
I

RHETORIC AND THE ROOTS OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

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This chapter discusses a problem originally posed by ancient political thought, especially by Gorgias, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Tacitus—one whose strands run through the fabric of Western political theory, namely, the relation between speech (or conversation or discourse) and politics.¹ Controversy over the nature of this relation has produced numerous debates among various schools of interpretation, for example, between liberals and communitarians and between postmodern and deliberative democrats.² The role and status of rhetoric, both as a form of political

1. See Cary J. Nederman, “Rhetoric, Reason, and Republic: Republicanism—Ancient, Medieval, and Modern,” in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Nederman argues, rightly I think, that the tension among various strands of republican thought can be traced to thinkers such as Cicero, from whose thinking emerged “two different and competing theoretical defenses of republicanism within the body of his work: one highlighting eloquent speech, the other focussing on the faculty of reason.”

2. The literature on the subject is legion. See, for example, Seyla Benhabib, “Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy,” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 67–94; James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996); the essays in *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (June 2002); and Simone Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). For an excellent discussion, see Gary Remer, “Political Oratory and Conversation: Cicero Versus Deliberative Democracy,” *Political Theory* 27, no. 1 (1999): 39–64. See also Peter Berkowitz, “The Politic Moralist,” *New Republic*, September

activity and as a method of political discourse, are contested questions because they underscore basic issues that revolve around political speech and political power: the relation between reason and desire/appetite, principle and power, and rulers and ruled. Rhetoric addresses what may be termed the relation between “public reason” and “public good,” on the one hand, and the politics of liberty and equality, on the other.³ In short, an inquiry into debates over the relation between speech and politics, rhetoric and philosophy, within ancient political theory and practice may prove useful to an understanding of democratic and republican politics.⁴

In any case, to classical authors rhetoric and politics are arts so closely interwoven that they presuppose each other. Moreover, rhetoric’s relationship to democratic politics is more intimate still. What follows is in part an attempt to question Platonic conceptions of rhetoric and arguments in political theory today and to show that their antagonism to democratic discourse rests on unfounded and tenuous beliefs regarding the relations obtaining among rhetoric, deliberation, and politics. In so doing, it also tries to discover the bases for a rhetorically informed understanding of deliberation.

The term *logos*, usually translated as speech, language, reason, is central to ancient political thinking, and is used in various senses and for various purposes by different thinkers in different times. In general, however, it possesses a philosophical and a political meaning, and both senses of the term are embodied in the famous statement of Isocrates, *logos hegemon panton*. The sentence may be translated as “speech and language are the ruler and guide of all things,” but *logos*, of course, may also mean discourse and argument, whether written or spoken (but especially spoken in the classical context).⁵ Isocrates, unlike Protagoras, and somewhat similar to Plato

1, 1997, 36–40. In reviewing Ruth W. Grant’s *Hypocrisy and Integrity: Machiavelli, Rousseau, and the Ethics of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), Berkowitz offers both a general guide and an informative discussion of the various schools’ positions.

3. See Berkowitz, “Politic Moralist,” 36–37.

4. Habermas argues that the “people’s public use of reason” was unique and “without historical precedent” before the European Enlightenment. See his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 27. See Alan Ryan, “The Power of Positive Thinking,” *New York Review of Books*, January 16, 2003, 43–46.

5. Isocrates *Nicocles* 5–9. Isocrates says, “We shall find that none of the things which are done with intelligence take place without the help of speech, but that in all our actions as well as in all our thoughts speech is our guide [*begemona logon*.]” In *Nicocles* 9. The editions of works of ancient authors cited in this chapter are those of the Loeb Classical Library, unless otherwise noted. In the *Encomium to Helen*, Gorgias asserts that “Speech [*logos*] is a

in the *Phaedrus*, sees the *logos* as the expression of a particular kind of truth, and he locates it within a given cultural and social context, moving in space and time.⁶ As such, the relation between *logos* and culture describes a power relationship based on the generation and dissemination of consent. Such generation assumes a particular form of knowledge and practice—the art (*ars*) or *techne* of rhetoric, which presupposes a particular relation between the speaker and his audience, which, in turn, assumes a particular sociopolitical structure or order that makes both necessary and useful the relation between the speaker and the assembly/audience. It is only in a political community such as the polis that the *logos* as *hegemon* would be capable of generating consent by means of the persuasive and rhetorical devices of public speaking.

Thus rhetoric is preeminently a republican and democratic form of speaking and communicating.⁷ It emerges, develops, and thrives under conditions of conflict, competition, and strife. On the other hand, while rhetoric cannot exist without competition, the continued existence of competition presupposes a social and political arrangement that is conducive

powerful lord” (par. 8). In addition, he notes that “Helen, when still young, was carried off by speech just as if constrained by force. . . . Her mind was swept away by persuasion, and persuasion has the same power as necessity . . . ; for speech, by persuading the soul that it persuaded, constrained her both to obey what was said and to approve what was done” (par. 12). In George A. Kennedy, Appendix IA, in Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For a discussion of the formulation *logos hegemon panton*, see T. A. Sinclair, *A History of Greek Political Thought* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1968), 115–42, especially 133–34. See also Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 3:88–91. Jaeger notes that “the logos, in its double sense of ‘speech’ and ‘reason,’ becomes for Isocrates the *symbolon*, the ‘token’ of culture . . . [which] assured rhetoric of its place, and made the rhetorician the truest representative of culture” (3:79). It is this double sense of speech/reason that gives *logos* another, equally revealing, meaning—namely, that of giving an account for something, both in the sense of elaborating a discourse or narrative and in the sense of providing a “reason.” To give an account would therefore mean to provide an intelligible, or at least a plausibly reasonable, basis for one’s action or one’s position.

6. It should be noted that the meaning of *logos* is fluid, full of nuances, and multilayered. Given its rich range of meanings (and the fact that both Plato and Isocrates were not formulating a vocabulary of technical philosophy), no translation can be sure and definite. A fully developed definition would require a historical and contextual analysis beyond the scope of this chapter. However, my discussion is based on a particular tradition of use—that is, as the term was developed by some to capture an encultured, contingent, and contextual form of discursive truth and power—rather than a consensus about its meaning.

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, “Description of Ancient Rhetoric (1872–73),” in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. and trans. with a critical introduction by Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, and David J. Parent (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3–5.

to a minimum tolerance of difference, plurality, and multiple points of view. In this sense, the orator is a party leader, a leader of a faction.

What Gorgias calls *rhetorike techne* is a skill or a craft devoid of substantive value or of any claim to objectivity or absolute truth.⁸ Corax (or Tisias) understands it as *rhetorike esti peithous demiourgos*: rhetoric is the maker or the craftsman of persuasion. The instruments or tools of this art are words, speech, and language. Lacking any natural or objective *telos*, its only end is to use words convincingly, to create a desired effect. Or rather, its end or purpose is defined by the sense of the term *peithein*.⁹ It teaches nothing but itself—to the extent that it does posit something—a value, a morality, a philosophy—the teaching is always provisional, relative to the context, and therefore subject to change and reformulation.¹⁰ At the same time, however, while Isocrates' views seem to parallel those of Gorgias—rhetoric as *peithous episteme*—he makes clear that the utility and effectiveness of rhetoric are themselves a function of a particular moral-intellectual culture without which rhetoric would have no value or meaning.¹¹ Aristotle sees rhetoric as an ability or a power “of discovering the possible means of persuasion,” and persuasion is achieved either through *ethos* (the character of the speaker), *pathos* (passion and emotion evoked from the audience or listeners), or through *logos* (argumentation, or showing the “truth” or the “apparent truth” of a given case).¹²

Despite their differences in emphasis and in outlook, Gorgias, Isocrates, and Aristotle generally associate rhetoric with forms of democratic politics. Thus Aristotle, in chapter 3 of his *Rhetoric*, seems to say

8. See Sinclair, *History of Greek Political Thought*, 62, 73–77, and Plato *Gorgias* 452–53, 456–57, 459–60. And see Robert Wardy, “Rhetoric,” in *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge*, ed. Jacques Brunschwig and Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 465–85.

