

Did Gorgias Coin *Rhetorike*? A Rereading of Plato's *Gorgias*

Maria Tanja Luzzatto

Università di Pisa, Italia

Abstract Thirty years after E. Schiappa's self-styled 'coining-of-*rhetorike* thesis', the assumption that *rhetorike* was invented by Plato in *Gorgias* (448d) is meeting with increasing consensus; yet the foundations of the 'revised' approach, besides contrasting with Aristotle's narrative and all our ancient sources, have never been examined in detail. Indeed, Plato's *Gorgias* is our main evidence to the contrary, since an unbiased reading of the dialogue very clearly points to the sophist from Leontini as the teacher who first 'disciplined' rhetoric and coined *rhetorike*. It is my aim to put Gorgias in context, and to reconsider in a different light both his relationship with the earlier *logon techne* and his statements about speech in *Helen*. The new discipline's powerful impact on contemporary politics seriously alarmed Plato, fuelling his attack against the sophist's school. Once we put Gorgias back in place, the absence of *rhetorike* in fifth-century texts is no longer an anomaly, and the missing word is readily found where it might be expected to appear.

Keywords Greek rhetoric. 'Revised' approach. Gorgias of Leontini. Plato's *Gorgias*. Sophistic. Alcidas.

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1 Introduction

Tum quae sciebat quisque docuit
(Quint. 3.2.3)

The title of this paper will immediately call to the mind of readers a well-known essay by E. Schiappa,¹ whose basic assumption is that ῥητορικὴ was coined by no other than Plato himself on the very page where we now meet the Greek word for the first time (*Grg.* 448d9), as “a conceptual target” and “a useful label... to use to contrast the nature of Isocrates’ (and others’) training from his own”. He did so, we are told, “in order to limit the sophistic art of λόγος to speaking in the assembly and the law-courts”, yet while inventing a disparaging term “for a skill he obviously mistrusted” Plato apparently succeeded in the historical paradox of giving an unforeseen impetus to the hated discipline. By severing the traditional links of the new *technē* with the sophistic movement and with the democratic revolutions of the fifth century, the so-called ‘revised’ approach dismisses both previous ‘standard’ accounts – G.A. Kennedy’s popular handbook (1963) being the prime target – and the whole of our ancient evidence, despite the fact that early witnesses are first-class and later ones show clear indication of relying on a single, but very authoritative source.² Moreover, the self-styled ‘coining-of-*rhetorike* thesis’ has implications that call into question rhetoric’s subsequent history no less than the time of its birth, and asks us to settle a complicated issue by trusting a single, all-important indicator (namely, the first occurrence of the new term in surviving Greek texts) in the face of a number of arguments to the contrary. But what about the indicator itself? Objections have been so far partial, timid and inadequate, mostly concentrating on the single word while losing sight of the way in which the shift to Plato and the Academy affected the overall picture. This is not to say that details are not important: in fact, many of them – *in primis* the correct meaning of τὴν καλουμένην ῥητορικὴν in *Gorgias* – ought to be decisive by themselves (*infra*, § 6), but since the revised approach is nevertheless steadily gaining acceptance,³ even in traditional quarters, I think a comprehensive

1 Schiappa 1990, 466-7 for the quoted passages. The essay is largely reproduced in Schiappa 1991, 40-9; 1999, 14-23. Later claims of the ‘thesis’ in Timmermann, Schiappa 2010 and Schiappa 2016. The same argument is tentatively advanced by Cole 1991, 2 (“the word *rhetoric* itself bears every indication of being a Platonic invention”), and 29 on Plato and Aristotle as “the true founders of rhetoric as well as of philosophy”.

2 Namely Aristotle’s lost *Synagoge technon*: for a possible reconstruction of the editorial format see Luzzatto 2008a, 193 ff.

3 See the rash pronouncements in Kalivoda, Zinsmaier 2005, 1423: “Mit Platons terminus ῥητορικὴ wird dann im 4. Jh. v.Chr. eine lexikalische und semasiologische Unterscheidung zwischen Theorie und Anwendung... vollzogen”, 1424: “das Wort ῥητορικὴ – und mit ihm

reappraisal of the problem is necessary, in order to prevent an ill-founded assumption from becoming so entrenched in studies of Greek rhetoric as to seriously handicap future research. My reply will be twofold. On the one hand, although it has long been fashionable among scholars to declare at the outset that Plato's choice of naming his dialogue after Gorgias does *not* entail a real relevance of the sophist's role in the debate to follow, I intend to bring the focus back on Gorgias himself and his 'profession'. On the other hand, while I agree with revisionist scholars in giving terms of art the importance they deserve, I am also persuaded that a strong cultural prejudice about the intellectual world of fifth-century Greece has resulted in a very serious misunderstanding of the correct relationship between the new discipline and the teaching methods that had been current before it. Yet before engaging in the fascinating quest for ancient Greek *rhetorike*, inevitably dwelling on what appear to me the shortcomings of the revised approach, I would also emphasize that I owe Schiappa a debt for drawing my renewed attention to Plato's *Gorgias* and the dialogue's main character. True, Schiappa's unflinching focus on *rhetorike* was meant to lead to Plato, but research is liable to take unexpected turnings, and it is by following the very same thread that I became increasingly aware that revisionist scholars, no less than traditional ones, had apparently lost sight of the obvious, and were guilty of taking no heed of Gorgias' personal role in shaping a new discipline that was going to be immensely successful. It is my aim in the following pages to put the missing piece back in place.

2 Assessing the Evidence: *What Was Gorgias?*

Gorgias lived to be more than a hundred years, a grand *sophos* from a bygone age, yet contemporary with teachers much younger than himself, Isocrates and Plato among them.⁴ Whichever experiment we choose in the fertile epoch that spans two centuries and the Greek world from West to East he was born with it, and we should not leave him outside the picture. He was a serious scholar, a sound teacher, and also a glamorous performer endowed with a unique, flamboyant style that caused a sensation in his time but soon was out of fashion (Arist. *Rh.* 3.1, 1404a26-28), to be blamed thereafter by stern teach-

das Konzept einer spezifischen Disziplin "Redekunst" – erscheint hingegen erst im frühen 4. Jh. v.Chr. bei Platon". A tactful compromise in Kennedy 1994, 3: "(*rhetorike*) apparently came into use in the circle of Socrates in the fifth century and first appears in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*".

⁴ Quintilian's remark (3.1.9 *cum multis simul floruit*) is much to the point: this use of Gorgias' exceedingly long life to mark out the whole early season of rhetorical practice possibly goes back to Aristotle's *Synagoge* (the main source of §§ 8-12).

ers of rhetoric in ancient schools: memory of Gorgias mostly lingered on as a warning to pupils against poetic excesses, and the sophist's name was eventually used as a tag for oratorical *kitsch*.⁵ Yet during his lifetime Gorgias had won wide renown as an able *practical* teacher,⁶ offering a much sought-after training in politics and public speaking to rich youths who rushed to his school from all over the Greek world – in spite of the enormous fees he charged them for it. It so appears that we must reckon with two different sides of the same man. The colourful descriptions and widespread disapproval of the sophist's style bequeathed to us by ancient school tradition are only a part of the picture, and the short texts that have come down to us in a small Byzantine corpus cannot do full justice to the sophist's role as a teacher of the Greek élite. Indeed, in the author's own opinion, the praise of Helen is an intellectual entertainment for a discriminating public, a *paignion* as he calls it (*Hel.* 21): the true meaning of the word has been a matter for debate,⁷ but there is no avoiding the fact that it subtly reminds readers that *Helen* is not, at least not entirely, serious. These *epideixeis* were cleverly shaped for self-promotion, and Gorgias is willing to show his hand up to a point – but if you wanted the real thing, you had to pay for it.

The real thing is what we may find in Plato, who brings us face to face in his *Gorgias* with a gentlemanly, authoritative *sophistes* speaking about himself and his goals and methods, not lecturing on behalf of heroes from the mythical past. The very first lines inform us that Gorgias has just been entertaining his admiring Athenian hosts with a learned *epideixis*, but Socrates quickly waves it aside and questions Gorgias about his profession. From our point of view, Plato moves away from display pieces, such as the few that have come down to us, and brings to the fore the sophist's business as a successful teacher, setting him in a broader perspective in order to assess his (in Socrates' opinion, wholly bad) influence on younger generations. The first debate between Socrates and Gorgias (about 20 pages in Burnet's text) is followed by two increasingly longer ones, with pupils of different age and standing: first (30 pages) the Sicilian Polus, who has been studying the art of speech ἐπὶ τέχνῃ and is now a professional in his turn and the author of a book (*Grg.* 462b11), and after him (nearly 70 pages) Callicles, who is attached to Gorgias

⁵ Harsh judgements start in the first century, D.S. 12.53.4, D.H. *Lys.* 3.4, *Th.* 24.9. For later instances, Hermog. *Id.* 1.6, 249.2 and 2.9, 377.10 Rabe, Athanasius in *Prolegomenon sylloge*, 180.9 Rabe. Moderns follow: see the scathing and often quoted, yet unfair remark in Denniston 1952, 12.

⁶ To the point of being blamed by Aristotle for this very reason, *S.E.* 34, 184a1 ff.

⁷ Bibliography in Ioli 2013, 249 (add Segal 1962, 119; Schiappa 1999, 130 f.; Velardi 2001, 37). Anyhow παίγνιον was a stock remark in display pieces, see Alcid. *Soph.* 34 ἐν παιδιᾷ καὶ παρέργῳ.

ἐπὶ παιδείᾳ, as was deemed suitable for an ambitious young man of the Athenian élite.⁸ It has often been remarked⁹ that since most of the scene is occupied by Gorgias' pupils the dialogue is perhaps misnamed; however nobody has ever raised doubts about the original title, and what surprises us certainly did not surprise Plato, nor contemporary readers. Is it possible that they knew something very important and quite obvious about Gorgias that escapes us? To answer this, we must begin by stating that, despite appearances to the contrary, Socrates pursues from beginning to end a single and coherent line of argument, his whole enquiry taking its cue from Gorgias' claim on *rhetorike* in the opening pages. This is why, even if Polus and Callicles are deemed better fit to represent the updated views and characteristic harshness of intellectuals by the turn of the century, Plato feels justified in tracing their opinions back to the seminal force of the new discipline of 'rhetoric', as it had been shaped in earlier years by the distinguished foreign intellectual who had imported into mainland Greece this last achievement of the Greek West.

Let us review the few known facts. Sometime around 430 Gorgias moved on from previous scientific speculations¹⁰ to launch a new educational programme that enabled him to compete with other renowned sophists by claiming for himself a distinctive portion of Greek *paideia*. According to Plato, he used for it the word *rhetorike* and prided himself on teaching this and nothing else, and ancient authorities, from Cicero (*Brut.* 47) to late antique professors,¹¹ entered Gorgias among the first 'teachers of rhetoric' in Greece. So much is known, but we still miss many details. The reason for this lies in the fact that our later witnesses are seldom historically-minded: teachers were guided by considerations of usefulness and had little time to waste in satisfying curiosities about doctrines and handbooks that had long become obsolete. Rhetoric had been there for centuries as an established discipline and a widely accepted body of rules: when viewed in retrospect, the historical pattern became dimmer and less interesting at the farther end, with the exception of a few theoretical problems which could still be a matter of hot debate, such as the correct definition of *rhetorike*. As a memory of the past, besides providing a convenient link between Sicily and Athens, Gorgias mostly survived

8 The distinction in Pl. *Prt.* 312b3-4. According to Dodds 1959, 5 "Polus is the spiritual heir of Gorgias, Callicles the spiritual heir of Polus", but I see no reason for connecting Callicles with Polus; rather, Plato links both Polus and Callicles to Gorgias, as two distinct outcomes (the second more dangerous than the first) of the same school.

9 Already by ancient readers: see the debate about the *skopos* Plato had in mind as related by Olympiodorus (*in Grg.* 1.4, 3. 2-7 Westerink).

10 Olympiodorus (82 A 10 D-K) gives a plausible dating of Gorgias' *Περὶ φύσεως* to the 84th Olympiad (444/440; Porphyrius is the likely source). See also *infra*, § 4.

