RHETORIC: ART AND PSEUDO-ART IN PLATO'S *GORGIAS*[1]

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Θεοὶ μὲν γὰρ μελλόντων,
ἄνθρωποι δὲ γιγνομένων,
σοφοὶ δὲ προσιόντων
αἰσθάνονται.

The Gods see what will be,
Mortals what is happening,
The Wise what is about to happen.
Philostratus *Vita Apollonii* 8.7.405

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of education is a sort of partnership between the teacher and the student. The former possesses what we shall call at this stage an art,[2]

1 For the convenience of readers unfamiliar with the ancient languages, wherever there are quotations or words in the original languages, an English translation is added. These English translations are taken from the various volumes in the Loeb Classical Library. Readers may locate these translations according to author and work.

2 The word "art" in antiquity (τέχνη, *ars*) has a wider meaning than at present. The word encompasses any speciality a person has and uses. The ancients did not distinguish between arts and crafts. A person could create using his art, and could also train others. Moreover, the categorical distinction in present-day thinking between the artistic occupation and its teaching was almost non-existent in antiquity, perhaps due to the fact that teaching was based primarily on imitating the teacher's artistic activity. On the significance of this term in non/pre-philosophical usage, see Heinimann 1961, Kube 1969.7–47, Roochnik 1996.17–88, Balansard 2001.13–45. Although the term "craft" has become the norm in secondary literature, I prefer to use the term "art" and cognates.

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while the latter intends to become an artist. The success of education therefore depends on both its components: the successful teacher, on the one hand, and the talented student, on the other hand. However, in case of failure, who is to blame? Is anyone to blame?

At first glance, we seem to have two options: the teacher or the student. Even a teacher who is the greatest expert in his art and has extensive experience in his field can do nothing if the student is untalented. On the other hand, even the most talented student cannot succeed if the teacher does not develop his talent.[3] However, there is a third possibility: the art itself is to blame. In other words, there could be a case where both teacher and student are successful—the teacher is an expert in his profession and the student is exceptionally talented—and the process still fails.

In what follows, I shall claim that this third option did not occur to the Athenians in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. This option was first identified, as far as we know from our extant sources, by Plato. I shall also claim that Plato was not only aware of the Athenians' inability to consider this third option, but he also knew the reason for this. I shall end by claiming that these things made Plato choose a special way of informing the Athenians of this possibility.

So far, things have been somewhat vague. Let us now state clearly, all our claims are based on four words: the rise of rhetoric. This "rise" opened up the possibility of the third option (in case of failure, the art itself is to blame); however, it is also what prevented the Athenians from noticing it. How can we understand such an apparent contradiction?

The answer lies in the word "rise" (of rhetoric).[4] When something

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3 In the fifth and fourth centuries, the distinction was often made between natural talent (φύσις), study (μάθησις/διδασκαλία), and training (μελέτη/ἄσκησις). Moreover, in the *Anonymous Iamblichi* Ch. 1 Par. 2 we find five components: natural talent (φύσις), ambition (ἐπιθυμία), industry (φιλοπονία), starting to learn very early (πρφαίτατα τὸ μανθάνειν), perseverance (τὸ συνδιατελεῖν). However, for our present purpose, the important distinction is between what the student brings with him (talent, which can be understood as including ambition and perseverance) and what he gets from the teacher (teaching, which can be taken to include knowledge and guidance for training).

4 The word "rise" is not intended to refer to the activity of rhetoric in practice, since we need only mention Aeschines and Demosthenes, among many others, to realize that rhetoric was, in fact, at its peak in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. Nor it is meant to refer to what is likely to have been the practice of teachers of rhetoric in that great age of the Athenian orators. According to a view which is at least very widespread among scholars today, the teaching of rhetoric by practicing orators like Lysias, Isocrates, and even Gorgias consisted mainly in practical exercises with a very few general concepts and rules

is stable and permanent, when it has a minimal level of maturity, and, especially, when it has its own past and history, it can be discussed methodically. Nothing is without advantages, disadvantages, and even dangers. These things should be examined and evaluated, and people should act accordingly. This is not, however, the situation when something is in its "rising" stage: it is naturally vague. It is a sort of twilight, an intermediate stage characterized by a lack of permanence and stability. Things are unclear since they are still in formation. They are unknown—and not only to outside observers. The practitioners of the art themselves are unaware of its nature, essence, and real strength.

The only person who can cope with this intermediate stage is the philosopher. An ordinary person sees with his eyes, but the philosopher sees also with his mind's eye. We could say that the philosopher is a sort of prophet. He is capable of looking at something which is still taking shape and identifying its nature and essence. These things are only revealed to other people at the end of the process. However, this advantage of the philosopher is also his great disadvantage. The philosopher cannot convey his opinion to the general public. The gap between them is too large, since they think on different levels. The public lives in the present, the philosopher in the future present. If the philosopher identifies a great danger in something currently in formation, he cannot just warn against it. The message would not be comprehended, and this is not due to the public's refusal to acknowledge it but to their inability to do so. The philosopher cannot choose the direct path; he has to find another way. On the one hand, he must remain in the public arena—the present—and, on the other hand, he must lead the public at least some way towards the future which he sees before his eyes.

The philosopher in our case is Plato, who was capable of examining rhetoric at its formation.[5] He appreciated the great dangers existing in the present which would only be revealed to others in the future. Plato had to

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(see, especially, Schiappa 1990, Cole 1991.75–94, Kennedy 1994.17). I refer to the "rise" of rhetoric as a *system* of rules and concepts as we have it in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, and, mainly, the remains of Hermagoras's treatise. Indeed, the *Gorgias* (on which much of what is to be discussed in this paper is based) was written at a stage when Plato could foresee that what was in his day merely a practical occupation with a few general rules (see, for example, the rules which are given in the *Phaedrus* 266d5ff.) was about to become a full system of its own. Actually, the process had already been initiated. Hence the term "rise."

5 On the exact meaning of the phrase "at its formation," see the previous note.

choose a special way of informing his readers about this danger. This way is the dialogue and its structure.[6]

2. *GORGIAS* AND THE PLATONIC DIALOGUE

In recent years, the dramatic method of analysis has been gaining ground in research on Plato.[7] This method attributes great importance to the Platonic form of writing—the dialogue—and sees it as a required framework for analyzing the text. The arguments appearing in the dialogue—or should we say drama?—are not Plato's but rather those of the characters. Plato is not a character in any dialogue, simply because he was the dramatist, and, in antiquity, the dramatist as such was never part of the drama.[8] The characters appearing in the play/dialogue have their own personalities, and also knowledge, opinions, and assumptions, all bound up together. All these factors are taken into account by Socrates, who also appears as a character.[9]

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6 The discussion, of course, is conducted by the character, Socrates, and one cannot assume that Plato would agree with every argument used by this character. But the framework of this discussion and the speakers represent choices made by Plato. More on the Platonic dialogue and its character below (especially notes 9–11).

7 The beginning of this trend in modern research can perhaps be attributed to Koyré 1945. This book, especially its first part, seems to be the first to have raised the requirement to treat the dramatic aspect of Plato's dialogues seriously. Since the 1960s, this trend has continued to strengthen. Among the leading works: Klein 1965 (second edition, Chicago 1989), Stokes 1986, Miller 1991, Ludlam 1991, Press 1993, Weiss 1998 and 2001.

8 One notes that in ancient comedy (for example, the plays of Aristophanes), there was a section, the παράβασις, where the chorus addresses the audience on behalf of the author. However, the address is in the third person and the author is not mentioned by name; this is an intermediate section, a pause in the play's plot in order to give the dramatist the opportunity to have his say. The contents of the παράβασις, which include praise for the author and settling scores with his rivals, do not introduce the dramatist into the work, since this is not part of the plot. Another issue is the Aristotelian dialogues, which, according to Cicero (*Att*. 13.19.4), had Aristotle himself appearing as one of the speakers in the dialogue and giving himself the last word. However, these dialogues lacked the dramatic plot of Plato's dialogues. Aristotle's dialogues (none of which has survived apart from a few fragments) were probably a series of speeches "for and against." Even if there was some drama, there is no comparison with Plato's dialogues. This distinction is confirmed by the testimony of Basil of Cappadocia (St. Basil), who says in letter 135 that Aristotle and Theophrastus used their own dialogue form because they understood they could not compete with Plato.

