commitment (πι παθος), 55 though to different objects. For it is the fact that their lives are the obvious products of these commitments that makes them so well suited for the contrast.

For Socrates, it is φιλοσοφια that so enamours him; whereas for Callicles, it is Αθηναιων δημον (public opinion). 56 The latter is ever changing, and as a result Callicles is constantly "tossed up and down (ανω και κατω μεταβαλλομενον)." 57 The former, however, is "far less fickle (πολυ ηπτον εμπληκτος)." 58 She is, however, no less compelling. Those who do not agree with her, even if she is not their favorite, in the end do not agree with themselves. Now it is indeed unpleasant, Socrates continues, to stand contrary to public opinion, but how much worse is it "to be discordant (ασυμφωνον εναν)" within and "to speak against (εναντια λεγειν)" one's self? 59

But Callicles is not moved by the threat of internal discord. He rebukes Socrates for his mistreatment of Gorgias and Polus, and for his juvenile addiction to philosophy. It would seem that Polus was not much more free of a desire for
"bourgeois respectibility" than Gorgias. For both had their mouths stopped because they were ashamed (αἰσχυνόμαι) to say what they thought "because of the opinions of the neighbors (δια το εἴθος τῶν ἀνθρώπων)." It is right, not by convention (νόμος) but by nature (φύσις) that the stronger should take the advantage of the weaker, and it is only the weaker multitude (οἱ αοθένεις ἀνθρώποι καὶ οἱ πολλοί) that say otherwise. And the reason Socrates has not grasped this is precisely because of his preoccupation with his favorite, philosophy. Philosophy is a good beginning for children, but unless one goes beyond it in manhood, he will "utterly inexperienced (πανταπασις ἀπειροῖ)" and "laughable (καταγελαστοῖ)," and unable to care for or defend either himself or his own. It is high time that Socrates gave up the life of philosophy and became a man of action (ὁ πολιτικός).

Such candor! This is just what is needed, says Socrates, "to definitively test a soul as to the correctness or incorrectness of its manner of life (βασανίειν ηικανῶς ψυχῆς περι ὀρθῶς τε ἡοσῆς καὶ μη)." Surely this time the argument will not be sidetracked by a false sense of shame. It can now be safely assumed that whenever there is agreement "the point in question can at once be taken to have been sufficiently tested." It is now time to begin the comparision of the life of philosophy and the life of Athenian politics (i.e.,
the life of rhetoric understood as η καλλιστη των τεχνων taken to its logical conclusion, that is, unhaltered by an irrational sense of shame).

Socrates has accused Callicles of being unstable in his convictions; in the first portion of their discussion (up to 499C) this is dramatically born out. Callicles had asserted that nature dictates that the superior (understood as the stronger) should rule the inferior (understood as the weaker), and therefore that one should not follow the conventions of the weak many. But, says Socrates, the many weak are stronger than the few strong.67 So then, says Callicles, take superior to mean wiser, more skilled and competent. But, says Socrates, that in turn would mean that those skilled, say, in shoemaking (cobblers presumably being among the inferior) should have better shoes than the rest, and so on.68 Then take superior to include manlier, those able to lead in the Assembly, retorts Callicles, and stop this nonsense (φλυαρεσ)!69 But what Callicles will not see is that it is he who must stop changing his position.

Socrates rejoins:

"...previously you were defining the better and the superior as the stronger, then as the wiser, and now you have come with something else: the manlier.... Come on, my friend, say it and get it over with, who do you say are the better and the superior and better and superior in what?"70
In what begins a rather lengthy discussion on the hedonism of the ruler, Callicles states his final position: the superior are those able to rule, and such men are "living as they should (δει τον ορθως βιωσομενον)" when they let their desires increase without restraint. Still doubtful of his sincerity, Socrates tests Callicles' equation of the life of pleasure (with its continual consumption) and the good life with three increasingly shameful comparisons. First, he likens it to the commonly alledged punishment in Hades of carrying water in leaky jar, then, to the ridiculous, fabled "torrent-bird" that excretes as fast as it eats, and finally, to the "shameful (ασχρος)" life of the indulgent catamite. Yet Callicles, who this time is trying hard to be consistent ("that my word might not contradict itself") does not retreat: the good life is simply the life of pleasure. And asked point blank, "Should we then undertake the discussion on the assumption that you are serious (ως σου σπουδαζοντος)?", Callicles responds in the strongest terms: Πανα γε σφοδρα ("Absolutely!").

Socrates moves from provocative analogies to reasoned but equally provocative dialectic. Faring well and faring ill are opposites and cannot exist at the same time in the same sense: one cannot be diseased and healthy in the same eye at the same time. But such is not the case with pain and pleasure, for it is precisely drinking while thirsty that it
is pleasant. So it would seem that faring well (the good) and pleasure are not the same.\textsuperscript{75} (Callicles must be compelled to answer by Gorgias). Moreover, continues Socrates, if good men are good by the presence of something good, and if the pleasant and the good are equated, then cowards, who have pleasure as much if not more than the brave, are by its presence made good.\textsuperscript{76} At this point Callicles makes what Guthrie has quite appropriately called his "shameless" volte face,\textsuperscript{77} and Socrates' initial observation of his instability is dramatically underscored. Having begun by asking Chaerephon if Socrates in his discussion with Polus was in earnest (\textit{σονύσις}) or in jest (\textit{απαίς}), and having just promised Socrates that he himself was in earnest, he claims that Socrates should have known him to be joking:

"Let me tell you, Socrates, I have been listening to you and agreeing with you, thinking that even if someone simply in jesting (\textit{παίζων}) concedes a point to you latch on to that in childish delight. As though you should actually think that I or any other man in the world should not take some pleasures to be better, and others worse!\textsuperscript{78}

With this Plato's purpose in the conversation between Socrates and Callicles Plato seems to change. Having exposed the central character flaw of Callicles, the quintessential
rhetor, namely, his instability, he takes up a critical comparison of the two ways of life (499C to end). Much is a recapitulation of what has gone before; Plato wants to present his argument against the life of rhetoric vis-a-vis the life of philosophy in a complete and final form. This final movement of the dialogue begins with the solemn words that what is about to be discussed is of utmost importance, namely, "what sort of life one ought to live (οντινα χρη τροπον ζην): the life of the orator or the life of the philosopher? The program is first "to consider the difference between them (σκευασται τι τε διαφερετον αλληλουν)" and then "which of them ought to be lived (και οποτερον βιωτεν αυτοιν)."

As has already been shown, one can tend the body and the soul in two different ways: with practices designed simply to please or with practices designed to truly benefit. It is obvious, says Socrates, that music is for pleasure, as is poetry, as is tragic verse. But tragic verse, when it is stripped of its melody and rhythm and meter, is nothing other than rhetorical public speaking (ρητορικη δημηγορια) concerned with the pleasing of the audience. Which suggests that the similar speeches addressed to the Assembly serve a similar end, not the benefiting but the pleasing of those present.

Do the orators seem to you to always speak what is best, with the goal of making the citizens as good as possible through their speeches? Or do they too
[i.e., like the poets] focus on gratifying the citizens?  

The point is the one made earlier with Polus: that rhetoric is to be distinguished as a practice concerned with pleasure, not with good.  

Callicles objects. While it is true that most orators are concerned with pleasing the Assembly, there are some that are concerned with the good of their auditors. In principle Socrates allows for such a rhetoric; but the fact is, he continues, "you have never seen this kind of rhetoric."  

Callicles admits that there are presently no legitimate orators in Athens (apparently including himself!); he hesitates, however, to extend this judgment to the great orators of the past: Themistocles, Cimon, Miltades, Pericles. But even these heroes of the past, says Socrates, failed in "true oratory (ἡ ἀληθινὴ ῥητορικὴ)." To be sure, they surpassed those who have followed them in giving the people what they wanted. Yet the fact is that the people were worse after their leadership than before it. Athenian oratory is and has been "flattering rhetoric (κολακικὴ ῥητορικὴ)."  