11 *Prolegomenon Sylloge* 4, 27.15; 5, 53.12; 13, 189.18; 17, 272.31 Rabe.

as the author of a celebrated, but seriously flawed 'definition' of rhetoric (πειθοῦς δημιουργός, *infra*) whose very weakness offered an opportunity for a useful lesson in logic: the simple framework was taken from Aristotle's *Synagoge*, and people who wanted to know more about the ancient sophist could always go back to it.¹² Our needs, of course, are quite different. Since we have no use for rhetoric as a general classroom practice, our main interest lies in historical and philological reconstruction of lost authors and works, and it has long been known that the Greek word *rhetorike* first occurs in Plato's *Gorgias*: hence, if we take the opening pages of the dialogue at face value, the sophist and his school notoriously specialized in the discipline and used *rhetorike* as their own prized possession. It should logically follow that for anyone interested in tracing the birth of Greek rhetoric Gorgias should be a key figure. Indeed, we might expect 'revised' approaches in particular to enhance the sophist's role, given their sensitivity to technical vocabulary, but surprisingly enough they rather agree with traditional histories in playing down the sophist's part as that of a self-conscious stylist with little or no influence on the 'disciplining' of discourse. This is a sharp contrast to Plato, who shows no interest at all for Gorgias' literary and stylistic merits, yet is seriously worried about his powerful impact upon the education of would-be Athenian politicians. Even if the philosopher has a poor opinion of Gorgias as an expert in dialectics, he is far from underestimating him as a teacher *in his own field*: Socrates' passionate defence of the need for a moral basis to education stems from a deep concern about the dangers of training ambitious and unscrupulous young people in "'rhetoric', as it is called". For his part, Plato will not treat Gorgias lightly and in this matter we had better follow his judgement.

However, I am well aware of a major obstacle. Any search for historical evidence on the sophists in Plato's dialogues is highly controversial and few scholars will subscribe to his reliability as a witness: a touch of irony and artistic parody are felt to be much more in line with the philosopher's taste for dramatic representation. This is especially true of sophists who appear vain and less serious to modern eyes, and as a rhetor of "dazzling insincerity" and an "indefatigable stylist" specializing in "verbal magic" Gorgias readily falls into this class. I quote these judgements from Eric Dodds' highly influential commentary (1959, 8) which appears deeply disappointing, however great its other merits, when it comes to the sophist who gives the dialogue its name. Of course, there are cases when Dodds will not deny that opinions expressed by Gorgias as a character in the dialogue may well belong to the historical person, but in his general assess-

¹² Contrary to current views, I believe that evidence has emerged that Aristotle's work was still available in the fifth century A.D., see Luzzatto 2013.

ment Gorgias is *never* important: he is a mere plaything in Socrates' hands, and his poor performance is only instrumental in giving Plato the opportunity to better further his own line of argument. This kind of prejudice is not confined to *Gorgias* and explains, by the way, the often erratic choice of passages from Plato in Section C (Ältere Sophistik) of Diels-Kranz *Vorsokratiker*. In Gorgias' case, a striking example is the absence of the single most significant pronouncement made by the sophist about the art he has been teaching, although Diels prints in the same section two strictly related statements made by him just a few lines before and after it.¹³ But even passages that figure in Diels' collection are rarely deemed to be faithful reports, let alone exact quotations:

For scholars interested in historically accurate appraisal of Socrates and contemporary sophists such as Gorgias and Protagoras, it is frustrating that few primary sources survive. Plato's work, just one generation removed, is a rich target for the recovery of lost information. But the lifelike atmosphere that pervades Plato's dialogues is the result of an artistic technique intended to engage readers, not an invitation to scholars of later generations to use the dialogues for historical reconstruction... Plato's dialogues are vehicles for advancing his own philosophical and educational agenda.

These words¹⁴ aptly summarize an attitude that is deeply ingrained and has found a broad consensus. It has the advantage, among others, of simplifying the task of modern commentators by giving them a free hand in dealing with any reported fact or opinion which might not square with preconceived ideas about the complex intellectual world that had shaped Plato's philosophy. Yet Plato did not move in a vacuum: on the contrary, he reaped the fruits of an extraordinary intellectual season and reacted step by step to challenges posed by previous thinkers. The "lifelike atmosphere" of his dialogues mirrors the world of his youth, a world that had been very real to him: it would have taken a second-rate writer to use fiction when life was such a rich and exciting source of inspiration, and only a disreputable scholar would engage in sham debates with mock sophists while leaving without answer serious opinions that were still highly influential. In a world where the sophists were leading figures, often much bet-

13 *Grg.* 450b (rhetoric as being *περὶ λόγους*) and 453a (*πειθοῦς δημιουργός*) are VS 82 A 27-28, but Diels skips 452e, see *infra*. As a consequence, the fundamental passage is still missing in the valuable Loeb by Laks, Most 2016, where passages from Plato are conveniently placed in a separate 'appendix'.

14 Yunis 2007, 76. Compare Dodds 1959, 192 "my own feeling is that parody is more likely in Plato than *verbatim* quotation", but even quotations that are not literal need not be fictional.

ter known to the reading public than Plato himself (and this was certainly true at the early time when he wrote *Gorgias*) and where their books were widely circulated, Plato could not have used Gorgias or Protagoras or Hippias as fictional spokesmen of unlikely statements they had never made without immediately bringing discredit on his own replies to them. True, he was not an historian, but by choosing dialogue instead of narrative he was not just committing himself to 'drama' as a literary pursuit. On the contrary, the dialectical format allowed him to discuss important topics with past members of the intellectual community, notwithstanding distance in time and place, and to engage in serious debates which could not disregard *scholarly* accuracy: when Socrates/Plato takes issue with opinions voiced by celebrated sophists we may reasonably surmise that he refers to their authenticated beliefs, since fake copies could be easily detected and would never deceive contemporary readers.

In the case of *Gorgias*, let me first advance a negative proof of this. Even a hasty reader cannot fail to notice that in the last two thirds of the dialogue Gorgias fades away and no more takes part in the discussion with Socrates, yet three brief but well timed remarks (464a, 497b, 506a) show that Plato is at pains to remind his readers that the sophist is still *present* on the scene; indeed, he will not leave it until the very end. Since Plato could easily have found an excuse for removing Gorgias altogether from the group of participants, it should logically follow that the sophist's silences after 464b are no less deliberate than his active involvement in the first part of the dialogue, and the simplest explanation is that while Gorgias, in Plato's opinion, must stay on and thus accept full responsibility for the ideas and attitudes he had been instrumental in passing on to the younger generations, yet he can no longer engage in the debate, once it turns off into directions unknown to him. The historical Gorgias had never been confronted with Socrates'/Plato's idea of *rhetorike* and Plato, for his part, will not put in his mouth counter-arguments that could not possibly belong to him.¹⁵ The crude analogy between rhetoric and cookery drawn by Socrates (464b ff.) is a shocking and unforeseen development which effectively breaks the dialogue in two sections: by casting his classification of the disciplines in the form of a mathematical proportion Socrates echoes one of the sophist's character-

15 This explanation of Polus' and Callicles' parts in the debate makes better sense to my mind of the dialogue's thoughtful structure; I cannot persuade myself that Gorgias' disciples "interviennent pour lui porter secours" because of his "faiblesse conceptuelle", Noel 2004, 133. It seems to me that such a reading mistakes for a lack of confidence on Gorgias' part the courteous attitude and complacency of an old teacher dealing with an unduly harsh and extravagant attack. Socrates and Gorgias are worlds apart and neither one is willing to change his mind.

istic *clichés*¹⁶ at the very moment when he starts moving away from him, a final bow to a respected teacher of the near past. The same holds true of Gorgias' relapse into silence after his brief remarks in 497b and 506a, when he rebukes both Polus and Callicles for not letting Socrates refute their arguments on his own terms: as a master of *elenchos* he is giving his two former pupils a lesson in fair play that is in keeping with his portrait throughout the dialogue and may well have been a historical trait of the man, but both times he will not – that is, he *can* not – take part in a debate that is steadily moving beyond his known interests and, we might say, his time of life. After 464b Plato ventures into a different world, and the aged fifth-century thinker is left far behind. As long as nothing contradicts this, a strong case must be made for Plato's general accuracy in reporting what Gorgias did or did *not* say.

Once we assume that Plato deliberately avoids ascribing opinions to Gorgias that lacked sure evidence, we ought conversely to trust him when he reports the sophist's ideas in the opening pages of the dialogue. Starting at 449d, Socrates' dialectical manoeuvre successfully elicits from Gorgias three fundamental statements about (a) the nature, (b) the scope and (c) the definition of *rhetorike* (452d, 453a, 454b) that will eventually enable Plato, in the debate to follow, to test his own educational programme against Gorgias' successful school. This is correct scholarly procedure: though very unequal in length, the two sections of the dialogue – before and after the turning point at 464a – reflect Plato's careful summing up of the historical development of 'rhetoric' up to the time when he opened the Academy, somewhere in the second decade of the fourth century. If, moreover, statements made by Gorgias in the first section can be fitted in a coherent whole and related in a meaningful way to earlier teaching methods, a historical and technical reading of *Gorgias* 452d-453a will strongly gain in plausibility. This is a really crucial point, because it will show that in Plato's authoritative view Gorgias was not just one of a number of fifth – and fourth-century professionals who taught 'rhetoric', but has been chosen as *the* representative of the discipline because he had fixed new boundaries to it, and given it a new name to match. That name was, very aptly, *rhetorike*. It should come as no surprise that ancient rhetoric was 'invented' by no other than a *rhetor*: "and an excellent one at that, Socrates" (*Grg.* 449a7).

This conclusion runs contrary to generally held views about Gorgias. True, he fares better than Corax and Tisias, his two less glamorous fellow Sicilians who vanish altogether into legend,¹⁷ and re-

¹⁶ Cf. *Gorg. Hel.* 14, and Dodds 1959, 227.

¹⁷ The problem does not concern us here, but in the face of Aristotle's clear evidence I think that even this assumption is quite unlikely, Luzzatto 2008a, 207 ff..

visionist scholars will at least grant him a 'predisciplinary' status,¹⁸ but it is now usual to represent early rhetoric as an entirely Athenian affair, and the cultural interchange with the Greek West no longer plays a part in it. This is a complete reversal of our ancient evidence and should not be accepted lightheartedly, yet novelty has its appeal and even otherwise traditionally-minded scholars now openly indulge in piecemeal additions of new, fashionable theories, apparently unperturbed by the historical havoc they might cause in doing so. Even the few scholars who have so far attempted to refute the 'coining-of-*rhetorike* thesis' show no awareness of Gorgias' possible role in settling the dispute, and the fewer still who incidentally suspected the truth¹⁹ appear to lay so little faith in it, as to miss altogether its fundamental importance for the history of the discipline. Yet if we accept Plato's portrait, the sophist from Leontini comes to the fore as a leading character in the narrative of early Greek rhetoric, and the current view of a late birth of the discipline in the fourth century will be no longer tenable.

3 Rhetoric-to-be: the Early Books

This is not to say that I don't agree with giving key terms the importance they deserve; indeed, I consider the focus on *rhetorike* a truly valuable suggestion, that has unfortunately led to mistaken inferences and serious misunderstandings. Past scholars may be mildly blamed for applying 'rhetoric' to authors who still did not use the word, but this is far from saying that in tracing the origins of the discipline back to ancient Syracuse they implied that *Cole's and Schiappa's rhetoric* was born full-fledged in Sicily by the middle of the fifth century. Criticism on this point is misleading: as Aristotle would have it, by playing with *homonymia*, revisionist scholars are guilty of neglecting their own principles, because they impose on early Greek *rhetorike* a foreign meaning – that is, "what we would now call Rhetoric as a discipline or rhetorical theory".²⁰ A valuable pointer has

18 See Schiappa 1999, 109 on Gorgias' "undeclared theory", and 131: "Gorgias wrote and spoke a generation before Rhetoric was recognized as a distinct "discipline"".

19 Mariß 2002, 97, in her very thorough and important commentary on Alcidas, comes very close to the truth: "als 'Erfinder' von ῥητορικὴ kommt Alcidas wohl nicht in Frage. Vielleicht ist er auch in diesem Punkt seinem Lehrer Gorgias verpflichtet: die Stellen bei Platon könnten durchaus für Gorgias als Inventor des Ausdrucks sprechen". A very sound conclusion, and I hope to prove that we can dispense with the residual doubts. See also Noel 2004, 136 "le Gorgias historique en fut, sinon l'inventeur, du moins le plus remarquable représentant", but she otherwise compromises with 'revisionist' beliefs, see Noel 2004, 141, 148; 2003, 5, 9.