9. Nietzsche, “Description of Ancient Rhetoric,” 5–6.

10. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 176–81.

11. For a good discussion of the nature and origins of rhetoric, see Edward Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), and Schiappa's *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); Thomas Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); and Robert Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato and Their Successors* (London: Routledge, 1996). On Isocrates, see Yun Lee Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, Power, Pedagogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 164–71, 200–232, and Takis Poulakos, *Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates' Rhetorical Education* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

12. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.2.1.

that rhetoric emerges out of, or is intimately connected to, the civic space of public address:

The kinds of Rhetoric are three in number, corresponding to the three kinds of hearers. For every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object (*telos*) of the speech refers. Now the hearer must necessarily be either a spectator or a judge, and a judge of either of things past or of things to come. A member of the general assembly is a judge of things to come, a juror in a court, of things past, the mere spectator, of the ability of the speaker.¹³

All three understand rhetoric as an art particularly suited to attack and defense by means of words and speech. But the crux of rhetoric is deliberative speech, which is practiced especially and normally within an assembly, because to Aristotle deliberation is more noble and more “civic”—that is, more universal, less private and specialized—and thus preeminently political.¹⁴

In the democratic polis, rhetoric necessarily means liberty and power. *Demokratia*, rule of the people, is in Athens traditionally associated with liberty and equality. Thus Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric* (1.8.5), notes that liberty is the *telos*, or the essential and defining characteristic of democracy.¹⁵ *Parrhesia*—freedom of speech—or the “liberty to say everything” is a central element in the construction and elaboration of the art of speaking, the *logon techne*.¹⁶ The terms *isegoria* (equal rights to speak), *isonomia* (equal political rights), and *isokratia* (equal right to rule) denote various forms of political equality that together embody democratic rule, and all are directly related to rhetoric as a political craft. In the assembly the rights and liberties

13. Ibid., 1.3.1–3. The constituent elements of a speech, of course, are closely connected to the three kinds of speech: the deliberative, the forensic, and the epideictic. All writers on rhetoric subsequent to Aristotle base their discussion on this classification, see Cicero *De inventione* 1.5.7 and Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 3–4.12–15. Of course, by the time rhetoric became the subject of theoretical, philosophical, and literary analysis its connection and relevance to social and political activity had been rendered, if not entirely superfluous, then certainly considerably more tenuous.

14. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.1.10.

15. Ibid., 1.8.5.

16. See Susan Sara Monoson, *Plato’s Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 51–63.

of citizens are embodied and focused in the right to speak.¹⁷ Citizenship, which means membership in the ruling body, which, in turn, defines membership in the polis, is characterized precisely by this right to speak. Thus possession of *isegoria* is an important criterion in determining the power structure of the polis. Whether the right is broadly or narrowly based determines the democratic or oligarchic character of the polis. For the right to speak in the assembly is the right to persuade the assembly to *act*—that is, to harness the power of the state and use it for particular ends.¹⁸ At the same time, the right to speak in the assembly is a necessary condition for equal treatment under the law—that is, *isegoria* and *isonomia* imply each other.

In addition, equal right to speak and equal treatment under the law, important in distinguishing the various types of regimes, are even more important in distinguishing the free citizen from the slave. To Aristotle speech and language are the underlying foundation of the polis, which would mean that to him the *logos* is inherently and necessarily political and social. Man is a political being because only within the political association (the polis)—which to him is the highest form of cultural and civil life—can he realize his full human potential. But the polis—and this is Gorgias and Isocrates—is an association characterized, and made possible, by speech and language (the *logos*).¹⁹ Polis and *logos* presuppose one another, such that each can only be understood in terms of the other. More specifically, in his *Politics* Aristotle distinguishes among different kinds of rule: in the household (*despoteia*), and in the polis.²⁰ The first is rule over unequal—women, barbarians, slaves; the second is rule over equals. Equality in speech and in law, therefore, applies only to members of the association.²¹ Women, slaves, and metics, which together formed the

17. See Josiah Ober, “The Orators,” in *Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 130–41.

18. See Harvey Yunis, *Taming Democracy: Models of Political Rhetoric in Classical Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2–15.

19. Schiappa makes the same argument for Protagoras, and links the latter’s understanding of *logos* to that of Aristotle. See his *Protagoras and Logos*, 189 and, especially, 185.

20. Aristotle *Politics* 1252a–1253b.

21. Nietzsche, writing on the relationship between rhetoric and Greek culture and politics, is instructive: “The nation which was educated by means of such a language, the most speakable of all languages, spoke insatiably and at an early age found pleasure and a distinct talent in speaking. There are, indeed, tribal differences, such as the *brachologia* [terseness] of the Dorians (especially the Spartans), but on the whole the Greeks feel that they are speakers, in contrast with the *aglossai*, the [languageless] non-Greeks (Sophocles); they are the ones who speak understandably and beautifully (the opposite is *barbaroi*, the “quackers,”

majority of the population of the polis (certainly of Athens) could not speak in the political space that defined the polis. Possessing no public persona, they could only speak and act within the household (ruled, we should remember, by the citizen/master). Indeed, to Aristotle the political distinction between slave/barbarian/woman and master/Greek/man corresponds to the philosophical and metaphysical distinction between reason/*logos* and appetite/desire. The ability to speak openly in the assembly or in the agora is thus the signal mark of equal citizenship.²² In effect, it is only within the public and open space of the polis—which is an association of equals, who are at the same time masters (*despotaī*) who rule a household of slaves—does it become possible to realize the Aristotelian ideal of “ruling and being ruled in turn.”²³ And it becomes possible precisely because the constituent members of the association have equal rights to speak and to address the assembly.²⁴ Thus ruling and being ruled in turn implies the reciprocal and mutual relation of persuading and being persuaded.

In practical terms, however, a democratic polis that tries to establish the equal right to speak along with the liberty to say everything must accept party politics and factional strife. Orators within the assembly are leaders of various factions. And as Plato and Aristotle demonstrate, democratic politics revolves fundamentally around the struggle between the few and the many, the oligarchs or dynasts against the democrats and groups of lesser means. Even within the latter group, however, as Thucydides makes abundantly clear,²⁵ the leaders of the democratic faction are themselves

cf. *ba-trachoi* [frogs]). But only with the political forms of *democracy* does the overestimation of oratory begin; it has become the greatest instrument of power *inter pares*.” “The History of Greek Eloquence,” in Gilman, Blair, and Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, 214.

22. See the *Politics* 1260a–1260b, where Aristotle discusses slaves and women, and approvingly quotes Sophocles’ line, “A modest silence is a woman’s crown.”

23. This should be contrasted to Euripides’ understanding of contemporary Athenian democracy as evinced in the exchange between Theseus and the messenger in *The Suppliant Women*, 400–440, where Theseus says, “There is no tyrant here. The city is not ruled by one man only, but is free. The people is the sovereign, and rulers succeed one another year by year in turn. No extra privilege is given to the rich man, and the poor is his equal” (403–8).

24. *Politics* 1274b32–1275b.

25. Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* 1.139.4, 2.40.2, 2.64.1, 2.65.8–10, 3.11.7, 3.43.4–5, 4.22.2, 8.1.1. See also M. I. Finley, “Athenian Demagogues,” *Past and Present* 21 (1962): 3–24, and Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

men of substance and education, skilled in administration (public and private) and in the ways and methods of addressing the assembly. The equal right to speak and the liberty to say everything thus mean political competition and civil conflict. The democratic city, in Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, is in reality—that is, politically, socially, and economically—two cities. Political theory, in a sense, emerges out of the conflict between the classes as it attempts to deal with the social and political problems such conflict poses.

These problems, as Machiavelli notes in chapter 9 of *The Prince*, and as Madison and Hamilton underline in *The Federalist Papers*,²⁶ have been endemic to “every city”—that is, to a political body defined by factional strife between the few and the many. As Machiavelli says, “The people desire not to be dominated and oppressed by the rich; the rich desire to dominate and to oppress the people. As a result of these two opposed desires, one of three effects appears in the city: princely rule or liberty or license.” Machiavelli’s discussion may be regarded as a succinct and terse summation of Thucydides’ description of the internecine class war within the Greek city-states, as well as a restatement of Plato’s analysis of democratic and oligarchic politics in the *Republic*. Thucydides addresses the problem of democratic politics as he describes the internal power struggles within the Athenian assembly as it is manipulated and moved to action by various factional leaders. Through the use of set speeches he shows how the moderate and conservative democracy under Pericles is gradually transformed into a radical democracy under Cleon and Alcibiades. What is crucial is his analysis of the change in the relation between the orator/statesman and the assembly he addresses. Although Thucydides castigates the demos (the many) for the disasters of the war, it is nevertheless interesting that his aristocratic, antipopular bias does not make him reject traditional Athenian democratic institutions. Indeed, he seems to argue that it was factional demagogues such as Cleon and Diodotus who led the assembly away from Periclean democracy. On the other hand, Plato regarded the intensification of factional strife and the triumph of radical democracy as the inevitable consequence of rule by a popular assembly and, concomitantly, of the right to speak openly and to say everything.

In the very different context of republican Rome, where the right to speak at meetings or in the various assemblies of the people was limited to

26. See Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Penguin, Putnam, 1999), nos. 9, 10, 51, 63, and 70.

magistrates, effective political power was concentrated within the senatorial oligarchy. Nevertheless, the right to speak to the people, to address them, and to put political and policy questions before the various *comitia* and before the *concilia plebis*, is what defines political activity in republican Rome. It was precisely the ability to move the Senate and the popular assemblies that enabled factions and their leaders to attain and maintain power.²⁷

Roman authors—whether historians and politicians such as Sallust, Cicero, and Tacitus, or writers and poets such as Virgil, Horace, and Ovid—associate rhetoric and oratory with *libertas* and with *certamen*. Indeed, under the republic liberty²⁸ and conflict presupposed each other. Moreover, although writers, especially Cicero and Sallust, lamented the loss of virtuous concord and harmony, which supposedly characterized the ancient Roman order, and simultaneously castigated the political and social strife that characterized Roman politics of their period, such a critique underlines the value they placed on *libertas*, and they were quite conscious of the irony wherein the critique was itself a weapon in the ongoing struggle for power. Sallust, in describing the contest between the Sullans and Marians, and in recounting the events of the Catilinarian conspiracy, echoes both Thucydides and Plato in his analysis of rhetoric and party strife. It is the *lubido dominandi* that sparks speeches at public meetings, in the Senate, and in the various assemblies.²⁹ The opposition between the few and the many, the rich and the poor, is described as a struggle between those who desire liberty (*cura libertatis*) and those who lust or desire to dominate (*cura dominationis*); yet at the same time, what to Sallust underlies these two seemingly antithetical desires is the struggle for glory, power, and wealth (*certamina et cura gloriae et divitiarum*).³⁰ Sallust, following Thucydides,³¹ describes how the diverse factions used the language of liberty and rights

27. See Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), and Claude Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, trans. from the French by P. S. Falla (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

28. On the concept of liberty in ancient Rome, see Chaim Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome During the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950). See also Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

29. See Benedetto Fontana, “Sallust and the Politics of Machiavelli,” *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 1 (2003): 86–108.

30. Sallust *Bellum Iugurthinum* 31.23, *Bellum Catilinae* 20.7–17, 23, and *Epistula ad Caesarem*.

31. Since Plato and Thucydides many have noted the rhetorical and political uses of

as a means to attack and to defend, and as tactical and strategic instruments of the struggle for power. He laments the corruption and debasement of political discourse. Yet what emerges quite clearly from his account is that such a use of language and speech, far from evincing a moral decline in public speech and debate, is inherent to political conflict, and the various rhetorical forms it takes are determined by the nature of the conflict.

Tacitus is very instructive. Writing long after the fall of the Republic, and trying to understand its transformation into a *dominatio*, Tacitus links conflict, competition, and strife with oratory and public speaking, and in turn, makes these central to republican liberty. The *res publica libera* is the public arena constituted by the competition among the Senate, the people, and the magistrates. Indeed, to Tacitus opposition and conflict define the civic life of the republic. He writes:

In the disorder and license of the past more seemed to be within the reach of the speaker, . . . hence, speeches of magistrates who . . . passed nights on the Rostra; hence prosecutions of influential citizens brought to trial . . . ; hence, factions among the nobles, and incessant strife between senate and people. . . . [T]he more powerful a man was as a speaker, the more easily did he obtain office, the more decisively superior was he to his colleagues in office, the more influence did he acquire with the leaders of the state, the more weight in the senate, the more notoriety and fame with the people . . . it was thought a disgrace to seem mute and speechless.³²

Thus the sequence: open and public speech led to factions among the nobles (that is, among the party leaders), which led to strife between the Senate and the people, which led to power and glory in the state. The passage evokes not only Cicero, but also Gorgias, Isocrates, and Aristotle. The power of the *logos* in the state (as in Gorgias and Callicles), as well as its role as a necessary ingredient to liberty and citizenship (as in Aristotle), is no more brilliantly described than in Tacitus's epigram—"It was thought

the idea of liberty, especially Sallust, Tacitus, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. A citation from Francesco Guicciardini is illustrative: "Non crediate a costoro che predicano sì efficacemente la libertà, perché quasi tutti, anzi non è forse nessuno che non abbia l'obietto agli interessi particolari." Ricordo 66, in Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, ed. R. Sponzani (Florence: Sansoni, 1951).

32. Tacitus *Dialogus de oratoribus* par. 36.

a disgrace to seem mute and speechless.”³³ Speechlessness is perceived as the token of powerlessness and dependence, indeed, of slavery and domination.³⁴

Leadership and influence in the Senate are linked to the generation of support with the people, which together make possible leadership in the state. Here Tacitus makes two points. First, the struggle for power taking place within the Senate forced the leaders to address the Senate and to attack and defend by means of speech and language. Thus, he says: “It was little good for them to give a brief vote in the senate without supporting their opinion with ability and with eloquence.”³⁵ Ability and eloquence—Cicero’s famous *ratio et oratio*—are necessary both to achieve power and to force a decision on matters of policy. And second, Tacitus underlines the fact that without popular support the leaders of the various factions, who together of course comprised the Senate, could not maintain their power relative to their opponents. As he notes, “Even against their own wish they had to show themselves before the people.”³⁶ The notion of “showing oneself before the people” is rich in ironic nuance. At one level, it points to the republican and democratic aspects of rhetoric, basic to any kind of civic life, and as such is reminiscent of Aristotle, and of his distinction between acting as a member of the political association and acting as a member of the household. “Showing oneself before the people” implies the open and mutual recognition of citizens within the polis or the *civitas*.