The life of rhetoric in Athens differs from the life of philosophy in that it is a life of flattery, a seeking to please rather than to benefit. But there is another significant difference. It was said that the goal of the rhetor is to protect himself and his family and friends from
suffering injustice. But to do so he must befriend those who are in power, which entails becoming like them, which is in all cases to learn to do injustice. It follows that to protect oneself from suffering injustice is to expose oneself to the greater evil of doing injustice. The life of rhetoric corrupts the soul.88

Socrates concludes his conversation with Callicles with an exhortation in the form of a myth to forsake the life of oratory, which is sure to corrupt his soul, and to pursue the life of philosophy. For there is, he warns, a court beyond this world where men are judged simply on the quality of their souls. And there it is the philosopher who will find acquittal with the rhetor being at a loss.89 Thus, doing injustice is to be shunned more than suffering it, and "as with every other activity, so rhetoric is to be used always in the service of justice (καὶ τὴν ρητορικὴν οὐτοῦ χρῆσθεν ἐπὶ τὸ δίκαιον αἰὲ, καὶ τὴν ἄλλη πάση πράξει)."90 Only after a long education ("we are presently uneducated [ηκομεν ἀπαιδευσιας]") in these things is it safe to enter politics.91

Conclusion

From the above reading of the Gorgias it is clear that from the very beginning Plato's focus is on rhetoric understood as "the noblest of the arts (ἡ καλλιστὴ τῶν τεχνῶν;
448C)," or in other words, as "a way of life (ο τρόπος του βίου; 527E)." For thus conceived it is always corrupt, since of itself it cannot discover the good and can only seek the pleasure of those who listen. But it is equally clear that in his criticism Plato does not preclude rhetoric as one art among many (cf. και τη ρητορική...και τη άλλη παση πραξεω; 527C). There is, to be sure, a "flattering rhetoric (κολακισκη ρητορικη)," but there is also a "true rhetoric (η άληθινη ρητορικη; 517A)" and a "true rhetor (ορθως ρητορικων; 508C)" who as "a virtuous craftsman (ο τεχνικος τε και αγαθος; 504D)" serves the interests of justice.⁹² At one point there was even something of a formula given for a genuine art of rhetoric (503E-505B),⁹³ and Socrates can even point to the few speeches of his own as attempts (επιχειρειν) at the "real political art (αληθως πολιτικη τεχνη; 521D)."

Taken in its likely historical setting and its likely historical purpose, the Gorgias makes a great deal of sense read in this manner. Plato, who has just begun his Academy, is defending his deviation from the prevailing educational model, one founded on the wisdom of the great sophist Gorgias and exemplified in the school of his disciple Isocrates, where, as we have seen, oratory was equated with philosophy. His is not a departure from πολιτικη τεχνη, but rather a necessary propaedeutic, or better, the true political education. For it is not enough to know simply how to speak
powerfully and persuasively; one must also know that just
cause on behalf of which it is right to employ the rhetorical
art. Rhetorical culture at best afforded one only the means
(at worst it actually corrupted the rhetor) not the end. The
ture education was in dialectic (the only adequate ars
artium) with rhetoric (understood as una ars inter multas)
employed in its service. To be sure, such a course was not
without personal dangers, especially in contemporary Athens.
But the alternative, so argues Plato, exposes one to an even
greater evil.
Notes on Chapter III

1 See Cornford's grouping of the dialogues in CAH, 4:311ff.


8 There is a growing body of literature approaching Plato's dialogues as literature. On the Gorgias see, for example, E. M. Green, "Plato's Use of Three Dramatic Elements

9 447A-B.

10 447C; the particular phrasing, τις η δυναμις της τεχνης του ανδρος, is significant. As will be seen below, what ultimately commends rhetoric to Gorgias and his associates is its power.

11 448A-449C; cf. *Meno* 70B.

12 On the contrast between Polus and Chaerephon and their importance in introducing the dialogue, see Green, op. cit., pp. 311-12, and Plochmann and Franklin, op. cit., pp. On the various *dramatis personae* of the *Gorgias*, E. R. Dodds' treatment is yet to be surpassed (op. cit., 6-18).

13 448E.

14 448C.

15 In another early dialogue, the *Menexenus*, Plato shows that the specialist in dialectic can easily display. Taken together, the *Gorgias* and the *Menexenus* show the expert rhetorician failing in dialectic, while the dialectician
performs remarkably well in rhetoric. This does not contradict the work of P. M. Huby, "The Menexenus Reconsidered," *Phronesis* (1957) pp. 104-114, and of C. H. Kahn, "Plato's Funeral Oration: the Motive of the Menexenus," *CP* 58 (October, 1963), pp. 220-234, who take the dialogue to be non-satirical. All the more so if serious, the Menexenus shows the philosopher's ability in epideictic display.

16 449A.

17 449B.

18 449C.

19 449D.

20 450B, C.

21 451D.

22 452E.

23 453A.

24 453A.

25 454E.

26 455A.

27 455D-456A.
28 256A. It is precisely in its power over the other disciplines in the political arena that rhetoric is η καλλιστη των τεχνων.

29 455D.

30 459C, D.

31 461B.

32 W. Jaeger writes: "[Gorgias] is depicted as an old gentleman who values bourgeois respectability as much as Protagoras.... Polus represents the younger generation. He is not ashamed to admit what everyone knows, that rhetoric is absolutely indifferent to questions of morality.... This contrast between the half-ashamed love of power shown by the conventional older generation which had invented rhetoric, and the cynical amorality of the younger generation, is a splendid example of Plato's art of displaying a spiritual type by developing all its characteristic forms, stage after stage" (op. cit., 2:128-129). C. Kahn writes: "Polus, who has no international reputation to lose and is not important enough to be the object of a political attack, can afford to make the admission from which Gorgias recoils: that rhetoric is really concerned not with justice but only with success" (op. cit., 85).

33 οτι Γοργιας ησχυνθη; 461B.

34 461D, E.

35 462C.

36 462D.
37 463A.
38 463B.
39 466B.
40 466B.
41 466B.
42 466D-467A.
43 467B-486E.
44 468E.
45 471A-D.
46 471E.
47 472B.
48 472C.
49 473D.
50 473E.
51 474C, 475D.
52 480A.
53 E. Green, "Plato's Use of Three Dramatic Elements in the Gorgias as Means to Demonstrate His Thought," *SJS* (?) , p. 310. And Kahn (op. cit., 75) sees the way of life motif from the very beginning. He writes: "The three elenchi of the Gorgias, the refutation of Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, constitute Plato's fullest portrayal of the way in which the dialectical encounter with Socrates turns into a critical examination of the interlocutor's own life." He does, of course, say that it "is most obvious in the case of Callicles, whose challenge to Socrates is explicitly cast as a choice between two ways of life."

54 481C.

55 481C. "Callicles is Plato's most important contrasting figure;" Green, op. cit., 312.

56 481D.

57 481E.

58 482A.

59 482C.

60 482D.

61 483B.

62 484C, D.

63 484E, E.

64 487A.
65 487E. Both Gorgias and Polus were hindered by shame when they position was shown to contradict convention (νομος), but Callicles, who will base his position on nature (φυσις) and who will utterly distain convention as the invention of the weak masses, cannot possibly be thus hindered. For the similarity of Callicles and Nietzsche, see W. H. Thompson, The Gorgias of Plato (London, 1871), appendix.

66 487E.

67 488D-489B.

68 490C-E.

69 490E.

70 491C.

71 491E.

72 493A-494E.

73 495A.

74 495C.

75 495C-497D.

76 497E-499B.

77 Guthrie, History of Philosophy, 4:291.
78 499B.

79 Actually, Plato carries the criticism a step further and shows that because of his instability Callicles cannot be a friend (ὡς ὄντων φιλῶν; 499C). A. Spitzer (op. cit., 3) hits on Plato's motive for doing this when she writes: "The dramatis personae represents [sic] concepts or ideas; their interplay resembles and represents the development of a position. By attracting or repelling the reader, or by bringing him from the one feeling to the other, the images create friendship or enmity for the ideas they represent."

80 500C.

81 500D.

82 502B, C.

83 502E.

84 503B.

85 517A. Between 503 and 515 there is a lengthy digression on true oratory, and in 515C Socrates asks if any of those great men of the past that Callicles had alluded to earlier (503C) met this standard.

86 515D-516E, and again in 518E-519A.

87 517A.

88 522C, but see also 508C-513C.

89 526E-527A.
90 527C.

91 527D, E.

92 It is this point that is overlooked by virtually all commentators. But see Black, op. cit., 366.

93 That Plato in this section conceives of a true rhetorical ἡξηχὴ can be seen in the fact that the true rhetor is likened to other craftsmen (painters, builders, shipwrights).
IV

THE PHAEDRUS: PLATO'S POSITIVE DOCTRINE OF RHETORIC

In the Gorgias Plato attacked rhetoric conceived as η καλλιστή των τεχνών. At the same time he seems to have allowed for a rhetoric understood as simply one art among others. This brings up the question of his positive doctrine of rhetoric. In this chapter it will be argued that Plato's admittedly passing suggestions for a legitimate rhetoric in the Gorgias are consistent with and anticipate his later elaboration of the doctrine in the Phaedrus. But before turning to an exposition of Plato's positive doctrine in the Phaedrus, the prior question of whether in fact the Phaedrus contains such a doctrine must be addressed.