20 Schiappa 1999, 22 (italics added; see also 16, 34); and Schiappa 1990, 469 "the development of what is now called rhetorical theory", 470 "rhetoric as we typically think of it".

thus been misconstrued in the light of contemporary disciplinary expectations. To avoid further confusion, care should be taken to clear up the different meanings of the all-important word in ancient and modern times, but 'revised' approaches are deliberately equivocal about this point. Schiappa's whole inquiry revolves around rhetoric's birth as the *ultimate* theoretical achievement: once it is 'conceptualized' in Plato's mind, rhetoric is both self-conscious and fully developed, the momentous act of calling it by its name effectively setting fourth-century theorizing apart from anything achieved before it in the same field, but under a different heading. The highly dogmatic approach cancels previous studies at a stroke and replaces the long history of Greek rhetoric, with its rich variety of authors and books and systems and teaching practices, with the single "watershed event"²¹ of the supposed coining of the new name in *Gorgias*. Both Cole and Schiappa are so keen on denying the existence of rhetoric before Plato as to take no notice of the disquieting fact that Greek rhetoric *after* Plato has very little to do with the philosopher, while owing very much to earlier systems, hastily dubbed 'predisciplinary', and readers are left with the uneasy feeling that rhetoric suddenly came into being, only to stand still ever after.²² Should we press this line of argument, most of our Greek texts will fail to meet the standard of a true disciplinary status, and the resulting paradox shows that we simply cannot look out for Greek *rhetorike* without being first agreed on the actual meaning of the word.

This is where *homonymia* has laid its trap. Ancient *rhetorike* sounds the same as our rhetoric, but the resemblance is otherwise deceptive. We have long since cut our ties with Greek (and Roman) school practice and "what we would now call Rhetoric" no longer is what Greeks called by that name. Is it wise to draw a sharp line between terms of art that were used in the fifth century or in the fourth - that is, between technical words that were anyhow used by the same people in the same cultural context at one or two generations' distance - only to readily merge into one ancient and modern 'conceptualizations' of rhetoric that are more than two millennia apart? In revised approaches the ubiquitous reference to a self-evident 'rhetorical *theory*' effectively blurs historical differences by implying that Rhetoric as such - with a capital letter - only needs to be called by its name to come into existence. But the truth is that by assuming that the conceptual spaces of ancient and modern rhetoric

²¹ Timmermann, Schiappa 2010, 9.

²² Cole 1991, 12 makes the inference explicit when he states at the outset that Plato and Aristotle "provide the foundations for rhetoric as taught and practiced throughout the rest of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and well into modern times" (cf. Cole 1991, 22). One wonders: did Cole ever read Quintilian or Hermogenes, Apsines or Fortunatianus? Whichever rhetoric he is speaking about, it is not what we meet in available ancient texts.

are basically the same, Cole and Schiappa end by losing sight of the main issue: while purporting to trace the birth of Greek rhetoric in fourth-century Athens, they rather engage in finding out the possible origins, on Greek soil, of the nearest ancient equivalent of a very contemporary 'rhetorical theory'.

To make sense of Greek *rhetorike*, we should ask the Greeks themselves, rather than relying on dubious descriptions of our own making. To begin with, ancient teachers did not view rhetoric as *theory*, but as a practical *training* in public speaking, the two main fields of action being the lawcourts and the political assemblies, and technical advice was thought out accordingly, not all at once. We know for sure that a first nucleus of 'rhetoric-to-be' originated as an exclusively heuristic technique for the needs of litigants in the people's *dikasteria*, where the constraints of court proceedings and the repetition of similar cases favoured analysis, making it easier for speeches to fall into a fixed pattern. The fifth-century *Technai*, the 'how to' handbooks whose somewhat scandalous existence is proved beyond doubt by Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle, offered a strictly utilitarian, orderly outline of the points to be discussed, and the triviality of debates held in the people's courts explains the unfavourable reactions to the new written medium, as well as to the distinctive school idiom that went with it, on the part of more ambitious teachers, ranging from Plato's undisguised hostility, to Isocrates' superior attitude, and Aristotle's determination to play down dicanic eloquence, albeit realizing that this was the very kind of ability most people sought to achieve.²³ However, Cole and Schiappa only mention the fifth-century judicial technique in passing and quickly wave it aside, as showing that whatever Tisias did, it had nothing to do with "rhetoric narrowly conceived" (Cole 1991, 97). But the truth is that all along the history of 'rhetoric' - in the *Greek* sense of the word - written instructions for the law courts remained first and foremost, so that it should come as no surprise that, what ancient rhetoric could never do without, should have been there from the beginning. Our different expectations cannot call into question the nature of the early *Technai*: on the contrary, their actual contents show that our current 'conceptualizations' of rhetoric will not apply to the Greek discipline, and that "the transition from poetry to prose, myth to reason, and orality to

23 See, in order of time, Isocrates' attack against the authors of earlier books, 13.19 (οἱ πρὸ ἡμῶν γενόμενοι καὶ τὰς καλουμένας Τέχνας γράψαι τολμήσαντες) who professed to teach how to plead one's case in court (ὑπέσχοντο δικάζεσθαι διδάξειν); Plato's survey of the same books in *Phdr.* 266d5 ff. (ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις τοῖς περὶ λόγων τέχνης γεγραμμένοις, and 267a2 ἐν κατηγορίᾳ τε καὶ ἀπολογίᾳ) and Arist. *Rh.* 1.1, 1354b26 "they all endeavour to give rules for pleading one's case in court" (δικάζεσθαι, and 1355a20 δικολογείν).

literacy" has nothing to do with it:²⁴ ancient litigants did not set out to rival poetic performances,²⁵ and practical advice for winning one's case in the *dikasteria* had no possible association with myth.

Having thus cleared the ground from improper 'rhetorics', we can move a step further and face the main challenge launched by Schiappa. Only let me turn his argument the other way round: given the fact that fifth-century authors supplied instructions that were felt by ancient teachers, from Aristotle onwards, as belonging to rhetoric - indeed, as the first promising nucleus of the discipline - why did the earlier books still not use the word? To begin with, we know this for a fact, not because the data-base of the Thesaurus tells us so (since all these books are lost, the word would not be there anyhow), but because Plato, in a well-known passage, pointedly reports the standard title of fifth-century *Technai*²⁶ and *rhetorike* is not where we should obviously expect it to be. Cole lightly rejects Plato's first-class evidence about these early books on the wrong assumption that a division of speeches in a fixed number of 'parts' must be "of Socrates' own devising", since "the whole notion of a proper, inevitable order of presentation with the first things first, last things last... is typically Platonic",²⁷ but an attentive reader will sense at once that in the philosopher's opinion the authors under review, while pretending to offer a (pseudo)scientific arrangement, are making use of a very improper order. From the very first Plato highlights the authors' obsession with dissecting speeches and with separately naming and numbering the resulting parts, in order to supply prospective users with an easy 'fill-in-the-blank' pattern for their own defence or prosecution: by representing the fifth-century *Technai* as random collections of model speeches revised approaches have missed the very point of Socrates' criticism. Routine speeches for pleading one's case in the people's *dikasteria* were a logographer's job, and they would not appeal to Plato, but as an educator he was interested in new teaching methods and the *logon technai* of his youth, however trivial their contents, had been something of a revolution in the field. By exploiting

24 Schiappa, Hamm 2007, 19, on the opposition between "rational self-consciousness and literacy" and "association with orality and myth". Also Schiappa 1991, 54 ff.; 1999, 11 f.; 2016, 2.

25 Cole 1991, x, xi; 28 f. "a new form of discourse (*artistic - that is, rhetorical - prose*) capable of rivaling poetic performances" (italics added); 29 "protorhetorical fifth-century efforts at replacing or supplementing the hitherto dominant poetic mode".

26 *Phdr.* 266d5-6 and 266c2-3 τοῦτο ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν ἢ λόγων τέχνη, mentioning Thrasymachos "and the others".

27 Cole 1991, 131. As for the remark (Schiappa 1999, 37) that "Plato's description seems to fit fourth-century writings such as the *Rhetoric* to Alexander better than anything known from the fifth century" any likeness is due to the fact that traditional patterns are still at work in the later treatise; see Chiron 2003, 564; Noel 2013, 68.

the written medium in an unusual way they arranged instructions in separate 'boxes', storing them where it would be easy and fast to search them out; and the fixed order that went with them, far from being "of Socrates' own devising", was based on expert consideration of court procedure, so as to make the most of the severely limited time allotted for trials. The new, crafty device for 'storage and retrieval' of needed information worked as a cheap substitute for logography as well as teaching, ingeniously contrived by professionals for the use of laymen, and thus made available to innocent and guilty people alike. This is why it both interests Plato and seriously worries him, as a conspicuous example of books "rolling about" in everybody's hands (*Phdr.* 275e), dangerous books that meddled in *dike* with clever ready-made answers, but no morals and no true learning.

It so happened that by the middle of the fifth century the strict rules for debate in the newly established *dikasteria* gradually fashioned a new kind of public speech,²⁸ which in turn gave birth to an early, written and prescriptive format, a much needed 'how to' book for litigants. In the *dikasteria* citizens were requested to plead on their own behalf and judgements could not be repealed. The clash of arguments and emotions enacted in ancient trials effectively staged a popular drama of sorts, where anybody might be compelled to play a part some time in life, and since most cases going to court resembled each other enough to suggest a standard course of action, sophists promptly took advantage of the fact: Protagoras and Antiphon, Tisias and Lysias, Thrasymachus and Theodorus and others we know little or nothing about, each and all helped in devising ways to turn strong the arguments of the weaker between two opposed parties, giving impetus to a novel "art of speeches" (λόγων τέχνη). Scholars have long since remarked upon the importance of judicial oratory in the fifth century, but to state that the early *Technai* mostly handled court cases subtly distorts the truth, because they *only* handled court cases and knew of no others. When Tisias of Syracuse circulated his book, the ability to plead one's own case in court was self-contained and not yet part of a broader discipline: a description of early *logon techne* as offering counsel's advice in legal action is much more to the point than any reference to rhetoric, as we generally think about it.²⁹ Indeed, the usual modern translations of Plato's and Aristot-

28 Events are dated within narrow limits, since *dikasteria* were introduced in Syracuse in 467/6 and a few years later in Athens, when Ephialtes transferred powers from the Areopagus to the people's courts in 462. The basic facts were reported by Aristotle (the source of Cic. *Brut.* 46).

29 But of course this was inchoate rhetoric from the Greek point of view, since precepts were arranged in order to supply litigants with a convenient plan for delivering real speeches in a trial, and were suited to the different needs of a single accuser or defendant. This is clearly borne out by the reported sketch in Plato (*Phdr.* 266d-267d),

le's *logon techne* with 'art of speech' and 'art of rhetoric' are surely wrong. Revised approaches rightly argued as much as far as 'rhetoric' goes, but their own use of 'speech' in the singular is no less mistaken, since in Plato and Aristotle the name always appears in the plural, and refers to the two opposite pairs of speeches by the accuser and the defendant, thus setting the *techne* from Syracuse alongside Protagoras' "two-*logoi*" theory. On the contrary, the apparently negligible shift to an "art of speech", in the singular, allows for a general, capitalized *Logos* to replace the limited and very practical contents of the fifth-century books, thus bringing them into line, out of deference to a cultural stereotype, with a predisciplinary 'mythic-poetic' tradition:

Prior to the fourth century, λόγος and λέγειν were used to describe what later would be called rhetoric. Both terms are far broader in their meanings than is the term ῥητορική, hence the appearance of ῥητορική signals a new level of specificity and conceptual clarity concerning different verbal arts. (Schiappa 1990, 458)³⁰

But the early *techne*'s exclusive concern with teaching how to plead in the *dikasteria* belies any such "holistic" notion of *logos*. Mention of "speeches" in the books' title without further qualification should either refer to all speeches, or to a single and well-known class of them: the former of course must be ruled out - which explains, by the way, why the old label slowly fell in disuse,³¹ when new kinds of political speeches were included. Schiappa underlines the use of *logos* as being "one of the most equivocal terms in Greek language",³² but the argument is misplaced. The word's wide range of meanings is a fact of the Greek language and its history, but the lists in our dictionaries are offered for choice: as a rule, only one meaning at a time will apply in a definite context and no ancient speaker would think of *logos* as being "equivocal". A learned writer might choose to play with the term and to expand its meaning on purpose, but this is quite exceptional and there will be sure pointers to it: the naive idea that

and must not be mistaken for sophistic constitutional theory, Schiappa 1991, 52 and 1999, 44.