9 Socrates himself has a different personality in each dialogue. It is true that even those who use the dramatic method sometimes have an a priori tendency to see Socrates as a teacher trying to teach his interlocutors and, therefore, as a character exemplifying the perfection of the philosophical requirement raised in the dialogue. However, even if such a tendency

The traditional question about the opinion of Plato (the dramatist), the "Platonic Question,"[10] is not irrelevant to this sort of research, but its answer should derive from an analysis of each whole dialogue in all its layers, including the characters and their personalities, their opinions, and the philosophical and less philosophical discussions among them.

In this article, we shall focus on one of the layers in one of Plato's more familiar dialogues, the *Gorgias*.[11] This layer is the structure of the dialogue. While it is true that there can be no analysis of a dialogue without analyzing the contents of that dialogue, sometimes things which have been handled casually by representatives of the traditional approach—such as the structure of the whole work—are especially important. Moreover, while individual arguments offered by Socrates may be conditioned by Socrates' interlocutors and the state of the debate and are, therefore, not necessarily

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has some basis (and of this I am not certain), we should remember that a serious analysis of the dialogue cannot be made on the basis of such general presuppositions. The specific behaviour and opinions of Socrates must be examined in each dialogue separately.

10 Recently the very justification of this question has been called into doubt. This would imply that there is not much point in searching for Platonic doctrines and that, perhaps, such doctrines do not exist. The most recent book taking this approach is Nails 1995. The author sees the solution to the "Socratic Problem" and the "Platonic Question" in the various ways Socrates and Plato conduct philosophy. Indeed, this trend has some support already in antiquity, in the activity of Arcesilaus (316/5–242/1 B.C.E.), the head of the Academy in the second quarter of the third century B.C.E. This philosopher revolutionized the Academy by claiming that Socrates, and even Plato himself, were essentially open and sceptical philosophers; thus he began the Academy's sceptical period. However, it seems to me that the current study of Plato, and especially the dramatic study of the dialogues, tends in the opposite direction. Most of the proponents of the "dramatic approach" (see note 7 above) would maintain that a full, "organic," analysis of a dialogue would usually yield some positive results which could serve as some indications of the author's views. Some would also claim that once all the dialogues have been fully analyzed in all their aspects, we *may* arrive at some more general conclusions concerning Plato's philosophical views or orientations. On this, see the concluding section of Stokes 1986.

11 Since Dodds' edition of 1959, several other works have appeared dealing with the dialogue as a whole. Among them one may note that of Irwin 1979, Plochmann and Robinson 1988, and ch. 3 in Roochnik 1996. These works share two main characterizations which differentiate them from my way of dealing with the *Gorgias*. First, they do not take the Platonic dialogue as a philosophical drama. This is surely true of the works of Irwin and Dodds, the first mainly occupied with philosophizing on issues found in the dialogue, and the second a commentary in the older tradition. Plochmann and Robinson's book does, indeed, take into account literary elements, but still does not see the dialogue as a philosophical drama, and the same can be said of Roochnik's discussion. The second point, which stems from the first, is that they take everything which Socrates says as Plato's own thought. However, in particular cases in which I deal with issues discussed in those works, I shall refer to them.

representative of what Plato himself may have thought concerning these issues, the structure of the dialogue and the choice of the interlocutors are innocent of such problems. The structure of the dialogue is evidently the author's conscious choice and should be regarded as the work of Plato himself.

In the dialogue *Gorgias*, Plato presents Socrates dealing with rhetoric through a conversation with the person most closely identified with this art, Gorgias.[12] I shall discuss the nature of rhetoric, but, at this stage, suffice it to say that, for Socrates, rhetoric is not an art.[13] It only appears to be one. At first sight, this would seem to be surprising. If we take those things which are commonly regarded as the characteristics of art, we shall find them all in rhetoric. Let us list some of them: textbooks, schools, study rules, teaching and practicing methods, and, first and foremost, teacher-student institutional relations. Indeed, those who are not experts and do not investigate things in depth may get the impression that we are dealing with an art. This is the issue on which the Socrates of our dialogue goes to battle. For him, the essential criterion for art is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη),[14] and as long as this is absent, rhetoric is not an art. However, by its nature, this criterion is hidden. It is the other characteristics—although, in fact, they are only criteria for the outward expression of an art rather than for its essence—which are the most noticeable and are the factors that lead us to call it an art.

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12 Of course, in a dramatic dialogue like this, Gorgias is not exactly the historical character, just as Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* are not exactly the historical Aeschylus and Euripides known to the audience. Each of these characters represents aspects of the historical character which the author chose to emphasize in his drama.

13 This is explicitly said by Socrates in conversation with Polus, see 462b8–9. There has been a very long debate among scholars concerning what has come to be known as SAT (Standard Account of *Techne*). This phrase, probably coined by Roochnik 1996.3, 6, denotes the question whether Plato/Socrates thought moral knowledge ought or could be formed and transmitted as a τέχνη. However—and regardless of the right answer to this difficult question with which I am not concerned in this paper—there is no doubt that the Socrates of Plato's *Gorgias* does not regard rhetoric as a τέχνη, at least as it is represented by Gorgias and his students. On the SAT in general, see Roochnik's book.

14 This refers to the knowledge of causes. Compare Plato *Gorg*. 465a2–6: τέχνην δὲ αὐτὴν (sc. ῥητορικὴν) οὔ φημι εἶναι ἀλλ' ἐμπειρίαν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει λόγον οὐδένα . . . ὥστε τὴν αἰτίαν ἑκάστου μὴ ἔχειν εἰπεῖν. ἐγὼ δὲ τέχνην οὐ καλῶ ὃ ἂν ᾖ ἄλογον πρᾶγμα ("And I say it is not an art, but a habitude, since it has no account to give of the real nature of the things it applies, and so cannot tell the cause of any of them. I refuse to give the name of art to anything that is irrational"). The meaning of this is simple: an activity that is not understood—in the sense that the causes of the connections between its various processes are known—is not a τέχνη, perhaps only an ἐμπειρία. But see note 39 below.

Plato presents Socrates as fighting against rhetoric throughout the dialogue (and in other dialogues as well), with the struggle taking place on various levels. Socrates attacks rhetoric on the basis of its contents: knowledge of the things it speaks about. He attacks rhetoric for its negative impact on the society that develops this "art," and so on. However, given the distinction between these two kinds of criteria (outward and essential), one should expect Plato, had he recognized it, to deal with the danger of confusing these two different kinds of criteria. This is precisely my claim, and I detect Plato's criticism not in one of the many arguments appearing explicitly in the dialogue but rather on an utterly different level—the structure of the dialogue.

Before turning to substantiate my claim, two issues should be emphasized:

1) Seeing the *Gorgias* as a philosophical critique of the art of rhetoric is a conventional interpretation of the dialogue; it is not my aim here to challenge this convention or to repeat it. My intention is rather to emphasize the unique structure of the dialogue through which Plato conveys his attack. By so doing, I hope to expose one of Plato's most profound critiques of this new art of speaking. This criticism is not just one argument to be read alongside the other arguments which appear explicitly in the dialogue, but should rather be seen as integral to Plato's general critique.

2) All the levels of the dialogue mentioned above, and there may even be more, are interconnected and influence each other. Therefore, isolating one layer cannot complete the analysis of the dialogue. This is also true regarding our attempt here.

The *Gorgias* is composed of three conversations. The first is the teachers' conversation[15]—Socrates and Gorgias. The two other conversations are between Socrates and the students of the teacher. The second conversation is between Socrates and Polus, and the third between Socrates and Callicles. We must not overlook one fact related to this structure. These three conversations are not independent of each other, not only because of

15 While on a first reading of the text, Socrates does not appear as a teacher (see Plochmann and Robinson 1988.9)—at least not explicitly—a dramatic analysis of the dialogue may change this impression. First, Chaerephon behaves as if he were Socrates' student; he even takes Socrates' place, at his request, in interviewing Gorgias (447c9). Second, the fact that Socrates disputes Gorgias's claim of being a teacher, and of calling his occupation an art, hints at the alternative—Socrates has a true art (philosophy?), and, therefore, he is the real teacher. (For a different view, see Roochnik 1996.) See also 485d3–e2.

the obvious fact that they each involve a teacher and his students but also because of another less obvious feature revealed only by careful examination of the dialogue as a drama, namely, that each of the interlocutors is present at all the conversations. For our purpose, it is important that Gorgias is present at the conversations with his students. Plato the dramatist makes sure of this,[16] and the hint is clear: the conversations with the students are, in fact, conversations with the teacher. For reasons related to the nature of the teacher, and the delicate position of his art, Socrates cannot teach the teacher directly.[17] Socrates has to use the students to teach the teacher. From this we can conclude that the dialogue *Gorgias* presents just one conversation, one between Socrates and Gorgias.