33. See Cicero *De oratore* 3.35.141, where he relates a story concerning the rivalry between Isocrates and Aristotle, in the course of which he quotes Aristotle citing Euripides to the effect that it is a disgrace to be silent and suffer a barbarian to speak, except that Aristotle substitutes Isocrates for barbarian—*ille enim turpe sibi ait esse tacere cum barbaros, hic autem cum Isocratem pateretur dicere*. Quintilian, too, cites a similar line: *turpe esse tacere et Isocratem pati dicere* (3.1.4). In addition, Cicero uses almost the same expression as Tacitus in discussing the central importance of oratory to the founding (and maintaining) of political and civil life: “It does not seem possible that a wisdom either silent or lacking speech [*inops dicendi*] could have converted men suddenly from their [primitive and savage] habits and introduced them to different ways of life . . . unless men had been able by eloquence to persuade their fellows of the truth of what they had discovered by reason.” *De inventione* 1.2.2–3. Tacitus’s epigram thus highlights speech and rhetoric as an indispensable constituent of citizenship and membership within a political community.

34. On the relation in Tacitus between *res publica* and *imperium, libertas* and *dominatio*, see Benedetto Fontana, “Tacitus on Empire and Republic,” *History of Political Thought* 14, no. 1 (1993): 27–40. See also Arlene W. Saxonhouse, “Tacitus’ Dialogue on Oratory: Political Activity Under a Tyrant,” *Political Theory* 3, no. 1 (1975): 53–68.

35. Tacitus *Dialogus* par. 36.

36. Ibid.

In addition, Tacitus seems to say that political activity—competition and opposition—takes place within sight of the people, who are not merely the spectators, but also the ground within which the conflict takes place, and as such, provide the purpose and meaning of the entire process. It is in the formal *comitia* and in the more informal *contiones* that the people as ground and background both form and inform the notions of civic discourse and public speech. At the same time, however, “showing oneself before the people” is a tacit, and ironic, assertion that republican politics is far from transparent—or as “moral” and as “just”—as its defenders might want to argue. For it points to multiple levels of “truth” telling, multiple layers of masks a leader (democratic or otherwise) is compelled to assume. It seems to say that the struggle for power, even (or especially?) when conducted openly before the people within a public space, cannot avoid duplicity and deception. What appears before the people, what is presented and revealed, is necessarily indeterminate, and whose “truth” and “authenticity” cannot be fixed and captured with certainty.³⁷ As in the funerals³⁸ of the Roman *nobiles*, where the public is treated to the spectacle of image busts of the family ancestors carried in procession, the party leaders and orator/politi-

37. On this point, see Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited and introduced by C. B. Macpherson (London: Penguin Books, 1985), pt. 1, chap. 16, p. 217, where he says, “The word Person is latine: instead whereof the Greeks have *prosopon*, which signifies the *Face*, as *Persona* in latine signifies the *disguise*, or *outward appearance* of a man, counterfeited on the Stage; and sometimes more particularly that part of it, which disguiseth the face, as a Mask or Visard: And from the Stage, hath been translated to any Representer of speech and action, as well in Tribunalls, as Theaters. So that a *Person*, is the same that an *Actor* is, both on the Stage and in common Conversation; and to *Personate*, is to *Act*, or *Represent* himself, or an other; and he that acteth another, is said to bear his person, or act in his name; (in which sense Cicero useth it when he saies, *Unus sustineo tres Personas; Mei, Adversarii, & Judicis.*” On Cicero’s notion of *persona* as human character, see *De officiis* 1.30.107–1.32.121. For the public magistrate as the representative of the state (*se gerere personam civitatis*), see 1.34.124. For an excellent discussion of rhetoric and politics in Hobbes, see Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), where he analyzes Hobbes’s intellectual and philosophical development, from his early use of rhetoric, to his rejection of it and embrace of science, and finally to his attempts to reconcile science and rhetoric—a journey which intriguingly approximates Plato’s movement from original opposition to ultimate recognition of rhetoric as a useful and necessary tool of dialectic, and to his attempts to arrive at a synthesis between rhetoric and philosophy.

38. Funeral orations, neither of the deliberative nor forensic kind, perhaps may be classified as epideictic, and their political effectiveness is famously recorded in Thucydides’ rendering of Pericles’ speech. In the Roman case, the relation between the funeral speech itself and the context within which it is inserted (procession, *imagines*) offers a revealing example of the power and force of nondeliberative and nonforensic rhetoric, and its dramatic and strategic use by party and factional leaders testifies to its importance in Roman politics.

cians appear before the people wearing masks appropriately designed for strategic effect.³⁹ It is not that politics is a “stage,” and the political actors are represented through their political *personae*. The protagonists/orators and their political conflicts are quite “real”; yet this reality becomes perceptible and meaningful by means of rhetorical (aesthetic and emotional) devices and methods, that is, through “appearance.”

And Tacitus continues:

The great and famous eloquence of old is the nursling of the license which fools call liberty; it is the companion of sedition, the stimulant of an unruly people, a stranger to obedience and subjection, a defiant, reckless, presumptuous thing which does not show itself in a well-governed state . . . our own state, while it went astray and wore out its strength in factious strife and discord, with neither peace in the forum, unity in the senate, order in the courts, respect for merit . . . produced beyond all question a more vigorous eloquence.⁴⁰

Tacitus, using the tools of rhetorical eloquence, is making an ironical argument, seeming to undermine what he actually supports, to advocate by criticizing, and to praise by blaming. Oratory is not simply linked to license/liberty; it is the motive force by which liberty/license matures and expands. The passage celebrates free expression and plurality, antagonistic perspectives, and competing desires and appetites, all of which lead to power struggles channeled within multiple and “counteracting”⁴¹ institutions.

39. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, in *The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 3:18: “Men in general judge more with their eyes than with their hands, since everybody can see but few can perceive. Everybody sees what you appear to be; few perceive what you are, and those few dare not contradict the belief of the many, who have the majesty of the government to support them. As to the actions of all men and especially those of princes, against whom charges cannot be brought in court, everybody looks at their result. So if a prince succeeds in conquering and holding his state, his means are always judged honorable and everywhere praised, because the mob is always fascinated by appearances and by the outcome of the affair; and in the world the mob is everything; the few find no room there when the many crowd together.” The distinction here made between the few who “touch with their hands” (who may perceive with reasonable certainty) and the many who can only see addresses the sociopsychological bases of knowledge, which apply to all, and does not refer to the political and economic distinction between the few and the many.

