

The influence of ancient greek orators and greek rhetoric philosophy essay



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Ancient Greek Orators and Greek Rhetoric-how they affected the world in the past and how they still influence the field of Art nowadays.

1. Introduction

Before we can trace the origins of rhetoric we must first determine just what it is we are looking for. If by using the word 'rhetoric' we mean the art of making speech persuasive as we find in Plato, Aristotle and their successors- which they called Greek $\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ ($\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ 'the rhetorical art') or $\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ ('rhetoric') for short - locates the birth of rhetoric in fifth century sicily.

At first it is the definition of the word Rhetoric. The Greek $\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ ($\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$) is formed by adding - $\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ (meaning basically art or skill -the art of influencing the thought and conduct of an audience). As a matter of fact is the art or science of all specialized literary uses of language in prose or verse, including the figures of speech the study of the effective use of language the ability to use language effectively and the art of prose in general as opposed to verse, the art of making persuasive speeches. Furthermore it means the study of the technique of using language effectively, at on other point of view it is the art of using speech to persuade, influence, or please and moreover is the excessive use of ornamentation and contrivance in spoken or written discourse.

Back in ancient Greece the term $\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ was used most typically to refer to politicians who put forth motions in the courts of Assembly. Most scholars, nowadays, agree that the earliest surviving use of the term $\rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ is in Plato's Gorgias, dating from the early fourth century, and its

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absence in important texts of the period concerning education a public speaking is striking

The types of Oratory

When we look at oratory we must first look at the three types of oratory as described by Aristotle, then we will go over the more modern genres.

Aristotle says that there is judicial or forensics, deliberative or legislative, epideictic or ceremonial oratory types:

Forensic oratory is speaking about the past in a matter of legal judgment.

When an attorney speaks to the court, as to ones guilt or innocence, this is forensic oratory. Another example of forensic oratory is when someone speaks to congress, or a congressional committee. In Act 3 scene VI of Shakespeare's Timon of Athens you

have an excellent example of this type of oratory. You can also refer to our speech library for more examples of forensic oratory.

Deliberative oratory is speaking about the future. Its purpose is getting someone to move to an action. If a congressman goes to congress and says that we need to start bills then they are using the deliberative class of oratory.

Epideictic is spoken about in the present and is used to praise or blame someone or something. Aristotle teaches that this type of speech is given to make its' listeners want to achieve the greatness of a good person or to make you realize the severity of the crimes committed by one who is evil.

The following essay is a mixture of narrative and thematic analysis that traces the history of rhetoric through a variety of approaches considers Rhetoric in a count of historical, intellectual and literally contexts. The central aim is to provide a comprehensive introduction to the many ways in which rhetoric was conceptualized, practiced and functioned in Greek culture. A small introduction and accessibility in a small, little prior knowledge of Greek rhetoric.

Along with the topic that deserves in the given essay of more attention, the field of Art in ancient Greek Rhetoric, different insights are going to give out into how the Greeks Orators saw and used the Art of Rhetoric, and furthermore how it was fundamentally at the heart of the society and by extension, how it influenced, and became part of, many of the things that we take for granted in our times.

Each chapter included in this essay, provides an overview of the main issues of its topic, at times raises new questions or adopt a fresh approach to its subject matter.

2. The Greek Rhetoric, the Greek Orators:

The rhetor knows not in the least which of the beliefs and desires of the people is honorable or base, good or bad, just or unjust, but he employs all these terms in accordance with the beliefs of the people.

The rhetor produces pleasure for his audience by advising it to make the decision that will please it not the one that is in its best interests. But the production of pleasure is not a rational operation, pleasure being the innate response to the satisfaction of irrational instincts. Sophistic rhetoric is not a <https://assignbuster.com/the-influence-of-ancient-greek-orators-and-greek-rhetoric-philosophy-essay/>

techne but just a form of flattery, a knack that can be enhanced by experience but not a subject for scientific theory (Gorgias 462c-d)

While the rhetor seeks to gratify the audience for personal gain, the true political expert offers honest advice based on knowledge of the audience's true interests. No wonder that the true political expert is chased from the field in Athenian democracy, for he has neither the ability nor the desire to flatter.

