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The Interface between Philosophy and Rhetoric in Classical Athens

Co-edited by Chloe Balla

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CHLOE BALLA

Plato and Aristotle on Rhetorical Empiricism

Abstract: Current interpretations of early Greek rhetoric often rely on a distinction between the empirical stage of rhetoric (associated with the sophists) and the theory of rhetoric which was invented by the philosophers Plato and Aristotle. But insofar as the distinction between experience and theory is itself a product of philosophical criticism and reflects the philosophical priorities of the authors who introduced it, its application in the interpretation of pre-Platonic rhetoric is anachronistic. By examining the contexts in which Plato's and Aristotle's arguments are cast, I propose to show the ways in which their accounts distort our picture of their predecessors.

I n a well-known passage of the *Sophistical Refutations* Aristotle compares teachers of eristic to someone who professes to relieve foot pain but instead of properly teaching the art of shoe-making presents his prospective student with a selection of various kinds of shoes. The contribution of such a man would be useful; it would not, however, lead to art. Aristotle goes on to explain the similarity of the case of rhetoric. Just as in the case of shoe-making, "on the subject of rhetoric there exists much that has been said long ago, whereas on the subject of deduction we had absolutely nothing else of an earlier date to mention, but were kept at work for a long time in experimental researches" (184a10–b4; trans. Pickard-Cambridge). Thus, according to Aristotle, the work of his predecessors amounts not to art but to the products of art: to shoes

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rather than to shoe-making. Aristotle's contribution is to offer the principles on account of which such products can come about; in this sense, rhetoric *qua* art is an invention of philosophers rather than fifth-century sophists and rhetoricians.

A similar idea forms the backbone of Thomas Cole's influential book, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*.¹ Cole has argued that the so-called *technai*, that is, the alleged fifth-century manuals of rhetoric, were not systematic works of theory, but rather demonstration texts, examples whose principles students were expected to internalize by imitation. Cole's suggestion ties in with the contempt that Aristotle and Plato before him express towards what we may call rhetorical empiricism. One problem with this account of the origins of rhetoric is that it fails to appreciate that the very notion of experience is itself a theoretical construct, one that does not necessarily capture, and in fact may misrepresent, the activity of early sophists and rhetoricians. What complicates the question further is that the first theoretical account regarding the notion of experience occurs in a polemical context, that is, in Plato's criticism of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*. In what follows, I would like to examine the broader political and philosophical context in which the arguments of Plato and Aristotle are cast, and to explain in what ways their conclusions may distort our picture of their predecessors in the field of rhetoric. In spite of the chronological priority of Plato's criticism in the *Gorgias*, I will focus first on Aristotle's account because it is formulated not in polemical terms, like the *Gorgias*, but positively.

The *locus classicus* regarding the transition from experience to art is the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In this text, Aristotle draws a distinction between (a) the empirical physician, who knows how to treat a patient without however being able to conceptualize his knowledge, and thus without being able to teach it to a colleague, and (b) the physician properly speaking, who really possesses the art of medicine. Aristotle here takes up a point that Plato made for the first time in the *Gorgias*, namely that mere accumulation of experience does not account for art (*Gorgias* 465a). But whereas Plato had postulated a paradigm that lies outside the world of experience and directs the activity of the artist, Aristotle identifies the mark of the transition from experience to art in the emergence of the universal concept within the human soul. Exactly how this emergence comes about is a complicated issue, but it seems clear that for Aristotle, just

¹T. Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1991).

as for Plato, the transition from experience to art implies transcendence of the limits of experience. What are the implications of such a view for the status of rhetoric? Aristotle's analogy to shoe-making suggests that insofar as rhetoricians do not acquire their skills by conceptualizing the precepts that lie behind the art of rhetoric but by imitating the products of other rhetoricians, what they exercise can have no claim to being art.

