

He himself says (A.10 993a15-17), as we have seen, that it was like a child which cannot yet properly articulate what it says.

Of relevance here also is a passage in Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* III.28.69. It reports a view of Aristotle's about the history of philosophy. Since we do not know the context in which the view originally had been expressed, the report has to be treated with caution. But Aristotle seems to have said two things. He accused the ancient philosophers who thought that they had perfected philosophy by their own efforts as either stupid or vainglorious. But he also noted that philosophy in a short time had made enormous progress and thus could or would attain its final shape in little time. It is tempting to think that Aristotle is referring to the short time in which philosophy under Plato and his followers (like Aristotle himself) made such progress as to make the work of earlier philosophers appear as somehow juvenile.

To conclude, Aristotle's account of the origin and the early history of philosophy in *Met. A.* for the reasons given at the outset is a basic source of literally fundamental importance. But in order to be able to use this text, we have to see how firmly embedded it is in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. It relies on a certain conception of philosophy which it itself is supposed to support. According to this conception philosophy in the first instance is metaphysics, 'primary philosophy'. It is remarkably close to Plato's conception, at least how Aristotle understands it. It is part of an effort in which Aristotle joins Plato to clarify what philosophy is or should be at a time when this was far from clear and controversial. It is against this background that we have to understand Aristotle's historical account.

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ISOCRATES, PLATO, AND ARISTOTLE ON RHETORIC

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Plato's criticism of rhetoric, which forms a recurrent theme in his dialogues,¹ is better understood in relation to his various educational rivals of the fourth century, most prominently Isocrates. Philosophers and classicists usually regard the opposition between Plato and Isocrates as part of the old quarrel between philosophy and oratory. But this begs the question, insofar as the distinction between philosophy and oratory seems to be the product rather than the cause of the opposition. Recent scholarship has contributed significantly to our understanding of the debate – and it has certainly made us more aware of the importance of contextual evidence.² In what follows, I propose to show how this kind of awareness allows us to reassess some basic claims regarding the nature and foundations of rhetoric made by the protagonists of the debate, namely Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In particular, I propose to challenge the traditional picture which (a) considers Plato's and Aristotle's criticisms of rhetoric as belonging essentially to a purely philosophical tradition, and (b) regards the latter tradition as one that is vehemently opposed to Isocrates' more shallow rhetorical enterprise. My suggestion will be that a non-biased study of Isocrates' texts may reveal in them early empiricist assumptions which, in turn, allow their author to resist Plato's philosophical alternative. Isocrates' commitment to such assumptions can thus be seen as an important step leading to Aristotle's account of the role of experience – an account which decidedly marks Aristotle's opposition to Plato's criticism of rhetoric. A few comments on Isocrates will provide a useful springboard for the discussion to follow.

¹ Implicit in the *Apology* and the *Symposium*, explicit in the *Gorgias*, later to be matched by the *Phaedrus*.

² See Eucken (1983); Nehamas (1990); Nightingale (1995); Striker (1996); Wallace (1998).

I

Isocrates started his career as a speech writer for the law-courts but later devoted himself to what he described as philosophy – using the term in its non-technical sense – and education. As Niall Livingstone puts it, '[t]he essence of his profession was to practise and teach the eloquent use of language for good ends, with a particular focus on πολιτικοὶ λόγοι, speeches (or discourse) addressing problems of government.'³ Isocrates' territory was indeed close to that of his most prominent contemporary in the field of education, namely Plato.⁴ The rivalry between them can be traced in Isocrates' occasional interest in questions of epistemology. Here is a typical formulation from the *Antidosis*:

Since human nature cannot attain knowledge that would enable us to know what we must say or do, after this I think that the wise (σοφοί) are those who have the ability to reach the best opinions (δόξαι) most of the time, and philosophers are those who spend time acquiring such an intelligence as quickly as possible. (*Antidosis* 271= *Against the Sophists* 2.8; trans. D. Mihrady and Y.L. Too)

The use of the term 'philosophers' here need not surprise us. As Martin Ostwald and John Lynch point out, 'the φιλοσοφία of Isocrates retains the practical connotations the term had in the fifth century and before, encompassing any serious study conducive to fostering sound opinions and correct judgments on factors inherent in a given situation and how to cope with them.'⁵ More particularly, Isocrates' φιλοσοφία seems to describe a combination of practical politics with practice in speech-making, or what we may fairly describe as rhetorical ability.⁶ Isocrates' attitude makes even better sense against the background of scepticism with which the late 5th and early 4th century common opinion hailed philosophy, regarding it as something useless and unsuitable for mature citizens – an aspect of intellectual history which has come to light through discussion of the historical background

³ Livingstone (2001), 3.

⁴ Though, again, one may be sceptical about the idea that Plato and Isocrates were the first (or two of the very few) intellectuals who, being interested in politics, saw the need of putting eloquent use of language to good ends. We are not able to know what other authors, for whose works we have no evidence other than their titles, would have suggested as their own views on the question.

⁵ Ostwald and Lynch (1994), 596-97.

⁶ Cf. Isocrates' advice to Alexander in *Letter to Alexander* 4; see also *Panath.* 30.

of Socrates' trial. In this regard, Isocrates' arguments were probably much more appealing to his fellow citizens than the Sophistic or Academic alternatives.⁷

Such considerations allow us to accommodate from a more or less pragmatic perspective Isocrates' opposition to a certain kind of philosophy, based on negative rather than constructive criticisms. In fact, most historians of philosophy and classicists tend to agree that Isocrates did not hold any profound alternative theory with which he would be able to confront someone like Plato with his arguments that rhetoric is in need of a moral and epistemological foundation. Far from engaging in philosophical discussion, Isocrates' statement that human nature cannot attain knowledge seems to be drawing on the older didactic tradition of Hesiod⁸ – whereas, at least *prima facie*, there hardly seems to be any further *philosophical* reason Isocrates would invoke to convince us that the search for a reality behind the phenomena is chimerical. In this regard, it may be fair to infer that Isocrates has no basis for thinking that the arguments of the rhetorician, proceeding from mere δόξαι, can be justified as sound arguments – or, at least, equally justified as those offered by the philosophers. The issue becomes particularly pressing against the background of Plato's criticism of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates argues for the dependence of oratory on philosophy. According to Plato, the reason that human δόξαι appear as consistent as they do is that they reflect, albeit in an imperfect way, the higher realm of ideas, which can be known only through philosophy. Can Isocrates meet the challenge of the philosopher? John Cooper, who has raised the question in a lucid and convincing way, answers it in the negative:

...it is a great strength of Plato's account that he both raises the question where the conventional ideas do come from and is in a position to give a quite reasonable answer to it. And if one accepts Plato's view one will have a natural and easy basis on which to defend one central claim that traditional oratory made for itself, the claim that oratorical skill gives one the power to shape public opinion, to lead people to adopt the views and attitudes the orator recommends, even if these should be very much at variance with those they brought to the discussion. For if the orator knows what on Plato's theory he

⁷ On this issue see Natali (1987), 238-39. For the problem regarding the demarcation of Sophists and Philosophers see Eucken (1983) ch. 1, Nehamas (1990); Striker (1996).