The teacher learns about his art, and about himself as a teacher, from his students. It is they who apply his education in practice. While Gorgias appears in the dialogue, and especially in his own conversation with Socrates, as a good person who regards himself as beneficial to society, in Socrates' conversation with the students, the teacher (who is listening to these conversations) is revealed to be one who raises potential tyrants, dominated by their desires, who would not hesitate to destroy the polis in order to fulfil their ambitions. Let us demonstrate this from the text.

As soon as Polus intervenes in the conversation, Gorgias's innocence begins to show some cracks. Polus is not embarrassed to declare that:

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16 Mostly these are marginal appearances. Compare, for example, Gorgias's entrance into the Socrates-Polus conversation at 463a5 with his entrance into the conversation with Callicles at 497b4–5. This is another way in which a dramatic analysis can add to our understanding of the dialogue's content. For our purpose—examining the structure of the dialogue—it is important that these entrances maintain the framework of the dialogue: the conversation of Socrates and Gorgias. Moreover, the fact of the indirect conversation between these two, through the students, implies the problems Gorgias has as a teacher and the problem of his art, rhetoric. More about this below.

17 Gorgias is presented in the dialogue as an innocent teacher who thinks that his art is beneficial (see his emphasis on his being a good rhetor in 449a7–8; see also his pride at being able to help his brother the physician in 456b1–5). Socrates respects him and therefore does not attack him directly. The sentence where Socrates states explicitly that rhetoric is not art (see note 13 above), is directed at Polus, although this was probably Socrates' opinion during the conversation with Gorgias also. However, another reason for Socrates' struggle with Gorgias through his students is the intermediate state of rhetoric in Gorgias's consciousness. The teacher is not aware of the true power and danger of his art. (Gorgias is aware of rhetoric's power to persuade on every matter without knowledge, e.g. 458e6–59a1, but he is still obsessed with the benefit of his art; he is naive and confused.) He has to learn of this danger from his students, who make use of their studies contrary to their teacher's intentions. These two reasons are, of course, connected, since Gorgias's "innocence" is largely the result of the "innocence" of rhetoric in his mind.

Γοργίας ᾐσχύνθη σοι μὴ προσομολογῆσαι τὸν ῥητορικὸν ἄνδρα μὴ οὐχὶ καὶ τὰ δίκαια εἰδέναι καὶ τὰ καλὰ καὶ τὰ ἀγαθά, καὶ ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ταῦτα εἰδὼς παρ᾽ αὐτόν, αὐτὸς διδάξειν, "Gorgias was ashamed not to admit your point that the rhetorician knows what is just and noble and good, and will himself teach these to anyone who comes to him without knowing them" (461b4–7). From this denial, we can understand the opposite: for Polus, knowing what is right is not essential. This is not the role of the rhetorician, and certainly not of his students.[18] Furthermore, later on Polus reveals to Socrates, and especially to Gorgias, the purpose of rhetoric as he sees it. During his conversation with Socrates, he expresses surprise at the latter: Ὡς δὴ σύ, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ ἂν δέξαιο ἐξεῖναί σοι ποιεῖν ὅτι δοκεῖ σοι ἐν τῇ πόλει μᾶλλον ἢ μή, οὐδὲ ζηλοῖς ὅταν ἴδῃς τινὰ ἢ ἀποκτείναντα ὃν ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ ἢ ἀφελόμενον χρήματα ἢ δήσαντα, "As if you, Socrates, would not accept the liberty of doing what seems [sc. best] to you to do in your city rather than not, and would not envy a man whom you observed to have put someone to death as he thought fit, or deprived him of his property or sent him to prison" (468e6–9).[19] This is the aim of Polus, and to achieve it he has become the student of Gorgias and of his art, rhetoric. While Gorgias thinks that his art is beneficial and even aids justice, Polus demonstrates to his teacher that, for the student, rhetoric is just a tool that helps a person proficient in it overpower others and increase his strength, even unjustly.

However, Polus is a theoretician. He has himself already written a book on rhetoric (462b11–c1), and the purpose of his studies with Gorgias is to become a teacher. Callicles, the third and final interlocutor in the dialogue, is the one who would apply rhetoric in practice. Callicles is an aristocrat, and he is studying with Gorgias with a clear purpose: he is the strong man, and, as such, he deserves to rule. Rhetoric is only the tool by means of which he will achieve his aim. Callicles even has a solid ideology justifying his actions. He uses the well-known distinction between "nature" and "custom" (φύσις, νόμος). Polus withdrew from the conversation with

18 Polus even implies that this is also Gorgias's view, which only shame has prevented him from expressing.

19 Here I have amended the Loeb translation "what you think fit" to "what seems [sc. best] to you to do." The reader of the Loeb might get the impression that the liberty Polus is so excited about concerns what he thinks "fits" in a moral sense which takes the interest of the city as a whole into account, whereas the Greek words ὅτι δοκεῖ σοι emphasize the absolute freedom of Socrates simply to do whatever he likes or thinks best for himself (even disregarding the city).

Socrates at a disadvantage. Why was this? καὶ ἔγωγε κατ᾽ αὐτὸ τοῦτο οὐκ ἄγαμαι Πῶλον, ὅτι σοι συνεχώρησεν τὸ ἀδικεῖν αἴσχιον εἶναι τοῦ ἀδικεῖσθαι· ἐκ ταύτης γὰρ αὖ τῆς ὁμολογίας αὐτὸς ὑπὸ σοῦ συμποδισθεὶς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐπεστομίσθη, αἰσχυνθεὶς ἃ ἐνόει εἰπεῖν . . . φύσει μὲν γὰρ πᾶν αἴσχιόν ἐστιν ὅπερ καὶ κάκιον, τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι, νόμῳ δὲ τὸ ἀδικεῖν, "For my own part, where I am not satisfied with Polus is just that concession he made to you—that doing wrong is fouler than suffering it; for owing to this admission he too in his turn got entangled in your argument and had his mouth stopped, being ashamed to say what he thought . . . For by nature everything is fouler that is more evil, such as suffering wrong: doing it is fouler only by convention" (482d7–483a8). For Callicles, all the concepts of good and bad change their value on an axis of nature and custom. He, Callicles, knows what is good by nature: increasing his strength and pleasure by any means. For this purpose, he uses rhetoric.

Gorgias listens to his students, and he may well ask himself: "For this child I prayed?"[20] Suddenly, it is the students themselves who are undermining the teacher's "art" and entitlement to be called a "teacher."[21] With this last sentence, I reach my main argument.

In the structure of the dialogue, I find a polemical approach to a phenomenon that was popular in Plato's (and Socrates') time. As we shall see, this was one particular phenomenon, an individual example out of a larger group that we can call "adopting the external criteria of art in order to obtain the desired title."

3. "ART" OR "THE ART OF ATTRACTING STUDENTS"?

In classical antiquity, art and the artist were generally regarded as advantageous.[22] The artist was a specialist in one of the areas considered

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20 Based on 1 Samuel 1:27.

21 As long, that is, as one takes it for granted that teaching is always beneficial. This axiom can, of course, be abandoned. On this issue and its implications, see below section 4, our discussion of rhetoric as a neutral art.