2. 1. References to the speeches of the Attic Orators

Below it is given a small overview to the speeches which are believed to be spurious and also have survived under the name of a particular orator.

- Aescines:

1. Against Timarchus

2. On the False Embassy

3. Against Ctesiphon

- Andocides:

1. On the Mysteries

2. On the return

3. On the Peace with Sparta

- Antiphon:

1. Against the Stepmother

2. On the murder of Herodes

3. Second tetralogy

- Demosthenes:

1. Olynthiac 1-3

2. Philippic 1-4

3. Against Meidias

4. Against Aphobus

5. Against Aristocrates

6. Against Lacritus

7. Funeral Speech

8. Erotic Essay

9. For the Liberty of the Rhodians

10. For the People of Megalopolis

- Dinarchus:

1. Against Demosthenes

- Hyperides:

1. In defence of Lycophron

2. Against Athenogenes

- Isaaues:

1. On the Estate Of Cleonymus

2. On the Estate of Meneclis

- Isocrates:

1. Archidamus

2. Evagoras

3. Helen

4. Plataicus

5. Antidosis

6. Panegyricus

- Lycurgus:

1. Against Leocrates

- Lysias:

1. On the Murder Of Eratosthenes

2. Funeral Speech

3. Against Eratosthenes
4. Against Agoratus
5. Against Theomnestus (1 + 2)
6. Against Alcibiades (1+2)
7. Against Epicrates
8. For Polystratus
9. Olympic Speech

3. Rhetoric and The world of Art:

3. 1. Rhetoric in the dramatics

Fifth-century tragedy contains material which could have derived ultimately from rhetorical teaching, and since many plays were written before the earliest published speeches, examination of that is of particular interest. Disappointingly but perhaps predictably the earliest tragedian, Aeschylus, does not add much to our knowledge of early rhetoric. However, the trial of Orestes in Eumenides shows some of the mechanics of legal procedure in operation, with the prosecutor speaking first and Apollo as witness for the defense. He is an unusual witness that he accepts responsibility for the alleged crime, they taking some of the wind out of the prosecution's sails. But the press on with their case, directly questioning the defendant establishes the fact of the crime and to confirm under whose authority he committed it. This interrogatory procedure was probably illustrated in the *technai*. The other feature of the thing that may relate to rhetorical theory is

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the distinction between justified and unjustified homicide, which, together with other distinctions gave rise to formal treatment under heads, later called *staseis*, Lat. *Status*.

A session at the 1987 MLA convention was devoted to the issue of "The Single Most Significant Contribution to Contemporary Theory in Rhetoric and Composition." Yet to argue in favor of a single text as the most significant contribution to contemporary theory in rhetoric and composition is highly redoubtable. How can a panel of three rhetoric and composition specialists arrive at even an uneasy consensus as to what defines "rhetoric" and "composition" and what differentiates them from each other, and much less determine what constitutes "significance" and what method(s) should determine it? Further, this definitional problematic raises essential evaluative issues, in particular the criteria for judgment. What are the grounds upon which any twentieth-century text can be singled out as seminal to rhetoric and composition? It seems that there can be only one answer to this question: we privilege the work of a rhetoric/composition specialist precisely because of his or her contribution to the

humanities in general, which, in turn, is privileged precisely because it is an essential component of the liberal arts tradition, which, in turn, is valorized for (among other reasons) its "liberating" properties-liberation in a particular sense (individuals benefit as they become emotionally and intellectually more free) and a collective sense (freed thinkers presumably are better equipped to erect and modify those structures and institutions that serve to benefit society).