30 Cf. Schiappa 1999, 68, 70; Timmermann, Schiappa 2010, 10-11; Cole 1991, 98 "the phrase *logon techne* can also designate the oral art of which the written *techne* is a record; and it has the wide range of meaning one would expect, given the fact that *logos* can refer to "reason" or "reasoning" as well as "speech".

31 At the beginning of the fourth century Alcidas (*Soph.* 15) may still use λόγων τέχνας, but in the plural, alongside 'rhetoric' (*Soph.* 1-2) to mean general speaking instructions.

32 Schiappa 1999, 54 and 76 "one of the most overworked words", 124 "a notoriously polysemous term".

any instance of the word was susceptible of carrying the full range of its known meanings is seriously mistaken. Mention of “speeches” in plain practical books, offering a system of ‘parts’ that was patently devised for litigants in a trial, would not be in the least equivocal. While rightly calling attention to the difference between ‘rhetoric’ and its earlier counterpart, Schiappa makes a bad use of it by reversing the historical process and working on the wrong assumption that a narrow fourth-century *rhetorike* was born out of the larger fifth-century category of *logos*. But the truth is that rhetoric followed the normal course: it was born small as a “technique of speeches” for use in the people’s *dikasteria*, to grow larger when the ingenious system of rules devised in Doric Sicily for planning speeches of accusation and defence was expanded to a multi-genre discipline by the Ionian sophist who had been working much of his life side by side with the Greek thinkers in the West.

4 Disciplining Rhetoric

Plato, of course, was born too late to have a part in this process: the first disciplining of discourse in Greece was worked out by earlier teachers, and as an intellectual from Leontini and an adult man when the democratic revolution took place in nearby Syracuse Gorgias was acquainted with the new speech ‘technology’ from the start. We have conclusive evidence of his personal association with its leading characters, and Plato lets him make a grand entrance in Tisias’ company (*Phdr.* 267a6-b2), artfully exploiting the rhythmical pattern of both names to add a touch of mock solemnity – a trick he delights in when conjuring up Gorgias’ resonant performances.³³ The implication is that they had both played an active role in exporting techniques for public speech from the Greek West: as far as we know, Tisias’ whole career revolved around court cases, but Gorgias went a step further. As the member of a distinguished family in Leontini, he had acquired a broad education in science, philosophy, and politics, and by 427 he was acting as *archipresbeutes* for his native city, advocating from the Athenian people alliance and military help against Syracuse with a memorable appeal to the common Ionian ancestry.³⁴

33 *Phdr.* 267a6 Τεισίαν δὲ Γοργίαν τε ἑάσομεν εὔδειν κτλ. The peculiar δὲ... τε coordination couples the two Sicilians sophists in a perfect trochaic dimeter followed by aeolic cola, εὔδειν being added after ἑάσομεν for euphony and rhythm (the ‘adonius’ is replicated at short distance, a7 and b1). This is clearly contrived, all the more so considering the sudden elevation in style after the very plain technical text preceding it, and the far-fetched metaphor from sleep might well be a quotation of Gorgias himself.

34 D.S. 12.53.2; cf. Thuc. 3.86.3 and Pl. *Hp.ma.* 282b4-7. On the importance of the relationship between Leontini and Athens for the history of rhetoric see Enos 1992.

But in the end Syracuse won, and as the tide turned Leontini underwent civil strife and massive changes in population,³⁵ making life in his homeland impossible for Gorgias: in forced self-exile he moved to mainland Greece and finally settled in rich and neutral Thessaly, his personal interests shifting accordingly from local politics to pan-hellenic propaganda – and the teaching of *rhetorike*. Both stages of the sophist's long career have found their way in Plato's dialogues, but mention of Gorgias in the *Phaedrus* passage is only incidental, the philosopher's focus being rather on Tisias' clever booklet. On the contrary, in his earlier dialogue a much older Gorgias figures as the main character and Plato's chosen competitor at the time when the Academy was being founded: confrontation with the sophist and his pupils is personal, bitter and polemical, rewarding readers of *Gorgias* with a unique insight into the most renowned and expensive 'school of politics' in Greece. The *logon techne* of the *Phaedrus* passage plays here no part at all and the very words are never met in the dialogue, whereas *rhetorike* literally explodes, totalling over a hundred occurrences, a frequency nowhere else to be found and even thrice the number of instances in the whole of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Moreover, although *rhetorike* – by then the usual word – is sparsely used in the *Phaedrus* too, Plato is very careful to avoid it whenever referring to Tisias. Yet Schiappa (1990, 458) rules out the possibility that Gorgias ever used it, since “prior to the fourth century, *λόγος* and *λέγειν* were used to describe what later would be called rhetoric”; but this means begging the question, because the late appearance of 'rhetoric' will only follow if *Gorgias* is fictional. As to the surprising statement that “there is no evidence that Gorgias ever used the word “rhetoric” other than the Platonic dialogue named after him” (Schiappa 1990, 459), most readers will feel that Plato should be enough, and the absence of rhetoric' in Gorgias' *Helen* is a misleading argument, since the arts of seduction and a lover's beguiling words do not fall within the domain of public speech – a point Schiappa himself makes when he assumes that *rhetorike* might have been coined “in order to limit the sophistic art of *λόγος* to speaking in the assembly and the law-courts” (Schiappa 1990, 466). Worse still, we are confronted with the disconcerting statement that “Gorgias' explicit declaration at 449a5 that he teaches the art of oratory would have been a clear signal to fourth-century readers that the target of the passage was Isocrates”, with Polus and Chaerephon “perhaps symbolically paralleling the conflict between Isocrates and Plato” (Schiappa 1990, 465). Schiappa hints at “thinly veiled references to Isocrates”,

35 Evidence on Leontini in the years 424-416 is supplied by Thuc. 5.4.2-6, 6.6.2, 8.2, 50.4 and D.S. 12.83.1, 13.89.4, 95.3, 113.4; by 403 the city had been emptied of its population, D.S. 14.15.1.

but gives no instances, and I fail to understand why Plato's tortuous behaviour should have been so transparent to fourth-century readers, who were acquainted with Isocrates as a proud teacher of *philosophia* – and Plato for one says as much in the only passage where he refers to the rival by name (*Phdr.* 279a9-10). I consider this kind of guesswork seriously mistaken. Moreover, if we agree on the early date of Plato's dialogue, Isocrates' pupils would be too young for the philosopher to pass judgement on their outcome in adult life, and the type of the strong-willed, utterly unscrupulous politician depicted by Socrates in *Gorgias* would be anyhow a very odd choice on his part, given Isocrates' mild and moderate stance. Callicles' outlook in life is not Isocratean at all, but mirrors the wild ambitions of a war generation that Plato knew only too well, because it had been his own. From his point of view, both Polus and Callicles belonged to a proud world that was meeting defeat – the warped heirs of a bold, mistaken education which had nothing possibly in common with Isocrates' cautious attitude and his very respectable school of 'humanities'. But we may find a very near match for Callicles in the vivid portrait by Xenophon of the Beotian Proxenos, who "had payed his fee to Gorgias of Leontini" in order to achieve quickly "great fame and great power and great wealth" (*infra*); just as we may presume for Callicles, he aimed at glory, and died young a cruel death. Gorgias had been the teacher of both and of the likes of them: this is what Plato's dialogue is about, and the new *rhetorike* attacked by Socrates has nothing to do with Isocrates but is, neither more nor less, Gorgias' well-known and much sought-after teaching programme. Thus, when Schiappa asks himself "why would Plato invent a term for a skill he obviously mistrusted?" (1990, 464) the plain answer is, in my opinion, that he did nothing of the kind. Rhetoric was not 'invented' out of spite for a next door competitor; on the contrary, had the word (and the thing) not been already there, Plato would never have written the *Gorgias* as we have it. The truth is that *rhetorike* was born positive, the perfect word for an eminently Greek discipline combining skilled public speech with leadership and personal *doxa*, and the term bears the distinctive mark of the free citizen pursuing success in the ancient city-state. This is what rich young people all over the Greek world were looking for, and Gorgias met the demand by offering a very clear-cut educational target, equipped with an effective training of his own devising. Aristotle (*S.E.* 34,183b38) calls it Gorgias' *pragmateia*: as we may surmise, a 'full-immersion' daily routine where pupils were made to learn and rehearse patterns of argument they would be likely to meet and need most often in real life. When Plato attacks him, rhetoric had been the sophist's avowed profession for decades: true, the momentous word first occurs in a text by Plato, but Plato is putting it in Gorgias' mouth, and this should be the one "clear signal" to past and present readers alike.

There were good reasons for Gorgias not to deliver his teaching in book form. To begin with, while early written instructions had been thought out for the special needs of adult litigants in the people's *dikasteria* and did not address themselves to the task of educating pupils, Gorgias set out from the first to train young boys in a variety of speaking skills, to be used later in life as a means of a successful political career. The implied higher social standing and the ambitions of leadership called for a shift of emphasis from judicial to symbouleutic eloquence and entailed using different teaching methods. Speeches in defence or prosecution could be carefully planned in advance, but speaking in the people's assembly required the ability to meet unexpected events and unforeseen attacks from political opponents with extempore speeches, and called for a flexible pedagogy, with levels of difficulty slowly increasing from simple drills for beginners to a satisfactory command of important political topics. Gorgias' *pragmateia* could not do without some such standardisation of practical exercises to be rehearsed in the classroom under the teacher's expert guide: these are the handy, ready-made *logoi* Aristotle hints at,³⁶ and the sophist's personal, recorded proficiency in extempore speech³⁷ must be viewed as strictly related to his teaching methods.

But not even Gorgias, for all his self-assurance and verbal virtuosity, would claim to teach his pupils every possible kind of speech, and in Plato's dialogue he says as much, promptly agreeing that *rhetorike* is about *logoi*, but not all of them (*Grg.* 449e1-4). When pressed by Socrates to tell exactly which, he presents his opponent with a set list, each kind of speech being associated for clarity with its prospective hearers and the proper places of delivery:

What I mean is the ability to persuade, by using speeches, judges in a *dikasterion*, and members of the council in a *bouleuterion*, and assembled citizens in an *ekklesia* and in any other meeting place, provided the meeting concerns citizens as such.³⁸

This is, if ever there was one, Greek rhetoric's true birth certificate. Being quite unperturbed by Socrates' delaying manoeuvre (beginning at 449e5), Gorgias patiently resumes his own line of argument and his reply comes ready and punctilious, as it might be expected

36 The half-humorous description of Gorgias' eristics-like teaching method most likely refers to single arguments, topics, means of proof etc., certainly not whole speeches, least of all epideictic showpieces like *Helen* or *Palamedes*.

37 Philostr. *VS* 1.1, 1.9.3, cf. Quint. 2.21.21.

38 *Grg.* 452e1-4 τὸ πείθειν ἔγωγ' οἷόν τ' εἶναι τοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ δικαστὰς καὶ ἐν βουλευτηρίῳ βουλευτὰς καὶ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐκκλησιαστὰς καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ συλλόγῳ παντί, ὅστις ἂν πολιτικός σύλλογος γίγνηται.

of a long-time teacher; he is neither evasive nor faltering, and in the very next lines it is only left for him to sum up rhetoric in a beautifully simple *kephalaion* (453a2 *πειθοῦς δημιουργός*).³⁹ Socrates of course is not satisfied, yet from his own point of view Gorgias states the contents of his teaching plainly and fairly. But unlike Socrates, he is a man of business, and the issue of a truly scientific, self-contained definition of *rhetorike* is not raised by him: to the sophist's mind, *peithous demiourgos* is rather a clever catchword for prospective pupils, and we may be sure that it worked very well that way. As for his public profession, the sophist's *epangelma*, he had already disclosed its full terms in the words quoted above, where he expounds the different kinds of speeches practised in his school, the earlier technique of speeches for the law courts opening the series as the first item of the list ("the ability to persuade, by using speeches, judges in a *dikasterion*"), and the total number being increased to cover the whole spectrum of political activity. From our standpoint, these words will immediately call to mind rhetoric's later division in the three *genera causarum* and it might be tempting to consider them commonplace. This is probably why, as I remarked above, the whole passage is missing from Diels' very influential *Vorsokratiker*, one of several unfortunate editorial choices in his section on Gorgias. The great scholar had no taste for rhetoric, and judging most of the sophist's statements to be boring and ineffectual he drastically cut down the evidence about him from Plato's dialogues. As a consequence of this, traditional handbooks take no notice of our passage and revised histories fail to realize its importance, albeit for different reasons. Worse still, Schiappa actually believes that the sophist could never have spoken the words Plato ascribes to him, since Gorgias "makes the *unlikely concession* that not all kinds of λόγοι fall under ῥητορική, only some" and "is *limited* to defending ῥητορική as training for persuasion in public gatherings" (1990, 467 f.; italics added), his own solution being that Plato's real, unnamed target is Isocrates' art of discourse, which is being ridiculed as an "(unnecessary) training for political persuasion". As I have already remarked, the guess is unfounded, and a forceful character like Gorgias hardly lent itself to figuring as a mere substitute for a younger and – at the time when the dialogue was written – a lesser teacher. Plato has so arranged the first part of his text as to let Socrates' and his opponent's views clearly stand out side by side: they are *both* necessary to him and he purposefully highlights important passages by the timely use of Gor-