22 The locus classicus is Aristotle's first sentence in *EN* 1094a1–2: πᾶσα τέχνη . . . ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ἐφίεσθαι δοκεῖ ("Every art . . . seems to aim at some good"). See also *Polit*. 1252a2–3: τοῦ γὰρ εἶναι δοκοῦντος ἀγαθοῦ χάριν πάντα πράττουσι πάντες ("All men do all that they do for the sake of what appears to be good"). It should be noted that Aristotle regards this as a sort of axiom which has no need of proof. Actually, one need not insist upon the term τέχνη to find the centrality of beneficence in art. As every art is a kind of human activity, the good (in the sense of beneficence) as an aim is self-evident. See the

beneficial to society, and, as such, could also teach others and turn them into artists.[23] For this he charged money, and in some arts, the payment was very high.[24] If we add to this the status enjoyed by the artist, there is no doubt that many would want to hold this title, some undeservedly. There are many ways of earning this "undeservedly," but what is common to them all is imitation. The pseudo-artists imitate what we have called the outward expressions of art—first and foremost, teacher-student institutional relations.[25]

The artist is entitled to teach; there is no argument about this. If we ask ourselves what gives him this right, the answer is simple: his expertise which comes from his extensive knowledge. The students who come to him do so because of this knowledge. However, what will someone do if he aspires to the title of artist, but lacks this knowledge? In other words, what will someone do if he wants to be called an artist, but does not possess an art? The answer is one word: imitation. The real criteria cannot be imitated,

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conversation between Socrates and Meno (Plat. *Meno* 76b6–78b2) and Meno's admission: Κινδυνεύεις ἀληθῆ λέγειν, ὦ Σώκρατες· καὶ οὐδεὶς βούλεσθαι τὰ κακά, "It seems that what you say is true, Socrates, and that nobody desires evil."

23 On the connection between art and teaching and the close link between the former and the latter, there is almost no need to expand. The most famous examples are in Aristotle. Compare the beginning of *Metaphysics* I (981b7–10): ὅλως τε σημεῖον τοῦ εἰδότος καὶ μὴ εἰδότος τὸ δύνασθαι διδάσκειν ἐστίν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὴν τέχνην τῆς ἐμπειρίας ἡγούμεθα μᾶλλον ἐπιστήμην εἶναι ("In general the sign of knowledge or ignorance is the ability to teach, and for this reason we hold that art rather than experience is scientific knowledge") and *Nicomachean Ethics* (1139b25–26): ἔτι διδακτὴ ἅπασα ἐπιστήμη δοκεῖ εἶναι, καὶ τὸ ἐπιστητὸν μαθητόν ("Again, it is held that all scientific knowledge can be communicated by teaching, and that what is scientifically known must be learnt"). For Aristotle, these things are conscious and phrased reflexively. However, these things appear even in earlier texts, although in a more simple and natural form. Compare, for example, Plato *Meno* 89D, *Gorg*. 447c1–2, 449b1–3, 449d1, 455c3–4. For further discussion of this link between art and teaching, see Roochnik's lists in the first part of his book (1996.17–88). The teaching criterion appears in Roochnik's (1996.20) view as early as the Homeric poems (list of criteria 1, no. 6) onwards.

24 Here I am hinting especially at the arts related to politics, and especially rhetoric. These arts—the merchandise of the Sophists and rhetoricians—attracted the best of the youth, who paid generously for them. Compare Plato *Apol*. 19d8–20c3, *Hipp. Maj*. 281a1–83b3. Compare also Isocrates *Antid.* 155.

25 Ancient sources regularly speak of a second "integral aim" of arts being to perpetuate themselves in the persons of new generations of artists (hence, perhaps, the famous Hippocratic aphorism ὁ βίος βραχὺς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρή, *Aph*. 1.1.1, which is commonly known in its Latin version *vita brevis, ars longa*). But here one should make a sharp distinction between the artist as a mortal human being and the artist as part of his art. In the first capacity, indeed, the artist wants to perpetuate himself, and hence the teacher-student institutional relations; but even if he has no students, he is still an artist.

since knowledge cannot be imitated. What remains to be imitated are the external features, which, by definition, are not real but can be passed off as the real thing. In short, it is necessary to distinguish between the founding/existence of an art and the outward expression of an art. In the first group, there is only one criterion: knowledge. In the second group, there are many criteria.

An example of the methods of the imitators, those who adopt the outward expressions of art, can be found in one of the works of Isocrates. Isocrates is known as one of the greatest orators of the fourth century B.C.E., and his speeches, which were actually public "expressions of opinions" (in particular his "letters" to Philip, his speeches against Alexander, and his appeals to the Athenians), earned him an everlasting place in the history of rhetoric and of world literature. However, we must not forget that Isocrates was also a teacher of rhetoric (or, as he called himself, a teacher of philosophy), and his school was probably the largest in his period. When he started teaching, Isocrates published an essay in which he attacked his competitors. This work, "Against the Sophists,"[26] has not been fully preserved, but what we have of it sheds light on one important dispute in fourth-century Athens. It appears that following the rise of rhetoric in Athens one generation earlier, many jumped on the bandwagon and presented themselves as teachers of this new art. Isocrates thought he was a real teacher and tried to expose the disadvantages of studying with his competitors, and sometimes even their methods.

In this work, Isocrates attacks three groups. We are interested in the second group, about which Isocrates writes (9): καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι τῆς μὲν ἀληθείας οὐδὲν φροντίζουσιν, ἡγοῦνται δὲ τοῦτ᾽ εἶναι τὴν τέχνην, ἢν ὡς πλείστους τῇ μικρότητι τῶν μισθῶν καὶ τῷ μεγέθει τῶν ἐπαγγελμάτων προσαγάγωνται καὶ λαβεῖν τι παρ᾽ αὐτῶν δυνηθῶσιν, "For the latter have no interest whatever in the truth, but consider that they are masters of an art if they can attract great numbers of students by the smallness of their charges and the magnitude of their professions and get something out of them."[27]

Isocrates is referring here to a phenomenon that was apparently common in his period. People lowered their prices to attract as many students as possible. The assumption behind this move is that whoever has

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26 This work is number 13 in the traditional order of Isocrates' works.

27 The word "profession" is used by this translator in a somewhat obsolete sense, not one's "trade," but what one "professes" to "sell."

many students must be a teacher. In other words, these people "break the market." If a student does not come to the teacher because of the knowledge and experience of the latter, he will come because of the low price he charges. The teacher will teach at a very low price for a while, and, after he acquires more and more students, his status as an "artist" will be established, and he will be able to raise his fees, since now he "really" is an artist.

Such actions immediately earn our criticism and contempt. We see them, rightly, as an act of charlatanism. However, if we read Isocrates' words carefully, we see that the picture is somewhat more complex. The words ἡγοῦνται δὲ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὴν τέχνην ("but consider that they are masters of an art"[28]) show that these teachers really thought they possessed an art.

So it appears that these teachers did not see themselves as charlatans. This is a most important point for a student of ancient philosophy and culture. Here he must ask himself why, for us today, it is so easy to see through the charlatanism in such an act, while, in antiquity, this was not so easy. Why is it that we can distinguish between the criteria for the founding/existence of an art and those of its outward expression, while, in antiquity, this distinction was not so clear? The answer to this question will lead us into the heart of this issue. Our answer is simple, and we have already hinted at it earlier: we are living in an age of fully developed rhetoric.[29] Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries was not. However, here we must be more precise: Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries was not living in a stage prior to rhetoric but rather at its inception. This is the meaning of the phrase "the rise of rhetoric," which I used above (see note 4).

Let us sum up our conclusions so far: in the period under discussion, some would tend to believe that a teacher who has a lot of students was really an artist and his occupation was an art. They do not distinguish between the students who reflect the already existing teacher's art and those students who help establish the teacher's art. In other words, in this period, the external criterion of a teacher-student relationship could work in both directions. The first direction, which we shall call "the right way," is one in which a teacher is already an artist due to his expertise and extensive

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28 Or to translate more precisely: "that this is what the art consists in."

29 Some would say that our era is the post-rhetorical era, since today we are immune to rhetoric. We even give marks to politicians based on their level of rhetorical skill. I would differ from this view: we are aware of the existence of rhetoric, and may even pretend to be cynical about it, but we are still influenced by it.

knowledge, and this is why students come to him. The second way, "the wrong way," is when the teacher "acquires" his art through having students. Even the title of teacher is acquired through the students. He just imitates one of the outward expressions of art—teacher-student institutional relations. It is this trend (among other things) that Plato attacks in the structure of the dialogue *Gorgias*. Plato declares total war on this phenomenon—not necessarily because of what he can actually see in the present, but because of what he knows will happen in the future.