40. Tacitus *Dialogus* par. 40.

41. James Madison, *Federalist* No. 51.

Public speech, indeed, precisely because it is a “stranger to obedience and subjection” produces a defiant, unruly people, eager to pursue their desires and appetites, and as such paradoxically willing to listen and to follow the orator/leaders best able to exercise their oratorical technique—that is, best able “to show themselves before the people.”⁴²

In effect, given a sociopolitical order constructed along the lines of a polis like pre-Hellenistic Athens, or of a city-state such as pre-Augustan, republican Rome, the knowledge of rhetoric—argumentation, the ways and means (logical, structural, physico-emotional, and dramatic) by which one addresses a body of people—is not a mere literary affectation, or a lifeless academic exercise. Rather, it is directly connected to social and political practice. Rhetoric is crucial to a citizen’s life, both in the assembly and in the law courts. To possess this knowledge is therefore to possess the means to assert one’s will over others. The use of a specific language, within a given historical context, shows the relative power equation of diverse groups. Thus the rise and decline of the vernacular may be seen as a barometer that tracks the rise and decline of the relative influence of the lower classes within a given society—that is, of the relative value assumed by the “many” within the power equation. In this context, therefore, rhetoric describes a form of knowledge that depends upon a close relationship between the speaker/leader and the people, in the same way that rhetoric as a form of knowledge depends upon the existence of a popular assembly whose persuasion and direction is the object of the speaker. But it should be noted that the orator, in the very process of addressing the people, is on the one hand assuming a position of moral-intellectual leadership with respect to them, and on the other, still immersed—or minimally, “showing himself before”—within them. He is of the people, because the effectiveness of the speech depends on his establishing a link—and because he must be present in the assembly to address the people. And if he appears “superior” to them, because he possesses a knowledge that enables him to generate arguments and reasons that will persuade the audience and elicit

42. See *Commentarolium petitionis*, reputedly a work of Cicero’s brother Quintus addressed to Marcus, on methods of electioneering, in which are stressed techniques such as deception, simulation, theatrical displays before the people, flattery, and ingratiation (16–17, 39–42, 44, 47, 52–55). In 1, he says, “Though nature is strong . . . an assumed personality can overcome the natural self for an affair of a few months.” And in 42, “What you lack by nature should be so well simulated that it seems a natural act,” and finally, in 55, “Be supreme in oratory [*dicendo*]; this is what holds and attracts men in Rome, and keeps them off from hampering or harming you.”

their support, it is only as a leader or *rhetor* in the assembly, subject to the scrutiny and accountability of the citizens.⁴³ Demosthenes makes this point in one of his speeches, where he notes that the audience or the assembly, if it does not determine, certainly plays a significant role in the formulation and delivery of the actual speech.⁴⁴ Addressing the Athenian assembly, he says: “Your orators never make you either bad men or good, but you make them whichever you choose; for it is not you that aim at what they wish for, but they who aim at whatever they think you desire. You therefore must start with a noble ambition and all will be well, for then no orator will give you base counsel, or else he will gain nothing by it, having no one to take him at his word.”⁴⁵ Demosthenes is trying to warn the Athenians to be wary of demagogues (which, of course, from the perspective of his opponents will be seen as a political and rhetorical maneuver). Stripped of moral pretension, however, his observation remains cogent. In a democratic polis such as Athens, where *demos* and polis are coterminous, orator and statesman are one and the same: the *politikos* is the leader who looks after the interests of the body of citizens (as opposed to those of the few).⁴⁶ And in republican Rome, where politics was fundamentally a struggle for preeminence and control over the direction and power-resources of the state, the popular assemblies, Senate, magisterial institutions, and law courts together formed the public space and ground that gave meaning and direction to civic and social strife. In both kinds of states knowledge of rhetoric cannot be separated from knowledge of the audience—which means knowledge of the means necessary to persuade, influence, and thus lead it. For in order to influence the audience/assembly, one should be able to adapt oneself to its peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, and this requires a knowledge of psychology, economics, and sociology—not, of course, in any social “scientific” sense, but in a fundamentally political sense (as understood by Aristotle and Cicero). It is no accident, as Quentin Skinner and others have noted, that Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, precisely because it deals with the art of speaking and persuasion, is simultaneously a trea-

43. On the relation between speaker/politician and audience/assembly, see Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 107.

44. On Demosthenes and his use of rhetoric, see Jeff Miller, “Warning the *Dēmos*: Political Communication with a Democratic Audience in Demosthenes,” *History of Political Thought* 23, no. 3 (2002): 401–17.

45. Demosthenes “On Organization” par. 36.

46. Indeed, Athenian politicians, especially in the fourth century, were called *rhetores*. See M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principle, and Ideology*, trans. J. A. Crook (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 270.

tise on character, and on the “passions” and “virtues” of human nature. As Vico puts it, “The end sought by eloquence always depends on the speaker’s audience, and he must govern his speech in accordance with their opinions,”⁴⁷ which is analogous to what Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* on the speaker adapting himself to the character of his audience.⁴⁸

Demosthenes’ exhortation to the people, along with Vico’s observation, highlights the problem regarding the nature and role of rhetorical knowledge originally posed by Plato (and taken up by Aristotle). The problem is addressed throughout his writings, openly and explicitly in some, tacitly and implicitly in others, and it has become a *topos* of most major political thinkers since the Greeks—namely, the relation between philosophy and rhetoric, knowledge and politics, reason and power.⁴⁹ On the purely philosophical and epistemological level, the issue is the status of reason itself, and its relation to “truth” and “opinion.” Plato’s position on rhetoric is not as clear-cut as it appears at first sight. On the one hand, he appears to move from relentless opposition and scathing critique in the *Gorgias* to recognition and acceptance in the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman*.

The *Gorgias* establishes a fundamental distinction between knowledge and opinion, between reason and appetite, and between philosophy and power.⁵⁰ These dichotomies are used to criticize Gorgias’s understanding of rhetoric as a technique by which the orator may dominate the people/audience. Speech is used either to instruct, and thus to improve the listener, or to persuade, to flatter, to satisfy the pleasures of the listener. Thus rhetoric is a form of speech, which is likened to the art of cooking, used to cater to, and to indulge, the undisciplined and restless appetites of the people. It appeals to the senses by creating the appearance of grace and pleasure in the conscious embellishments of speaking and performing. Teaching and instructing aim at knowledge (*episteme*), which is always true, while rhetoric aims at persuasion in order to evoke opinion (*doxa*) and belief

47. Giambattista Vico, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, ed. Giovanni Gentile and Fausto Nicolini, vol. 1 of *Opere* (Bari: Laterza, 1914–41). Also see Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, trans. from the Latin and with introduction and notes by Elio Gianturco (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).

48. *Rhetoric* 1.8.6 and 2.12–17.

49. See Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, “Territorial Disputes: Philosophy Versus Rhetoric.” See also Robert Hariman, “Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 38–54.

50. On Gorgias’s rhetoric and its relation to Plato’s *Gorgias*, see Wardy, *Birth of Rhetoric*. See also Wardy, “Rhetoric,” in *Greek Thought*, 465–85, and Charles Segal, “Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 66 (1962): 99–155.

(*pistis*), whose truth is always contingent. What Plato wants is to show that the superior knowledge of the philosopher (or the expert/intellectual) is aimed at “what is best” for the audience/listener. In the same way that reason acts as the guide and the ruler of the soul by disciplining the appetites and controlling the passions, so too the philosopher/intellectual by means of speech and discourse (education and instruction), acts to lead the people to what is best. Thus, rather than exercising rational rule and control over appetite and desire, sophistic rhetoric gives them free rein.

Plato brings the art to its logical conclusion, and makes Callicles construct a theory of *Machtpolitik*, whose concept of the democratic politician is the embryonic figure of the tyrant outlined in the *Republic*.⁵¹ Sophistic rhetoric, and the notion of politics based on it, is both product and cause of a restless desire for power, wealth, and glory, which culminates in imperial expansion and ultimate collapse. In this sense, Callicles symbolizes the unbridled desire for power that both Thucydides and Plato see in post-Periclean Athenian democracy. It is interesting to note that Plato’s discussion of rhetoric prefigures Machiavelli’s formulation of the model prince. The metaphor of the fox and the lion, fraud and force, neatly captures the uses of rhetoric: “The one who knows best how to play the fox comes out best, but he must understand well how to disguise the animal’s nature and must be a great simulator and dissimulator.”⁵² Simulation and dissimulation—elements of what both Plato and Machiavelli call appearance, which is crucial in the construction of a given reality—are ironically dependent upon an accurate and perceptive analysis of the subject or audience (social psychology, sociocultural values, emotive symbols, language, social-political status, and so on). At the same time, the analysis must be combined with a fine psychological understanding of the relation between the nature of the audience and the emotive and dramatic symbols evoked by historical

51. See Malcolm Schofield, “Approaching the *Republic*,” in Rowe and Schofield, *Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 191–232, especially 192–98.

52. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 18. Compare Machiavelli’s understanding of prudence and political virtue with Vico’s: “Our youth are seriously compromised: they are unable to engage in the life of the community with sufficient prudence, nor do they know how to infuse their speech with a knowledge of human psychology or to permeate their utterances with passion. When it comes to prudence in civil life, it is well for us to keep in mind that human events are dominated by opportunity and choice, which are extremely subject to change [*quae incertissimae sunt*] and which are strongly influenced by simulation and dissimulation—both preeminently deceptive things [*res fallacissimae*]. As a consequence, those whose only concern is truth [*qui unum verum curant*] have great difficulty in finding means to a goal and even greater in attaining their ends.” *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, in *Opere*, 1.91.

memory and the geography of place and of landscape.⁵³ The construction of cultural and ideological structures of power is the modern equivalent of rhetorical practice, and to this extent the use of fraud and deception is crucial. In the modern world, certainly, mass media and mass communication networks are sophisticated and elaborate instruments of image formation and value dissemination, an increasingly technical and technological underpinning to an activity whose theoretical foundations and practical elaboration were originally outlined and explored by the Sophists.

The issue here is the status of *logos* itself.⁵⁴ Is reason, and its expression in speech, language, and discourse, inherently and fundamentally deceptive? Gorgias seems ambiguous on the matter. As he says in the *Helen*, “On most subjects most people take belief as advisor to the soul,” and, “How many speakers on how many subjects have persuaded others and continue to persuade by molding false speech?”⁵⁵ Yet the “molding of false speech” assumes the existence of—or at least the possibility of devising—an objective method by which false and true speech may be determined.⁵⁶ Constructing such a method enables Plato to argue that the forums in which rhetoric is effective, and the ends to which Gorgias says rhetoric is directed, are not suitable to philosophic discourse and the teaching of knowledge.⁵⁷

Plato hints at the possibility of reforming sophistic rhetoric in the *Gorgias*. Socrates asks Callicles about orators who “make the Athenians better,” and suggests a type of rhetoric informed by philosophy and knowledge—what he calls “true rhetoric”—directed to the ways and means justice may be promoted, injustice removed, and moderation instilled, and indiscipline corrected.⁵⁸ He develops this idea in the *Phaedrus*, where the orator, by means of dialectic and philosophic discourse, acquires the necessary knowledge to see and understand reality (as opposed to appearances). Since the orator is now also philosopher, and knows the distinction

53. For an excellent discussion of this relation, that is, the interaction among rhetoric, socio-physical space, architecture and aesthetic representation, and audience/public, see Ann Vasaly, *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

54. See, for example, Nietzsche’s discussion in “Description of Ancient Rhetoric,” 21–25, where he says that “language is rhetoric, because it desires to convey only a *doxa* [opinion], not an *episteme* [knowledge].” See also his “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense,” in Gilman, Blair, and Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, 246–57.

55. *Encomium to Helen*, 11, in Kennedy, Appendix IA.

56. See Guthrie, *The Sophists*, 180–81, 192–99.

57. *Ibid.*, 269–74.

58. *Gorgias* 503C and 517A.

between knowledge and belief, truth and opinion, reason and appetite, he is able to use deception and dissimulation for purposes of education and instruction. The point is to use rhetoric and the arts of deception to teach philosophic truth.⁵⁹ What this means is that the philosopher, in addressing his audience, should be able to generate passion in them while at the same time controlling his own passion. Such an ability to generate passion coolly and with calculation demands knowledge of the constituent elements of the soul. Thus the philosopher, in order to teach and lead the people to what is best, must become an orator. Plato does not simply reject the idea that the speaker must adapt and shape his discourse to the nature and character of the audience he is addressing. The speech of the philosopher/orator is shaped in accordance with the nature of the people's psychology in order to transform it toward the virtuous and the best.

At the same time, however, Plato wants to maintain the distinction between philosophy (which teaches by means of dialectic) and rhetoric (which persuades by means of illusion and deception). Thus, in the *Statesman* he writes that rhetoric does not educate by means of rational discourse, but rather persuades the many (*plethou*) or the mob (*ochlou*) through myth (*ochlou dia mythologai*).⁶⁰ Of course, in the dialogues Socrates is presented now teaching by means of dialectic, now persuading by means of myths and legends. The first arrives at truth by means of knowledge, the second arrives at the same truth by means of illusions and fictions. In effect, we see Plato, in his analysis of rhetoric and its relation to the masses, in the process of constructing a methodology by which the telling and speaking of the philosophic truth is achieved through its antithesis—deception and dissimulation.

The dual nature of the *logos* as the *hegemon* "of all things" is clearly revealed in the *Republic*. There Plato contrasts the *logos* as reason, the ruler of spirit and appetite, both guide and arbiter of truth and virtue, to the *logos* as rhetoric, seducer, and flatterer of the appetites and the passions. Knowledge, and those who possess knowledge, are independent of social and historical structures, such that the subject of knowledge is a reality that only reason is able to penetrate. Plato establishes the philosophic *logos* as the determinant of all reality and makes it master and ruler over *politike praxis*. Because philosophy possesses knowledge of the truth, and thus of the difference between reality and appearance, myths, legends, and liter-

59. *Phaedrus* 239E.

60. *Statesman* 304D.

ary and artistic fictions are both useful and necessary to the philosopher-rulers. Myths and other similar fictions, therefore, are valid when they are used to lead the people to believe right opinions. Poets, dramatists, and other artists are criticized, not because they construct illusory fictions that deceive the masses, but because Plato believes they do not know how to deceive well enough (that is, according to the philosophic *logos*).⁶¹ Thus: “If anyone, then, is to practise deception, either on the country’s enemies or on its citizens, it must be the Rulers of the commonwealth, acting for its benefit; no one else may meddle with this privilege.”⁶²

In effect, to Plato rhetoric and politics are subordinate to dialectic and to philosophic reason. The foundation of true rhetoric is the science (*episteme*) of mind, such that rhetoric is the “art which wins men’s minds by means of words [*techne psychagogia dia logon*].”⁶³ By means of words, or by means of reason, (*dialogon*) one will arrive at the truth, objective and independent of human perceptions, appetites, and interests.

The distinction that Plato establishes between the two kinds of speech is central both to despotic and to democratic politics. “True rhetoric,” which is subject to philosophy and to dialectic, leads the mind or the soul to truth (*psychagogia*), and sophistic rhetoric, which is subject to appetites and passion, leads the people (that is, the many) toward ends or policies

61. See M. F. Burnyeat, “Art and Mimesis in Plato’s *Republic*,” *London Review of Books*, May 21, 1998, pp. 3–9. Both Plato and Aristotle compare politics and aesthetics, but in opposite directions and with different conclusions. To Aristotle, as also in Athenian democracy, in the same way that the *ekklesia* was sovereign in the polis, so too the audience or spectators, whether in drama or in the arts generally (such as architecture or sculpture), determined the winners of prizes in dramatic or artistic contests. Of course, as Burnyeat notes, such a practice is anathema to Plato. See Plato *Laws* 700E–701A and *Republic* 492B–C. As he says in the *Laws*, in a discussion of music, “Consequently they gave the ordinary man not only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge. The audiences, once silent, began to use their tongues; they claimed to know what was good and bad in music, and instead of a rule of the best in music, a sort of vicious ‘rule of the audience’ [*theatrokratia*] arose. But if this democracy had been limited to gentlemen and had applied only to music, no great harm would have been done; . . . however, music proved to be the beginning of everyone’s conviction that he was an authority on everything, and of a general disregard for the law. Complete liberty was not far behind.” See Paul Cartledge, “‘Deep Plays’: Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. P. E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3–35.