39 Plato clearly implies that *πειθοῦς δημιουργός* are Gorgias' own words, all the more so since they perfectly fit the sophist's ideas about the social uses of rhetoric. Ancient readers rightly had no doubts, Quint. 2.15.5 *hanc Plato illius opinionem vult accipi, non suam*. See Fuhrmann 1960, 126 fn. 6.

gias' well-known mannerisms. According to ancient grammarians, he even slipped in two non-Attic words to make his account more realistic;⁴⁰ we cannot verify this, but in the Greek of our passage we cannot mistake the sudden recourse to striking rhythmical and rhyming effects very typical of Gorgias, in order to highlight a no less typical pattern of thought. About the latter we have reliable and independent evidence from Aristotle, who tells us that Gorgias was in the habit of avoiding definition of abstract concepts in favour of detailed numbering of their constituent parts,⁴¹ and we have a very clear instance of the method in the opening pages of Plato's *Meno*, where the sophist's pupil promptly replies in the same line on being asked by Socrates "what is it that you call *arete*... if you *and Gorgias* know the answer".⁴² *Meno* makes reference to sex, age, and social status to arrange his list of different virtues, Gorgias likewise lists speeches according to places and hearers: master and pupil use the same approach, methodical and concrete, steadily eschewing the abstraction and generalization that is being forced on them by Socrates. By comparison, the chosen pattern of simple repetition of related items may sound old-fashioned and not in touch with later scientific methods: the way of thinking is certainly not Plato's, just as the way of speaking is not Isocrates'. So why should Plato want to heap circumstantial evidence clearly pointing to an old-world, distinctly foreign teacher, if his real target were a nearby Athenian colleague? Readers who will not believe in the literal quotation of well-known tenets of Gorgias' school may assume a clever impersonation by Plato himself of the sophist's ideas and mannerisms: but covered criticism of Isocrates' *philosophia* has nothing in the Greek text to support it.

We may suspect, however, that Isocrates has come into this more in order to oust Gorgias, than for his own sake, and this brings us back to where the problem lies. Is there anything really *wrong* with Gorgias' reply? Must we judge it to be an unwilling "concession" to Socrates, and an "unlikely" one at that? To be sure, the text itself nowhere suggests this, quite the contrary. The sophist's words sound very formal and carefully polished, and Socrates highlights the im-

40 *Grg.* 450b9 χειροῦργημα and κύρωσις. The interesting remark by unknown ancient grammarians is reported in Olympiodorus' comm. *ad loc.*; note that Socrates (450e1) is going to use Attic κύρος instead.

41 41 Arist. *Pol.* A 13, 1260a27 οἱ ἐξαριθμοῦντες τὰς ἀρετὰς ὥσπερ Γοργίας. The use of ἐξαριθμεῖν is unequivocal.

42 *Men.* 71d7 ff. Noel 2006, 177 is sceptical: "lorsque Aristote attribue directement à Gorgias cette même énumération des vertues, cite-t-il ce dernier ou fait-il seulement référence au *Ménon*?", but an unprejudiced reading rules out the latter option. Aristotle does not mention either Menon or Plato, and he would never use a Platonic dialogue for factual information that could be checked directly. For this very important point in method see the excellent discussion of the quotation from Polus' book by Plato and Aristotle in Renehan 1995.

portant pronouncement as such: “now you really seem to me, Gorgias, to have stated at your best your opinion about rhetoric, what kind of technique you think it is” (452e9-453a1). Yet Schiappa believes that we must rule out a plain reading of the text because of the “substantial differences between the defence of *logos* found in the speeches of Gorgias and his floundering performance in Plato’s dialogue”,⁴³ but in our passage Gorgias expounds his views on rhetoric and is not speaking about *logos* at all. Since the “nontrivial difference between an explicit theory of *logos* and an explicit theory of *rhetorike*”⁴⁴ is one of Schiappa’s main concerns, it might be odd that in our case he takes no account of the important shift in subject matter: of course this is explained by the mistaken belief that ‘rhetoric’ must be a *later* substitute for earlier theories about ‘speech’, but this will only be true if we remove Plato’s evidence about Gorgias having used the word, and the only reason for doing this lies in the sophist’s use of *logos* instead of *rhetorike* in the essays we have by him. In other words, the argument has come full circle and leads us nowhere.

To find a way out, we should rather examine both the relevant passages in Gorgias’ writings and his replies to Socrates in Plato on their own account, by trying to view them as the different issues of a life-long reflection on speech by a single fifth-century thinker. The point is that *logos* and *rhetorike* fulfil separate roles; rather than following one after the other, they should be placed side by side, the former supplying the conceptual background of Gorgias’ new teaching endeavour. To turn theories about speech into a successful educational enterprise was no easy task and would call for the personal expertise of a man of the world and an engaging speaker, a long-time politician, a sound teacher and a shrewd businessman, and for all we know, Gorgias fits into the portrait admirably. Of course, in a world of competing sophists, he would also need a clear and attractive label to advertise the new discipline and the expensive school that went with it, and could not very well wait for Plato to supply him with a name. But if we judge *rhetorike* to be the right word for Gorgias’ teaching, why should *he* not have been the one to find it? On the other hand, if we agree with Schiappa in believing it to be “unlikely”, why should Plato want to cheat his readers with a seriously misleading name, even going so far as to actually coin it himself?

43 Schiappa 1990, 469: “floundering” echoes a prevailing judgement (according to Dodds 1959, 9 Plato depicts Gorgias “as a well-meaning but somewhat muddle-headed old gentleman” who “accepts his dialectical defeat”), but in my opinion misinterprets what rather appears as the punctilious probing, on Socrates’ part, of his opponent’s ‘official’ position, so as to debar him from reconsidering it later.

44 Timmermann, Schiappa 2010, 140, and Schiappa 2016, 3 “the theoretical object of analysis of *logos* in the fifth century BCE was not identical to the theoretical object of *rhetorike* in the fourth century BCE”.

Moreover, Gorgias had serious reasons for not using general *logos* to single out the kind of training practised in his school. To wit, his choice of *logoi* in *Helen* (8-14) strongly suggests the need for a different and distinctive 'term of art', since the peculiar list entirely leaves out the political speeches that properly belong to rhetoric, while giving pride of place to poetry, followed by ritual chants, magic, cosmogony and debates over wisdom and philosophy, all of them the most unlikely subject matter for pupils who had very different aims in mind. This we know both from Plato and an entirely independent source:⁴⁵

Proxenos of Beotia from the very first, when still a young boy, was eager to become a man capable of dealing with important affairs, and *because of this very desire he payed his fee to Gorgias of Leontini*. After having studied with him, deeming himself to be already *fit for leadership* and for being second to none, thanks to his friendship with members of the élite, in offering his services, he joined this venture with Cyrus and he expected to gain from it *great fame, and great power, and great wealth*. But though being eager for success, he made it nevertheless clear that he would not achieve anything of it unjustly, but by using justice and honor; without them, not at all.

In Xenophon's affectionate portrait of a very close friend who was killed young, the meaningful information about the study with Gorgias must have come from Proxenos personally, and offers conclusive proof, from an unbiased contemporary source, of the sophist's true aims and methods.⁴⁶ From our point of view, its fundamental importance lies in the fact that it clearly bears out Plato's account of the sophist's school as being politically oriented: to be sure, Gorgias could not fail to introduce his pupils to the full range of topics requested by educated people in his time,⁴⁷ but wealthy youngsters did not join him in the first place in order to become poets or specialize in magic and *meteorologia*. Gorgias' statement in Plato, that not *all* speeches fall under rhetoric, is no more unlikely than the special list he offers in *Helen*, since in both cases we are confronted with purposefully limited selections within the vast domain of speech, each one of them leaving out items that find place in the other: Gorgias is

⁴⁵ X. An. 2.6.16-18, a very important passage, but sadly curtailed in VS 82 A 5.

⁴⁶ See Lendle 1996, 154 on Proxenos' and Menon's ambitions: "es sind dies offenbar die Grunderwartungen, zu deren Erfüllung Gorgias im Unterricht seinen aus den oberen Schichten stammenden Schülern die richtige Wege zu zeigen versprach", and 164: the two disciples embody "zwei verhängnisvolle Wirkungen, welche vom Unterricht des Gorgias ausgehen konnten".

⁴⁷ On Gorgias' polymathy see Pl. *Men.* 70b6-8, 76a8 ff., *Grg.* 447c6-8, Cic. *De inv.* 1.7. For the teaching of cosmogony Ps.Pl. *Isocr.* 838D.

clearly investigating *logos* by sorting out its different kinds, and the overall pattern is better explained as one more instance of his plain analytical habit (cf. ἐξαρτιθμεῖν *supra*). Hence, there are serious problems with the widespread belief that *Helen* 8-14 expounds a general theory of *logos*, and it is my opinion that we should resist the temptation to view the celebrated passage as the sophist's manifesto: rather, all our pieces of evidence, *including* the statements made by Gorgias in Plato, should be understood as complementing each other by supplying separate parts of a final picture that will only result by fitting all the available pieces together. It might come as a surprise that most of the picture is on the negative side. In *On Not Being* Gorgias registers the failure of speech to communicate objective reality, since the flux of particles moving from one body to the other will only convey the sound of words, but not their meaning; in *Helen*, on the contrary, when dealing with irrational passions and the fabrication of deceitful tales, the minimal physical entity of *logos* (§8 σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ) gains absolute power, but brings the threat of a "harmful persuasion" (§14 περὶ τοῦ τινὶ κακῆ) in its train. It would be impossible to open a school on such a premise, and Gorgias badly needed a *positive* subject matter in order to undertake teaching. This is where the new discipline comes in, 'rhetoric' being the unequivocal name for the choice of political speeches as the rational side of *logos* that eventually enabled the sophist to impart a useful craft, firmly rooted in the standard values of Greek society. Speeches addressed by free citizens to their equals within a public setting make appeal to the rational mind and must abide by times and rules of performance; the recourse to emotions will be limited to a clearly appointed space and not be allowed to hold sway over the process of decision-making, any "harmful" persuasion being thus counterbalanced by sound reasoning based on facts and means of proof, and by democratic equal right of speech. As a thinker and as a man of science Gorgias need not have changed his former opinions: the disquieting, powerful *logos* that forces its victims to surrender to unrestrained passions and unruly acts could not be dispelled entirely, but as a teacher Gorgias managed to replace the treacherous and barbaric *dynastes* (*Hel.* 8) with the capable craftsman, the useful and law-abiding *demiourgos* of the Greek city, and by limiting his school practice to strictly political speeches he fulfilled the necessary conditions for an otherwise harmful persuasion to turn into the beneficial tool of a truly Greek leader.⁴⁸ This was only to be expected. As I already remarked above,

48 By the way, Gorgias' defence of Palamedes, unlike *Helen*, lies within the boundaries of the judicial *technē* and the text's grid-like structure immediately calls to mind the technicalities of the early fifth-century books. The remarkable feature has been rightly highlighted in Fuhrmann 1960, 129 "so läßt sich kaum bestreiten daß hinter der Argumentation ein kompliziert verschachteltes System steckt", and 130 on Gorgias'

Gorgias had been acquainted from the start with the process set in motion in Syracuse by a talented politician of the former regime,⁴⁹ who had dexterously put his skills at the service of democracy by devising a practical plan of action for pleading one's case in court, and later in life he readily acknowledged his debt to previous teaching in the same field by placing the speeches addressed to "judges in a *dikasterion*" (*Grg.* 452e2) at the head of his own broader and more ambitious *epangelma*. The meaningful overlap with the contents of the fifth-century *Technai* alerts us to the fact that rhetoric did not come into existence as a sudden theoretical 'conceptualization' out of an earlier, vague and holistic Art of Speech, and that it does not make sense to deny the disciplinary bond between techniques that were very much alike - the second one being inclusive of the first - only because they were taught for a short time under two different labels.