There is an important objection one can raise against such a view. Conceptualization of precepts does not need to be explicit. One can teach a grammatical rule either by spelling it out explicitly or by presenting a set of examples in which the rule is exemplified. The classification of these examples presupposes knowledge of such a rule, which may be either latent, and hence implicit, or explicit. The person who knows how to follow a rule is not necessarily interested in formulating it *expressis verbis*. In the case of shoe-making, it is certainly conceivable that one can learn how to make shoes not by listening to an explanation about how one makes shoes, but by watching carefully, over and over again and to that extent also systematically, an experienced cobbler producing shoes. To go back to the case of rhetoric, we can certainly imagine that good students of display speeches would be able to internalize and hence to imitate the principles underlying particular speeches, whether they were intended as display pieces or not. The success of such a procedure is attested in the growth of rhetoric in classical Athens, which flourished in the fourth century quite independently of the philosophers' attempt to provide it with the theoretical concepts which, on their account, turn it into art.²

Aristotle seems aware of this objection when, referring to medicine, he gives an account of the value of experience as a stage that precedes, but does not necessarily lead to, art. According to the *Metaphysics*, a person who possesses medical experience but is unable to state the causes on account of which he proposes the particular treatment is able to treat patients with success.³ Furthermore, the case of medicine illustrates that "with a view to action experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and we even see men of experience

²On this point see H. Yunis, "The Constraints of Democracy and the Rise of the Art of Rhetoric," in D. Boedeker and K. Raafaub, eds., *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 223-40.

³Regarding the connection between experience and rationality, see M. Frede, "Aristotle's Rationalism," in M. Frede and G. Striker, eds., *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 157-73; P. Gregorić and F. Grfić, "Aristotle's Notion of Experience," *Archives der Geschichte der Philosophie*, forthcoming.

succeeding more than those who have *logos* without experience" (981a13-14; trans. Ross). This is why people are likely to mistake experience for real knowledge and art (981a1-2). In connection with this remark, Aristotle cites Polus, according to whom "experience made art but inexperience luck" (981a4-5), and glosses it in a way which, anticipating the epistemological remarks that follow, rules out the possibility that art is exhausted in experience: "science and art come to men through experience" (981a2-3).

Polus presents a similar argument at the beginning of Plato's *Gorgias*; and a similar view is cited by Aristotle at the beginning of the *Rhetoric*, where we learn that ordinary people acquire skill in rhetoric or dialectic "either at random or through practice and from acquired habit" (1354a6-7), which leaves little doubt that Aristotle had in mind the parallel case of rhetoric.⁴ According to this argument, rhetoric is a skill which, just like medicine, can be successfully exercised by either "artists" or "men of experience." In the case of speech composition, one can think of individuals who are able to speak well without ever having been taught. On Aristotle's conception, a person who has this kind of skill will be unable to impart his knowledge to others, precisely because his skill is not based on a grasp of the universal that marks the transition from experience to art. This ties in with Aristotle's suggestion that the ability to teach is a distinguishing mark of the man who knows as opposed to the one who merely has experience (*Metaphysics* 981b8-9). But it is important to realize that this kind of empiricism, for which Aristotle shows considerable respect, differs from what we have described as empiricism in connection with his criticism in the *Sophistical Refutations*. Aristotle's criticism there was directed against people like Gorgias, who attempted to impart their art by having their students learn by heart speeches which had been already written down, presumably for teaching purposes. What makes the case of people like Gorgias problematic from Aristotle's perspective is the fact that instead of exercising their ability to speak in order to persuade (as empirical

⁴There is no independent evidence concerning Polus. R. Renehan, "Polus, Plato, and Aristotle," *Classical Quarterly* 45 (1995): 68-72, argues against the view that when Aristotle quotes Polus in the *Metaphysics* he does not draw directly on Polus' book but relies on Plato's *Gorgias*. This does not rule out the possibility that the connection between rhetoric and experience was also made by Polus, especially since Plato at *Phaedrus* 267b describes him as someone who was particularly interested in diction. On the other hand, even if Aristotle had independent access to Polus' text and Polus himself had not stressed the connection between rhetoric and experience, he was certainly familiar with the relevant discussion in the *Gorgias*.

physicians would exercise empirical medicine in order to heal), they pretend to be teaching an art. It is conceivable that as the teaching of speech composition became more fashionable, teachers of rhetoric or sophists became less interested in practicing and more interested in teaching.⁵ This is the kind of procedure Aristotle has in mind when in the *Metaphysics* he refers unfavorably to "those who have *logos* without experience."