Hunt, Brownstein and Schakel
on the Phaedrus

Sometime between his early "Plato On Rhetoric and Rhetoricians" in 1920 and his influential essay, "Plato and Aristotle On Rhetoric and Rhetoricians," in 1962 Everett Lee
Hunt changed his mind on Plato's attitude toward rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*. In 1920 he could write: "Plato in his earlier years despised both rhetoric and rhetoricians.... Later he [Plato] came to see some possibility in rhetoric, and he outlined a theory of it in the *Phaedrus."³ But by 1962 his opinion had reversed:

Plato never viewed rhetoric abstractly, as an art of composition, as an instrument that might be used or abused; he always considered it a false impulse in human thought....the ideal rhetoric sketched in the *Phaedrus* is as far from the possibilities of mankind as his Republic was from Athens.⁴

Within several years Hunt's revised thesis was carried forward by Oscar Brownstein⁵ and by Peter Schaken.⁶ For Brownstein, the true art of rhetoric as put forth in the *Phaedrus* is "possible only for the perfected philosopher"⁷ which means that it is "clearly impossible in Plato's view."⁸ Those who would persuade must fall back on dialectic, which for Brownstein is Plato's "genuine art of speaking." He concludes:

Plato, and philosophy [i.e., dialectic], win it heads or tails; either Phaedrus (or the reader of the dialogue) recognizes the absurdity of these goals [the ideal requirements of the true art of rhetoric] and turns to dialectics, or he turns to dialectics in order to attain them.⁹
And building upon Hunt, he adds:

Everett Lee Hunt has written that Plato's ideal rhetoric is as far from possible realization as is his Republic; this may be so, but the purposes of the two conceptions wholly differ—this ideal rhetoric is the Platonic counterpart of Aristophanes' Cloud-Cuckoo-Land.\textsuperscript{10}

Schakel agrees with Brownstein that the purpose of the ideal in the \textit{Phaedrus} is not to elevate and inspire but rather to produce despair and retreat:

Plato consistently opposed rhetorical theory and, rather than suggesting a reformed theory of rhetoric in the \textit{Phaedrus}, intensified his opposition by contrasting with traditional rhetoric an unattainable, ideal "art of rhetoric."\textsuperscript{11}

Like Brownstein he acknowledges his dependence on Hunt.\textsuperscript{12}

Hunt's 1962 essay is divided into fifteen sections, with sections IV to IX dealing with Plato. The \textit{Gorgias} is the subject of section VI,\textsuperscript{13} and the \textit{Phaedrus}, of section VII.\textsuperscript{14} Surprisingly, in his section on the Phaedrus Hunt does not depart from his earlier assessment.\textsuperscript{15} Rather, it is not until section IX,\textsuperscript{16} ostensibly the summary of sections IV through VIII, that he puts forward his new interpretation of the \textit{Phaedrus} as presenting an ideal meant only to condemn and
not also to rehabilitate.\textsuperscript{17} This "conclusion" is not substantiated (not even anticipated) by the previous analysis. At best Hunt can be read as offering a flash of insight. The defense of Hunt's thesis comes in Brownstein and Schakel.

Brownstein's case rests upon his analysis of the overall movement of the discussion between Socrates and Phaedrus in the latter half of the dialogue. He provides the following outline:

Socrates defines or describes the arts of discourse four times; of these two appear to be the same art described in quite general and then in specific terms, and two seem to be the same art described in "popular" and then in "scientific" terms: in their actual order they are (1) a "popular" rhetoric, to which he opposes (2) general criteria for a legitimate art of discourse, which are met by (3) the specific principles of dialectic as he defines them, and which can be superceded when man no longer needs to seek to know by (4) the "scientific" rhetoric.\textsuperscript{18}

His method will be to "consider each of these in turn and their functional relationships" and then finally to "consider Plato's purpose in proposing what he calls the 'scientific' or true rhetoric."\textsuperscript{19}

To begin with, it should be said that in fact the above is not the movement of the discussion at all, as a simple
noting of the quotations with which Brownstein himself buttresses his four descriptions of the arts of discourse makes plain: "popular" rhetoric being described variously in 260, 261 and 266-268; the general criteria in 260 (actually 259), 261 and 264; the specific principles of dialectic in 265 and 266, and the "scientific" rhetoric in 269ff. To be sure, this does not overturn his point, but it does suggest that Brownstein has not discerned the intrinsic organization of the discussion, that his analysis of the discourse is patchy at best, if not contrived. More importantly, however, are the connections he sees between the various parts of the Socrates-Phaedrus discussion.

Granted that in answer to the "popular" account of rhetoric (which claims that rhetoric aims only at persuasion not truth) Socrates offers general criteria for any art of discourse. (For Brownstein these are four: it must be rooted in the truth about the subject, it must have application to both public and private speaking, it must lead the soul by means of resemblances, it must have an inner logic that is a function of the speech's purpose.) But is it really the case that the method of collection and division termed "dialectic" is put forth by Plato as fulfilling these criteria, and more importantly, that "scientific" rhetoric is an unattainable ideal to be employed "when man no longer needs to seek to know"?20 At no point does Socrates say that dialectic
fulfills the four criteria of discourse isolated by Brownstein. And even if the case can be made that it does fulfill them, it is significant that Plato does not make the case. All Socrates actually says about dialectic is that it enables him "to speak as well as to think."\textsuperscript{21} It is essential to good speech, but it is not thereby sufficient. There are the other properties of discourse given in the various \textit{vade mecum}s of the rhetoricians.\textsuperscript{22} They are, no doubt, of only minor importance when compared to the method of collection and division. Plato has Socrates call them the "niceties of the art." But it is just as clear that they are not to be despised, that they are necessary (\textit{τα πρὸ αναγκαία}) for the art.\textsuperscript{23}

Beginning in 269D Plato puts forth what Brownstein aptly calls his "scientific" rhetoric, the function of which, according to Brownstein, is "to demonstrate the practical impossibility of the art."\textsuperscript{24} Strangely, however, Plato begins with a remarkably balanced and, on the surface at least, a quite feasible answer to Phaedrus' question of what it takes to become a true rhetor: the familiar triad of natural ability, knowledge, and practice. (As Hackforth notes,\textsuperscript{25} Plato is here, both in substance and language, very close to Isocrates.) To be sure, for Plato knowledge involves more than that contained in the popular handbooks; it includes a knowledge of Nature. But even this is not
presented in the terms of a discouraging idealism. The example given is Pericles and the improvement he gained from his study with Anaxagoras. It would seem that Plato's primary interest is to defend inclusion of the study of Nature in the preparation of the orator, not to discourage aspiring orators. On the contrary, when Phaedrus, upon hearing of what is required for a scientific rhetoric, does become discouraged, Plato, far from trying to dissuade, has Socrates encourage him. On the one hand, says Socrates, we must attempt this high standard because our language should please the gods; on the other, it is noble to attempt what is noble, even if complete success is not assured.

But if Brownstein's defense of Hunt's thesis is not convincing, Schakel's defense is even less so. Unlike Brownstein he does not rest his argument on an exposition of the dialogue, but on the fact that the "two main charges against rhetoric in the Gorgias--rhetoric's deceptiveness and its lack of artistic method--also form major themes in the Phaedrus." In the first two parts of his article Schakel demonstrates these parallels between the Gorgias and the Phaedrus. To be sure, he makes his point. But it is not at all clear how this supports his thesis, especially since all the quotes he offers from the Phaedrus (ranging from 259-268) are prior to the discussion of the reconstructed rhetoric beginning in 269D! All he has succeeded in showing is that
in the *Phaedrus* Plato is still critical of rhetoric as conceived by his contemporaries, that is, rhetoric as η καλλιστή των τεχνών. It says nothing of his attitude toward a reconstructed rhetoric.

In the third part of his article Schakel makes his case that the "art of rhetoric" proffered by Plato is an "unapproachable ideal" that places Plato "unequivocally as an early representative of the antirhetorical tradition." But if his earlier argument (on the parallels between the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*) was misdirected, here his argument, though to the point, is unconvincing.