⁸ On Hesiod's influence on Isocrates, see Mihrady and Too (2000), 157 with further bibliographical references in note 1.

must, he can introduce even quite new ideas on whatever topic, ideas that, however original, will have the power to persuade his hearers just because they more nearly resemble the actual truth about the terms under dispute than any of the grounds on which their prior opinions rested. Because [the speaker] knows how to introduce striking ideas that persuade because they express something that closely resembles the truth, however novel they may be, he possesses in his own mind the resources to persuade the crowds he addresses, and is not disgracefully dependent... upon knowing what ideas his hearers already accept as the means by which to persuade them.⁹

Cooper explains why Isocrates does not meet the challenge of philosophy and highlights the cogency of Plato's alternative. On the other hand, this kind of philosophical criticism seems to overlook some important facts about rhetoric and its function in the context of 5th and 4th century democracy. Plato's criticism (which Cooper endorses) seems to overlook the fact that rhetoric is the sort of thing where different individuals, who may come from different backgrounds, try to *deliberate* about issues which, by their very nature, cannot be decided on the basis of timeless and unchanging abstractions. As Aristotle puts it, rhetoric deals 'with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us'.¹⁰ Plato's criticism also ignores the value of democratic pluralism, expressed, in ancient Greece, through the values of *παρρησία* and *ἰσηγορία*, the very condition that gives rise to the rhetorical tradition. In this regard, one can turn Plato's question on its head and ask: Is Plato prepared to concede that different speakers who argue, equally well, for different, or even contrary views, do so because they present the same truth from different angles? Isn't it rather the case that, according to Plato, the philosophical orator will be able to 'translate', as it were, truth into persuasive argument, in a way that will never allow any other orator to develop and argue for a different, let alone contrary, opinion? Seen in this light, Plato's alternative to traditional oratory gives rise to a paradox, insofar as it removes from the art its most essential quality: the power to deliberate for opposite positions in the context of a heterogeneous, democratic body. We will come back to Plato's alternative and its antidemocratic background in the final section of the present paper. For the time being, I would like to examine whether Isocrates' views regarding rhetoric and its epistemological grounding can be given a serious philosophical defense.

⁹ Cooper (1985), 84-85.

¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1357a, trans. Rhys Roberts.

In arguing that Isocrates cannot meet the challenge of the philosophers, scholars who wish to pursue Cooper's criticism seem to identify philosophy with the Platonic commitment to the world of Ideas, according to which failure to account for the origin and justification of common notions in a realm other than that of everyday linguistic usage and political practice is certainly a flaw. We should keep in mind, however, that this is not the *only* possible position that a fourth century philosopher might have taken. Recent work on the Hellenistic school of Medical Empiricism has drawn attention to certain antecedents of this school in the fifth and fourth century thought.¹¹ The best-known predecessor for the Ancient Empiricists is Polus, Socrates' interlocutor in Plato's *Gorgias*, who believed that 'Experience brings expertise to the process of human existence, while inexperience leaves it haphazard' (*Gorgias* 448c; trans. R. Waterfield). One methodological difficulty with understanding Polus is that his thesis is reported through Plato's polemic. However, a better-attested example of pre-Empiricist thought survives in the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine*. The author here objects to philosophers who more or less pollute his old good discipline with 'empty postulates' like the discussions on 'things in the sky or below the earth' and, in a way which is reminiscent of Polus,¹² invites us to acknowledge that 'medicine has long had all its means to hand, and has discovered both a principle and a method, through which the discoveries made during a long period are many and excellent.' (*On Ancient Medicine* II; trans. W.H.S. Jones).

If the ideas expressed by the author of *On Ancient Medicine* do indeed provide evidence for early Empiricist thought, we may be able to arrive at a more full-blooded version of Isocrates' doctrine: because just as medicine was known to heal long before certain intellectuals imported their fancy postulates into it, rhetoric, or the art of speaking well, existed (notably in decision making) long before intellectuals like Plato started to demand that moral and epistemological foundations be provided for it. A hard-core empiricist could take the medical analogy a bit further and argue that just as in the case of medicine certain doctors have been known to heal without having been taught the art of medicine in any formal way,¹³ so too there are

¹¹ Frede (1987a), 231-232; 246; Blank (1998), xvii-xxv.

¹² Cf. Hutchinson (1988), 27, noting Polus' similarity to the Hippocratic author.

¹³ See below, Herodotus' text on the Babylonians and Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A.1.

people who have become proficient speakers and statesmen without ever having been taught by a professional philosopher or sophist.¹⁴

Keeping in mind this kind of quasi-Empiricist background, let us now turn to the celebrated praise of *λόγος* in Isocrates' *Nicoles*. The passage comes after a criticism against those who 'are ill disposed toward speeches (*οἱ λόγοι*) and fault philosophers, saying that they engage in such pastimes not for the sake of virtue but for personal advantage (*πλεονεξία*)'. Against such accusations Isocrates claims that

...*λόγος* is responsible for nearly all human inventions. It legislated in matters of justice and injustice, and beauty and baseness, and without these laws, we could not live with one another. By it we refute the bad and praise the good; through it we educate the ignorant and recognize the intelligent. We regard speaking well to be the clearest sign of a good mind, which it requires, and truthful, lawful, and just speech we consider the image of a good and faithful soul. With speech we fight over contentious matters, and we investigate the unknown. We use the same arguments by which we persuade others in our own deliberations; we call those able to speak in a crowd 'rhetorical'; we regard as sound advisers those who debate with themselves most skilfully about public affairs. If one must summarize the power of discourse, we will discover that nothing done prudently occurs without speech, that speech is the leader of all thoughts and actions, and that the most intelligent people use it most of all.... (*Nicoles* 6-9 trans. Mihradý and Too, repeated *verbatim* in *Antidosis* 253-256).

Notoriously, the Greek word *λόγος* can be translated as both reason and speech. Of course, it is the cognate of Plato's and Aristotle's words for what we usually render as rational part of the soul. Why is it then that Isocrates does not belong to this tradition? A trivial answer might exploit the fact that

¹⁴ Cf. Isocrates, *Against the Sophists*, 14: 'many philosophers have remained private citizens, while others have become skilled speakers and politicians without ever having visited the sophists' trans. Mihradý and Too. Of course this is not to say that Isocrates completely downplays the role of teaching – *after all, teaching is exactly what he professes to do*. But he does it without claiming to have any privileged kind of knowledge that he is able to impart to his students. Discipleship is one out of *three* conditions that a successful student must possess, the other two being natural talent and practical experience (*ἐμπειρία*). See, *inter alia*, *Antidosis* 186-192; *Against the Sophists* 13, 17. As we shall see, however, in Aristotle's account Isocrates' claim to combine experience and teaching appears as an inconsistency in his argument.