We are now able at last to offer a very simple reply to the question that was left unanswered above. There would have been no reason for using the word *rhetorike* as long as technical advice was restricted to court cases; on the contrary, once emphasis was shifted to deliberative speeches, it would be necessary to think of a different *epangelma*, and it was only natural for Gorgias to borrow the new name from the sphere of Greek politics. Thus the broader, three-genre discipline that was to dominate ancient education for the centuries to come was shaped by a plain process of addition. Gorgias was no revolutionary at heart, and the inclusive character of his new discipline was a teacher's practical and sensible choice. Rhetoric-to-be had already been 'conceptualized' in Doric Sicily, well before Gorgias opened his school in Greece. It only took a little more time and the flair of an accomplished speaker and politician to realize that recurring, hence teachable patterns of argument could be detected in political debates no less than in the lawcourts; but when the broader teaching of rhetoric eventually replaced the earlier one, the limited *logon technē* from Syracuse and the useful technical apparatus of the fifth-century books, far from being abandoned, were simply to become a part of it, joining in the steady stream of rules that was going to shape Greek rhetoric century after century.

However, while challenging a fundamental tenet of the 'revised' account by positing evolution instead of revolution, I am not advocating return pure and simple to the traditional tale. From my point of view, facts have been distorted in both cases by the failure to assess Gorgias' role, and this has been so far the missing piece in narratives

"virtuose Schachteltechnik" in *On Not Being*. This explains the difference between *Palamedes* and *Helen* much better than any comparison in terms of a "rationalistic" vs an "emotional" approach (Segal 1962, esp. 117-20 and 129).

49 Evidence on Corax as a historical figure in Luzzatto 2008a, 189 ff.

and counternarratives: on the one hand traditional scholars took *rhetorike* for granted, thus failing to realize the change it brought about, on the other Schiappa believes the word to be the all-important factor, but plays havoc with history by claiming for Plato what Plato is giving to Gorgias. The truth is that 'rhetoric' marked the *next* stage within a single process which had modestly begun under a different name, yet all along that process we are dealing with the same practical training for logographers and/or politicians, not with a speculative and theoretical discipline. We have no right to project contemporary expectations back into the ancient educational system, only because we still happen to use a word that sounds the same. To begin with, any too sharp distinction between 'rhetoric' and 'oratory'⁵⁰ is in danger of being refuted by Schiappa's own terminological approach, since he must have recourse to Latin in order to give the Greek word an undue theoretical slant, namely "the status of conceptual or meta-rhetoric that attempts to theorize about *oratory*... what we would *now* call Rhetoric as a discipline or rhetorical theory" (Schiappa 1999, 22; italics added). But what we would now call rhetoric no longer is what Greeks called by that name. To ancient teachers rhetoric always meant both a work to be done and the instructions that were devised in order to show how best to do it: in Gorgias' own words, it was, neither more nor less, a good artisan's job, the required training calling for skilled practitioners, certainly not for philosophers. What mainly interests us, of course, is the move from personal *empeiria* to a teaching practice, that is to a *techne*, as Aristotle has it;⁵¹ in Schiappa's words, the "disciplining" of discourse. Must we also take this to mean the birth of a "theoretical" art? Schiappa is quite insistent on the point, yet according to ancient teachers, who may be trusted to know their business better than we do, the answer was definitely no, and the non-theoretical nature of rhetoric has an important bearing on its origins as a discipline. Quintilian is quite clear on the point:

Nature thus gave us the beginnings of speech, observation the beginnings of art. Just as in medicine, when men saw that some things were healthy and others were not, they developed the art by observing these things, so also in speaking, when they found that some things were useful and some not, they marked them down for imitation or avoidance, and added other points, by analogy, on their own initiative. *These observations were confirmed by experience. At the next stage, they each taught what they knew.*

⁵⁰ Schiappa 1999, 21 "the use of the word *rhetoric* to denote the practice of oratory and the use of the word to denote a specific domain of theorizing".

⁵¹ See the well-known passage at the beginning of *Metaphysics*, esp. 981b7 on διδάσκειν.

This passage⁵² might have been written word for word centuries before, and Gorgias would readily agree with his distinguished Roman colleague. Indeed, as long as rhetoric was not divorced from the ancient system of education, Greek, Roman and Byzantine teachers felt much the same. On the contrary, any sudden 'discovery' of rhetoric by a philosopher with no interest nor any personal experience in public speaking will nowhere fit into the pattern, and the same applies to the altogether different meaning of the modern discipline. To put it simply, when Gorgias first launched his *epangelma* the name was the thing, and for Plato both the name and the thing were Gorgias', but in revised accounts the same name is being used for a different thing: it is no wonder that by going in search of the wrong item they end up finding rhetoric "as we typically think of it" (Schiappa 1990, 470) in the wrong place.

5 The Missing Word

The quest for the birth of *rhetorike* has led us all the way from Plato's *Gorgias* to the dialogue's famous namesake, but a sceptical reader might still object that, even if some kind of rhetoric was already being taught before, maybe it was Plato, after all, who actually invented the *word* for it, since it nowhere appears before him. This would anyhow prove fatal to Schiappa's alternative history, the sole purpose of dating *rhetorike* in the fourth century being to deny the existence of the discipline in the fifth, yet the purely lexical problem deserves to have a place of its own, since this is by far the argument which has most impressed scholarly readers, and Schiappa himself believes it to be his strongest point:

The central hypothesis defended in this essay is that the term ῥητορικὴ originated in the early fourth century and was possibly coined by Plato. The hypothesis is refuted if an authentic fifth-century passage containing ῥητορικὴ is identified. (Schiappa 1990, 470)

The hypothesis is reinforced by two further arguments:

Not only is Plato a prolific inventor of -ικὴ terms in general, he invented an important series of -ικὴ terms for *verbal arts* in particular. (Schiappa 1990, 464)

⁵² Quint. 3.2.3 (transl. Russell). See also the fundamental distinction between theoretical and practical arts in Quint. 2.18.1-2 with the conclusion: *rhetorice in actu consistere*. In 2.18.3-5 Quintilian momentarily shifts next his attention from the discipline itself to the orator, claiming also *inspectio and pura voluptas litterarum* as parts of his interests. This is typical of a later age, but does not alter the general position: Quint. 18.5 (*rhetorice*) *dicatur activa vel administrativa*.

... the argument from silence gains strength when one surveys the wide variety of materials that survive and that can be reasonably expected to employ the word. (Schiappa 1999, 16)

As to the last two statements, we may point at once to obvious weaknesses. The “wide variety of materials that survive” unfortunately does not include *any* of the authors who were most likely to supply reliable information about the teaching practices in the last decades of the fifth century: neither Herodotus’ and Thucydides’ histories,⁵³ nor the dramatic pieces by Euripides and Aristophanes (discussed *infra*) can make up for the almost total loss of the sophistic literature, and the vagaries of transmission have seriously undermined the statistical value of those texts that survive. Plato himself, of course, has come down to us intact and he is indeed our greatest asset – provided we put him in his historical context and make good use of his writings as evidence for recovering the otherwise shattered world of Greek education all around him. As a professional teacher, Gorgias would be no less qualified for coining technical terms – while having far better reasons than Plato for being in need of *rhetorike*. Generally speaking, it is hazardous to think that all *-ike* terms met in Plato’s writings first originated where we now happen to read them, whatever our Greek lexicons tell us, since they cannot add a single word that was spoken or written outside the texts that chanced to survive: however useful for us, the entire database of the *TLG* does not make a whole in any sense. To be sure, Plato would not be averse to coining *-ike* terms, if need be, and he may well have been a particularly “prolific inventor”; the number of instances in his writings is imposing, but how many of them would be left, were Plato’s text the same amount of Protagoras’ surviving fragments? We cannot compare five huge Oxford volumes with the scanty remains of early sophistic. However, we have sure evidence that the great vogue for the new scholarly jargon went well back to Socrates’ time, since two amusing passages in Aristophanes clearly testify to the inordinate fondness for *-ike* terms in Athens when Plato was a three-years old baby.⁵⁴ As a

53 I cannot find passages in the two historians where mention of ‘rhetoric’ would be indicated, and if we are agreed on Gorgias’ role, Herodotus’ narrative is anyhow too early to be acquainted with his teaching. As for Thucydides, his carefully woven *demegoriai* were highly valued in ancient schools and teachers commented on them as evidence of fifth-century oratory, but we cannot expect the historian himself to behave like a literary critic, and it would be out of place for him to praise Pericles or Antiphon by using a later neologism.

54 In 424, see Aristoph. *Eq.* 1378-1381, where eight *-ikos* terms, five of them *hapax* and all of them related to argumentative skills, are packed in four verses of conversation between two *meirakia*; Coulon 1923 *ad loc.* “les élèves des Sophistes affectaient d’employer à tout propos des adjectives en *-ikos*” (compare *Nub.* 1172 and *Vesp.* 1209, performed in the next two years).

dedicated educator, the philosopher joined in the previous efforts to build the scientific vocabulary of Greece, but he was anyhow a late-comer in the field, and *rhetorike* bears no less indication of being sophisticated than Platonic. Yet I am not suggesting that new instances of the word would be sure to pop up, should any of the lost fifth-century writings come to light. On the contrary, if *rhetorike* was Gorgias' special *epangelma*, as I have argued so far, such an assumption is quite unlikely, and we need to recover the true meaning of the word to find the right places where to look for it. Thus my reading of Plato's *Gorgias* in the foregoing pages allows for taking up Schiappa's main challenge from an entirely different point of view, and for explaining away, case by case, the apparent "anomaly" of the "conspicuous absence" of the word.⁵⁵

ῥητορική does not appear in fifth- and early fourth-century texts where it would be expected to appear if the term was in common, or even in specialized, usage. (Schiappa 1990, 457)

But the fault lies entirely with our misguided expectations. However great the success of 'rhetoric' in the centuries to follow, and however abused the name in our own languages, it was going to take time for it to become a fairly common word: as long as it remained a specialized term, at the early stages of its extraordinary life, we may reasonably expect it to have been used only within specialized contexts. Besides, if rhetoric started out in the years of the Peloponnesian war as the cherished possession of a *single* school in Greece, we have no right to expect it to appear, for some time at least, outside Gorgias' own circle – save when the term is being polemically used against him by antagonist teachers. Therefore, the hundred-odd instances of the word in Plato's *Gorgias* are exactly the kind of evidence we should expect to find if Gorgias was the first to teach *rhetorike*, and if this was Plato's reason for attacking him.

But let us turn to a detailed examination of Schiappa's own argument.