After a review of Plato's reconstruction of the true art of rhetoric Schakel writes:

> The perfections of Plato's scientific "art of rhetoric," as summarized here, contrast vividly with the imperfections of traditional rhetoric. But its very perfections, in method and results, intimate that it is less a theory than an ideal, typical of Plato.31

Footnoting Hunt, he concludes that in the *Phaedrus* Plato "intended...to erect an unapproachable ideal" as a "condemnation" of real rhetoric.32 Now to be sure the ideal condemns the actual for Plato; but condemns in order to correct, not to discourage.33 The case can even be made from the Platonic account of virtue that the forms, in so far as
they participate in the Good, are compelling. For his interpretation Schakel can only point to Phaedrus' reaction to Socrates' account of rhetoric: "I think, Socrates, that this is admirable, if only practicable."\textsuperscript{34} But as already mentioned above,\textsuperscript{35} Socrates' response (that we must aim to please the gods in our speech, and that we must not for fear of failure neglect an admirable course) is designed to encourage his discouraged interlocutor (and with him Plato's possibly discouraged readers--it is as if Plato himself anticipated Schakel's response to his "unapproachable" ideal!).

Plato's Account of Rhetoric in the \textit{Phaedrus}

Plato's positive doctrine of rhetoric is not explicitly treated until the discussion between Socrates and Phaedrus that begins at 257B. But it is anticipated in the first half of the dialogue in three speeches which "provide the matter for the discussion (in 257Bff.) of the legitimacy and the foundation of persuasive speech."\textsuperscript{36} The first of these, the eroticus of Lysias,\textsuperscript{37} is offered as an example of bad rhetoric;\textsuperscript{38} the second, Socrates' own eroticus,\textsuperscript{39} an example of "bad" rhetoric improved somewhat by a partial application of the method of collection and division;\textsuperscript{40} and the third,
Socrates' palinode to Eros, of rhetoric that has received this method's full benefit.

The latter half of the dialogue is doubly introduced. First, the subject of the dialogue is finally made explicit. Phaedrus comments that the rhetorical tour de force of Socrates' second speech may actually cause Lysias' retirement, especially in light of certain recent criticisms that have been leveled against him as a logographer. But, responds Socrates, there is no shame in writing speeches (λογογραφεῖν), only in writing them poorly. The really significant question, he continues, is of "the means of good writing (τρόπος τοῦ καλοῦ γράφειν)." Second, looking ahead to the long and difficult discussion that is to follow, Socrates calls Phaedrus' attention to the cicadas that are chirping around them. If we but make the effort to continue our studies, hard as that may be, they will "grant us that boon which heaven permits them to confer upon mortals." Here (pace Hunt) Plato actually anticipates the charge of impossible idealism: God helps with real philosophical enquiry.

At this point the subject is restated and broadened: "we should investigate the matter (λόγος) of how it is that one either does or does not speak or write well." Plato holds that speech is prior to writing, and he wants to discuss it independently and first. Thus 260A-274A treat oral
persuasion, with the written word becoming the topic only in 274B-278B.

Plato "goes at once to the heart of the matter, the indifference of rhetoric to truth." Socrates proposes that to speak well one must to begin with "know the truth about the matters on which he is to speak." Phaedrus, however, has heard just the opposite: that there is no necessity (αναγκης) for the aspiring rhetor to learn the way things are (οντως), but only the way his audience thinks they are (οσα δοξει). But the results of this way of persuading are potentially disastrous, says Socrates, and he gives his famous encomium of the donkey. Phaedrus agrees.

However, Socrates continues, there is a modified account of rhetoric and truth that is not so ridiculous. A personified Rhetoric might claim: it is not that I "require (αναγκαζω)" ignorance; it is rather that I supplement knowledge. For without me knowledge of the truth will never become "the art of persuasion (πειθειν τεχνη)." (As Hackforth rightly notes, the emphasis is on τεχνη; rhetoric is what makes for an art of persuasion.) Surprisingly, Socrates is willing to grant all this, if only rhetoric can be shown to be an art. Given, however, the present state of the discipline, the popular account of rhetoric as indifferent to truth, he doubts whether this can be done, and he
begins to discuss with Phaedrus the inadequacies of contemporary rhetoric.

Socrates first convinces Phaedrus that rhetoric is "a certain leading of the soul through words (τεχνη ψυχαγωγια τις διαλογων)." His concern is to move beyond any accidental traits, like the fact that it usually takes place in the courts or the Assembly, that might tend to sidetrack the definition. He next points out that the activity essential to the leading of the soul is "antilogic (αντιλογικη)," which in its purest form is the ability to speak persuasively on both sides of an issue in such a way as to at one time make a course of action look attractive and at another unattractive, τα αυτα τοτε μεν αγαθα, τοτε δ' αω ταναντα, which ever fits the need of the moment. This in turn is effected by "resemblances (ομοιοτητα)" between things discerned by the speaker. For it is by moving from one thing to another similar thing that a speaker leads his audience to the desired conviction. But for this to be skillfully done, Socrates insists, the speaker must know the nature of things, how they do and do not resemble each other. Otherwise, he himself will be deceived and will be recommending as it were donkeys. From this is follows, and he concludes, that contemporary rhetoric, with its disregard of truth, is "an art of speech that is ridiculous, and is in fact no art at all." He takes the eroticus of Lysias as a case in point. Beginning
as he does with no attempt at definition, and proceeding in a haphazard fashion, Lysias' speech shows that he does not proceed from a knowledge of the subject through a series of resemblances to a desired end. In fact, his speech begs the question, starting at the very point where it should end.62

Simply noting that Lysias' speech contains "many other examples" of what not to do, Socrates passes to a consideration of his own two speeches. In keeping with contemporary practice, they demonstrate the ability to argue opposite points of view.63 But unlike the rhetoric of the day, they exhibit what Socrates will call "dialectic (τὸ διαλεξικὸν),"64 the twofold process of collecting under "one idea (μεν αὐτὸν)"65 an undifferentiated plurality that is then divided "according to a natural and intelligible order (κατ' εἰδῆ)."66 Thus the general concept of μανια in his first speech was partially divided, leading to a notion of love as a kind of madness to be rejected, while in the second speech, the division process was completed, and love, though still a kind of madness, was seen to be the highest form of the divine kind.67

Phaedrus is impressed by Socrates' method, and he agrees that dialectic is not a bad name for it, but the subject of their discussion was rhetoric, and as of yet Socrates has done little to describe it.68 But surely I have, replies Socrates, for "can anything of substance that receives the
name 'art' be wanting of these processes ("Καλὸν που τι αὐτῇ, ὁ τούτῳ ἀπολείφθεν ὁμος τέχνη λαμβανεται)"? What he has been describing has much to do with the art rhetoric, for any art that deserves the name is built upon dialectic. He will allow, however, that other aspects of rhetoric remain (τὸ λειπομένον τῆς ῥητορικῆς).  

(It is important to see that Socrates is not here reducing rhetoric to dialectic, as Browstein maintains; for if that were the case, he would be at the same time reducing all arts to dialectic. He is claiming that dialectic is the conditio sine qua non of art. He allows other aspects of the art, and not just the material from the manuals that he and Phaedrus are about to discuss, which he dubs "the niceties of the art (τὰ κομψα τῆς τέχνης)." In 269Cff he mentions other elements, and these are surely of substance in his mind.)

"Indeed a great many things remain, Socrates," says Phaedrus, "things written in the manuals on speaking." Of course, Socrates is not unaware of these and he quotes at length from the manuals the various technicalities of rhetoric. He concludes, however, that these are only "the preliminaries of the art (τὰ πρὸ τῆς τέχνης ἀναγκαῖα)." To know only them is like knowing which drugs produce which effects, but not knowing when and where these effects are desirable. Phaedrus concedes the point. When, however, Phaedrus becomes cynical toward the traditional practitioners
of the art, Socrates calls him back to a remarkably genial attitude. In this Plato makes his position plain: the niceties of the art are just that. They are not to be despised. The question, then, is how "the truly rhetorical and persuasive art (τὴν τοῦ τῶν ῥητορικοῦ τε καὶ πιθανοῦ τεχνη)" is acquired.

As noted earlier, Plato at this point takes his cue from Isocrates:

Whether one can acquire [the rhetorical art], so as to become a perfect orator, Phaedrus, is probably, and perhaps must be, dependent on conditions like everything else. If you are naturally rhetorical (φυσικῶς ῥητορικῶς), you will become a notable orator, when to your natural endowments you have added knowledge (ἐπιστήμην) and practice (μελέτην).