λόγος in the passage from Isocrates bears the meaning of speech rather than reason. But why is that so? The contrast of Isocrates with philosophers whom we could describe as rationalists here is instructive.¹⁵ Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, unlike Isocrates, postulate a separate faculty of reason which goes beyond the formal ability to process data in a consistent, *logical* way, that is, in a way which allows us to arrive at justified beliefs. Both Plato and Aristotle regard reason as a separate faculty (accounted for by a distinct part of the soul), a faculty which can, as it were, intuitively grasp the truth and provide us with knowledge and understanding of the essence of things. For Isocrates, on the other hand, the function of *λόγος* is confined to what one can empirically attest, that is, a tool which is characteristic exclusively of human nature and which allows us to deliberate, or arrive at justified beliefs, otherwise described as reasons (in the plural) on the basis of which we deliberate. That speech has this function seems to be a trivial fact. And writing, in particular, is a method that enables us to shape thought in an ordered, disciplined fashion. This characteristic of writing, which has become a popular topic in current anthropological discussions concerning orality and literacy, seems to have a special importance for Isocrates' intellectual formation: it is probably no accident that Isocrates was the first orator who did not make his career by delivering his own speeches but rather by circulating them in writing.¹⁶

Of course the rationalist might insist: how do human beings set their goals? Or how do they know their goals are worth pursuing? In the field of medicine, restoration of health – whether in its actual form, *i.e.* when a treatment is applied successfully, or as a goal at which a treatment aims – gives us an ultimate criterion of what is right and what is wrong. But, the rationalist may continue to argue, the situation in language is quite different: classical Greek literature gives us plenty of opportunities to witness the presumably common, or at least fashionable, practice of *ἀντιλογία*, opposing or even knock-down arguments (to invoke the vivid metaphor of Protagoras' book). Given the establishment of this tradition in the fifth century, couldn't we plausibly object that behind Isocrates' elegant statements one is completely open to the snares of relativism?

¹⁵ See Frede (1996).

¹⁶ The importance of this aspect in the way in which Isocrates represented himself and his career is noted in Mihradý and Too (2000), 1. See further Too (1995), ch. 4.

The last objection lies at the heart of Plato's criticism of rhetoric and has shaped current understandings of early oratory.¹⁷ But do we need to endorse it? Careful study of the sources shows that the very notion of relativism is a philosophical construct which postdates the tradition we customarily describe as Sophistic.¹⁸ This, of course, does not remove the threat of indeterminacy from the rhetorical or sophistic tradition; and this is, I think, the reason why Isocrates insists that knowledge and practical experience must be matched by *natural talent*.¹⁹ Isocrates' political orientation, but also his commitment to rationality as an essential characteristic of human nature, suggest that his goal by far exceeds the instrumental values of a *λογογράφος*, i.e. of a professional who is capable of conscientiously preparing excellent speeches for parties endorsing contrary views.²⁰

The last statement, concerning Isocrates' commitment to rationality may *prima facie* seem inconsistent in view of our earlier suggestion that within the empiricist/rationalist dichotomy it is Plato and the philosophers who embrace the latter, whereas Isocrates embraces the former horn. But some qualifications are in order. First of all, to suggest that Isocrates may be drawing on an empiricist 'tradition' may be somewhat anachronistic and artificial, but it does not imply that he fails to see rationality as an intrinsic quality of human nature. Furthermore, to conceive of rationality as an intrinsic quality of human nature does not entail the postulation of some separate seat of reason, over and above human language and political practice. Isocrates' aspiration to rationality, then, lies in the use of language in a consistent and effective way, in the context of political institutions populated by individuals who, by their very nature, strive for excellence. But this kind of rationality is certainly compatible with what we have so far been describing as 'empiricism'. To clarify my point, let me illustrate with a couple of 5th and 4th century texts. The first comes from Herodotus's *Histories*:

¹⁷ For a typical example see McCabe (1994), 136, describing Isocrates as a moral relativist.

¹⁸ See Bett (1989). The picture is blurred by the 'fashion' of court-speech writing. The extent to which this reflects actual practice is a question that has recently received attention; see Gagarin (2001). For the connection between rhetoric and sophistry see Striker (1996).

¹⁹ See above n. 14.

²⁰ For the sense of *λογογράφος* see Yunis (1996), 174-175, with further bibliographical references in n. 2.

They [*viz.* the Babylonians] have no physicians, but when a man is ill, they lay him in the public square, and the passers-by come up to him, and if they have ever had his disease themselves, or have known any one who has suffered from it, they give him advice, recommending him to do whatever they found good in their own case, or in the case known to them; and no one is allowed to pass the sick man in silence without asking him what his ailment is. (*Histories* I.197; trans. A.D. Godley)

Here we seem to have an account of how a technical domain such as medicine may proceed in a 'non-technical' way – at least if by non-technical we mean the absence of any set rules or generalizations on which an art draws. In this regard, the passage allows us to elaborate on a *positive* notion of non-technical knowledge. Although Herodotus' story may sound outrageous with respect to the history of medicine,²¹ it may serve as a good point of reference for practical politics. In fact, we can seek a parallel to it in the well-known passage from Plato's *Protagoras*, where the Sophist boasts of the egalitarianism of Athenian democracy:

...when we meet in the Assembly, then if the state is faced with some building project, I observe that the architects are sent for and consulted about the proposed structures, and when it is a matter of shipbuilding, the naval designers, and so on with everything which the Assembly regards as a subject for learning and teaching...But when it is something to do with the government of the country that is to be debated, the man who gets up to advise them may be a builder or equally well a blacksmith or a shoemaker, merchant or shipowner, rich or poor, of good family or none. (*Protagoras* 319B-D; trans. W.K.C. Guthrie)

Unlike the case of medicine, the model Protagoras describes is that on which modern democracies continue to operate, at least in principle. One can of course invoke the case of political *science*, that is, a *discipline* which treats the political domain in a *scientific* way. Interestingly enough, this objection goes back to Plato's *Gorgias*, in the distinction between, on the one hand, an empirical knack (*ἐμπειρία* or *τριβή*), that is, a 'field' that could merely account at best for an accurate description of the external world, and, on the other hand, a real art (*τέχνη*), capable of discovering the causal connections that allow us ultimately to understand a certain domain in the world around us. The distinction was then adopted in the celebrated opening chapter of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, with

²¹ For the purposes of the present argument, we need not dwell on the accuracy of the story and its meaning for the science of medicine. For doubts concerning its accuracy see Lloyd (1987), 56.

an important qualification: Aristotle, unlike Plato, also pointed out that ‘with a view to action experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and we even see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience’ (*Met.* A.1 981a, trans. W.D. Ross).²² It is probably no accident that, as we shall presently see, Aristotle does not repeat this remark in the context of his *Rhetoric*. After all, he professes to transform oratory from a knack into an art. But the way in which Aristotle in *Metaphysics* A.1 highlights the power of *ἐμπειρία* is a useful background for our own understanding of the claims of an ‘empiricist’, or a *quasi*-empiricist like Isocrates.