The last point becomes clearer in the light of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the final chapter of this work, Aristotle contrasts the sophists who profess to teach the art of politics, without themselves being practitioners, with the politicians "who would seem to do what they do by means of some sort of natural ability and experience, rather than by means of thought" (*NE* 1181a1; trans. Rowe). The sophists, who train their students in speech composition, are criticized because they profess to guide people who wish to become political experts, while at the same time failing to appreciate the significance of experience: "and yet experience seems to make no small contribution, since otherwise people would not in fact have turned into political experts through familiarity with the political sphere; hence those who aim for expert knowledge in the sphere of politics seem to need experience as well" (1180a10-13). Aristotle goes on to cite an example which to his mind shows that the sophists are inadequate teachers of politics and legislation. He refers to teachers who profess to impart knowledge of legislation to their students by

collect[ing] together those laws that are well thought of, on the basis that one can then pick out the best—as if the selection were not itself a matter of acumen, and correct discrimination not the greatest task, as in questions of music. For it is those experienced in each sphere that discriminate between the relevant products correctly, and understand by what means and in what way they are brought to completion, and what sorts of things harmonize with what; whereas for the inexperienced it is an achievement if they simply avoid failing to observe that the product has been well or badly produced, as in the case of painting. But laws are like the products of political expertise; how then could someone become a legislative expert, or discern which are the best of them, from them?

1181a17-b2

⁵On the difference between sophist and rhetorician, see G. Striker, "Methods of Sophistry," *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3-21.

The example from painting describes an ability even laymen can have to recognize the failure of an artist to represent a particular model. Aristotle thereby suggests that sophists who urge their students to acquire knowledge about legislation by reading the constitutions of other states are unable to provide them with any criterion by which they can choose what will be beneficial for their own state. At best, just as laymen who come across a painting, they can understand if "the product has been well or badly produced." But this ability is not sufficient for someone who wishes to become a legislative expert; for he will have to understand the deeper structure of the legislation, just as, on Aristotle's argument, an experienced ear can understand the deeper structure (i.e. the harmony) of music.

Interest in this kind of deeper understanding seems to be reflected in Aristotle's project concerning the collection of constitutions, of which only the *Constitution of Athens* has come down to us. As for the target of his criticism in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is not hard to trace a reference to a passage from Isocrates' *Antidosis*, where Isocrates attempted to debase prospective statesmen who, instead of seeing the value of speech composition in the way he himself cultivated it, confined themselves to the practice of legislation. Isocrates objects that "those who choose to legislate have at hand a multitude of established laws; they have no need to seek others, but they need only to gather together those that are well regarded elsewhere – which anyone who wishes could easily do" (*Antidosis* 83; trans. Mhrady and Too).

The procedure that Isocrates recommends here is similar to the one Aristotle attributes to Gorgias. Both of them present their students with the products of the art, "with shoes rather than shoe-making." Despite our tendency to describe their flaw as empiricism, both, according to Aristotle's criticism in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, lack experience. This statement becomes problematic in light of a text from the *Protrepticus*, in which Aristotle takes issue with prospective students of legislation precisely on account of their empiricism:

as he is not a good builder who does not use the rule or any other such instrument [i.e. instruments derived from nature] but takes his measure from other buildings, so, presumably, if one either lays down laws for cities or administers the affairs of the state, with a view to and in imitation of administration as conducted by other men or actual existing constitutions, whether of Sparta or of Crete or any other state, he is not a good lawgiver or a serious statesman; for an imitation of what is not

good cannot be good, nor can an imitation of what is not divine and stable in its nature be imperishable and stable.

B49 Düring; trans. Düring

What is particularly striking is that in the *Protrepticus*, unlike the texts from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explicitly connects the method under attack with reliance on experience, when he criticizes lawgivers who "do not take their tools and their most accurate reasonings from first principles . . ." but "take them at second or third hand or at a distant remove, and base their reasonings on experience." He then draws the conclusion: "the philosopher alone copies from that which is exact; for what he looks at is the exact itself, not copies" (B48).

Based on this last passage, one may be tempted to argue along the lines of the developmental hypothesis that when Aristotle wrote the *Protrepticus* he was still under the influence of Plato, and that in his earlier works he shares Plato's contempt for experience as a reliable source of knowledge. But in making such a claim we tend to isolate Plato's argument from the context in which it arises. We thus fail to realize the extent to which the wedge between experience and art that Plato draws in the *Gorgias* is not intended as a general epistemological statement, but as part of Plato's artillery against rhetoric in the context of Athenian democracy.⁶ Given the context in which this criticism is raised, we can easily understand why Plato would have no reason to attribute to experience the positive value that Aristotle attributes to it in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. Plato's criticism in the *Gorgias* focuses on the idea that the empirical rhetorician is confined to gratification precisely because he lacks knowledge of the principles that should govern his domain.⁷ But this criticism, which presupposes, earlier in the dialogue, Gorgias' failure to present a consistent argument regarding the morality of rhetoric, does not need to hold for empirical knowledge generally. As the parallel case of medicine suggests, an empirical physician, insofar as he is a physician, will never yield to what the patient finds less painful but rather to what, regardless of the pain it may cause, will be conducive to health. That Plato never considers the medical example to make this kind of point is not surprising, unless we think that his criticism in the *Gorgias* addresses a question sim-