The "movement" from rhetoric and composition to humanities to liberal arts to liberation shapes the individual, society, and the interrelationships between them. Understanding the connection between rhetoric and composition and the liberal arts requires a brief historical summary. Rhetoric was, of course, an integral component of the classical tritium; indeed, it can be argued that rhetoric was the cornerstone of the liberal arts tradition. Children and young adults in Antiquity were required to study rhetoric, beginning with simple narrative exercises that led to sophisticated declamation and argumentation. Most important, however, was the purpose of rhetorical *grammata*. The young were trained to speak effectively because the life of the city required it. Establishing and modifying legal codes required a pragmatic rhetorical ability and the underlying freedom to articulate positions without restraint. Free speech and municipal cohesion were absolutely dependent upon the dynamics of one art: rhetoric. Rhetoric, then, is the essence of humanism. Greek literature often emphasizes freedom of action (particularly in the drama of Sophocles) and free thinking is also essential to dialectic, as Plato consistently demonstrates in his dialogues. It might, therefore, be argued that all of the original liberal arts required the condition of freedom to flourish. Rhetoric, however, was the one liberal art that privileged practical, humanistic discourse..

There is still controversy, of course, about the function of rhetoric in the humanities. However, no one can deny the historical importance of rhetoric in the liberal arts, and, I will argue, James L. Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse* is the most significant twentieth-century text in rhetoric and composition propose this text as seminal precisely because it rearticulates

fundamental principles constituting the liberal arts tradition. There are pragmatic and theoretical reasons for the reflowering of rhetoric as a liberal art, as the necessity of returning rhetoric to the writing classroom becomes increasingly apparent. National reports on writing and the humanities have expressed "profound disquiet about the humanities in our culture" (Commission 4) and call attention to the connection between writing and the liberating effect of the liberal arts.

As Robert Scholes warns, "We have turned writing instruction into a merely technical matter, not a road to liberal education through the serious study of rhetoric".

These historical values of rhetoric and composition have informed the liberal arts tradition for well over two thousand years, educating people to perform their proper role as educated citizens in the democratic polis.

3. 2. Rhetoric and Tragedy: Weapons of mass persuasion

The origins of Greek tragedy are shrouded in mystery. The genre that we trace to the sixth century and its development in the fifth eventually formed the basis of the Western drama. It became part of festivals dedicated to Dionysus with the aim of entertaining the audience and influencing both citizens and allies. Aristotle's *Poetics* is still a good source for the beginnings, although it was written about two centuries later than the material described. He traces the origin to the dithyramb (a hymn in honor of Dionysus) and a type of satyr drama. Herodotus (1. 23) tells us that Arion of Methymna (c. 600) first composed dithyrambos in Corinth. The *Suda* claimed that Arion invented the *tragikos tropos* (speaking in the tragic manner). The

performance/ recitation of Homer was another precedent for Greek tragedy. Herodotus (5. 67) also says that there were tragic choral celebrations of the hero Adrastus, which the tyrant Cleisthenes at Sicyon incorporated into the cult of Dionysus.

There are only three fifth-century Greek playwrights whose works survive in more or less complete form: Aeschylus (c. 525-456, seven tragedies), Sophocles (c. 496-406, seven tragedies), and Euripides (c. 480-406, eighteen tragedies and one satyr play - the comic play that shared elements with tragedy and followed the presentations of the tragedies at the festivals). These constitute roughly one-tenth of the plays these tragedians wrote.

Aeschylus in many ways is the most poetic of the three major tragedians that have survived. His language shows many of the features that one associates with rhetoric, particularly in its verbal fireworks: word play, alliteration, similes, anaphora, and hyperbole, to name a few.

In his earlier drama, which helped shape future rhetoricians, the two main features were verbal display, as Aeschylus showed in his choruses, and persuasive arguments meant to convince crowds and the court. Sophocles shows even more rhetorical proficiency than Aeschylus, and the sophisticated use of rhetoric will increase even

more with Euripides. Drama reflects the growing influence of rhetoric on the society in general, a curve the curve that continues in the fourth century.