According to Isocrates, then, there is nothing beyond the realm of human experience on which we humans can base our judgements. *But* despite the fact that we are confined to the realm of *δόξα* and the fact that we can never achieve the kind of certainty that his rivals claim for their *ἐπιστήμη*, human agents seem to be able to communicate and to judge each other’s arguments in a consistent, effective and, in that restricted sense, rational way. Isocrates’ commitment to the epistemic value of human *δόξα* might seem an anathema to those who follow the tradition of Plato or Parmenides. But it might have made better sense to those embedded in a different tradition of Greek thought, *i.e.* of the kind of ‘empiricism’ advocated in the texts we examined above.

By attributing epistemic value to human *δόξα*, Isocrates is able to promote the audience to the status of a reliable judge, thus providing himself with an interesting and perhaps original argument against those who question the moral intention of his students. Insofar as human beings are able to understand the *λόγοι* addressed to them, it is to the interest of the good speaker to provide the best advice, leading to the most profitable course of action. Furthermore, Isocrates’ commitment to the epistemic value of human *δόξα* allows him to avoid contemporary antidemocratic arguments that treat rhetoric as merely catering to the mob’s irrational desires. He is prepared to concede that the multitude is by its nature susceptible to emotional manipulation, but, unlike his alleged teacher Gorgias,²³ he is unwilling to turn this weakness of human nature into a positive element of his art.²⁴

One difficulty with Isocrates is that his texts do not present any clearly stated theory about his work; there is certainly a lot of reflection on the aims

²² The closest Plato comes to Aristotle’s remark is *Meno* 97b. But he does not exploit correct opinion in the context of his political program.

²³ Too (1995), 235-39, offers evidence against the view that Isocrates studied with Gorgias.

²⁴ See *Antidosis* 132-33.

and content of his educational program, but this always comes as part of a defense or an attack against the enemy. There is no work in which Isocrates spells out the content of his teaching in theoretical terms, suggesting, for instance, what kind of psychology or ‘logic’ one needs to draw on in order to become a good orator.²⁵ On the other hand, as I have been trying to suggest, resistance to the construction of a theory, resulting from the appreciation of the contingency of human nature, is exactly the mark of those who would subscribe to empiricist ways of thinking. In fact, Isocrates uses the notion of a fixed art (*τεταγμένη τέχνη*) like orthography to illustrate the contrast between a kind of learning which draws on hard and fast rules from that which is more flexibly adopted according to the *καιρός*: ‘Who...has not seen that while the function of letters is unchanging and remains the same, so that we always keep using the same letters for the same sounds, the function of *λόγοι* is entirely opposite’ (*Against the Sophists* 12, trans. Mihrady and Too). Though he concedes his students must be versed in a variety of forms of speeches and ‘exercise themselves in their use’ (*Against the Sophists* 17, trans. Mihrady and Too) he stresses the fact that rhetoric, unlike orthography, is not an art which can be based on, let alone exhausted in, hard and fast rules.

In the following section I will try to show why, if the preceding account is accurate, Isocrates becomes a challenging interlocutor for Aristotle – and, consequently, why Isocrates’ views about rhetoric must be taken seriously by historians of philosophy.

II

Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* can be described as an attempt to transform oratory from an *ἐμπειρία* to an art. Aristotle does not actually repeat the statement of his *Metaphysics* A.1 regarding the effectiveness of people who possess practical skill, without having the art which corresponds to it, but he does concede that people acquire rhetorical skill by means of habituation. And he proceeds to find the method or the system by which such a skill may become a discipline²⁶ – or, according to biographical evidence, a skill about which

²⁵ For the view that Isocrates never published any handbook of rhetoric, see Barwick (1963), 275-95; Cahn (1989), 121-44, cited by Roochnik (1996), 79.

²⁶ Garver (1989), 73 rightly points to the fallacy of this argument suggesting that, if everything that is done regularly can be reduced to a system, one would be ‘entitled to be confident that arts existed for everything that we do through chance and habit...’

he is able to lecture in his afternoon lectures. Although it seems that by the time Aristotle taught the subject as the head of his own school his feelings toward Isocrates were inimical,²⁷ other biographical evidence suggests that the young lad who came to Athens from Macedonia in fact started his education as a disciple of Isocrates.²⁸ It is thus plausible that Isocrates' understanding of oratory influenced Aristotle's views on the same subject. In fact, if we approach Aristotle's *Rhetoric* against the background of Isocrates' (potential) influence, we readily come across a number of points where these two teachers of oratory seem to converge.²⁹ Both are critical toward people who presumably tried to earn their living from the practical application of oratory, and consequently devoted their work to the forensic branch of the art; by contrast, both regard deliberative oratory as the noblest aspect of the art.³⁰ Moreover, not only does Aristotle endorse Isocrates' willingness to

²⁷ The evidence concerning Aristotle's early discipleship to Isocrates is collected in Düring (1957); see also Chroust (1973b). It is not difficult to imagine at least the general lines along which a controversy between Aristotle and Isocrates could revolve around the relative priority of theoretical or political wisdom; for a general discussion on this point, see Düring, (1961), 19f. However, it is harder to establish the relation between the two with regard to the aims and means of rhetoric, especially since the 'protagonists' of this part of the controversy, *i.e.* the *Γρύλλοι* attributed respectively to Aristotle and to Isocrates, are now lost. For a detailed assessment of the relevant problems, see Chroust (1973b). The rivalry between Isocrates and Aristotle can also be seen against the background of king Philip's decision to appoint Aristotle rather than Isocrates as the tutor of Alexander the Great. For a beautiful reconstruction of this story, see Merlan (1954/55).

²⁸ See Chroust (1973a), 97.

²⁹ I am not sympathetic to McCabe (1994), 140, who regards Isocrates as one of the targets of Aristotle's criticism in the early chapters of the *Rhetoric*. The early chapters, stressing the objection that Aristotle's predecessors dealt with *τὰ ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος*, *i.e.* things falling outside the subject-matter of oratory, seem to address primarily orators who dealt with forensic oratory. But this would hardly be accurate for Isocrates who, as we have seen, speaks with contempt for those who write court-speeches. I would agree with McCabe's presentation of Aristotle as 'occupying the middle ground between Plato and Isocrates' (143), but, especially in the case of Isocrates, on different grounds.