⁶For more positive statements involving the notion of experience see *Republic* 484d, 582a, 584e.

⁷*Gorgias* 462d-e.

ilar to that which Aristotle raises in his *Metaphysics*. Plato's task in the *Gorgias* is not to answer the epistemological question how one acquires knowledge or technical competence in a given practical domain (such as rhetoric, medicine, or even music), but to undermine the view according to which experience in and of itself turns laymen into experts, especially with regard to the domains of rhetoric and politics.

That Plato's criticism of experience in rhetoric is not intended as a doctrine about empirical knowledge generally becomes more obvious if we consider the evidence from the *Phaedrus*. Drawing on the medical analogy, Socrates envisages a person who claims that he knows how to "raise or lower ... the temperature of people's bodies," to "make them vomit or make their bowels move" and on the basis of this knowledge professes to be a physician, without having any idea as to "whom he should apply such treatments, when, and to what extent" (*Phaedrus* 268a-c; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff). Phaedrus' reaction to the caricature Socrates has drawn allows us to see the connection with the criticism of empirical rhetoric. People, says Phaedrus, would say that "the man is mad if he thinks he is a doctor just because he read a book or happened to come across a few potions; he knows nothing of the art." Aristotle takes up Plato's point when he says that people cannot become medical experts by studying written texts,⁸ but also when in the *Protrepticus* he talks about statesmen who believe they can gain knowledge in legislative matters by reading the actual constitutions of other cities.

However, neither Plato nor Aristotle suggests that prospective physicians or prospective statesmen should not study such written texts. In fact, Socrates describes people who claim to have medical, musical, or theatrical knowledge just because they have come across some written text on the relevant field as possessing what comes before the art (269a). This remark ties in with the criticism of writing throughout the dialogue. Towards the end of the *Phaedrus* Socrates points to the static nature of written texts and discusses how a written composition may get "not only into the hands of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it" (275e). Those who do not understand it fail to realize that a written text is no more than a reminder, to support the memory of those who already know what it talks about (275a). To appreciate the content of a written text one must already be acquainted with the subject in

⁸Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1181b2-3

a way that will allow the reader to place the information contained in the text in its relevant context.

Both Plato and Aristotle describe this kind of acquaintance as knowledge of nature. Aristotle's language when he praises the philosopher who takes his tools from nature (in the *Protrepticus*) is not very far from the passage in which Socrates contrasts to empiricism what Phaedrus recognizes as the so-called method of Hippocrates:

In both cases we need to determine the nature of something: of the body in medicine, of the soul in rhetoric. Otherwise, all we'll have will be an empirical and artless practice. We won't be able to supply, on the basis of an art, a body with the medicines and diet that will make it healthy and strong, or a soul with the reasons and customary rules for conduct that will impart to it the convictions and virtues we want.

Phaedrus 270b

Acquaintance with nature prevents us from uncritically imitating what we find written down in a text. According to Plato's example, a real physician, unlike a layman, knows how to profit by the information contained in a textbook; paraphrasing Aristotle's example from the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the light of the *Protrepticus*, a legislative expert (*nomothetikos*), unlike a sophist, knows how to profit from the written text only if he is already acquainted with the real nature of a state. We see that an important aspect of Plato's criticism, which Aristotle takes over in the passage from the *Protrepticus*, is the emphasis it places on the mimetic character of empiricism. The alleged physician who has acquired fragmentary knowledge of medicine through a textbook, the statesman who thinks he can learn how to legislate by studying the institutions of other states, and, last but not least, the rhetorician who examines the "shoes" with which Gorgias presents him share a common flaw: none of them possess firsthand knowledge of the subject matter, and in this sense, none of them become aware of its nature, that is, of its inner principle of organization, which involves an understanding of the causal chain which allows nature to realize itself.