Since some see students, and especially their number, as a real criterion for bestowing the title of artist and teacher,[30] Plato constructs a dialogue where the students do exactly the opposite. Polus and Callicles unwittingly undermine Gorgias as a teacher, his occupation as an art, and finally themselves as students. In short, the whole system is destroyed to its foundations, and by its own advocates, a teacher and his students.

Here we should emphasize that Socrates does not categorically dispute that a teacher having students is a criterion for art. He only disputes it as a sufficient condition, since, as we should remember, students are not an integral part of an art, they are only an integral part of the outward expression of an art. Plato appeals to the readers of the dialogue to be aware of a new way of practicing an art, appearing to practice it, and to take precautions against it. Some people are trying to take a shortcut to art by having a large number of students, and, therefore, it is necessary to examine the students. A large number of students is not a sufficient proof of art, since sometimes they were not acquired "in the right way."

So far, we have been discussing the phenomenon of using teacher-student institutional relations in order to lend the teacher the title of artist and Plato's war against this phenomenon. However, this teacher-student institution is only one detail, albeit a very important one, of the whole phenomenon which we have called imitating the external criteria of art—or, in other words, imitating the criteria for the outward expression of art. Plato chooses this criterion in particular to represent the whole group due to its importance (the importance of its outward expression) in any art. However,

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30 One can get an impression of how close the teacher-student criterion was linked in antiquity to art through a locus classicus in Plato *Meno* 96c1–4. Meno is, of course, wrong and an ἐπιστήμη or τέχνη (πρᾶγμα in Socrates' words) can exist even if no one teaches it, but Meno's approval of Socrates' suggestion may well represent the common ancient conception that anyone who has knowledge or an art would obviously teach it. Moreover, it is exactly this point which Socrates used in his conversation with Anytus earlier in the same dialogue (90a1ff), i.e., if ἀρετή is teachable, the teachers are necessarily to be found.

it is clear that a successful imitator could produce fine textbooks, could also build a grand school with a perfect administrative staff, and could even invent an educational system including rules for study, exercises for practice, and even a period of training.[31] Here, we reach our third and final part.

4. RHETORIC: "ART" OR "THE ART OF IMITATION"?

Within the dialogue *Gorgias*, its dramatic background and its presumed readership, Plato has to limit himself to the present—real and dramatic—which we termed "the rise of rhetoric." He exposes the weaknesses of teacher-student institutional relations, which are the main criteria of the outward expression of art, but his real view is to the future. In other words, through the structure of this dialogue, Plato is hinting at a more dangerous future situation, the accumulation of all the external criteria into a freestanding method—rhetoric.

In order to understand the status of rhetoric at the beginning of its rise, we should examine what this word means to us. I think we can say that rhetoric today is any human attempt to persuade others to accept an opinion by means not necessarily involving knowledge and reason. We have not restricted this definition as to the subjects of persuasion or the means of persuasion. However, when rhetoric first appeared on the stage of history, things were different. Rhetoric was originally almost a synonym for politics.[32] The orator was a person involved in politics but specializing in the ability "to speak well."[33] The teachers of rhetoric trained their students to speak on a very specific subject, in Gorgias's words: περὶ τούτων ἅ ἐστι δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικα, "(and it deals) with what is just and unjust" (*Gorg*. 454b7). In our terms, this is ethics, or, more accurately, politics.[34] In terms of

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31 It is easy to see that all these are aids to the teacher-student institution.

32 See Dodds' (1959.194) note on the word Ῥήτορα (449a6). See also Kennedy 1994.3–5.

33 See Isocrates (*Antid*. 256): καὶ ῥητορικοὺς μὲν καλοῦμεν τοὺς ἐν τῷ πλήθει λέγειν δυναμένους ("While we call eloquent [more literally, rhetoricians] those who are able to speak before a crowd").

34 The distinction between ethics and politics was almost non-existent in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. Even the term "ethics" was probably invented by Aristotle. Before Aristotle, dealing with such matters was known by various names, such as "dealing with virtue" or "good and bad, just and unjust, fine and base." For Aristotle himself, ethics is a sort of "private aspect of social life." The connection of ethics to social life is noticeable when Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, also discusses social virtues such as generosity and justice, and he completes this series of lectures with a discussion of the role of the lawgiver in preserving and nurturing the virtues of the citizens. Moreover, the final sentence of the *Ethics* is a link to the *Politics*.

the means, too, rhetoric today is much broader than it was in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. In that period, rhetoric was, at least in theory, restricted only to speaking.[35] This is one of the things that Gorgias stresses. Today we can speak of non-verbal rhetoric. Advertisements that catch the viewer's eye using pictures "cause" the latter to buy the advertised product. This is a purely rhetorical device.

Gorgias and his friends are at an intermediate stage. Their art—rhetoric—is perceived by them to be politics with a stress on fine speech. The beneficial purpose of politics and its being an art, in fact the most noble art, thus includes, by definition, rhetoric. Even if there are special characteristics of rhetoric that hint at the coming disaster, its teachers are not the ones to identify them, especially not on their own initiative. They depend on rhetoric for their living. Socrates, in the *Gorgias*, identifies the risk presented by rhetoric. It is fortunate for rhetoric that it is at an intermediate stage. At this stage, when it is still linked to politics, a decent citizen can utilize it for beneficial ends, and there are some who do. Indeed, Gorgias himself testifies that he could use his rhetorical skills to help his brother the physician persuade a patient to take a medication if he refused to do so (456b1–5). We said "his rhetorical skills" intentionally. For Gorgias, the art of rhetoric is not purely formal as it is today, since, for the ancients, there is no art that lacked its own *materia*.[36] For Gorgias, rhetoric, in this case, leaves its area (politics) to help another art, medicine.

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35 We say "in theory" deliberately. The ancient orator was already aware of the influence of various gestures, posture, waving his hands, etc. Furthermore, the area of speech itself was not limited to the contents but also included the quality of the voice and playing with the tone and volume of the voice. We should remember that an important part of the theory of speech is what we call "delivery," which includes these things and many more. However, when rhetoric has to be characterized within the arts, it is speech that distinguishes it (see Gorgias's first answer at 449e1, and later at 450b6–c2). Yet already in the Hellenistic-Roman period, we find Quintilian, and later Sextus Empiricus, criticizing rhetoric on the basis of its description as "the art of persuasion through speech." They claim that the beauty of Helen influenced the elders of Troy, and that the naked body of Phryne persuaded the elders of the Areopagus without Hyperides the orator having to say a single word (Sext. *Math.* II.3–4, Quint. *Inst*. II.15.9).

36 Here I am touching on a fundamental argument, but this is not the place to describe it in detail. A few words will suffice. In the Hellenistic period, at the peak of the attacks on rhetoric, one of the main claims against rhetoric as an art was that rhetoric had no *materia* as required in every art. It is interesting that nobody even at that late stage said: "Indeed, rhetoric needs no *materia*, since it is a formal art." It is true that some of the answers come close to the perception of rhetoric as a formal art (see the definition of *materia* in Quintilian *Inst*. II.21.4: "omnes res, quaecumque ei [sc. rhetoricae] ad dicendum subiectae

Socrates understands that the moment rhetoric becomes detached from politics—a moment which is approaching rapidly—rhetoric will become a formal art which requires no area of knowledge. In fact, rhetoric had always been thus, but after its separation from its parent, this fact will be exposed. Then, using a collection of rules appropriate for any time and place, the "new artist" will be able to persuade people on any subject whatsoever.

Gorgias is in a state of tension between theory and practice. In practice, he teaches a formal art, which, in the conception of antiquity, is not an art at all.[37] In theory, rhetoric is still a branch of politics, and therefore, by definition, it has a subject matter everyone knows and understands: political affairs.[38] However, Gorgias's pupils do not vacillate between theory and practice. They understand very well what this art is about to grant them: unrestrained power that helps conquer and enslave other people. The art of speeches can persuade the assembly of the people or any other public gathering to accept opinions merely on the basis of speeches, without any knowledge of the subject they are discussing. It can lead them to make decisions that are supposed to benefit them, but, in fact, serve only the personal ambitions of the orator—and all this at the expense of those who voted for him.