³⁰ Aristotle is critical toward the use of rhetoric in the law-courts, especially when the orator tries to appeal to the judge's emotions in a non-rational

accept the audience as a reliable judge, but he goes a step further in the same direction when he suggests that even emotions can contribute to the work of oratory in a positive, rational way. Unlike Isocrates, whose 'theory' regarding rhetoric can be only extrapolated by statements made in his speeches, Aristotle undertakes the task of composing a technical handbook.³¹

There is a striking similarity between the *Rhetoric* and the account of *Metaphysics* A.1 regarding the transformation of an empirical skill into an art. The connection between the texts is most clear where Aristotle suggests that, just as in medicine the real doctor – as opposed to the one who proceeds through *ἐμπειρία* or experience – arrives at a particular treatment by means of a classification among different human types, so in the case of oratory, the orator who masters the art – as opposed to the one who proceeds merely through *ἐμπειρία* or experience – composes a particular argument (or speech, here the ambiguity of the term *λόγος* is certainly instructive) by means of a classification of persons. According to the text:

...none of the arts theorizes about individual cases. Medicine, for instance, does not theorize about what will help to cure Socrates or Callias, but only what will help to cure any or all of a given class of patients: this alone is subject to technique – individual cases are so infinitely various that no knowledge of them is possible. In the same way the theory of rhetoric will not consider what seems reputable to a given individual like Socrates or Hippias, but what seems so to men of a given type (*Rhet.* 1356b; trans. Rhys Roberts).

If we wish to consider rhetoric as an art we must be able to generalize; moreover, as Aristotle indicates in *Metaphysics* A.1, we must be able to proceed from the stage of *ὅτι* to the stage of *διότι*. In other words, we must be able to give a satisfactory answer to the question: Why is it that people are persuaded? And the answer here seems to rest in Aristotle's technical modes of persuasion (*ἐντεχνονί πίστις* – 1356a). Thus, people are persuaded (a) because they are convinced through a certain logical presentation of the

way. Unlike Isocrates, he is willing to rehabilitate court-speech writing, restricting it, however, to 'show[ing] that the alleged fact is so or is not so, that it has or has not happened. As to whether a thing is important or unimportant, just or unjust, the judge must surely refuse to take his instructions from the litigants: he must decide for himself all such points...' (*Rhet.* 1354a27-31; trans. Rhys Roberts).

³¹ Cf. Most (1994), 183.

reasons which, given the evidence, lead to certain conclusions; further, (b) people are persuaded because they 'believe good men more fully and more readily than others';³² finally, (c) people are persuaded by the way in which the speech appeals to their emotions. And this is why Aristotle's course includes sections in psychology. The fact that Isocrates does not provide the kind of theoretical discourse that we have tried to reconstruct from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* does not suggest that he would be reluctant to endorse it. After all, Aristotle's formalization does not, or at least not necessarily, involve the kind of higher *ἐπιστήμη*, that, according to Isocrates, would be inaccessible to human reason. In this regard, Aristotle seems to provide Isocrates with an appealing normative context. But what makes Aristotle's *Rhetoric* particularly valuable for understanding Isocrates is that it does not appeal to any non-empirical, metaphysical notions of the kind that are more familiar to the reader of the *Phaedrus*. Given these considerations, Aristotle can be seen as enriching, but at the same time, at least up to a certain point, as also endorsing Isocrates' rhetoric. In the final section of the present paper I propose to suggest that this endorsement marks a significant difference between Aristotle's views on rhetoric and what has usually been regarded as the antecedent of these views, namely Plato's *Phaedrus*. But first let us consider what is the benefit of this enrichment for the art of rhetoric.

Let me start with an apparently minor issue. In contrast with Isocrates, who condemns the use of paradoxical topics, of the kind used in epideictic speeches,³³ Aristotle acknowledges that practice in any kind of argument is an essential part of the art: 'we must be able to employ persuasion ... on opposite sides of a question' (1355a29-30).³⁴ Some scholars here have seen an

³² 1356a6-7. Of course, some speakers may appear to be more and some less reliable, but when Aristotle talks about the *ἦθος τοῦ λέγοντος* as a mode of persuasion, what he has in mind is the skill that goes into presenting oneself by means of the speech, where the confidence must be due to the speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker's character.

³³ See *Helen* 1.

³⁴ To a certain extent, this difference may be related to the nature of our sources. Unlike Aristotle's 'lecture-notes', written presumably to address people who had already 'enrolled' in the relevant course, Isocrates' speeches addressed an audience which, as we have seen, could be in principle sceptical toward abuse of *λόγοι*. In this regard, to suggest that arguments could be used to prove opposites would be undermining the interests of the author. But the difference goes deeper.

indication that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 'aims as a technical handbook to provide the student with the means to succeed in public speaking and leaves entirely undetermined the question of what moral or cognitive aims he will thereby pursue'.³⁵ *Prima facie*, the suggestion seems plausible not only because of the actual contents of the *Rhetoric* but also because of what came to be known as the notion of a 'stochastic art', that is, of an art, which, just like medicine or rhetoric, determines its success not by the extent to which it *hits* its mark, but rather by the precision with which it aims at its mark. The term 'stochastic' is attested in Alexander of Aphrodisias,³⁶ but the passage from Aristotle's *Topics* on which Alexander comments states the matter clearly. Aristotle here suggests that the condition dialectic must fulfil in order to qualify as an art is similar to the one medicine must fulfil:

it is not every method that the rhetorician will employ to persuade, or the doctor to heal: still, if he omits none of the available means, we shall say that his grasp of the science is adequate (*Topics* 101b9-10; trans. W.A. Pickard-Cambridge).

By the same token, in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle says:

it is not the function of medicine simply to make a man quite healthy, but to put him as far as may be on the road to health (1355b12-13).

If the aim of the orator is not to persuade, but rather to exhaust the relevant means by which something will be persuasive, then treatment of paradoxical topics can be seen as part of this kind of, other things being equal, innocent exercise and presumably also for research.³⁷ But it would be misleading to interpret the medical analogy as suggesting that rhetorical means can be completely separated from the goal toward which they aim – if this were the case, sorcery would also qualify as a stochastic art. The medical analogy is rather instructive: insofar as the physician is a physician, the goal he aims at is always beneficial. In fact, the notion of a stochastic art was invented in order to vindicate the competence of experts in fields like medicine or rhetoric who, in spite of their expertise, quite often fail to accomplish their

³⁵ Most (1994), 185-6.

³⁶ In *Aristotelis Topicorum*, 32.12-34.5 (ed. M. Wallies). For a reconstruction of Alexander's argument, see further Ierodiakonou (1995), 473-85; for a discussion on the origins of this view in early Greek thought, see Allen (1994) and Roochnik (1996).