But the second term of this familiar triad he changes to ἐπιστήμη, a term which Isocrates is careful to avoid, and which for Plato is a technical term meaning exact knowledge of the nature of a thing. It is important to understand that Plato is not here claiming that this knowledge will necessarily make one an orator. Like Isocrates he holds that this is a function of several things. His point is rather that only by such knowledge can rhetoric be practiced as an art (τεχνη). It is this knowledge that will make the routines of contemporary rhetoricians into art. A case in point is
Pericles, whose rhetorical accomplishments should be attributed to his association with Anaxagoras who taught him nothing less than "the nature of intelligence and ignorance (ἐπὶ φύσιν νοῦ τε καὶ ανοιάς)." \(^77\)

The discussion of rhetoric ends as Socrates sketches for Phaedrus an outline of such ἐπιστήμη. The first thing required is "a knowledge of the various types of souls (εἰδέναι ψυχή οσα εἴδε)." \(^78\) In addition to this there are various "kinds of speeches (λόγων εἰδῆ)" that must be understood and classified. \(^79\) Third, it must be discovered which types of speeches persuade which types of souls. \(^80\) Fourth, one must learn how to recognize the various types of souls that are persuaded by the various types of speeches. \(^81\) And finally, one must learn how to deliver that kind of speech on the particular topic or issue at hand, employing the various technical devices found in the books on rhetoric mentioned earlier. \(^82\) At this point Socrates concludes:

...if anyone who omits any of these points (τι αὐτῶν) in his speaking or writing claims to speak by the rules of art (τεχνῇ λέγειν), the one who disbelieves him is the better man (emphasis added). \(^83\)

Conclusion

In the Gorgias Plato argued against rhetoric understood as ἡ καλλιστή τῶν τεχνῶν and, I have argued, for rhetoric
understood as one art among many and in the service of justice. In addition, throughout the dialogue he sought to show that rhetoric is inferior to dialectic, which alone is worthy of the position of "master knowledge." One argument he used to prove this was that without the benefits of dialectic, that is, without some concern for the truth and the good, rhetoric is not an art at all.

In the *Phaedrus* it is precisely this dependence of the art of rhetoric on dialectic that becomes preeminent. The three speeches that open the dialogue show increasing utilization of dialectic, and the discussion that occupies the second part of the dialogue outlines a rhetoric based on a knowledge about speeches and souls gained from dialectical studies. This leaves Plato, as in the *Gorgias*, with rhetoric as one art among many and with dialectic as η καλλιστή τῶν τεχνῶν—a postion it holds not by brute force over the other arts, but by the fact that it is only by reference to it that any art deserves the name.
Notes to Chapter IV

1 OJS (1920), pp. 33-53.


3 Hunt (1920), p. 53.


7 Brownstein, op. cit., p. 394.


10 Ibid.

11 Schakel, op. cit., 125.

12 Schakel, op. cit., 131 n. 8.

13 pp. 24-32.
14 pp. 32-38.

15 pp. 37-38.

16 pp. 41-42. "To summarize briefly our whole discussion of Plato...(41)."

17 p. 42

18 Brownstein, op. cit., 394.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 λέγειν τε και φρονειν; 266B.

22 266D-267E.

23 269A.

24 Brownstein, op. cit., 397.


26 270A. It might be objected that this interpretation would make this the only positive reference to Pericles in the middle dialogues. But here Plato is not speaking of Pericles' policies, but rather about his ability to persuade. The fact is that at all points Plato allows that Pericles is persuasive; his criticism is rather concerning the ends for which he effectively argued.
27  273E-274B.
28  Schakel, op. cit., 125.
31  Ibid.
32  Ibid.  Here Schakel footnotes the alleged conclusion to Plato's rhetoric of Hunt's 1962 article.
33  "But its very perfections, in method and results, intimate that it is less a theory than an ideal..." Ibid. I seriously doubt whether Plato would admit Schakel's account of theory (as positive and instructive) and ideal (as impossible and discouraging).
34  274B.
35  
37  230E-234C.
38  Cf. 235A-B, 234B-D, 257C, and 262C-264E.
39  237B-241D.
40  Cf. 266A.
41 234E-257B.

42 Cf. 266A-B.

43 257B-C.

44 258D.

45 Ibid.

46 259B. (Hackforth's trans.)

47 259E.

48 The narrowing of the topic in 259E from speaking and writing to just speaking is not to be missed.

49 Hackforth, op. cit., 121.

50 259E.

51 260A.

52 260B. As the story goes, an orator trained a rhetoric grounded only in ἄληξε is of the opinion that donkeys are horses, and as a result extolls the use of donkeys in the cavalry.

53 260D.

54 Ibid.

55 Hackforth, op. cit., 122 n. 2.
60 While for Plato the orator must know the truth, it is not the case that he must tell it. Plato's account of rhetoric is clearly "propagandistic." This thesis is enthusiastically put forth by K. Popper in his *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Revised ed. (Princeton, 1950). A more circumspect treatment is to be found in G. Morrow's excellent "Plato's Conception of Persuasion," *Phil. Rev.* 62 (1953): 234-50.

61 262C.

62 263D-E. But see Hackforth's reading of 264A-D, op. cit., 130.

63 265A.

64 266C.

65 265D.

66 266C.

67 But see Hackforth's discussion of Socrates' rhetoric, op. cit., 133 n. 1.
Phaedrus complains that "the rhetorical still escapes us." Socrates' answer is instructive. Whatever is art is so precisely because of dialectic. He does not here reduce rhetoric to dialectic. He rather points to the dependence of rhetoric on dialectic by virtue of the dependence of all art upon dialectic. Dialectic is an essential part of art and hence an essential part of the art of rhetoric. To be sure, they have not arrived at a complete account of the rhetorical, but for Socrates διαφευγεῖν is too strong a term.

69 266D.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 269B.

73 268C-D.

74 268E-269C.

75 269D.

76 Ibid. (Fowler's translation.)

77 270A. To be sure, Plato's recommendation of Anaxagoras' παιδεία is not without its irony (ἐπὶ φυσίν νου καὶ τε ανοίας).

78 271D.

79 Ibid.
80 271D-E.

81 271E.

82 272A.

83 272B. Plato makes it plain that to omit any of above is to fall short of an art of rhetoric. This precludes (pace Brownstein) the possibility that for him dialectic, which omits the last three, is the whole of the persuasive art.

84 As was the case with the spurious rhetoric of the Gorgias.
v.

PLATO'S CRITIQUE OF RHETORIC AND THE TRANSITION
FROM ORAL TO LITERATE CULTURE IN ANCIENT GREECE

In this fifth and final chapter the preceding discussion
of Plato's critique of rhetoric will be placed in the context
of recent orality-literacy studies. In particular we will be
concerned with the current work of Robert Connors\(^1\) who has
applied the theories of Eric Havelock\(^2\) on Greek poetry to the
debate between philosophy and rhetoric in fifth and fourth
century Athens.

Eric Havelock on Plato and Poetry

While it was Milman Parry in the late 1920's who first
discovered the oral nature of Homeric verse,\(^3\) it was not
until Eric Havelock's 1963 *Preface to Plato* that the
implications of orality for general culture were addressed.\(^4\)
The point of departure for Havelock's study was certain
unexplained and seemingly unexplainable elements in Plato's
treatment of poetry. Havelock's conclusions, however, are capable of much broader application, and in his programatic essay, "Greek Rhetoric and the Transition from Orality," Robert Connors utilizes them to "illuminate some of the curious questions that traditional scholarship has left us concerning rhetorical practice in fifth and fourth-century Greece." Connors readily admits his debt to Havelock.

"Havelock posits a revolution in Greek thought and thinking processes that has three stages." The first stage is that of primary orality (before ca. 700 B.C.) in which all cultural traditions were passed on orally without any benefit from writing. During this period the only technology available for preserving Hellenic culture was "the rhythmic word." Thus poetry was not art in the modern sense of the term, but rather "preserved communication." Poetry was παιδεία, and the history of poetry (Homer, Hesiod, the tragedians) was the history of Greek culture and education.

The second stage is a transitional period (ca. 700 to ca. 370 B.C.) in which oral and literate elements are mixed within the culture. Havelock uses the term "craft literacy" to describe the emerging literate culture of this period, for reading and writing were specialized skills not available to the general population which continued to be shaped by oral culture. For Havelock, it is the residue of this oral educational system that explains why even Plato saw "the
works of Homer and the tragedians...not as though they were art but as though they were a vast encyclopedia containing information and guidance for the management of one's civic and personal life" (a claim Protagoras will make for rhetoric!).  

It also explains why he reacted against them as holding a monopoly on the educational apparatus of the day, and why he insisted on their being excluded from higher education in his ideal republic.

The third stage is that of literacy in which these skills became more widely available. In this period, beginning around the middle of the fourth century, Hellenic culture came to be conveyed by the new technology of the written word.