This formal side that existed, at least in practice, in Gorgias's rhetoric, entails also a neutral side. If rhetoric is formal—if rhetoric has no specific *materia*—that implies the surrender of the criterion of knowledge:

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erunt," "Everything that may be placed before it [sc. rhetoric] as a subject for speech"), but none of them actually crosses the line. In the classical era of the fifth and fourth centuries, even such a suggestion would not have been possible. Plato, who according to the analysis proposed here could see where the "art" of rhetoric was leading, is an exception. Of course he has no concept of *materia* (ὕλη), but he does make his Socrates ask persistently and in various formulations what rhetoric is about (e.g., περὶ τί τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη: *Gorg*. 449d9). In later terminology, one could say that Plato's Socrates is aware of the question of *materia*, although the technical term has not yet been formulated.

37 This is not the place to dwell on this issue, but a few words are necessary. The *materia* is the basis of every art in that, by being expert in a definite and determinate field, the expert is called an "artist." Moreover, speaking of giving an art its *materia* is somewhat anachronistic, because it presupposes a concept of formal art. For the ancients, art is built on a *materia* and does not get one (the very term τέχνη derives from the "one who is expert in woodwork"; see Roochnik 1996.19, Kübe 1969.9–10, Balansard 2001.17–20). In a way, therefore, a formal art removes the constitutional component of art—*materia*—and hence removes its very essence.

38 Here in the wider sense of "affairs of the polis," including legal matters and norms of social behavior.

the orator does not have to know[39] the subject about which he is talking. His "knowledge" is restricted to "knowing the rules of persuasion."[40] As far as rhetoric is concerned, the subject of the speech is accidental; it can change every day and every hour. This surrender of the precondition of knowledge is what makes this formal art also a neutral art. If the orator does not know the subject about which he is speaking, how can he know if his speech is beneficial? The orator does not necessarily do any harm, but the very fact that he cannot guarantee benefit makes his art neutral. Here we reach the important point in the Socratic critique of rhetoric. It appears that, for Socrates, a neutral art is by its own nature a harmful art. Even if from a purely logical point of view, the adjective "neutral" does not imply "damage," in practice, this is always the result, without exception. The fact that the orator has no knowledge of the subject about which he speaks is just one side of the equation. The other side is the thing in which he is interested: persuasion. An art only interested in persuading, while surrendering the precondition of knowledge, is doomed to be harmful in every case.[41]

In the last two paragraphs, we have given a brief and incomplete summary of the problems inherent in rhetoric according to Socrates. The way, or rather ways, Socrates faces the rise of rhetoric is often discussed. For

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39 With this, we touch on another important issue: which "knowledge" should the orator have? The history of rhetoric presents, among others, some "weak" versions of knowledge. An example of such a version is Quintilian *Inst*. II.21.14: "sed mihi satis est eius esse oratorem rei, de qua dicet, non inscium" ("I however regard it as sufficient that an orator should not be actually ignorant of the subject on which he has to speak"). These "weak" versions were probably derived from Aristotle, through Cicero and other intermediate sources, and are not relevant to our subject. No doubt the Socrates of our dialogue takes "knowledge" in the stronger sense of the word. See note 14 above.

40 "Knowing the rules of persuasion" cannot be a substitute for "knowing the subject on which one speaks." It may be helpful, even necessary, but, strictly speaking, "knowing the rules of persuasion" is no more than being familiar with the instruments which the artist uses (= speech), and the ancients did not confuse *materia* (ὕλη) and *instrumentum* (ὄργανον). The adjective "expert" is exclusively given to one who knows his *materia*: "knowing the rules of persuasion" uses the verb "knowing" unjustly. It designates *familiarity* with *procedures* rather than *knowledge* of *contents*.

41 If I cannot teach others due to insufficient knowledge and time (455a2–6), I do not really have an art. Furthermore, one who does not know does harm by the very activity in which he knows that he does not know. It is not surprising, therefore, that Socrates uses the adjective διδασκαλικός. διδασκαλία is the conventional term used by the orators to represent themselves as teachers of their audience and their activity of teaching them. This association could not have escaped the notice of anyone who read the *Gorgias*. Gorgias, however, is forced under Socratic elenchus to admit that rhetoric is not διδασκαλική.

our purpose, we shall deal only with one special feature of the structure of our dialogue—the teacher and his students—and conclude with this.

There is no doubt that there are charlatans in every art. Someone can claim to be a carpenter, and declare himself publicly a carpenter. He can also gather students in various ways and teach them. In this case, the lie will eventually be exposed. If he is not a carpenter, the charlatan will be unable to create the products of carpentry, such as a table. He can promise the best and most beautiful table on earth, but he will have to fulfill his promise. When the date of delivery passes and the promised product is not there, the lie will be revealed. Similarly, he cannot get away with it—however many students he may have—if his teaching is faulty. When most[42] of the students do not become carpenters, which must happen in this case, there is only one conclusion: the teacher himself is not a carpenter. Such cases may occur from time to time, and we must fight them, but they do not disqualify carpentry as an art and its teachers as artists. Indeed, we must admit that nobody would wish to disqualify the artistry of carpentry due to the charlatanism of a pretender to the title of carpenter. This is the first option we mentioned at the beginning of this article, the failure of the process is attributed to the teacher.[43]

The charlatan carpenter can sometimes use improper means without planning them in advance. Rhetoric takes those means, organizes them, and turns them into a body of information that can be transferred from teacher to student. In short, rhetoric turns artistic imitation into a freestanding art. There is no longer any need for knowledge. The absence of the necessary criterion for any art—knowledge—is no longer an obstacle. One only has to know how to imitate, and the way is clear to putting on the

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42 The fact that sometimes, even if a teacher is good, some students can fail due to lack of talent was already known to the ancients. See the Sophistic essay Δίσσοι Λόγοι ("Double Arguments"), chapter 6, that deals with the issue of the teaching of ἀρετὴ καὶ σοφία ("virtue and knowledge"). See also chapter 4 of Περὶ Τέχνης ("About Art"), another Sophistic essay included in the Hippocratic corpus: the patient does not always recover, and this fact is not sufficient to fault the physician's art. A brief and accurate summary of this issue—the relation between the teacher's teaching and the student's talent—appears in a special chapter of Quintilian devoted to this subject (*Inst*. II.19). In any case, nobody would doubt that if most of the students fail (not to mention all of them), the fault is with the teacher.

43 The second possibility is, of course, seeing the student as responsible for the failure of the process. Let us imagine a case where a teacher has one hundred students who complete their studies successfully and become carpenters in their own right. Only one student fails. Is there any doubt that the failure of the process stems from this student?

mantle of all of the arts. It is no accident that we find in Socrates' conversation with Polus two important references to rhetoric. One appears at the beginning of the conversation, Socrates' explicit statement that it is not an art at all. Rhetoric is no more than an ἐμπειρία.[44] Socrates' second, more important reference to rhetoric is a long speech in which he sees rhetoric as an imitation of judging. In this famous passage (464b2–66a3), Socrates draws a comparison between four real arts and their imitations. In this context, rhetoric is presented as an imitation of judging. If judging is an art requiring true knowledge of what is just and unjust, rhetoric imitates it using fine speeches that claim to judge, but, in fact, hide an ignorance of everything related to justice. In Socrates' words, this is κολακεία. This word is translated into English as "flattery." I think we would not be mistaken if we consider this κολακεία to include also an undertone of "imitation."

Socrates identifies in rhetoric the art of imitating the external criteria of an art and their application to any art whatsoever. Rhetoric did not invent charlatanism, but it certainly turned it into an art. For Socrates, this is a pseudo-art, but a pseudo-art whose artistry consists precisely in its being a pseudo-art. In this last sentence, I believe, we have summarized the great danger of rhetoric. Plato in the *Gorgias* struggles against rhetoric in various ways, and we have focused on one way which has not, it seems, been given sufficient attention: the structure of the dialogue.