³⁷ Cf. the threefold distinction of *Topics* I.2 101a26-28: *πρὸς γυμνασίαν, πρὸς τὰς ἐντεύξεις, πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμας*.

established end. Of course, in the case of rhetoric, this brings us back to a problem we have already encountered: unlike medicine, where restoration of health gives us an unequivocal criterion of what is right and what is wrong, nothing allows us to decide what statement may be persuasive, or even what conviction will be beneficial for the listener's soul. And this, of course, has to do with the fact that, unlike medicine, rhetoric allows for treatment of opposite theses. To be sure, Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* makes it clear that trying to prove opposites is only part of a training one receives in order to be able to refute the other party if they argue unfairly (*Rhet.* 1355a32-33). But unfortunately, this is only a claim, rather than an argument which shows that the orator, or at any rate the good or properly trained orator, has some privileged access to the truth. So far, we have seen how Isocrates attempted to overcome the difficulty: besides training and knowledge, orators must also have a good nature; but they also need to exercise their art in a way which will allow them to continue to participate in the πόλις – and speakers who wish to be successful in practical politics would never use speech in a way which would jeopardize the trust of the community. But, as Plato keenly noticed, this does not rule out that orators may err; and it certainly does not explain away the difficulty that arises from the fact that orators, regardless of moral intention, can argue persuasively for opposite courses of action. At this point Aristotle seems eager to combine Isocrates' 'pragmatic' attitude with Plato's metaphysical demands: he describes rhetoric as an offshoot of dialectic and of the art dealing with ethics and politics (1356a25-27; 1359b9-10).

Insofar as rhetoric is an offshoot of dialectic, the study of it is the study of a formal field, leading to a merely instrumental technique. What the orator needs to know is how to construct valid arguments, so that what he studies has to do with form rather than with content. Thus, *qua* offshoot of dialectic rhetoric becomes a kind of logic. That Aristotle wants to pursue this aspect of rhetoric is clear when, after explaining that the orator does not need to have *precise* knowledge of all the subjects he might come across, he substitutes analytic for dialectic and he advises us not to confuse the instrument (he uses the word δύναμις) with the knowledge which this instrument conveys. But what about his statement regarding politics and ethics? In a sense, Aristotle seems to rely on the connection between rhetoric and politics and ethics in order to provide the speaker with the expertise he needs if he is to present himself as a persuasive character as well as to instil the relevant emotions in his audience.³⁸

³⁸ Cf. Cooper (1994), 200.

But expertise in ethics and politics is also presupposed if one wishes to argue, as Aristotle does, that dialectic deals not just with any kind of argument but with those whose premises consist of ἔνδοξα or reputable beliefs. At this point Aristotle seems to be crossing paths with Isocrates: it is no accident that those whom we respect and by whom we tend to be persuaded hold the opinions that they do. Such opinions are based on the world around us, which both Isocrates and Aristotle regard as a reliable source of information. In fact, Aristotle is prepared to concede that there are people who can deal successfully with political affairs without having recourse to any *theory* about the πόλις and the values underlying it.³⁹ Significantly, however, Aristotle also claims that such empirical knowledge can be ultimately transformed into true understanding.⁴⁰ Thus, as the framework of *Metaphysics* A.1 suggests, unlike Isocrates, Aristotle postulates a further level, at which one arrives when one reaches some sort of universal truth concerning our actions. But again, what makes Aristotle's account congenial to Isocrates' is the fact that our approaching the truth does not start by some appeal to Platonic metaphysics, but rather from a careful consideration of ἔνδοξα:

For it belongs to the same ability to see both the truth and what resembles the truth; at the same time, human beings are by nature pretty well oriented toward the truth and more often than not succeed in reaching it. Hence that person will be able to hit upon things [to say] that are held in good repute (τὰ ἔνδοξα) who is also able to hit upon the truth (1355a14-18; trans. J.M. Cooper).

The *Rhetoric* does not explain how exactly a person who is able to hit upon ἔνδοξα will also develop the ability to hit the truth. But Aristotle's insistence that rhetoric is an offshoot not just of dialectic but also of ethics and politics naturally defers us for further explanation to the treatises which deal with a deeper understanding of the subject-matter which forms the basis of ἔνδοξα. To confine ourselves to the case of rhetoric, we can distinguish three levels at which, according to Aristotle, a competent speaker can perform his art in a successful way: the first is the level of habituation. As we have already seen, in the beginning of his *Rhetoric* Aristotle concedes that some people possess the skill through mere habituation;⁴¹ next comes the level reached by

³⁹ *EN* 6.6 1141b16 ff. seems to support such a conclusion.

⁴⁰ What makes the difference, of course, is the postulation of the notion of a universal, the *locus classicus* here being *Post. Ant.* II 19.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that Aristotle, in the beginning of the *Rhetoric*, substitutes ἔξις for ἐμπειρία. This may be a way to avoid the negative connotations that

students who for example simply attend Aristotle's afternoon lectures. Here one becomes acquainted with the technical apparatus or universal principles which ultimately account for a successful practice of the art, where one bases one's arguments on ἔνδοξα and remains there. At the third level, one becomes acquainted with the technical apparatus or universal principles which ultimately account for the successful practice of the art, but is also able to treat ἔνδοξα in the critical fashion that ethics and politics.

If the preceding account is convincing, we can see Aristotle's reaction to Isocrates as an attempt to provide rhetoric with the normative context it needs in order to qualify as an art (at least by Aristotle's standards) (level 2) and with the foundations necessary to justify it epistemologically (level 3). Level 3 is reminiscent of Socrates' claim in the *Phaedrus* according to which the plausibility orators claim for their speeches springs from a deeper correspondence between the realm of popular opinions and that of real essences. As I suggested earlier, proposing a different realm of real essences grasped by reason is a move made both by Plato and Aristotle and not by Isocrates – and because of this it is tempting to regard both Plato and Aristotle as 'rationalists'. But we need to qualify our statement regarding Plato and Aristotle insofar as it is clear that each one of them understands the process by which one arrives at the real essences of things in rather different, or even opposite ways. Thus, Aristotle sometimes describes the process by which our originally fuzzy and gradually more consistent understanding of the world around us turns into a grasp of the principles governing this world as a gradual move from things that are known to us to fundamental objects of knowledge (*EN* A.4, 1095a30-b4).⁴² To confine ourselves to the case of rhetoric, rhetoricians can successfully practice their art without necessarily going beyond the stage of ἔνδοξα. Moreover, successful practice within this stage is a first step toward the fuller grasp of truth – which in turn implies that dialectic is 'a capacity from which the knowledge of the truth is ultimately developed'.⁴³ Of course, this sounds like the *Phaedrus*, where it is argued that only the dialectician can qualify as a rhetorician.⁴⁴ But the similarity is only apparent, insofar as Plato and Aristotle give a different

the term ἐμπειρία might have acquired ever since Plato wrote his *Gorgias* in the context of his criticism of rhetoric – but it further reflects Aristotle's interest in introducing a more demanding and challenging term (ἔξις) to account for the problematic passage from ἐμπειρία to τέχνη.

⁴² Cf. Cooper (1994), 206.