More important for Havelock's thesis than this chronological schema, however, is his account of the states of mind that correspond to the respective cultures, and at least in the case of oral culture is the precondition for it. How can a culture be preserved orally? How can all the information necessary to sustain a culture be stored in the memory? Such a feat must have required a state of mind different than any known today. For Havelock, this state of mind is one of "total personal involvement and therefore of emotional identification with the substance of the poetised statement." The objectivity so valued in literate culture—indeed, according to Havelock, only possible in a literate
culture—could not exist in the oral phase. The very preservation of oral culture demanded it.

"To control the collective memory of society [the poet] had to establish control over the personal memories of individual human beings." He did this through the psychological resources made available to him through his craft, through the poetic performance. Rhythm, music, even dance served to organize and set in motion a series of mnemonic reflexes in the audience that allowed for the encoding of the poet's message. Taken together they constituted "a mobilization of the resources of the unconscious to assist the conscious." Havelock writes:

The audience found enjoyment and relaxation as they were themselves partly hypnotized by their response to a series of rhythmic patterns, verbal, vocal, instrumental, and physical, all set in motion together and all consonant in their effect.

The "crux of Havelock's argument," however, lies in the role he assigns to Plato in all of this. As the harbinger of the new age of literacy, Plato is wholly critical of poetry which he can only associate with the non-critical and participatory oral consciousness from which the Greek mind is emerging. Plato exemplifies the shift from the residual orality of the transitional phase in Greek culture to literacy with its critical consciousness. It is precisely
for this reason that he finds it necessary to exclude poetry from his educational program. Poetry is a means of manipulating, not educating. It does not allow one to be objective and to think independently. It hypnotizes.\textsuperscript{19}

Philosophy, on the other hand, the \textit{modus vivendi} of literate culture, reverses this. It allows one to stand over against sensual experience as independent of it. It produces a concept of the soul, of the self as subject, and it recognizes that which is experienced as object. Writes Havelock: "The doctrine of the autonomous psyche is the counterpart of the rejection of the oral culture."\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, it allows the individual to live in a world in which the objects themselves stand over against experience. This is the world of abstraction and hence the world of the Forms. In this world the spell of the rhythmic word is broken, and from this world it is excluded.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Robert Connors on Plato and Rhetoric}

Robert Connors builds upon Havelock's thesis regarding Plato's repudiation of poetry to account for Plato's equally critical attitude toward rhetoric. Early in his essay he summarizes his position:

I believe that oral rhetoric attained its great power and popularity among fifth and fourth-century
Greek states by utilizing—in a quite conscious and "literate" fashion—the mechanisms of passive oral consciousness described by Havelock, mechanisms that still existed in most people and that made the Athenians of Socrates' and Plato's times peculiarly receptive to certain sorts of carefully wrought oral persuasion.22

Connors begins by noting the close relationship of rhetoric to poetry and how it apparently was able to share in the power of poetry in an oral culture.

Our knowledge of preliterate rhetoric is limited. But Connors constructs a reasonable hypothesis. First of all, it is not technical. That is, it is not a "teachable practice." Rather it was conceived as a gift. Much like poetry.23 Second, it is reasonable to assume that it took over much of the verbal technology that made poetry successful, such as formulaic and rhythmical speech.24 But early rhetoric differed in a significant way from poetry. Poetry produced empathy for the sake of memory; rhetoric, for the sake of persuasion:

...behind every rhetorical utterance there was an agenda, a persuasive purpose. The poet or rhapsode sought to produce, as Gorgias put is, "fearful shuddering and tearful pity and grievous longing" in his hearers—but for their own sake. The rhetor sought to produce them for other motives—to press a point, gain adherence to a cause, win a case.25
That rhetoric in this transitional period sought to bring the power of poetized utterance to bear on politics explains the almost mythical power of the orator. According to Homer the orator "stands out in the gathering," and men look upon him "like a god as he goes though the city." Conners perceptively notes that this also explains the puzzle of why the Greeks, "who have always been the western models for rationalism, so easily gave up their freedoms to so many glib-tongued demagogues." It was simply a manifestation of the times. Like Plato's philosopher, many during this period were emerging from the cave of orality into the bright sunlight of literacy. Unlike the philosopher, however, the demagogic orator did not return to the cave reluctantly and in order to help those who had remained behind, but rather "to try to manipulate the shadows that still constituted everyone else's reality!" In a significant footnote Conners even suggests that even Pericles' career can be explained in this light.

But the shift from orality to literacy can be illustrated from the developments within rhetoric itself. Rhetoric after Aristotle, that is, literate rhetoric, is expressly critical of earlier rhetorical practice. Conners illustrates this in relation to two of the giants of preliterate rhetoric, Antiphon of Rhamnus and Gorgias of Leontini.
Antiphon was credited by Thucydides with bringing the Four Hundred into power in 411 by his oratory. He was the best that he had ever heard. He writes that there was "no man who could do more for any who consulted him, whether their business lay in the courts of justice or in the assembly." But this does not accord with what we know of Antiphon's rhetoric, which was "vague, repetitive, larded with obvious general statements about the nature of life." Writes Dionysius: "Antiphon has nothing [to offer us today, i.e., 60 A.D.] but his antique and stern dignity." While Antiphon's character which showed itself in his prose was still to be admired, hisἐχθρὴ had become obsolete. Writes Connors:

We can see in Antiphon's style and methods clear reflections of most of the characteristics that [Walter] Ong ascribes to orally based expression: Antiphon is aggregative not analytic; he relies on commonplaces, formulas, topics, sententious maxims; his speeches are repetitive and amplificatory; he narrates much of his position as an agonistic "story".

Sometime after Antiphon oral culture and hence the criteria for effective speech were replaced by literate culture with its mode of thinking and persuading.

The case is even more striking with Gorgias. Beginning with Aristotle Gorgias' style became the object of ridicule.
His use of poetic devices such as rhythm and figure was judged excessive.\textsuperscript{34} Aristotle's opinion was shared by Cicero, Diodorus Siculus and Dionysius.\textsuperscript{35} And yet no one can deny the power and fame accorded the orator. He was in great demand every time he visited Athens. He acquired a personal fortune from speaking and teaching others to do so. He spoke at the Olympian and Pythian games, a honor usually denied foreigners. And of course he was chosen by Plato to be the quintessential rhetorician in the dialogue named after him.\textsuperscript{36}

Unlike Antiphon, Gorgias reflected upon the persuasive power of his art. Thus in the \textit{Helen} he argued in defense of the woman traditionally blamed for starting the Trojan war, that she was either taken by force, or she was moved by the gods, or she was overcome by love, or she was persuaded—all of which amount to the same thing, namely, that she was compelled. In other words, as he knew it, to be persuaded was to be compelled. He writes:

\begin{quote}
The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}
Of course Gorgias may simply be exaggerating the efficacy of his art. But it may also be the case that the rhetoric and the audiences with which Gorgias was familiar were substantially different from those with which we are familiar today—or for that matter, substantially different from those only a century later. If this is the case, then Gorgias' overly poeticized rhetoric, far from having seemed "larded" with rhythm and figure, may well have produced in his orally conditioned hearers a response similar to that produced by the poets who availed themselves of these same devices.

Connors concludes his comments on Gorgias by referencing two standard studies on ancient rhetoric: Charles Segal's 1962 essay, "Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos,"\(^{38}\) and Jacqueline de Romilly's 1975 Harvard lectures, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*.\(^{39}\) So far as they go, both studies, which emphasize the "magical" power of the spoken word, confirm Connors' analysis. What they lack, however, is an explanation for how rhetoric could be conceived in terms of such unheard of power. This explanation is precisely what Connors, following Havelock, provides: an orally conditioned consciousness that could be tapped by a particular verbal technology, both of which are now things of the past.

The second half of Connors' essay concerns Plato's reaction to and his way of coping with rhetoric. As a harbinger of the literate mindset, Plato obviously opposed
the bewitching power of oral-based rhetoric—which in the case of Gorgias came not only to be practiced but taught as a matter of art, as a τεχνη. Jacqueline de Romilly writes: "He [Gorgias] is the theoretician of the magic spell of words." But whereas traditional scholarship "has tended to concentrate on the content of Plato's writing," Connors focusses on form. For it is in regard to the form of discourse that Plato sought to "break the spell, interrupt the charm, subvert the magic" of rhetoric.

To begin with, Plato's estimate of the power of rhetoric is remarkably similar to Gorgias'. In the Protagoras, for example, Socrates describes the way in which others are "charmed" and "spellbound" by the words of the great sophist, and he says of himself:

For a while [after Protagoras had finished speaking] I was still under his spell...but when I perceived that he had really come to a stop, I pulled myself together, as it were, with an effort.