One can envisage a situation in which what one reads in a book becomes the springboard for deeper study of the subject matter. But Plato is unwilling to consider further how an individual can achieve the transition from this kind of fuzzy, secondhand experience to art. In a passage from the *Laws* (720d) he describes the procedure of

physicians who have learned their skills on the basis of experience, having no real knowledge of causes but imitating their masters by internalizing rules of thumb. These physicians, whom Plato labels "slave physicians," are contrasted to free physicians who are able to explain to the patient the origin and nature of diseases and also have the time to converse with the patient and his friends. Although the distinction between slave and free physicians anticipates Aristotle's distinction between experience and art,⁹ Plato in the *Laws* has no interest in explaining how the kind of medicine that he describes as based on slavish, mechanistic imitation succeeds in healing as much as its free counterpart. (The difference, according to the text, lies in the fact that the latter is able to persuade the patients whereas the former is not). But this is not the kind of question Plato wishes to address.

Plato's conception of experience as a procedure based on slavish mimesis is reproduced in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*. But here Aristotle is not interested in treating the notion of experience in the more systematic way we find in his later texts. Although he uses the term ἐμπειρία to describe the flaw of those who do not receive their principles from nature, he also uses the words ἐμπειρος τῆς φύσεως to describe in a positive light successful physicians or trainers.¹⁰ Nevertheless, when he develops the notion of experience in later contexts he is unwilling to apply it to what Plato in the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Laws* described as ἐμπειρία, despite the fact that he fully endorses Plato's criticism for rhetoricians who rely on ready-made written texts. This is the criticism we find in both the *Sophistical Refutations* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* and which allows us to form our view of what in the outset of this paper we described as "rhetorical empiricism." In the context in which it arises, this criticism applies to orators who acquire their art by uncritically studying other written texts (this criticism is shared by Plato and Aristotle) or by tailoring their speeches to the taste of the mob (stressed by Plato in the *Gorgias*); it leaves out, however, the kind of rhetoricians who would fit the more positive description of the passage from the *Metaphysics*. That such a description is virtually absent from

⁹The Athenian Stranger describes the reaction of a slave physician upon seeing a free physician practising his art: "you are not treating the patient, but tutoring him. Anybody would think he wanted to become a physician rather than get well again" (*Laws* 857c-e, trans. Saunders). See also Laks in this issue of the journal.

¹⁰*Protrepticus* B46: "for as all intelligent physicians and most experts in physical training agree that those who are to be good physicians or trainers must have a general knowledge of nature, so good lawmakers too must have a general knowledge of nature (ἐμπειρους εἶναι τῆς φύσεως)."

Aristotle's account need not surprise us, because presumably his criticism is directed not against an abstract concept of rhetoric, but against particular individuals who professed to train prospective statesmen. This should not prevent us from appreciating the fact that rhetoric as an art flourishes independently and in spite of the criticism it receives from the philosophers.

On the other hand, it is important to realize in what respects the criticism Plato and Aristotle develop against rhetorical empiricism distorts our understanding of early rhetoric. I would like to suggest that the tendency to connect the sophistic movement with an interest in "concrete human experience,"¹¹ or even with a practical orientation, which is exemplified most prominently in accounts of the origins of rhetoric, is to a large extent the product of philosophical bias. We can trace this tendency back to Plato's attempt in the *Gorgias* to reduce rhetoric to mere experience. Plato's criticism hardly makes sense unless we postulate the wedge between experience and art that Socrates introduces in this dialogue.¹² But what allows both Plato and Aristotle to introduce the distinction is the assumption that the transition from experience to art implies a transcendence of the limits of experience, which in turn presupposes the conception of a deeper structure of reality, for which only Plato's ideas or Aristotle's universals can sufficiently account.

Moreover, with regard to the alleged practical orientation of the sophists, a closer examination of the relevant evidence suggests that teaching the art of persuasion may not have been a primary concern for them.¹³ The opposite view, which is quite common in traditional historiography, draws support from later sources, such as the story about the origins of rhetoric related by Cicero, according to which it was the practical needs of states in Sicily after the overthrow of the tyrants that brought about the rise of rhetoric (*Brutus* 46). The problem with this piece of evidence is that Cicero himself attributes its origin to Aristotle, who, if my argument is correct, had reasons to stress the practical orientation of the sophists. To understand these

¹¹So J. de Romilly, *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992), 9, cited by R. A. Wallace, "The Sophists in Athens," in D. Boedeker and K. Raafaub, eds., *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press 1998), 203-22 (208).