⁴³ Cooper, (1994), 208

⁴⁴ *Phaedrus* 261A.

content to dialectic. According to Plato, rhetoricians who happen to hit upon the truth do so in an erratic, non-technical way, and so do not strictly speaking qualify as rhetoricians. I would like to suggest that this contrast between Plato and Aristotle regarding the legitimacy of 'empiricist' orators, which is largely overlooked in the relevant studies, brings Aristotle closer to Isocrates than to Plato. In the following section, I will try to show why Plato's conception of rhetoric further enlarges the cleavage between him and Aristotle.

III

We have already suggested that Socrates' verdict in the *Phaedrus* regarding the conditions rhetoric needs to fulfil in order to qualify as an art presupposes a notion of rhetoric which has little to do with current Athenian intuitions. I will now try to show what the alternative notion involves and what is Plato's agenda behind its introduction.

Let us start with what seems to be a typical account of Plato's views on rhetoric: Having strongly criticized, at the earlier stage of his career, the kind of rhetoric which people presumably following Gorgias' lead practiced in the fifth century Athens, Plato comes back to the question at a later date (and in a work which is often taken to be at the threshold of his late thought). Plato now sees rhetoric – at least one kind of rhetoric – in a much more favorable light. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates parts company with earlier more or less empiricist speech-writers, and establishes a kind of rhetoric which, far from being at odds with philosophy, presupposes the study of it. The tribute paid to Isocrates toward the end of the *Phaedrus* and Socrates' enigmatic concession regarding his philosophical inclinations (279A-B) has been a matter of controversy. But regardless of the actual interpretation different scholars adopt,⁴⁵ most of them tend to assume that the difference between the Platonic and the Isocratean view about rhetoric concerns the requirements that Plato sets for the rhetorician *before* he qualifies as a rhetorician. By contrast, I would like to suggest that the difference between Plato and Isocrates does not rest solely on their respective understanding of the scope of philosophy, but concerns the content and aims of the rhetorician. Moreover, since, as I have tried to show in the preceding section, at least with regard to *practice*, Aristotle's model of rhetoric does not differ significantly from that of

⁴⁵ For a useful summary of the different interpretations that have been proposed regarding the question whether the reference to Isocrates is serious or ironic see Eucken (1983), 273-74.

Isocrates, our discussion concerning Plato's conception of rhetoric allows us also to revisit the question of Aristotle's alleged debt to Plato.

A significant difference between the kind of rhetoric Socrates criticizes in the *Gorgias* and that which he recommends in the *Phaedrus* rests in the moral and epistemological foundations of the art. The *Gorgias* is critical of a purely instrumental brand of rhetoric and points to the need to understand and articulate an end toward which any speaker should aim.

Taking up the criticism concerning the teleology of rhetoric, the *Phaedrus* then envisages a rhetoric which would operate on the (non-stochastic) model of medicine: the rhetorician must have knowledge of the subject-matter, but also of the soul in which he wishes to implant it. The medical analogy which is exploited here gives an implicit answer to the Platonic Gorgias, who had claimed that a good rhetorician can be more successful than a doctor in persuading patients to follow their treatment.⁴⁶ The upshot of Socrates' objection in the *Gorgias* had been that, if Gorgias is correct, people will end up being persuaded by the non-expert rather than by the expert.⁴⁷ The constructive alternative suggestion of the *Phaedrus* points to a combination between knowledge of the subject-matter and technique in argumentation, modelled on the example of a doctor. Socrates now goes to great pains to distinguish even within the practice of *medicine* the doctor who is able to pinpoint causal connections within the nature of a living body from the doctor who follows rules of thumb in an empirical fashion.⁴⁸ He offers something like a caricature of the latter, when he talks of 'doctors' who would confine their task in suggesting what drug would cause a given effect, drawing their knowledge on medical textbooks rather than on real experience, however without being able to decide – presumably on the basis of an actual, living body – when such a treatment is appropriate (*Phaedrus* 268A-C). What we may find striking in Plato's statement is his failure to appreciate the value of a medical practitioner who, as Aristotle pointed out,

⁴⁶ *Gorgias* 456B.

⁴⁷ The connotations of this criticism for Socrates' own history are obvious, but they become even more explicit in a passage that comes later in the dialogue, where Socrates suggests that if a doctor were to compete with a cook in front of a jury of children, the winner would be the cook (*Gorgias* 521E).

⁴⁸ For the purposes of the present argument I am setting aside the Hippocratic question, though I think my remarks concerning Plato's criticism of empirical medicine show how far Plato is here from drawing on historical medical models.

can succeed more than the one who has theory without experience. But to infer that Aristotle was here able to put his finger on an aspect of experience his teacher had simply missed would be to misunderstand completely Plato's agenda, which, in turn, is shaped to a large extent by his evidently aristocratic idea that running the state is a matter of art, rather than a matter of experience. If we take this aspect of Plato's production into consideration, the caricature of the empiricist doctor we described above falls into place. In talking about *doctors* who draw their knowledge exclusively on second-hand, written material, Plato is not so much interested in some question of medical but rather in the question of rhetorical methodology. At any rate, a doctor who draws his knowledge exclusively on written material is obviously a fictional character,⁴⁹ part of an intellectual experiment which allows Plato to illustrate a particular point regarding *rhetoric* rather than medicine, namely the fact that students of rhetoric cannot learn the subject through written text-books.

But what exactly is it that the particular example advises us not to do if we wish to practice rhetoric in an artful way? What does the case of the empiricist doctor suggest for the 'methodology' of rhetoric? First, and most obvious, comes the criticism of writing. In the context of the *Phaedrus*, this suggests that *orators* (rather than doctors) must not draw their skill from studying other speeches or rhetorical handbooks. But there is another more profound point of criticism, concerning what we may describe as the individuality of the interlocutor. One of the implications of Plato's cryptic advice that rhetoric must study the nature of the whole is that the orator must be familiar with psychology – a suggestion which makes even better sense when we consider the definition of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* as a sort of *ψυχαγωγία*, or leading of the soul, through words. (261A-B). It seems possible to find in Plato's account a source of inspiration for Aristotle's emphasis on the study of emotions.⁵⁰ But there is an important difference regarding Plato's interest in the complexity and *individuality* of different human souls.⁵¹ To be sure, Plato *never says* that human psychology is *not* a science which can allow us to understand different individuals by reducing them to different kinds of *ψυχή*. And indeed one can think of Socrates,

⁴⁹ Note that even Phaedrus admits that these people would be fools (268C).

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Wardy (1996), 82: 'Aristotle's various schemata for organizing emotional proclivities within a typology of character [...] take their original impetus from the notion of 'scientific' psychology advanced in that dialogue.'

⁵¹ Cf. Cooper (1994), 204.

the expert in ἐρωτικά, as someone who is particularly able to understand (though of course not necessarily to persuade) the varieties of human soul. There is a great distance, however, between (a) accepting that someone like Socrates, presumably also a philosopher, can understand different human souls – though again not all of them, but rather the ones toward which he is attracted – and (b) suggesting that one can attend a formal *course* supported also by a handbook which will enable those who have the right disposition to understand the varieties of human soul.