62. *Republic* 388, and see 389–91.

63. *Phaedrus* 261B, 271D. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is based on the *Phaedrus*: an orator should study the various parts of the soul, and consequently the different kinds of men, in order to know what kinds of speech, and what kinds of persuasion, to use when addressing them. See Wardy, “Rhetoric,” 482–85.

given by the ongoing power struggle (*demagogia*). The former is an activity that may be conducted privately or not (indeed, anywhere, because independent of political, social, and historical conditions), whereas the latter is a preeminently public activity, and cannot be conducted except in the assembly or the law courts.⁶⁴ In the same way, the former leads one to *episteme*, whereas the latter leads one to mere opinion and, worse, to error.⁶⁵

The rhetoric of Gorgias and Callicles is the breeding ground of the “spirit of liberty and equality.”⁶⁶ In the democratic constitution, Plato notes, “liberty and free speech are rife everywhere; anyone is allowed to do what he likes. . . . The result will be a greater variety of individuals than under any other constitution . . . with its variegated pattern of all sorts of characters.”⁶⁷ The right to say everything, and the right to pursue desires, appetites, and interests unmediated by the philosophic *logos* produce, *avant la lettre*, a Hobbesian war of all against all. The fight between the rich and the poor, between oligarchy and democracy, culminates, as we know, in the tyranny of the irrational appetite for power embodied in Plato’s famous characterization of the tyrant as a “beast” and a “wolf.”⁶⁸ Plato describes the process by which class conflict and strife, conducted under conditions of *isegoria* and liberty, lead to tyranny and the consequent abolition of public and civic speech.⁶⁹ The right to say everything ironically leads either

64. Plato makes a similar point in the *Sophist* (222C–D), where speech is divided between that which is practiced in the assembly and in the courts, and that which takes place in the private sphere.

65. See *Republic* 562B–563C. In the *Statesman* Socrates, comparing the statesman (guided by philosophic discourse) to party and faction leaders, calls the latter cheats, liars, and Sophists (303C).

66. *Republic* 563.

67. Ibid., 557. For a different and provocative discussion of *parrhesia* and democracy in Plato, see Monoson, *Plato’s Democratic Entanglements*, 3–18, 154–80.

68. *Republic* 566 on the tyrant as a wolf, and 493A–C on the masses as the “great beast.” It should be recalled that in book 1, when Thrasymachus joins the discussion on the nature of justice, Socrates looks “at him in terror,” calls his intervention an “onslaught,” and refers to him as a “wolf” (336). Thrasymachus, of course, espouses a theory of politics as *Machtpolitik*, in which right and justice are mere fictions and deceptions used to attain and maintain power. To Thrasymachus, Gorgias, and Callicles, justice has no independent, objective status: what exists is not justice, but a rhetoric of justice, not right, but a rhetoric of right. It is not an accident that Machiavelli, in his famous chapter 18 of *The Prince*, employs the rhetorical figures and metaphors of the beast (the fox, the lion, and the centaur) when discussing the “ways of fighting”—that is, politics understood as conflict and competition.

69. Plato, like a philosopher/ruler who develops myths and narratives in order to teach a higher truth and a higher morality, develops stages of political change purely for pedagogic purposes. As such, his theory of revolutionary change should be seen in light of his rhetorical theory. The historical reality in the ancient Greek polis is that democracy emerged

to speechlessness or to subservient flattery. By flattering the people through rhetoric and public speech the orator becomes a tyrant, and rhetoric/flat-tery is now redirected toward the tyrant. However, Plato attacks tyranny, not because it silences public speech, but because it represents the rule of the lowest appetites. The opposite of tyranny is not democracy, but the rule of philosophy. Indeed, while democracy, which is described by a multiplicity of appetites and a variety of interests, produces tyranny, which is characterized by the appetite for domination, tyranny, once properly instructed and educated by philosophy, may lead to the just state where reason rules. In either case, public speech, once replaced by public reason, is superfluous. As Tacitus notes, writing about the status of oratory in Rome under imperial rule: “The orator gets an inferior and less splendid renown where a sound morality and willing obedience to authority prevail. What need there of long speeches in the Senate, when the best men are soon of one mind, or endless harangues to the people, when political questions are decided not by an ignorant multitude, but by one man of preeminent wisdom [*sapientissimus et unus*]?”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, “true” rhetoric in Plato performs a necessary political and social function: it is the means by which the philosopher leads the masses to accept a sociopolitical and sociocultural reality manufactured and constructed by philosophical reason. The philosopher devises myths and fables (simulation and dissimulation, in Machiavelli’s and Vico’s terms), and uses rhetoric to disseminate them. As such, rhetoric in Plato is the means by which the reason and knowledge of the philosopher are transformed into faith and religion in order to generate within the people support and consent for the state. In the *Republic* politics and rhetoric (as free speech) are abolished.⁷¹ And where philosophy and reason rule, speech is only a means to instruct the masses.

from tyranny, not the reverse as Plato would have it. Because of social and economic changes tyrants arose who destroyed the power base of the traditional landed aristocracy, established hoplite armies of citizen-soldiers, and established their power on the emerging classes of commoners (such as peasants of means, traders, merchants, artisans, etc.). A transitional form of government, tyranny generally created the conditions for the emergence of oligarchies or democracies. On this, see A. Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants* (London: Hutchinson, 1956). For our purposes, however, it is important to note that in traditional aristocracies—where blood lineage and an ethics of honor are crucial—the idea of *logos* as the giving of an account for one’s actions is meaningless: an aristocrat does not explain his actions (certainly not to an inferior). From an aristocratic and traditional point of view, giving a rational account is an ethic of the base and the vulgar, and therefore eminently democratic.

70. Tacitus *Dialogus* par. 41.

71. More precisely, in the *Republic* Plato, as Aristotle saw, tried to create the private sphere of the family or household writ large, such that the speech which would instruct and

At the same time, what is most interesting is that Plato links liberty, equality, and free speech with expansion and empire. The release of appetitive energy, unrestrained by moral reason, yet consciously directed by an instrumental and calculating intelligence, leads to conflict and competition within the state, and to the consequent refocusing of these energies toward foreign adventures and conquests. Pericles and Cleon recognize that democratic Athens is despotic and tyrannical. Indeed, there is a direct connection between the radical democratic character of the state and its imperialistic policy. Empire provided the economic and material base necessary to support the radical democracy. In addition, as both Plato and Thucydides understood, there is a connection between economic and social conflict at home (the struggle between “those who hold and those who are without property”)⁷² and imperial expansion abroad. They directly relate expansion, or acquisition of property, to internal dissension and internal strife, which they deem pernicious to the state, whereas the Sophists see strife and factionalism as salutary to the life and growth of the state. Thus, internal acquisition (the conflict within the democratic state over the ownership and accumulation of property) is translated into external acquisition (empire).