Fifth-century drama provides compelling evidence for a later date for the coining of ῥητορική. Euripides, who is generally assumed to have been familiar with sophistic doctrines regarding "rhetoric", used λέγειν to describe speech or speakers, πείθω for persuasion, and λόγος for argument or speech. (Schiappa 1990, 458)

As for that, Euripides was an Athenian citizen who lived in a proud and self-assertive 'democracy', yet neither the noun nor the related

⁵⁵ Schiappa 2016, 4; Timmermann, Schiappa 2010, 10.

forms appear anywhere in the tragedies we have by him; to mention a particularly clear instance, this is also true of the debate between Theseus and the Theban herald in *Suppl.* 399 ff., a most outspoken comparison of Athen's political constitution with a tyrannical rule. Why does Euripides steadily avoid the word all his listeners would be sure to have in their mind, and use periphrases instead?⁵⁶ In Greek tragedies poets do not speak in their own persons; they were at liberty to use the characters of drama for discussing contemporary topics, indeed Euripides did so quite often, but they were anyhow careful to avoid striking anachronisms and would not put a technical jargon in the mouth of heroes and heroines of the distant mythical past – and the sheer absurdity of Hecuba or Odysseus, Medea or Jason using Gorgias' school neologism exempts us from the need to point out that, unless it were a proper name, a four-syllable word scanning like a choriamb could not be placed anywhere in the iambic trimeter of tragedy. Of course, neither difficulty applies to comedy, and nothing would prevent Aristophanes, should he wish to do so, from ridiculing a newfangled discipline taught by a fashionable sophist. Schiappa mentions the “well-known diatribe against sophistic training in *Clouds*” as an obvious instance:

Had the word ῥητορικὴ been used by the Sophists or had it even been associated with them, Aristophanes certainly would have targeted it as one of the objects of his attack. That ῥητορικὴ does not appear even once in this play is strong evidence that the term had not yet been invented. (Schiappa 1990, 459)

The implication is that Aristophanes would be sure to need “the word that is often used to sum up the entire teachings of the Sophists” (Schiappa 1999, 17), but it is our mistake to use it this way, and Aristophanes would know better. Schiappa himself rightly states elsewhere that “though the Sophists were obviously interested in *logos*, it is historically inaccurate to say that they held a common theory concerning the art of rhetoric” (1991, 77): to be sure, if *rhetorike* was Gorgias' word, this is even more true than he suspects. Moreover, he rightly shares the view of most scholars that Aristophanes' general parody of the new kind of education and the two-*logoi* contest in *Clouds* (vv. 436-7 and 899 ff.) refer to the teachings of Protagoras: since there is certainly no trace of Gorgias anywhere in the play, the absence of *rhetorike* is at best evidence that not Gorgias, but Protagoras is the

⁵⁶ *Suppl.* 406 δῆμος δ'ἀνάσσει 442 δῆμος αὐθέντης χθονός. Aeschylus did the same, *Suppl.* 604 δήμου κρατοῦσα χεῖρ.

sophist under attack.⁵⁷ The conclusion to be drawn from Aristophanes shows that each sophist must be considered on its own terms, a sound principle Schiappa himself recommends elsewhere:

I suggest that the Sophists ought to be examined as individuals, and that we ought to be as sensitive to their differences as we have been to their similarities. (Schiappa 1991, 12)

However, when setting about the search for *rhetorike*, he disregards this procedure by taking no account of the possibility that 'rhetoric' might be exactly that, the contribution of an *individual* fifth-century thinker and teacher. He begins with a curt statement about the two older Sophists:

There is no record of the first Sophist, Protagoras, having used the word ῥητορικὴ, even in the Platonic dialogue named after him... There is no evidence that Gorgias ever used the word "rhetoric" other than the Platonic dialogue named after him. (Schiappa 1990, 459)

As for Gorgias, I have already discussed at length above this curious assessment of Plato's evidence: suffice it to say here that we cannot have it both ways, and use the absence of *rhetorike* in one dialogue as an indication that Protagoras did not know the word, while claiming that the many occurrences of the word in the *Gorgias* are not even an intimation that Gorgias, on the contrary, did use it. Why not try trusting Plato in both cases?

Actually, since Gorgias entered the teaching profession very late in life, it was far more likely for him to discuss Protagoras' *epangelma* than the other way round, and we should rather expect him to have been the target of a younger generation of competing teachers:

There are no surviving *ipsissima verba* from other fifth-century Sophists such as Antiphon, Prodicus, or Hippias that indicate the word ῥητορικὴ was in use in their time. (Schiappa 1990, 459)

Prodicus' interests are best described as belonging to grammar and ethics, certainly not rhetoric, and Hippias was notorious for boasting his polymathy. It is true that Sophists were bound to react to novelties, and Prodicus' malicious jibe as reported by Plato⁵⁸ shows

⁵⁷ Schiappa 1999, 17 adds *Wasps* as a piece where 'rhetoric' was bound to appear, had the word been in use. But the play is about the Athenian craze for business in the lawcourts, which would be still felt at this date as self-contained.

⁵⁸ In *Phdr.* 267b2-5 Socrates recalls how Prodicus burst into laughter on being told about Tisias' and Gorgias' claim to teach people how to speak at any length: "we don't need long or short speeches, but speeches of the right measure".

acquaintance, on his part, with the judicial *techne* from Sicily, but school gossip of this kind would be passed on orally, and even if Prodicus or Hippias hinted at the new teaching of *rhetorike* somewhere in writing, how are we to know? Their *ipsissima verba* amount to a handful of isolated words for Prodicus, and a few lines at best for Hippias – all of them about topics that have nothing to do with rhetoric. As for Antiphon, a fair number of texts survive, but even if we adopt a ‘unitarian’ view of the author, there is no place in the sophistic writings where *rhetorike* might possibly fit in, and the same applies to the speeches by Antiphon of Rhamnus: logographers were expected to plead their cases, not to waste time in scholarly debates, and there is as much chance of finding *rhetorike* here as in the later speeches of the same kind by Lysias or Isaeus or Demosthenes – where the word, quite obviously considering the subject matter, never turns up. So if *rhetorike* is not used by logographers in the fourth century, why should we expect the word to appear in fifth-century ones?

Schiappa quotes next a passage of the *Dissoi Logoi*, an intriguing pamphlet by an unknown survivor of ancient Sophistic who adopts a marked Protagorean stance. The lines in question (8.1-3) make quick reference to brief exchange of opinions (*dialeghesthai*), knowledge of the truth, correct judgement in the law courts (*dikazein*), political speeches (*damagorein*), argument-skills (*logon technas*) and knowledge of the universal nature of things, as being the different outcomes of the same and single *techne*:

If there was a late fifth-century sophistic passage in which one would expect to find the word ῥητορικῆ, it surely is this one. (Schiappa 1990, 460)

Dialexeis 8 virtually cries out for the use of such simple terms as *rhetorike* and *dialektike*. (Schiappa 1999, 17)

But despite a superficial resemblance, there is no trace here of Platonic *dialektike*; as for rhetoric, the very purport of the new discipline's neatly delimited scope goes counter to the archaic confidence in all-round speaking abilities shown by the unknown author. The concise, outmoded and unadorned table of contents quoted above belongs to a very early stage of ancient Sophistic, or is otherwise featuring a clever imitation of it: *rhetorike* would not be used in either case, and the author's cast of mind is far more sympathetic with Protagoras' tricky eristics and wide-ranging political *arete*, than with rhetoric as Gorgias set out to teach it. Should we insert *dialektike* or *rhetorike* in this text as general headlines, we would be interpolating our own meaning of the word, not the ancient one; anyhow, the reason why *rhetorike* does not appear has nothing to do with Plato, but with the possible relationship between this text and Gorgias.

So far, Schiappa uses fifth-century texts where *rhetorike* is not found as evidence that the word was only invented later on, but he unexpectedly shifts next to authors who still fail to use it, and yet are contemporary with or even younger than Plato, remarking that 'rhetoric' "appears to be limited to Plato and Aristotle throughout much of the fourth century" (1990, 461). In view of his foregoing argument, this is perplexing: were it possible for a specialized handbook brimming with technical terms like the *Rhetoric to Alexander* to dispense with *rhetorike* altogether in the latter part of the fourth century, why should fifth-century poets, historians and sophists have felt constrained to use it, had the word been known to them as the special label of Gorgias' school? Rivalry between schools was no less intense in the fifth century than in the fourth, and rhetoric was bound to be a controversial issue all along the period. Just as Gorgias shifted attention away from earlier *dikologia*, *polymathia* and *arete* to the clearly limited and practical skills needed in public speaking, teachers competing with him would be wont to keep his new discipline at a distance. This is surely true of one of his pupils, Isocrates:

There certainly is no doubt that Isocrates taught oratory as it is now commonly understood. However... Isocrates did not professionalize the word ῥητορικὴ. His art, like that of the fifth-century Sophists, was that of *logos*. (Schiappa 1990, 461)

Whatever his 'art', Isocrates called his teaching by the name of *philosophia*. He had been among the very first who had studied with Gorgias, but as a dedicated *philosophos* he was careful not to be mixed up with him,⁵⁹ and to avoid a well-chosen and attractive word that might pose a serious threat to the older, traditional education; all his life, he went on teaching oratory not by itself, but as a part of general 'philosophy',⁶⁰ besides using classroom methods based on written composition that were very different from Gorgias' *pragmateia*. 'Rhetoric' would be surely bound to strike a false note in Isocrates' school. As to the fourth-century handbook generally ascribed to Anaximenes, it bears *rhetorike* in the (at least partially) spurious book title, but otherwise complies with its task without any further reference to the word:

59 Curiously enough Gorgias was represented on Isocrates' tomb as a scientist εἰς σφαῖραν ἀστρολογικὴν βλέποντα (Ps.Plu. *V.Isocr.* 838D), see Gemin 2018, 34: "il discepolato presso Gorgia era un'attività che Isocrate evidentemente non intendeva rivendicare".

60 I readily agree that Isocrates' *philosophia* is not "'rhetoric" by another name" (Timmermann, Schiappa 2010, 13), yet it surely was inclusive of rhetoric too. The multidisciplinary meaning was the older one, and it lasted throughout the Hellenistic age, see Luzzatto 2008b, 131-3, 146 f.

Λόγος is the term used to describe the capacity the work offers to improve. If ῥητορικὴ was a term denoting an established specialty as implied by Plato and Aristotle, it is remarkable that *Rhetoric to Alexander* never once used the word. (Schiappa 1990, 460)

By strictly keeping to practical matters, the author offers technical advice that relies both on earlier technography and on an assortment of later teachings; he has no pretensions to ‘philosophy’, yet echoes of Isocrates surface all along his work and might explain the purposeful avoidance of reference to rhetoric. But a more compelling reason to my mind is Anaximenes’ unique system of *seven* kinds of speech, since it openly conflicts with the boundaries of the discipline as Gorgias had fixed them: at a time when Gorgias’ school was still well known, it would be odd to use *rhetorike* when introducing a peculiar arrangement of the subject matter that did not agree with it.⁶¹ Be that as it may, this handbook is sure evidence that even a fully specialized text could still do without *rhetorike* in the late fourth century, but Schiappa’s statement about *logos* being used instead is surely mistaken: in the first lines, the author openly refers to “political speeches” as the scope of his teaching,⁶² and only uses *logos* – mostly in the plural – to mean instances of actual speeches. There is no such thing as an Art of Speech anywhere in the text, and no place where *Logos* might be assumed to stand for rhetoric, or is being used, in Schiappa’s words, “to describe the capacity the work offers to improve”.

6 *Rhetorike*, Lost and Found

Having reached this point, we are apparently faced with a dilemma: either rhetoric was ‘invented’ by Plato in the fourth century to be used inside the Academy as a “conceptual target” for the teaching of philosophy, or it was an earlier, fifth-century name for the new discipline taught by Gorgias, to be used for a time within his school and circle. Our evidence might possibly point both ways – were it not for Plato himself and, as we are going to see shortly, Alcidas. As for Plato, the coining-of-*rhetorike* thesis rests on the risky overall assumption that we can only make sense of his *Gorgias* by *not* believing what we are being told. In a straightforward reading, an illustrious sophist informs Socrates about his teaching practice and proudly

⁶¹ Quintilian (3.4.9), who was bound to know, clearly implies that the system was unique; modern attributions of the treatise to Anaximenes depend on this.

⁶² Indeed, should we believe that ῥητορικὴ was interpolated along with the attribution to Aristotle, the opening lines of the text would strongly suggest Τέχνη πολιτικῶν λόγων as the original title.

lays claim to the new training in rhetoric, supplying details about its subject matter, setting the outward limits of the discipline, and generally highlighting its social importance. According to Schiappa, on the contrary, 'Gorgias' is not Gorgias at all, but a character of fiction boasting Plato's own idea of a bad rhetoric - and possibly a substitute for Isocrates (who actually claimed 'philosophy'). Moreover, on being asked about his long-standing profession, the aged sophist resorts, for want of a better name, to picking up Socrates' on-the-spot neologism, and the wrathful Polus follows suit, hotly defending his own and his master's specialization by using the unheard-of word 'invented' by his opponent just a few minutes before. Such a reading of the dialogue is to my mind hardly acceptable,⁶³ and I fail to see any reason for this pointless play in deception.

Actually, however, Schiappa shows no interest at all in *Gorgias*, save for a brief remark by Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue. From our point of view, this particular passage is worthy of note as being the first occurrence of *rhetorike* anywhere in Greek texts, but it is ill-advised to set it apart from the great many instances of the word that follow it. If we are to understand Plato's use of 'rhetoric', interpretation of his dialogue should be comprehensive, since the exclusive focus on a single passage carries the risk of making too much of it. Indeed, Schiappa forcibly suggests that the wording of the passage at issue clearly shows Plato in the very act of coining *rhetorike*, not just letting Socrates repeat someone else's fashionable tag:

Δῆλος γάρ μοι Πῶλος καὶ ἐξ ὧν εἶρηκεν ὅτι τὴν καλουμένην ῥητορικὴν μᾶλλον μεμελέτηκεν ἢ διαλέγεσθαι.