Of all the fifth-century playwrights whose work has survived, Euripides uses the most rhetorical devices, particularly those derived from the sophista, but

at the same time he recognizes the ethical problems associated with their use. In Euripids' play there is a more ambiguous interpretation of the gods; if the gods intervene, it is generally to the detriment of man.

Greek tragedies used rhetoric to further dramatic action and define speakers, and we find in it Aristotle's three main types of oratory as set out in his Rhetoric: deliberative or symbouleutic (addressing a political gathering); judicial or dicastic; and oratory that praises or blames to suit an occasion (epideictic, 1358s-b). Speeches were usually addressed to individuals rather than groups, but given the constant presence of chorus (and in Aeschylus the majority of the lines), there is always a crowd to convince, or an audience on stage, besides the audience before whom the drama is performed.

The practice of rhetoric appears in the speeches in the first surviving complete Greek drama we have, Aeschylus' Persians of 472. But there is no clear articulation of theory such as that attributed to Tisias or Corax, the legendary fifth-century "founders" of rhetoric.

Drama contributed to the art of rhetoric, and rhetorical practices contributed to drama. The rhetoric of drama is used to please, enhanced by rich vocabulary, meter, and poetic devices. It can sometimes have a magical effect on the listener (see the binding song used by the Furies in Aeschylus' Eumenides 306-396). Arguments Persuade by appeals to reason, the senses, and the emotions.

3. 3. Attic comedy and the development of theoretical rhetoric: Did Rhetoric exist in Aristophanes times?

Attic Old Comedy is particularly useful in reconstructing the early history of Greek rhetoric, since its formal agonistic structure features many debates that employ rhetorical topoi and catchwords, and moreover because more than any other category of evidence from the period, it gives us a vivid picture of contemporary oratory and oratical education as they appeared to the general public.

Some scholars have recently disputed whether anything that can truly be called "rhetoric" existed in the late fifth-century, but the evidence of Comedy, as it bears on

this question, has been either neglected or dismissed. A reexamination is therefore in order.

It is of course possible that the early handbooks have not survived until our time because they were rapidly super-seeded by more sophisticated hand books in the fourth century and thus fell out of circulation early. However, it is even more likely what the earliest sophist/rhetoricians did not write technai for general distribution precisely because they wanted students to pay for the opportunity to learn their method through dialectical interaction; exoteric works would only be exemplary orations for different occasion or types of cases, of sufficient virtuosity to impress a literate audience and entice pupils to pay for the real secrets of the trade. Theories did not need to be written down to be theories.

Comedy clearly shows speakers engaged in self-conscious linguistic and discursive strategies to succeed in persuading a specific target audience. We see and hear of speakers whose speeches appeal most on the emotional and intuitive level, rather than as rational arguments, and whose concerns are not with establishing factual truth, but with success over their opponent at all costs.

3. 4. Rhetoric and lyric poetry

The major portion of Greek lyric poetry was composed in the course of two centuries, beginning c. 650 with Archilochus and Alcman, And ending c. 440 with the deaths of Pindar and Bacchylides . Since this period precedes the era when the practice and theory of Greek rhetoric reached its maturity, beginning in the late fifth century with Gorgias and continuing in the fourth century and beyond, the use of rhetorical analysis to elucidate lyric poetry necessarily applies later theory and practice to previously composed poetry and must therefore be used judiciously and in full awareness of the anachronism.

This interaction between rhetoric and poetry works in two directions. The later rhetorical treatises look back to the epic and lyric traditions for examples of practice that preceded or prefigured the later theoretical formulations (examples from Homer are especially numerous in rhetorical treatises). At the same time, the later rhetorical formulations have provided modern scholars hermeneutic tools for interpreting the earlier lyric poetry.