In the Menexenus (an important but often overlooked dialogue) Socrates admits that orators "bewitch our souls." Making fun of, but at the same time describing, the response of the oral mind to rhetoric, he says,

Every time I listen fascinated, I am exalted and imagine myself to have become at once taller and
nobler and more handsome...and this majestic
feeling remains with me for over three days."45

And in the *Phaedrus*, where Plato offers his well-known
definition of rhetoric (the art of leading the soul by means
of words),46 much of the discussion (especially early in the
dialogue) concerns the μάνη that is produce by discourse:

Do not be surprised if I seem to be in a frenzy as
my discourse progresses, for I am already almost
uttering dithyrambs....Do you not notice, my
friend, that I am already speaking in hexameters,
not mere dithyrambs?...If I continue, what kind
of hymn do you suppose I shall raise? I shall
surely be possessed by the nymphs to whom you
[Phaedrus] have purposely exposed me [in reading
Lysias' oration].47

Connors' writes of this progression:

What Socrates is jokingly describing here is the
rhetorician's gradual approach to more and more
powerful, "inspired" poetic techniques. From prose
to dithyrambs to hexameter is a clear map of the
journey to poetry, to that tapping of the poetic
response mechanism that must have seemed magical.48

Of course Plato is critical of all of this. Even if he—
or at least Socrates--is still susceptible to poetry and to
rhetoric, he is literate. He must oppose the spell of the
poeticized word. But the question is how to do so. Asks
Connors: "what sort of protective device might be found, what φαρμακον or antidote could safeguard the mind from the corruptive rhetorical spell?" It is in regard to this question that Connors redirects attention from the content of the Platonic dialogues to their form.

"Simply put, Socrates' answer to the danger of the rhetorical spell is to prevent it from being woven." At least this is the central concern in Plato's Socratic, that is early, dialogues. Socrates is continually at pains to control the form of the discourse, to keep it at the level of a two-way discussion complete with questions and answers, and thus to "subvert rhetorical magic by interrupting it with questions (emphasis original)." In other words, dialectic, the question and answer form of discourse, was the younger Plato's means of breaking the spell of rhetoric. It was his "antidote." Here Connors goes beyond Havelock. Havelock had already noted that interruptive question-and-answer was "an offensive weapon" to be used to disrupt poeticized discourse. But Connors suggests that it was also, and perhaps primarily, a "defensive tool" to protect Socrates and even Plato from being caught up in and overcome by "one-way rhetorical address." In the Protagoras and the Gorgias Socrates is adamant that he will not hear long speeches. Connors writes, "this evidence suggests that Socrates and the younger Plato are retailing a method as well as a
philosophy."55 And he concludes: "The enemy, for both Socrates and the younger Plato, was the authoritarianism of one-way discourse, whether poetic or rhetorical."56

In a kind of afterword Connors addresses the problem (for both him and Havelock) of Plato's discrediting of writing at the end of the Phaedrus and in the Seventh Epistle. As the prophet of literate culture should not Plato extol writing? Not necessarily, says Connors, if we understand Plato as primarily committed to dialectic. For vis-a-vis dialectic, written discourse, though not as spellbinding, is just as "one-way" as the rhetorical oration. "You might think that [written words] spoke as is they had intelligence," writes Plato, "but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing."57 Speaking of orators in the Protagoras, Socrates complains, "But suppose you put a question to one of them--they are just like books, incapable of either answering you or putting a question of their own."58 As Plato apparently conceived it, the cultural revolution in which he was leader, "was dialectical, not literary."59
Evaluation of Robert Connors

Overall, Connors' thesis is convincing, especially if the theories of Havelock are accepted. His thesis is also largely consistent with the findings of this investigation, and in some cases it confirms them. In other cases, however, where Connors has simply accepted the traditional conclusions this study has challenged, his work, which he readily (and too modestly) admits is "meant only to suggest some of the paths of investigation that may prove fruitful," can be improved.

Regarding areas of agreement--first of all, there can be no doubt that rhetoric is closely associated with poetry, and that Plato himself makes this connection:

SOCRATES: Well now, if you should strip from all poetry its music, rhythm, and meter, the residue would be nothing else but speech?
CALLICLES: That must be so.

SOCRATES: And these speeches are addressed to a huge mob of people?

CALLICLES: I agree.

SOCRATES: Then poetry is a kind of public address?

CALLICLES: Evidently.
SOCRATES: Must it not be a rhetorical public address? Do you not consider that the poets engage in rhetoric in the theaters?

CALLICLES: I do.60

In addition, Plato most certainly recognizes the magical power of rhetoric. For example, in the *Phaedrus* it is the art that is capable of producing in the hearer "a divine frenzy"61 and that (quite literally) "leads the soul by means of words."62 In the *Menexenus* orators "bewitch our souls."63 And in the *Protagoras* we read of the great sophist's entourage:

Those who followed behind listening to their conversation seemed to be for the most part foreigners--Protagoras draws them from every city that he passes through, charming them with his voice like Orpheus, and they follow spellbound--but there were some Athenians in the band as well.64

Socrates himself is not immune to his spell:

Here Protagoras brought to an end his long and magnificent display of eloquence. For a long time I gazed at him spellbound, eager to catch any further word that he might utter. When I saw that he had really finished, I collected myself with an effort and said....65
Third, Connors proposal that Socrates and the young Plato employed dialectic as a defense against the seduction of rhetoric has a great deal of merit. In the Protagoras, for instance, Socrates refuses to continue the discussion if Protagoras will not dialogue. And in the Gorgias he immediately focusses on Gorgias' claim to be able to answer questions and will not let his interlocutor drift into monologue. Elsewhere, Hippias accuses Socrates of constantly cutting things up with his questions, of never letting a person fully develop his thought, of not looking at the whole. For Polus this was tantamount to inhibiting freedom of speech. Nonetheless, there is a sustained effort on the part of Plato to inhibit rhetorical displays, and he is repeatedly critical of their deleterious effects.

Fourth, there is the fact that Plato clearly saw himself opposing a cultural alternative in rhetoric. This is confirmed by the above reading of the Gorgias where rhetoric is opposed precisely in its claim to be ἡ καλλιστή τῶν τεχνῶν, what Callicles in the end calls "a way of life." It also comes out in Protagoras' description of his art:

[From me he will learn] the proper care of his personal affairs, so that he may best manage his own household, and and also of the state's affairs, so as to become a real power in the city, both as speaker and man of action.
And as we saw in chapter 2 above, Plato's competitor, Isocrates, recommended rhetoric as a complete education. Actually, Connors' model of rhetoric and dialectic as competing cultural options is not only suggestive for understanding Plato, but also for understanding the relationship of these two schools.

There are, however, a few points on which Connor's thesis may be modified by the findings of this study. First of all, as we have demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4 above, Plato does not oppose rhetoric as such, but only rhetoric conceived as η κάλλιστη τῶν τεχνῶν. Connors, however, writes:

For Plato, rhetorical discourse was extremely powerful, even magical, and it is this rhetorical magic that Plato opposes as he opposes the poetic magic that spawned it.

What Plato really opposes is rhetoric that is not employed in the service of truth and justice as revealed by dialectical inquiry. Rhetoric is most certainly to be employed in leading the state, in influencing the masses, in "leading their souls by means of words." It is just that among the leadership of the state rhetoric must be subject to dialectic.

To put it another way, Plato believed that through carefully controlled dialogue one could come to know the truth. But he also believed that such knowledge was within
the reach of only a few. The vast majority of mankind could possess only opinion. This opinion could and indeed should be manipulated by the rhetoric of the informed few. These few, however, must be above such manipulation. They must be careful not to be manipulated by their own rhetoric. Yet only when rhetoric is in the service of dialectic, that is, only when dialectic and not rhetoric is conceived as η καλλιστη των τεχνων, can this be the case.

In the Gorgias, therefore, Plato does not oppose rhetoric per se, but rhetoric as the final court of appeal for politicians such as Polus and Callicles. If rhetoric is the highest court, then politics degenerates into a power play between competing self-interests. Instead, the key players in the political arena, the orators, must pursue truth, allowing their personal interests are to be subjected by the even greater power of dialectic.75

In this regard, it might also be noted that Plato does not oppose compulsion—neither compulsion as such, nor that produced by rhetoric under the right circumstances. For on the one hand, the opinions of the many are to be manipulated quite consciously by the rhetoric of politicians.76 While on the other hand, dialectic, too, is heady medicine. It is only irrational compulsion (vis-a-vis the compulsion of reason) among the elite that he finds objectionable.
In this light Plato can be seen as embodying precisely the craft literacy of Havelock's transitional period. For the few, the literate, the charm of oral rhetoric was to be broken by dialectic. For the many, however, the power of an orally based rhetoric was to be wielded, but in the interest of the truth possessed by the few.