¹²Polus' difficulty to follow Socrates in 462c-d shows the gap between the Platonic approach and the continuity between experience and art that must have been common ground in Pre-Platonic thought. Cf. M.J. Schiefsky, *Hippocrates' On Ancient Medicine. Translated with Introduction and Commentary* (Brill: Leiden, 2005), 347.

¹³M. Gagarin, "Did the Sophists Aim to Persuade?" *Rhetorica* 19 (2001): 275-91.

reasons it is important to understand that the distinction between experience and art in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* forms part of a rather different discussion, on the meaning of σοφία or wisdom, the object of which is the very subject of the particular treatise. A crucial part of Aristotle's argument here is that both ἐμπειρία and art fall short of wisdom insofar as they aim at production; by contrast, what makes philosophy more valuable than any other knowledge is that it alone is not pursued for any external use—"it alone exists for itself" (*Metaphysics* 982b).

That philosophical knowledge has no utility may sound abhorrent to a modern reader. The situation would be somewhat different for Aristotle's audience, particularly those sharing an aristocratic mentality.¹⁴ This reaction goes back to Plato and in the way in which he discredits the practical orientation of Socrates' rivals in the context of Athenian democracy. Plato's criticism is typically directed against their interest in moneymaking, their willingness to tolerate time constraints set by various political and judicial assemblies, and last but not least their dependence on the reception of their audience. But there is no independent reason to believe that the authors of the speeches we describe as sophistic, and which we usually understand as propaedeutic for the art of rhetoric, had an interest in training students in rhetoric. This remark is important, because it allows us to appreciate that the interests of many of the authors whom we classify as sophists or rhetoricians include subjects that would hardly have any practical use.¹⁵

Reservations concerning the empirical emphasis and the practical orientation of early rhetoric point to a reconsideration not only of the origins of rhetoric but also of the origins of philosophy. It seems that Plato's attempt to define the discipline by highlighting the theoretical orientation of philosophy has influenced the way we understand the claim of intellectuals before him to practice philosophy. We find a typical example of this understanding in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, in the statement that "the *philosophia* 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

¹⁴A. Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Philosophy. Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), 230–31.

¹⁵See R. A. Wallace, "The Sophists in Athens," cited in n. 11 above; "Plato's Sophists, Intellectual History after 450, and Sokrates," forthcoming in *The Cambridge Companion to Athens in the Age of Pericles*, L. J. Samons II, ed. (Cambridge University Press). On Antiphon see M. Gagarin, *Antiphon the Athenian: Oratory, Law, and Justice in the Age of the Sophists* (University of Texas Press: Austin, 2002).

and how to cope with them."¹⁶ But Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides, for instance, allows us to infer that far from focusing primarily on practical matters, the Athenians shared a non-systematic interest in wisdom or intellectual cultivation, regardless of its immediate relevance to their current affairs.¹⁷ One can argue that Pericles uses the verb φιλοσοφοῦμεν in a general sense to describe the Athenians' love of wisdom (2.40.1); but if we keep in mind his own discipleship to Anaxagoras¹⁸ and also the fact that terms such as σοφία, θεωρία, and φρόνησις are not introduced as technical vocabulary before Aristotle, we can start to think that fifth-century intellectuals did not have a clear conception of what distinguished practice from theory,¹⁹ and that our own tendency to understand fifth-century intellectuals as oriented toward practical, utilitarian ends comes from polemical sources like Plato and Aristotle. This kind of skepticism undermines any attempt to reconstruct the transition from an original stage of rhetorical empiricism to a mature art of rhetoric.

¹⁶M. Ostwald and J. P. Lynch, "The Growth of Schools and the Advance of Knowledge," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994), vol. 6, 592–633.

¹⁷Cf. M. Frede, "Aristotle's Account of the Origins of Philosophy," *Rhizai* 1 (2004): 9–44 (21).

¹⁸See Plato, *Phaedrus* 269e.

¹⁹For the development of the philosophical notion of θεωρία out of its cultural context see A. Wilson Nightingale, "On Wandering and Wondering: *Theoria* in Greek Philosophy and Culture," *Arion* 9 (2001): 23–58; *Spectacles of Truth*, cited in n. 14 above, p. 18.