Plato takes the most prominent external criterion of art—the teacher-student relationship—and uses it to undermine the whole system. The students, the product of the teaching of rhetoric, undermine the credibility of their teacher and of his art. The outward expressions of art cannot serve as a criterion for the existence of real art; it refutes itself, and consequently rhetoric, which relies entirely on this sort of outward expression, defeats itself. While rhetoric tries to hide its fallacious nature, Plato constructs a dialogue in which rhetoric is gradually exposed. Furthermore, Plato uses the very criteria which normally conceal the fallacious nature of rhetoric—

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44 Hamilton 1960 translates this word as a "knack gained by experience" (p. 43). Here I prefer the Penguin translation because the Loeb translation—"habitude" (see, above, n. 14)—does not convey the right meaning (Plochmann and Robinson's 1988.xvii, passim rendering—"familiarity"—is also problematic in that it has other connotations which have nothing to do with art or craft). However, we should note that for us "knack gained by experience" may appear to be more connected to craft, while the word ἐμπειρία in Greek is connected both to art (fine arts) and to craft (technical arts). More precisely, ancient Greek does not distinguish between these two types of art. Both are τέχναι (*artes*). See, above, note 2.

teacher-student institutional relations—to expose and refute it.[45] This is one of the dialogue's important messages.

In order to balance the picture a little and to focus it properly, we must remember that "dry" speech is not the ideal, and the use of various aids is a natural and human thing and, as such, justified; but here precisely is the crucial point: rhetorical elements are admissible, but not rhetoric wholesale. The difference between these two is what the word "art" expresses. As long as rhetorical elements are used without being considered an "art," these are proper aids and fulfill their function. However, the moment these aids are conceived of as a body of knowledge that is acquired and taught, which means that they have become constituents of an art, this is the real danger. The moment the need to know disappears, and this disappearance receives artistic justification, there is no way back. In short, the establishment of the art of rhetoric is its undermining.

Let us explain in greater detail: the establishment of an art is the final stage in a process that starts with some ordinary human activity. The artist does not invent "something out of nothing." He deals with things that ordinary people, who are not artists, also deal with. He is just better than them, because he "arranges" these things. In other words, what people do unintentionally, out of their life experience, the artist does with thought and order.[46] However, the very thing that establishes an art undermines rhetoric. The reason for this is related to one thing: *materia*. The other arts have a *materia*, but rhetoric does not. Where there is a *materia*, it makes sense to

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45 By doing so, all the arguments against rhetoric which appear explicitly in the conversation become ramifications of this axis and hence reach, through this framework, their full implication and strengh. Furthermore, in this way, the dramatic and the philosophical aspects of the conversation are most fully integrated.

46 Compare with the first sentences of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1354a3–11): διὸ καὶ πάντες τρόπον τινὰ μετέχουσιν ἀμφοῖν [sc. ῥητορικῆς καὶ διαλεκτικῆς]· πάντες γὰρ μέχρι τινὸς καὶ ἐξετάζειν καὶ ὑπέχειν λόγον καὶ ἀπολογεῖσθαι καὶ κατηγορεῖν ἐγχειροῦσιν. τῶν μὲν οὖν πολλῶν οἱ μὲν εἰκῇ ταῦτα δρῶσιν, οἱ δὲ διὰ συνήθειαν ἀπὸ ἕξεως· ἐπεὶ δ' ἀμφοτέρως ἐνδέχεται, δῆλον ὅτι εἴη ἂν αὐτὰ καὶ ὁδῷ ποιεῖν· δι' ὃ γὰρ ἐπιτυγχάνουσιν οἵ τε διὰ συνήθειαν καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου τὴν αἰτίαν θεωρεῖν ἐνδέχεται, τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον ἤδη πάντες ἂν ὁμολογήσαιεν τέχνης ἔργον εἶναι ("Hence all men in a manner have a share of both [sc. rhetoric and dialectic]; for all, up to a certain point, endeavour to criticize or uphold an argument, to defend themselves or to accuse. Now, the majority of people do this either at random or with a familiarity arising from habit. But since both these ways are possible, it is clear that matters can be reduced to a system, for it is possible to examine the reason why some attain their end by familiarity and others by chance; and such an examination *all would at once admit to be a function of art*"; emphasis mine). This is the way that Aristotle sees, elsewhere in his works, the development of all arts.

arrange things into a system and to establish an art. But what can we say in a case where arranging things into a system means no more and no less than surrendering the *materia*? We can conclude that this issue of the *materia* (= knowledge of *materia*), while establishing an art, undermines rhetoric. From here, we arrive at an interesting conclusion: the only way rhetoric can be connected to the word "art" is by adopting the pseudo as its essence—which means that rhetoric is neither art nor pseudo-art. It is the art of the pseudo.

It is worth emphasizing that Plato's task is not simple. The deliberate use of the forms of the outward expression of art, the external criteria, is only in its infancy. Not only is the public fooled, even the teachers who use them are not fully aware of the severity of their actions. This is an "art" in formation.[47] We should remember: rhetoric is one of the main occupations of the Sophists and rhetoricians and, as such, is no exception to their main purpose, which we can describe in the words of Protagoras: Ὦ νεανίσκε, ἔσται τοίνυν σοι, ἐὰν ἐμοὶ συνῇς, ᾗ ἂν ἡμέρᾳ ἐμοὶ συγγένῃ, ἀπιέναι οἴκαδε βελτίονι γεγονότι, καὶ ἐν τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ ταὐτὰ ταῦτα· καὶ ἑκάστης ἡμέρας ἀεὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον ἐπιδιδόναι, "Young man, you will gain this by coming to my classes, that on the day when you join them you will go home a better man, and on the day after it will be the same; every day you will constantly improve more and more" (*Prot*. 318a6–9), and a few lines later: τὸ δὲ μάθημά ἐστιν εὐβουλία περὶ τῶν οἰκείων, ὅπως ἂν ἄριστα τὴν αὑτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατώτατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν, "That learning consists of good judgement in his own affairs, showing how best to order his own home; and in the affairs of his city, showing how he may have most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action" (*Prot*. 318e5–19a2).

It is easy to see that the Sophists actually teach people how to appear good. However, in this first period, when the gap between being and appearing is only beginning to receive systematic and artistic expression, the Sophists should not be accused of charlatanism. They, and especially their audience, do not see the problem clearly. The fact that some of the characteristics of the good man include the ability to speak well, to walk around the streets moderately, and to entertain his friends properly, does not mean that someone who learns these things artificially, of his own initiative, becomes a good man. It is a one-way street.

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47 This phrase is parallel to "the rise of art" mentioned frequently earlier.

We started the discussion with a statement that the responsibility for artistic failure rests with either the student or the teacher. Rhetoric raises for the first time in history a third option: the art itself is to blame. However, this is not an option applicable to all arts. This option, it seems, is applicable exclusively to the one and only art that raised it: rhetoric. Moreover, rhetoric is necessarily harmful, and it is necessarily responsible for its own failure. Paradoxically, an interesting thing is happening here: it is rhetoric that, in practice, expands the field of possible causes of the failure of education to three, but, in fact, as far as rhetoric is concerned, there is only one option: it has only itself to blame.

Here one could ask, justifiably, what sort of failure we are talking about. Is this the sort of failure we could call a "technical failure,"[48] where the student is unable to apply his art? Or is it what we can call a "moral failure," where the student is able to learn the artistic technique, but uses it to harm others? The only way to answer this question is by presenting the problem implied within the question itself. This distinction between a technical failure and a moral failure, perceived as a problem not related to art, is a modern distinction, and here we can see the difference between antiquity and modern times. In antiquity, the moral failure is not distinct from the technical failure (in our own anachronistic terms, of course). Any moral failure, as a failure, is the failure of the art. We thus touch upon one of the basic premises of antiquity: all art was seen as beneficial from its very definition as art. Indeed, the fact that today we can speak of a moral failure detached from the art itself is the contribution of rhetoric. Moreover, this detachment necessarily results from seeing rhetoric as a neutral/formal art. After all, rhetoric has to be a neutral/formal art in order to survive as an art. In other words, in order to surrender the *materia* (that is necessary for art) and still remain an art, rhetoric must establish a new "art"—a neutral/formal art.

The fact that Gorgias and his period saw benefit in every art from its very definition is essential for our reading of the *Gorgias* and understanding the intermediate stage of rhetoric of this period. It seems that many people have failed to observe this approach, including E. R. Dodds.