"Even from what he said, it is clear to me that Polus is better trained in *rhetoric*, as it is called, than in using dialogue". (*Grg.* 448d8-10)

According to Schiappa, typical translations of the passage, such as the one above, fail to take account of a "second pattern" of *kaloumenos* in Plato that "involves giving old terms new meanings or introducing new words", and should be replaced in consequence by the alternative rendering "what is now called rhetoric",⁶⁴ making the phrase to mean "what is being called rhetoric by me now": the use of the present participle should imply the required "now", and refer to an on-the-spot invention by Plato himself, not to current contem-

63 See also the sensible remarks in Noel 2004, 134 against the possibility that Plato has "outrageusement caricaturé les idées du Gorgias historique", and 135 "pourquoi faire de Gorgias le représentant d'une art dont il ne serait pas le principal théoricien?".

64 Schiappa 1990, 468-9 (italics added); see also Schiappa 2016, 8 fn. 5.

porary usage. Yet in the few instances in Plato where the assumed 'second' pattern of *kaloumenos* should be at work, the pattern clearly is just the same as the usual one, the added adverb, not the participle, making all the difference.⁶⁵ Actually, Schiappa's understanding of the unequivocal Greek phrase is simply mistaken:

The verb *kaleo* is Plato's verb of choice when giving a name to something... Consider, for example, Socrates' naming of the four arts in *Gorgias* (463b). Socrates' use of *kaleo* at *Gorgias* (448d) perhaps is best understood as saying "what is being called rhetoric". (1999, 19)

There is a serious misunderstanding here, since the point at issue is about syntactic structure, not the meaning of a plain Greek verb. Should Plato wish to introduce a new name, he certainly could use *καλεῖν* for it, but he would need the *indicative* mood to convey a distinction in time and the completion of the action. As for *καλουμένη* in our passage, the time of action must be inferred from the main verb in the sentence, and the meaning is that Polus' way of speaking shows that he has been trained in the discipline known to him at the time, and to Socrates now, as *rhetorike*. The rules of grammar are not subject to opinion and cannot be stretched to accommodate fanciful translations. Schiappa's reference to *Grg.* 463b1 ff. as a useful parallel is rather clear evidence to the contrary: when Socrates expounds his personal view of rhetoric as one of the four parts of 'flattery', Plato underlines the novelty of his bold scheme by the repeated use of the first person indicative, with *ἐγώ* added for emphasis. The mere suggestion that a phrase like *ὁ ἐγὼ νῦν ῥητορικὴν καλῶ* – which is Schiappa's required meaning – might be changed into passive by sim-

65 The supposed parallels in Plato (*Cra.* 406e4-6, *Smp.* 190e7, *Phdr.* 243b2, *Lg.* X 894c6 and *Ep.* VII 343b1) have been eliminated in O'Sullivan 1993 with irrefutable arguments that need not be repeated here. Schiappa's translation is mistaken, and it is not a question of interpreting Plato's text "de la manière la plus naturelle", Pernot 2000, 39. The very detailed analysis of Schiappa's position in Mariß 2002, 96-7 reaches the same, inescapable conclusion ("vielmehr zeigt τὴν καλουμένην daß der Begriff ῥητορικὴ allgemein in Gebrauch war") and rightly points to Plato's "Gegenbegriff ἀληθινὴ ῥητορικὴ" in *Grg.* 517a5. Schiappa's response to O'Sullivan simply fails to realize the point at issue (1994, 514 "it does not necessarily follow that Plato is not using καλούμενος in just such a way in this particular passage"; but Plato knew his Greek!). Possible anachronism (Schiappa 1994, 513 "all that follows is that the character of Socrates implies that the word was in use at the time. Such use could have been limited to within Plato's academy") is misplaced, since what Socrates clearly implies is that the word is being used by Gorgias and his disciples – as they go on doing all along the debate. As to the similarity with *Lg.* 894c6 *καλουμένην δὲ ὄντως... κίνησιν*, here *ὄντως* underlines the proper meaning of a very common term, not the coining of a new one. The same applies to τὴν γαστέρα νῦν καλουμένην in *Smp.* 190e7, and *Ep.* VII 343b1 τὰ νῦν στρογγύλα καλούμενα. Schiappa quotes Bury's Loeb transl. "which are now called 'round'", but "now" of course refers to current Greek usage – quite the opposite of his required meaning.

ply using the present participle, while dispensing with both $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$, is impossible Greek and best forgotten. However, I quite share Schiappa's view of late⁶⁶ that "the introduction of the word *rhetorike* with the verb *kaloumenos*, if anything, might tip us off that Plato is using the word self-consciously": Socrates is clearly *distancing* himself from the foreign jargon of the exclusive club whose members, Gorgias himself, Polus, Callicles, are present on the scene, and his remark to Polus is contrived and faintly scornful, the first hint of the harsh criticism to follow.⁶⁷ To be sure, in the dramatic setting of the *Gorgias*, *rhetorike* was not yet a "common" word – but of course things were already different when Plato wrote his dialogue years later.

So far, we have been dealing with a missing word and two different ways of explaining the apparently curious anomaly, one of them leading to Plato, the other one to Gorgias. What we need in order to make a choice is evidence from a third party, and this is where Alcidas' surviving pamphlet against rival sophists provides us with the right clue. *Rhetorike* figures prominently two times in the preamble of the short text (*Soph.* 1-2), and there is no mistaking the word's programmatic force, since the author claims the discipline as his personal expertise, while challenging his (unnamed) opponent's qualification to teach it. Must we assume that Alcidas borrowed his 'rhetoric' from Plato? To begin with, the possibility is ruled out from the outset if his pamphlet was written before *Gorgias*, and this is why Schiappa has been at pains to replace the usual dating around 390 with a "revised chronology" well after 380, by arguing that "there is good evidence in Alcidas' text to suggest that it is in response to *Panegyricus* rather than the other way round".⁶⁸ For my part, I believe that the search for clues in Isocrates' published works is no reliable method, either one way or the other; but the pamphlet is typical of a sophist's first public appearance, and the author's intensely competitive attitude to Isocrates' rival school would rather favour an earlier date.⁶⁹ However, I will not press the point, since I believe that it has no bearing at all on the problem at issue. The plain truth

⁶⁶ Schiappa 2016, 2; cf. 1999, 19.

⁶⁷ *Rhetorike* in *Grg.* 448d is equally disdainful, and no more novel, than the word *techne* in Isocr. 13.19 τὰς καλουμένας τέχνας, and his reference to the sophists in 15.313 τοὺς μὲν καλουμένους σοφιστάς, or AlcId. *Soph.* 1 τῶν καλουμένων σοφιστῶν. The typical nuance counters the objection (Schiappa 1994, 514) that if *rhetorike* was a commonly-used word, Socrates would not have used καλουμένη with it.

⁶⁸ Schiappa 1990, 462 and 1999, 20 note 7. The argument is somewhat downplayed in Timmermann, Schiappa 2010, 10 note 3 "even if [Alcidas'] text is dated earlier... it is clear that the word *rhetorike* was a fourth-century, not a fifth-century, term of art". Were this the case, are we to believe that Alcidas himself coined the word, or that he took it from an unknown, earlier source? And what are we to make of Plato's role?

⁶⁹ The same conclusion, favouring a date around 390, in Mariß 2002, with ample discussion of earlier studies (26 ff., 50-5 on Schiappa).

is that, unless fresh evidence should turn up, we have no means of fixing the exact time when Alcidamas began his teaching career, and on second thoughts Schiappa himself almost gave up his attempt at establishing Plato's priority:

It is worth stressing that the origins-of-*rhetorike* thesis does not depend on the precise identification of the originator of the word *rhetorike*. It does not matter if it was Plato, or Socrates, or Alcidamas, or whoever. (Schiappa 1999, 20)

This is unexpected and confusing. Attentive readers were so far led to believe that Plato *mattered*, since he provides the only possible rationale behind the assumed late naming of *rhetorike*: "in order to contrast clearly the training of philosophy to that of his sophistic competitors, Plato needed a conceptual target that would not be confused with the training offered by his own school".⁷⁰ It is conceivable that Socrates might have done the same years before, even if this would anyhow entail a much earlier, fifth-century date of rhetoric's birth, but what about Alcidamas? Apparently, we are now being told that the coining-of-*rhetorike* thesis works just as well, should we put him in Plato's place; indeed, it appears that any second-rate sophist will do - provided he were young enough to teach at the right time for rhetoric to be 'conceptualized'. Must we gather that revisionist scholars have waged war against the old Sophists on behalf of "Alcidamas, or whoever"? This is to my mind a real stumbling block in Schiappa's narrative, and there is no way of removing it by a different dating of the relevant texts, since it would be no less unlikely for Alcidamas to borrow the name of his lifelong teaching practice from Plato's venomous attack in *Gorgias*, than for Plato to borrow *rhetorike* from Alcidamas' very sophistic claim of the discipline: all the more so, since according to Schiappa's general assessment of *Gorgias*, the further implication would be that Plato used Alcidamas' new word in order to attack *Isocrates*' teaching of philosophy, while ostensibly pretending all the time to attack Gorgias - who according to him used neither *rhetorike* nor *philosophia*, but simply *logos*. This is really asking too much even of a well-disposed reader, but the truth is that by accepting the concession about Alcidamas' "or whoever's" possible role in shaping the history of the discipline, the very foundations of the coining-of-*rhetorike* thesis are in danger of collapse. And yet the obvious and very simple solution has been staring us in the face all the time, settling the matter once and for all. There would be no reason for Alcidamas to take *rhetorike* from Plato, nor for Plato to take it

⁷⁰ Schiappa 1990, 466. The very same point of view is put forward once more in Schiappa 2017, 38.

from Alcidas, because they were both using the well-known word that had been coined by Gorgias, no less than thirty years before. Plato states as much, as plain as could be, throughout Socrates' debate with the sophist and his pupils; as for Alcidas, he boasts his training and personal skills in 'rhetoric' as a matter of course. He was Gorgias' loyal pupil and had been appointed to take Gorgias' place at the head of the school:⁷¹ just as Gorgias had done before him, 'rhetoric' and nothing else is what everybody would expect him to teach. Alcidas' pamphlet is no exception to the rule that *rhetorike* never fails to appear whenever reference is openly made, or clearly implied, to Gorgias' school; despite the massive loss of sophistic literature, the surviving evidence is both plain and consistent, and we have no right to ask for more.

It is a fair surmise that during Plato's lifetime 'rhetoric' would often be a topic for discussion within the Academy, albeit in a contentious spirit. The philosopher was alert to its dangers, but he also realized the appeal and likely success of Gorgias' discipline: the overall use of *rhetorike* in his dialogues – almost obsessive in his first early attack, sparse yet unavoidable elsewhere – strongly suggests as much. His own attitude was always uncompromisingly hostile to the thriving *techne* that was changing and shaping Athenian politics and traditional *paideia*, and when nearing the end of his last work he ideally sentenced rhetoric's primitive core to death;⁷² yet the lively interest of an outstanding pupil, and the fact that he was given by Plato free hand in teaching rhetoric for years within the Academy, bears witness to an unflinching interest in the new discipline. As for Aristotle, he used *rhetorike* from the start and resolutely put the word in the title of his treatise – possibly being the first one to do so. Anyhow, unlike Plato, he would have no qualms about adopting the name. His personal fight at the time was with Isocrates' school; Gorgias belonged to a faraway world that was only known to him through books, a respected figure now past resentment and rivalry, who deserved merit for the realistic, clear-cut purpose of his teaching practice, broader in scope and more politically oriented than mercenary *logographia*, yet abiding by its limits and not pretending to impart general *arete* or philosophy. Aristotle would be sure to appreciate the practicality of Gorgias' discipline, and we may guess that the choice of *rhetorike* on his part was a decisive factor in the later, undisputed success of the new teaching format. But the word was neither Pla-

71 Suid. Γ 388 Adler (Γοργίας) διδάσκαλος ... Ἀλκιδάμαντος τοῦ Ἐλαίτου, ὃς αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν σχολὴν διεδέξατο. Cf. Suid. Α 1283, Δ 454 and D.H. *Is.* 19.2 Aujac, Ath. 13.592C. The school relationship was notorious in antiquity.

72 *Lg.* 11.938c; reference is clearly implied to the early *Techne* for the lawcourts (937e5 δικῶν μηχανήν and 938a1-2 τῆς τέχνης καὶ τῶν λόγων τῶν ἐκ τῆς τέχνης).

to's, nor his own; as it often is the case with him, Aristotle cleverly borrowed, reworked and redefined a well-found achievement from a past age, and time has come for us to give Gorgias back his due.

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