It is significant that Plato's pupil, Aristotle, who according to Connors schema would have been the first to move out of this transitional period, saw things much differently. For him, rhetoric (now literacy based) was a tool that could be used in pursuit of truth, or at least in the public discussion of uncertain things. For him, there was a place where the mind could repose somewhere between apodictic certainty and raw self-interest, and from which place a legitimate (i.e., objective) discussion could proceed. He thus writes in the *Ethics*:

> Now our treatment of this science will be adequate, if it achieves that amount of precision which belongs to its subject matter. The same exactness must not be expected in all departments of philosophy alike.... The subjects studied by political science...involve much difference of opinion and uncertainty.

It might also be mentioned that Plato's complaint against rhetoric was not just in regard to its magical
qualities, as Connors suggests, but also in regard to the fact that its content was determined by what the addressees wanted to hear. In other words, it pleased not only by virtue of its poetic qualities, but by means of flattery. A dialectically-based rhetoric, however, can not consistently employ this means. It has to say not what others want to hear, but what they need to hear. Its objective was not the pleasing of an audience, but its improvement.

According to the Phaedrus, a dialectically-based rhetoric, while not dismissing oral-based techniques, seeks to persuade by a kind of linguistic sleight of hand. If, for instance, the objective is to move an audience from point A (what is already assented to) to point E (what is to be assented to), then the rhetor, by virtue of a series of distinctions made via the method of collection and division provided for in dialectical inquiry, imperceptibly shifts his subject until E comes to look like A, and the assent that was given to A is also given to E. Though it is never actually stated, this, I take it, is Plato's substitute for flattery.

Also according to the Phaedrus, a dialectically-based rhetoric seeks to persuade by cataloging types of arguments and the types of souls that are persuaded by types of arguments. Arguments are then used according to the type of soul to be persuaded. This too then replaces the flattery of a rhetoric not determined as to its ends by dialectic.
It could be said in summary, then, that Plato did not seek to replace rhetoric by dialectic, but rather to subordinate the one to the other. It should also be said, however, that in so doing Plato's view of rhetoric itself was changed. The power of oral-based rhetoric was first, its magical poetic quality, and second, its flattery. But for a dialectically-based rhetoric, while poetical magic was still exploited, flattery was necessarily replaced as the ends for which it was practiced was now determined not by the desires of the audience but by its needs. To this end it employed subtle deception and argumentation specifically tailored to the addressees. In addition, since Plato insisted on listing those precisely oral-based rhetorical strategies among the "niceties" of the art, it might also be argued that the earlier priority on the poetical was reversed.
Notes to Chapter V


3 Milman Parry, l'Epithete Traditionelle dans Homere (Paris, 1928).

4 For a survey of Havelock's development see the first essay in his The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982).

5 Havelock, Preface, pp. 3-19.

6 Connors, op. cit., p. 38.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Havelock, Preface, p. 42.


13 A possible problem for Havelock's thesis is that the oral state of mind is a necessary precondition for oral culture, while the literate state of mind is the consequence of literate culture. I mention this only in passing, for it is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate this problem.

14 Op. cit., p. 44.


18 Connors, p. 40.

19 Havelock, pp. 145-164.


22 Connors, p. 40.


24 Ibid.

26 Odyssey, 169-173; quoted in Connors, p. 42.

27 Connors, p. 43.


30 8.6; quoted in Connors, p. 45.

31 Connors, p. 45.

32 De Isaeo, 20; quoted in Connors, p. 45.

33 Connors, p. 45.

34 Rhetoric, Book III passim.

35 Orator, 176; Historical Library, 12.53; De Isaeo, 19. Referenced in Connors, p. 60, notes 17-19.

36 Connors, p. 46.

37 13-14.


40 Op. cit., p. 16
41 Connors, p. 49.

42 Ibid.

43 328D; quoted in Connors, p. 51.

44 235A; quoted in Connors, p. 50.

45 235A-B; quoted in Connors, p. 50.

46 261A.

47 238-41; quoted in Connors, p. 50.

48 Connors, p. 50.


51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.


57 Phaedrus, 275D; quoted in Connors, p. 55.
58 Quoted in Connors as Protagoras, 275D. The correct citation is 329A.

59 Connors, p. 55.

60 502C-D.

61 234D.

62 261A.

63 235A.

64 315A-B.

65 328D.

66 336B-C.

67 447C.

68 Greater Hippias, 301-304; Quoted in Connors, p. 63, note 43.

69 Gorgias, 461D-E.

70 Op. cit., 448C.

71 Op. cit., 527E.

72 Protagoras, 318E-319A.

73 XV, 276-77.
74 Connors, p. 49.

75 On the power of rhetoric and its ability to control the mind viv-a-vis and in regard to truth, see my treatment of Gorgias 474A-481B in Chapter III.

76 Cf. Gorgias, 504D-E.

77 Rhetoric, I, 1.

78 I, 3, 1-2.

79 See, for example, the theme of flattery that runs throughout the Gorgias and the Menexenus.

80 261D-262C.

81 271C-272B.

82 Phaedrus, 269A.
CONCLUSION

What was Plato's true opinion about rhetoric? In the Gorgias he brings to bear the full arsenal of his literary genius against rhetoric, while in the Phaedrus he is surprisingly affirmative, going so far as to offer positive guidelines for the art. In this study I have urged that the problem has been wrongly conceived. The obviously prior question--one easy to overlook, for indeed it has been overlooked--is whether the rhetoric derided in the Gorgias is in fact the rhetoric rehabilitated in the Phaedrus.

In fifth century Athens a group of professional educators known as the Sophists offered rhetoric not only as a practical political and judicial discipline but as a master knowledge to which all other learning was subject. While in the fourth century in the school Isocrates rhetoric continued further on this trajectory. In the Gorgias Plato takes aim at this high-minded conception of rhetoric. What claimed to be "the noblest of the arts," he found to be no art at all, but a mere pretense of art, a flattering knack; and what claimed to "hold sway over all other powers," he showed to be helpless before the power of the true ars artium, dialectic.
At the same time, Plato was a man with genuine and long-standing political concerns. And in the same dialogue in which he rails against rhetoric misconceived, he alludes to a "true rhetoric" that is employed in the service of political knowledge. Although not the grandest of the arts (it is only una *ars inter multas*) Plato leaves every impression that it is in his eyes legitimate.

It is precisely this more modest art that he outlines in a later dialogue, the *Phaedrus*. There it is not a famous sophist like Gorgias who lays claim to practicing "the noblest of the arts" that he has Socrates confront, but a logographer, Lysias, whose claim is simply to practice "the art of speaking and writing well." Of course, such an art, like all arts that are truely arts, must be based on dialectic. It comes as no surprise when in the last third of that dialogue Plato goes beyond merely acknowledging the existence of such an art, to actually offering his own description of what it must look like.

The conclusion of the first part of this thesis (chapters 1 through 4), then, is that "rhetoric" could be used in two senses in Plato's day, and that Plato availed himself of this distinction, and that this explains the apparent contradiction of the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*.

This conclusion, however, illumines and is illumined by the theories recently advanced by Robert Connors about
rhetoric and the transition from orality to literacy in ancient Greece. According to Connors, early (i.e., oral-based) rhetoric exploited the incomprehensibly powerful techniques of poetry to move an audience almost hypnotically to its desired ends; and Plato, champion of the critical reasoning and objectivity of nascent literacy, precisely on this basis opposed it. Connors also proposes that in opposition to rhetoric Plato (and Socrates before him) developed dialectic—discussion controlled by continual questioning—intended to "break the spell" of protracted poeticized speech.

Of course, this accords well with Plato's contention that the power of rhetoric can (the Gorgias) and should (the Phaedrus) be controlled by the even greater power of dialectic, and with the claim that rhetoric left to itself is despotic. It is the conclusion of the second part of this thesis (chapter 5) that this does not, however, provide an altogether accurate assessment of Plato's attitude toward rhetoric, even oral-based rhetoric. If the findings of this thesis are correct, rhetoric, controlled and shaped by dialectic, but in all its oral power, is to be used by the orator on the population at large.

It also has been found that under the influence of dialectic oral rhetoric itself began to change, so that in addition to attempting to enchant an audience, it sought to
reshaping the substance of the matter at hand. Of course, it
this is the case, then while oral or Gorgianic rhetoric dealt
in mass hypnosis, Plato was the first to retail what we have
come to know as propaganda.
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