In his monumental edition of the *Gorgias*, Dodds comments on the

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48 The term "technical art" is precisely one of the results of the art of rhetoric that managed to neutralize art in terms of its "benefits" and its dependence on *materia*. It is no surprise that a term like "technical art" would be meaningless in Greek (ἡ τεχνικὴ τέχνη?). Ancient Greek has no term equivalent to our "technical" in this sense.

contents of the dialogue. On page 212, Dodds devotes a few explanatory lines to the passage 456c6–57c3: part of Gorgias's speech in praise of his art. As part of this praise, he defends himself against a possible attack on the basis of the bad student. Gorgias claims that just as the art of boxing should not be blamed if a student of boxing hits his parents, thus for rhetoric: the art should not be blamed if the student misuses it. In this case it is, of course, the student who is to blame for not using his art properly.[49] On this, Dodds comments: "We do not blame the boxing-master if one of his pupils uses his skill to knock out his father. (Rhetoric is thus not anti-moral; it is morally neutral.)" Dodds attributes to Gorgias something that the latter cannot do: see his art as a neutral art. Indeed, this is precisely Socrates' task, a task at which Socrates fails. Dodds, it seems, makes Socrates' task redundant and, at the same time, invalidates the whole dialogue.

If we turn to the dialogue itself, we will find Gorgias's statement: ἐκεῖνοι [sc. οἱ διδάσκοντες] μὲν γὰρ παρέδοσαν ἐπὶ τῷ δικαίως χρῆσθαι τούτοις πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους καὶ τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας, ἀμυνομένους, μὴ ὑπάρχοντας· οἱ δὲ μεταστρέψαντες χρῶνται τῇ ἰσχύϊ καὶ τῇ τέχνῃ οὐκ ὀρθῶς. οὔκουν οἱ διδάξαντες πονηροί, οὐδὲ ἡ τέχνη οὔτε αἰτία οὔτε πονηρὰ τούτου ἕνεκά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὴ χρώμενοι οἶμαι ὀρθῶς, "For they [sc. the teachers] imparted their skill with a view to its rightful use against enemies and wrongdoers, in self-defence, not provocation; whereas the others have perverted their strength and art to an improper use. So it is not the teachers who are wicked, nor is the art either guilty or wicked on this account, but rather, to my thinking, those who do not use it properly" (*Gorg*. 456e2–57a4).

A teacher who sees his art as neutral would not claim to teach ἐπὶ τῷ δικαίως χρῆσθαι ("with a view to its rightful use"). This is not supposed to interest him at all. What happened to Dodds is a typical example of a reader from a rhetorical age being exposed to a text that reflects a complicated and complex stage between two eras: the pre-rhetorical[50] and the rhetorical.[51] In other words, Dodds sees Socrates and Gorgias as arguing

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49 One notes that in the passage which is about to be cited from Gorgias's speech, Gorgias does not regard even boxing as a neutral art. The teachers of boxing, like every other artist, teach their art ἐπὶ τῷ δικαίως χρῆσθαι ("with a view to its rightful use," 456e3).

50 To be more accurate: the intermediate stage, what we call "the rise of rhetoric."

51 It appears that the circumstances under which Dodds prepared his edition are also relevant. This was originally a series of lectures given to students before they left to serve in the army during World War II. The author thought that it would be good to equip the students with *Gorgias* before they left. See the author's introduction (p. v).

over the nature of rhetoric when it is already freestanding (detached from politics and its influence). Such an approach is disastrous for understanding the dialogue.

Gorgias sees boxing as a beneficial art, just like any other art. He does not even need to reflect about this. This assumption is implicit in the word τέχνη itself. The comparison between boxing and rhetoric is not in seeing both of them as neutral arts but rather in regarding the failure of artistic education as attributable to the student. Gorgias cannot see the difference between boxing and rhetoric, and neither can Dodds. Both see the failure of the process as the fault of the student who misuses his art, but the difference between them should be made clear.

Gorgias does not distinguish between a moral failure and a technical failure. To him, a student who abuses his art (= moral failure) is taking a good art and using it badly. Here we should stress that the student who misuses his art is not turning it into a neutral art, and certainly not into a bad art; he simply cannot do this, since art itself is by definition beneficial. The student's ability is limited to using a *good art* for bad things,[52] and therefore it is his fault. Dodds distinguishes between a moral and a technical failure (a modern rhetorical distinction). To him, a student who misuses his art is taking a neutral art and giving it a negative value, and he is to blame for this. True, Dodds could disagree with Gorgias and perceive art differently. However, Dodds does not do this; he simply judges Gorgias by his own modern rhetorical standards. This he is not entitled to do.[53]

It is Socrates who sees Gorgias in his true colours. Socrates is trying to hint to Gorgias about the dangers of his art. Socrates, according to our analysis, understands Gorgias's inability to distinguish between boxing and rhetoric. Gorgias is not aware of the third option—in case of failure, the art itself is to blame. Where there are only two options (teacher or student), the similarity between students of boxing and of rhetoric who misuse their art is natural and necessary—in both arts the student is to blame. However, Socrates' hints do not stop at the issue of rhetoric being a formal/neutral art. In other words, Socrates does not think it sufficient that, in case of a failure, this failure should be attributed to the art itself. For Socrates, failure in this

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52 Note the word μεταστρέψαντες ("have perverted") above (457a1).

53 The same is true of Roochnik 1996.189, who writes of "Gorgias's characterization of rhetoric as use- or value-neutral." Moreover, on the next page he writes: "Since a typical techne is value-neutral . . ." This statement referring to Plato's *Gorgias* provides a typical example for what I am arguing. Dodds as well as Roochnik, both living in a rhetorical era, ascribe rhetoric's outcome/product to an era in which rhetoric is still in its rise.

case is not merely possible but necessary. If the student fails with a technical failure, he has not learned the rhetorical rules and/or is unable to apply them (= persuade), he is not an artist; this is the modern perception of artistic failure. However, in the ancient conception, even if he is successful at his art, even if he is able to persuade in every case without knowing or understanding the subjects about which he speaks, even here he fails. A moral failure is no different from a technical failure. In some ways, it is even worse. Such a successful artist would necessarily cause harm, since such an art is disastrous to the society that nurtures it. This is Socrates' message: it is possible at the local level for the "artist" to succeed and persuade and gain a certain advantage (so that, in the modern approach, this is not sufficient to harm the art). But within a general view that sees the artist as a person not detached from the society in which he operates—a view that perceives a person's benefit and happiness as connected to, and dependent upon, that of the society—in such a view, formal and neutral rhetoric will always be harmful, and it has only itself to blame.[54]

5. CONCLUSION

Socrates talks to Gorgias and his students in the context of the rhetoric of his period—politics and the Greek polis. However, it would not be unrealistic to think that Plato the dramatist already foresaw—during the period of the rise of rhetoric, while things were still unclear—the end result of that art. After all, it is the words of Gorgias himself that portray rhetoric exactly as it is today in its widest sense: οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν περὶ ὅτου οὐκ ἂν πιθανώτερον εἴποι ὁ ῥητορικὸς ἢ ἄλλος ὁστισοῦν τῶν δημιουργῶν ἐν πλήθει, "For there is no subject on which the rhetorician could not speak more persuasively than a member of any other profession whatsoever, before a multitude" (*Gorg*. 456c4–6).[55] Today, in a media-dominated era,

54 This, of course, differs from the modern approach that sees "a lie that works" as an artistic success. The criticism is in seeing the benefit (a necessary condition for any art) as limited to the artist's close environment. The big question is what are the limits of the benefit. More simply, we could imagine that an orator who manages to obtain through his speech everything he wants, not always decently, would think his art beneficial, up to the point when another more talented artist appears.

55 Aristotle seems to offer this as one possible approach (*Rhet*. 1356a25–26), but not the only one (see *Rhet*. 1354a1–3, 1355b25–26). Crassus in Cicero's *de Oratore* claims that an orator should know everything he speaks of (I.30–34), but Antonius disputes this (I.80–93). Quintilian also offers the idea that rhetoric deals with everything—but only as one of number of options (*Inst*. II.21.4). Today this seems to be the prevalent view.

when people's direct acquaintance and appreciation of each other is being replaced by acquaintance and appreciation necessarily mediated by external criteria that can be formulated into a method and taught as a subject of study through institutions (schools of advertising, seminars on public relations and personal image, job interview courses) which contain nothing outside the four walls of their formal rules, today rhetoric has been given its real scope of activity—everything.

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