In a recent important study of rhetoric and archaic poetry, J. Walker points to an interesting intersection of poetry and rhetoric that occurs in Plato's <https://assignbuster.com/the-influence-of-ancient-greek-orators-and-greek-rhetoric-philosophy-essay/>

Protagoras, where Socrates and Protagoras analyze and dispute the meanings of statements and individual words in Simonides' poem to Scopas. Although Socrates ultimately belittles the exercise of poetic analysis, the two men do take the argument of the poem seriously. The association of the poem with Protagoras, the representative of rhetoric, in contrast to Socrates' position as a philosophical dialectician, points up the essentially rhetorical argumentation of Simonides' poem. Indeed, Walker argues in his book that archaic lyric embodies an epideictic discourse which is the theoretical and historical forerunner of later rhetoric. By employing a definition of enthymeme as argumentation intended to persuade to thymos (heart) of the listener, particularly in striking 'caps', he argues that Hesiod, Theognis, Pindar, Alcaeus, Sappho and Solon (among others) employ a 'rhetorical transaction' that requires their audiences to make ethical and political judgments.

3. 5. Rhetoric and Elegy

Elegiac poetry often employs rhetorical arguments. Solon's elegy, as an example, contains rhetorical arguments. They contain gnomic statements, exhortations to good behavior, warnings against keeping bad company, and analyses of the perceived corruption of society.

3. 6. Rhetoric and the novel: Rhetoric and Romance

The development of prose fiction is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of post-classical Greek literature. The examples that have survived intact share many features in common. Some of them are the Ephesian Tale by Xenophon of Ephesus (second century AD), Chaereas and

Callirhoe by Chariton of Aphrodisias (first century AD) and Cleitophon and Leucippe by Achilles Tatius (second century AD).

The burgeoning of the Greek novel coincided with the period of the 'Second Sophistic' with its intense interest in rhetorical theory, practice and performance.

The earliest modern studies of the novel combined an obsession with tracing the origins of this non-classical genre with a distinctly dismissive attitude towards the

Second Sophistic. The impact of sophistic rhetoric on the novel was judged to be entirely negative, encouraging intrusive displays of learning and of technique in place of the exploration of human experience that was thought to be the true task of the novel. Recent reassessments of some 'digressions', particularly the descriptions of paintings and other works of art, have shown their organic connection to the plots and structure of the novels. Translations and studies of the Greek theoretical works on declamation have also revealed the intellectual underpinnings of the Second Sophistic.

As a matter of fact, the elementary rhetorical studies teach to the students the art of presenting a coherent narrative (as important to declamation as it is to the novel) through the exercises of *muthos* (fable) and *diegema* (narration).

3. 7. Ceremonial-Epideictic Oratory

The Greek epideictic means “ fit for display.” Also called ceremonial oratory, according to Aristotle, a type of persuasive speech designed primarily for rhetorical effect. Epideictic oratory was panegyric, declamatory, and demonstrative. Its aim was to condemn or to eulogize an individual, cause, occasion, movement, city, or state. An outstanding example of this type of speech is a funeral oration by the Athenian statesman Pericles in honor of those killed during the first year of the Peloponnesian War. The word is from the Greek epideiktikós, meaning “for display” or “declamatory,” and is a derivative of epideiknýnai, meaning “to show off” or “to display.” Thus, this branch of oratory is sometimes called “ ceremonial” or “ demonstrative” oratory. Epideictic oratory was oriented to public occasions calling for speech or writing in the here and now. Funeral orations are a typical example of epideictic oratory. The ends of epideictic included praise or blame, and thus the long history of encomia and invectives, in their various manifestations, can be understood in the tradition of epideictic oratory. Aristotle assigned “ virtue (the noble)” and “ vice (the base)” as those special topics of invention that pertained to epideictic oratory.

