

A comparative analysis of early greek rhetorical theory

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The Rhetoric word has been derived from the Greek word Rhetor meaning speaker and meaning of the term is an art of public speaking. (Habib, 2005) The art implies various techniques applied by the speaker to create dramatic, intellectual and emotional appeal while delivering the speech. It also implies composition and arrangement of the text making it more appealing and persuasive for the listeners.

Since last two hundred years, the scope and application of rhetoric has considerably changed in the changing literary, social and intellectual contexts.

The art of rhetoric has been modified to meet various needs in the political sphere, in the sphere of institution and discipline of philosophy, in the institution of theology whereby rhetoric has been placed in context to the expression of divine revelation, in the entire sphere of education practices and literary criticism. In all these areas, rhetoric is placed and articulated to meet their specific interests.

Rhetoric was originated in Ancient Greece in the fifth century B. C and got into existence by Sophists, Aristotle, and then from the Roman world to Cato, Cicero and Quintilian. The father of Church St Augustine enlisted the form of rhetoric during the service of Christian doctrine.

Classical rhetoric had five parts: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. There is also held opinion that the art of rhetoric was founded in 476 BC by Syracuse whose student Tisias spread the teachings of this master and brought it into the main stream. All theorists and historians have

acknowledged the fact that rhetoric was used profoundly in the political activities and was the most important component in democracy.

The ruling powers had all the right to express independently and in an articulate way and had judged that it was only through the control of language, ideas and worldviews that a particular class could have a control over the economic and political spheres. The trend was true in our ancient and is very well prevalent in the democratic world of today. (Habib, 2005) The following essay will be the analytical comparative study of the two Greeks theological perceptions on rhetoric and the way they developed the same.

Socrates was living during the age of what classicist Eric Havelock has named “ the crisis . . . in the history of humancommunication, when Greek orality transformed itself into Greek literacy” (Havelock, 1988, p. 1).

Before this education was imparted orally and through poetic tradition going back hundreds of years and the Socrates opposed this form of education by proposing that education be made professional and should be imparted through dialectical examination of ideas and he was sentenced to death for the same. (Havelock, 1988)

Socrates developed his form of rhetoric from differences between the older tradition and the new literacy forms offered by the Greek alphabet. Greeks used different words to develop two different forms of communication-epos also known as discourse that was both in written as well as in oral form.

The public speaking and public discourse were so important in Ancient Athens that new form of rhetoric emerged and this gave birth to many

professional teachers of rhetoric. These teachers were called as Sophists emerged from Sophos meaning wise and they were used to teach the art of rhetoric for their use in the courts, legislatures, political forums as well as in the political debates and philosophical dispositions.

Among the Sophists, Protagoras was considered as the most influential among all, and his most important idea was “ man is the measure of all things.” (Habib, 2005, p. 65) Protagoras laid his bases on the fact that each argument has two sides and there is equal rationale behind these two sides.

He was accused of expediency in argument, as it could induce the people to think about the worst as best and best thoughts as worst. Another to enhance the concept rhetoric into the public sphere was Gorgias (485-380BC), whose disposition of rhetoric lay on the language of poets. He looked at the world as the world of opposites, contradictions and polarities, which could be reconciled by only the words of poetry. He viewed that rhetoric touched the soul and so poetry.

Stylistic devices of poetry and sounds of music was rhetoric which could make the speech very interesting and soul touching, while the teachings of Isocrates were dependent on the political events and emphasized on the education as a form or rhetoric device.

Like Socrates, he believed that education should impart moral values and emphasized on truth and virtue as the most important part of rhetoric and should include training of the mind and body as complementary form of activities. All in all their formation of the techniques of rhetoric emerged

from the struggles out of the need of their political, educational and cultural causes.