Furthermore, Plato's preoccupation with the varieties of human soul decidedly undermines the model of rhetoric that an Athenian of the fifth or fourth century would find familiar. We can find a plausible account at least of the scope of 'traditional' rhetoric in Gorgias' claim that rhetoric gives you the power to 'convince by your words the judges in court, the senators in Council, the people in the Assembly, or in any other gathering of a citizen body' (452E – trans. D. Woodhead). This function of rhetoric, however, seems either to ignore psychology altogether, or to treat the citizen body as homogeneous. It is certainly no accident that the definition of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* shifts the emphasis from the art of speaking addressing *crowds* to the art of speaking addressing *individuals*. The medical analogy will help us to elaborate a little further on this point.

We have already seen how Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* used the example of medicine in order to suggest the need for a typology in rhetoric. Just as a doctor – presumably, at least according to the classification of *Met.* A.1, a doctor who has been trained in the *art* rather than the mere *practice* of medicine – treats patients not *qua* individuals but rather *qua* cases of some general regularities, so an orator will not consider 'what seems reputable to a given individual like Socrates or Hippias, but what seems so to men of a given type' (*Rhet.* 1356b, trans. Rhys Roberts). Would Plato approve of the particular use of this analogy? I think the answer to this question ultimately depends on our interpretation of the well-known passage from the *Laws* in which Plato introduces the notion of a legislative prelude.

The Visitor from Athens draws a distinction between two kinds of doctors (720c-d). On the one hand, there are those who do not invest the time needed to attend each individual case. Plato describes this kind of doctors as slave doctors and, interestingly enough, uses the term ἐμπειρία to describe the origin of their skill (προστάξας δ' αὐτῶ τὰ δόξαντα ἐξ ἐμπειρίας). On the other hand, there are those, whom Plato describes as free doctors, who spend all the time they need in order to communicate both with their patient and with their environment in order to decide on

the appropriate treatment (720d1-4). One of the problems with the slave doctors is that they group, or rather lump together cases which strike them as similar. Had they been *free* doctors, they would be able to scratch beneath the surface and discover differences which would *either* point to a different classification *or* suggest an entirely different 'paradigm' for medicine, whereby *any classification* would be misleading. In the case of medicine the dilemma does not seem to be realistic. Even if doctors do not explicitly opt for the Aristotelian notion of explicitly reducing patients to certain types, the experience they acquire from treating various patients allows them to make associations – and the more experienced they are the more likely they will be to associate between the most relevant features of a patient. This seems to be a clear and indisputable fact about the way people benefit from experience, and it therefore seems paradoxical that Plato, at least in the context we have been considering, completely fails to consider it. But the paradox is partly removed as soon as we consider more carefully the context in which Plato suggests the analogy.⁵²

In particular, the Visitor from Athens suggests the model of the free physician as the model on which the lawgiver should proceed if he were to introduce each law with an appropriate 'prelude'. In other words, just as the free doctor must try to convince or at least to persuade his patients to follow a particular treatment by explaining to them the reasons for which it will be beneficial, so the lawgiver must introduce law proper with a speech explaining to the citizens why a particular law must be observed. It is possible to interpret the preludes as a vindication of the model of rhetoric Socrates had suggested in the *Phaedrus*.⁵³ The good orator presupposes knowledge of dialectic. And once he has it, according to the *Phaedrus*, he is even more effective in transferring his knowledge to the citizens. Just as the good doctor, who, following the method of Hippocrates recommended by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, understands the nature of the disease, can help the patient by prescribing to him or her the right kind of treatment; so the Platonic orator can help the member of the community by telling him or her what course of action will be to his or her benefit. By far the most notable example of this implementation of rhetoric within the model of Plato's *Laws* is in book X: in order to convince the citizen body to observe the law regarding atheism, the

⁵² Another way to remove the paradox would be to suggest that Plato here refers to some historical distinction between such kinds of doctors, but we have no evidence to support such a view.

⁵³ Cf. Yunis (1996), 223.

orator/lawgiver introduces the law proper with what came to be known as the argument from design for the existence of God.

Plato's marrying philosophy with rhetoric has a number of advantages. It saves rhetoric from the threat of indeterminacy and, at least under the reading I have been advocating, it hands it over to the lawgiver who can unequivocally exploit it for the benefit of the community. But Plato's suggestion is based on a conception of rhetoric which, as we have already suggested, would be completely foreign to prevailing Athenian intuitions regarding the function of rhetoric in the community. Plato describes the lawgiver as an authority who tries to persuade his citizens to obey the law. If he fails to persuade them, the citizens will be punished. Insofar as the citizens are likened to patients there will be no question of discussing the matter in the way that the context of traditional rhetoric would suggest. This Platonic implementation of rhetoric has interesting implications when we try to compare Plato's and Aristotle's criticism of rhetoric.

Prima facie, both Plato and Aristotle think of rhetoric as a field which deals with persuasive speech. But there is an important difference with regard to the direction and hence also the priorities of rhetoric. As we have seen, for Aristotle it is a kind of logic. It starts from ἐνδοξά, but defers us for their truth value to the fields of ethics and politics. Rhetoric owes its instrumental status to its description as a stochastic rhetoric. By contrast, however, Plato's interest in rhetoric lies in the fact that, as he states allegedly endorsing a view of Gorgias, 'it is an art which by far exceeds all others – because it enslaves them δι' ἐκόντων' (*Philebus* 58A=DK 82A26). A paradigm case of such a willing submission is in Plato's *Timaeus* (56c) where Necessity willingly yields (ἐκοῦσα πεισθεῖσά τε φύσις ὑπεῖκεν) to Reason. The implementation of rhetoric in the introduction of the legislative preludes bears a certain similarity to the cosmological model: what matters is not the content of the argument but the ψυχαγωγία, or leading of the soul to a particular course of action.

If my account of Plato is convincing, then we can conclude that, despite what the historiography of philosophy teaches us, when Aristotle develops a model of rhetoric in his *Rhetoric* he is drawing on the Isocratean rather than Platonic tradition. But does this also imply that, at least as far as rhetoric goes, Aristotle draws on a *rhetorical* rather than a *philosophical* tradition? I hope the preceding discussion showed the limits of the dilemma.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ I am most grateful to Mitzi Lee and Spyros Benetatos for their patience in reading various drafts of this paper; to the audience of the Seminar on the

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ivilizations of Greece and Rome (sponsored by the Humanities Center at Harvard), where I had the opportunity to present part of this material, in May 2000, and to Voula Tsouna for her comments on the earliest version; to Michael Frede, Pavlos Kalligas, Pantelis Bassakos, and the referees for *Rhizai* for their comments on the final version. I would also like to acknowledge the generous support of the Center for Hellenic Studies for a Fellowship in 1999-2000, where I did early work on this paper, and of the Greek State Fellowship Foundation for fellowship assistance in 2000-2001.

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