Epideictic oratory was trained for in rhetorical pedagogy by way of progymnasmata exercises including the encomium and the vituperation.

4. Art, Rhetoric, The world today

First and foremost, scholars are deeply concerned with the relationships between rhetoric and civic education in Greece and what those relationships might tell us about the present.

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As it was presented a small introductory overview to the history and the represents of Greek Rhetoric of course, the essay will be continued with the review of nowadays. As a matter of fact it is going to be quoted in the next pages how the Greek Rhetoric continued through the passing ages, how we realize in our days the effect and furthermore the influence of Greek Rhetoric and Greek Rhetors in the world of Art nowadays.

Contemporary appropriation is typically motivated by a desire to draw inspiration from classical texts to meet current theoretical, political or pedagogical needs. As it is already mentioned during the start of this essay, when one uses the word "rhetoric" or "rhetorical" denotes at that time a wide range of phenomena, including oratory, parts of speech, prose genres , figurative language, performance, pedagogical practices, discourse, the strategic use of language, persuasion and various theories of discourse, language or persuasion. Indeed one can say, in a simpler way that Rhetoric "designates many ways of being and performing in the world.

Now, the framers of the current treatises on rhetoric have constructed but small portion of that art. The modes of persuasion are the only true constituents of the art: everything else is merely accessory. Rhetoric is useful (1) because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly. Moreover, (2) before some audiences not even the possession of the exactness knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot

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instruct. Here, then, we must use, as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody, as we observed in the Topics when dealing with the way to handle a popular audience. Further, (3) we must be able to employ persuasion, just as strict reasoning can be employed, on opposite sides of a question, not in order that we may in practice

employ it in both ways (for we must not make people believe what is wrong), but in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that, if another man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute him. No other of the arts draws opposite conclusions: dialectic and rhetoric alone do this. Both these arts draw opposite conclusions impartially. It is clear, then, that rhetoric is not bound up with a single definite class of subjects, but is as universal as dialectic; it is clear, also, that it is useful. It is clear, further, that its function is not simply to succeed in persuading, but rather to discover the means of coming as near such success as the circumstances of each particular case allow. In this it resembles all other arts. Furthermore, it is plain that it is the function of one and the same art to discern the real and the apparent means of persuasion, just as it is the function of dialectic to discern the real and the apparent syllogism. What makes a man a 'sophist' is not his faculty, but his moral purpose. In rhetoric, however, the term 'rhetorician' may describe either the speaker's knowledge of the art, or his moral purpose.

5. Conclusion

Over the centuries, though, the term has been used to denote a variety of practices and functions of discourse. Arguably, one can take the position that a term such as 'rhetoric' represents a socially-constructed category or perspective rather than just a 'thing'.

There has been much work undertaken on rhetoric in years gone by(it is worthy to be mentioned that especially in recent years the studies and the research for Rhetoric has taken a more intensive character, as the sources tell). More than that , translations of ancient works dealing with rhetoric, speeches by orators , and so forth are appearing with welcome regularity these days.

The majority of scholarship has focused on rhetorical theories and practices in or near Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries, but there are centuries of later Greek rhetorical theory, pedagogy and practice that remain under-explored. Greek rhetoric and conceptualizations of persuasive discourse in other cultures has increased significantly in the last three decades, although as it is generally suggested, that much more work remains to be done.

Arguably the popularity of the 'rhetorical turn' is fueled by the fact that a rhetorical perspective emphasizes two attributes of human beings as a species that are unquestionably important.

But rhetoric should not be identified just with sophistic or democratic rhetoric, which are particular styles of rhetoric. And rhetoric is definitely not opposed to philosophy, (at least not for Plato), who built a concern with rhetoric into the very conception of his philosophy. Rhetoric entails the

conscious distinction between form and content in the transmission of a
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message, and the manipulation of form for effect in a conscious or artistic manner.

Humans must communicate to survive and such communication always takes place under contingent circumstances.