Philosophic thought in the ancient world after Plato, whatever its differentiation into various and bitterly antagonistic schools, retains the supremacy of philosophic reason over all other forms of activity. Politically and socially, the victory of philosophy over rhetoric signals the decline and fall of the polis and its *ekklesia*, and the consequent rise of the Hellenistic monarchies. Thus various forms of Stoicism turned their attention to the education and cultivation of a wise and philosophic ruler, the only kind of political speculation relevant—and possible—within a despotic order.⁷³

In effect, *logos hegemon* is constituted by two different forms, or ways, of thought and discourse, each revolving around the other in a reciprocal and competitive, if not contradictory, tension. *Logos* as speech and language presents a form of knowledge that depends upon the subject that knows

shape people’s souls by means of words would become possible and be realized within the polis as a whole. By transforming the polis into a household ruled by the philosopher, Plato was able to transform the rhetoric of Gorgias into the “true rhetoric” of dialectic.

72. James Madison, Federalist No. 10.

73. See Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986), chap. 1, and Sinclair, *History of Greek Political Thought*, 239–61, 287–301. See also Saxonhouse, “Tacitus’ Dialogue on Oratory,” 53–55, 65–67.

or bears this knowledge, as well as on the object to which the knowledge is addressed. As such, it is fluid and in constant movement, and dependent upon context and perspective of both subject and object. Indeed, it is the product of this interaction between the two terms. This is the sophistic knowledge against which Plato wrote, and in response to which he constructed his own version of the *logos* as philosophic reason. Speech and language inevitably lead the discussion, not only to a consideration of the nature and role of ethnicity, nation, and people, but also to a critical analysis of social, economic, and psychological factors. From its structural characteristics, such as syntax, grammar, and idiom, to its elaboration in various literary genres, from the beginnings of critical thinking on rhetorical discourse in Magna Graecia attempts were made to derive and specify concrete expressions and manifestations that together would constitute the life and culture of a given people. Isocrates, who looked at speech and rhetoric as a form of knowledge, understood Hellas as a cultural unit precisely on this basis. A way of life resting on a shared culture and on common language and literature provided for Isocrates the basis on which the jealous and fiercely competitive Greek city-states could come together.⁷⁴ Speech and language, therefore, take root and develop within a particular and concrete sociospatial context, such as Athens or Syracuse, and are expressed in a specific and individual language, such as Ionian or Doric. The particularities that rhetorical discourse identifies generate a relativistic and skeptical outlook on life and the world.⁷⁵ Thus sophistic thought is not only inherently democratic, but also demagogic in character—where demagogic is here understood in its original meaning, as leadership of the people.⁷⁶ All of which points to the centrality of rhetoric as a theory and as a practice.

On the other hand, *logos* as philosophic reason as we find in Plato aspires to the ideal of an ahistorical, universal form of knowledge whose “truth” or validity is independent of the context within which it may have arisen or within which it is inserted. It tends toward a universality that, in its architechtionic desire to locate politics and society within an ordered cos-

74. See Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates*, 179–81, 183–84, and Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3:79.

75. See Schiappa, *Protagoras and Logos*, 117–33, and Guthrie, *The Sophists*, 181–88. Guthrie, referring to Protagoras’s famous epigram *metron anthropon*, says that it encapsulates the notion that “there was no reality behind and independent of appearances, no difference between appearing and being, and we are each the judge of our own impressions.” *The Sophists*, 186. Such a subjectivism and individualism necessarily negate an “all-embracing” good for all, and emphasize the importance of the particular and the concrete.

76. Hansen, *Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, 268.

mos, would level, or negate, the multiform particularities issuing from the speech and languages of diverse social groups. These particularities, with their multiple variety and antagonistic differences, are relegated to the realm of appearance and deceptive fictions, and they are given value only to the extent that philosophy may use them to establish a higher unity and a greater totality. Thus, *logos* as reason and *logos* as speech and language: in the one, reason is autonomous, and master of desire and appetite, and in the other, reason is a calculating and instrumental faculty, and the servant of appetites and desires. The first expresses the absolute integrity of reason, and thus of thought, in confrontation with the world; the other, their mutual penetration and permeability.

Such a simultaneous antagonism and interdependence of the two are neatly captured in Cicero's formula, *ratio et oratio*: reason and speech together are the foundation of politics and the state.⁷⁷ Cicero is certainly conscious of the moral and intellectual controversies of the various Greek schools concerning the relation between philosophy and rhetoric. He translates the philosophy and culture of a highly sophisticated and intellectual world into the much more primitive, less articulate, and certainly less intellectual environment of the Roman political and ruling class.⁷⁸ Yet in the debate between philosophy and rhetoric, philosophy and politics, Cicero seems to return to Isocrates' understanding of rhetoric.⁷⁹ It is a technique and method by which power may be acquired, but also, precisely because it is a means to power, it assumes a determinate political, moral, and social order within which it acquires meaning and value.⁸⁰ The struggle within the ruling class between the *populares* and the *optimates*, which began with

77. Cicero *De officiis* 1.50.

78. See George Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World, 300 B.C.–A.D. 300* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 4–10, 23–24, 29–38, 53–55, 61–71; see also his discussion of Cicero as both orator and theorist of oratory. And see M. L. Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome: A Historical Survey* (London: Routledge, 1996).

79. On Cicero and Isocrates, see S. E. Smethurst, "Cicero and Isocrates," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 84 (1953): 262–320.

80. In *De oratore* 3.16.60–61, Cicero criticizes the Platonic distinction, and has Crassus say: "Whereas the persons engaged in handling and pursuing and teaching the subjects that we are now investigating were designated by a single title (the whole study and practice of the liberal sciences being called philosophy), Socrates robbed them of this general designation, and in his discussions separated the science of wise thinking from that of elegant speaking, though in reality they are closely linked together. . . . This is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain, leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak."

the Gracchi brothers' attempt to reform Roman politics and society (around 133 B.C.E.), and which eventually culminated in the fall of the republic and the rise of military dynasts, shows the uses to which oratory could be put in organizing, deploying, and leading the Roman citizenry, both for and against various factions.

Cicero's distinction⁸¹ between oratory and discourse or conversation—what he calls *contentio* and *sermo*—embodies the antinomies between rhetoric and philosophy, and also encapsulates the contradictions inherent in the notions of speech and discourse. *Sermo* to Cicero is a form of speech conducted within an elite or narrow context for the purpose of ascertaining what is true, whereas *contentio* is a form of speech used to bring a mass audience to action or to a decision.⁸² As discussed earlier, rhetoric or oratory presupposes a public that the politician/speaker is seeking to convince and to persuade. As such, it is alert to the passion, mood, temper, and language of the people. In so doing, the orator, rather than “commanding obedience”⁸³ from his audience in order to lead them to a virtuous state only the speaker can see, is compelled to adapt and to conform to the needs and individual character of his hearers. The public, like the audience in a Greek tragedy, is the judge of the orator’s argument and of his performance. At the same time, however, as both Gorgias and Tacitus show, the orator, precisely because of his skill in rhetoric, and of his knowledge of the psychology and character of his audience, is able to shape and to mold the opinions—that is, as Gorgias says in the *Helen*, the orator, “by persuading the soul that . . . [he] persuaded, constrained her both to obey what was said and to approve what was done.”

Cicero, like Plato, makes reason the arbiter of the natural law that maintains the social order, and thus establishes a dichotomy between those who reason and those who do not (or simply reason less). In this case only those

81. Cicero *De officiis* 1.37.132: “The power of speech . . . is great, and its function is twofold: the first is oratory [*contentionis*]; the second, conversation [*sermonis*]. Oratory is the kind of discourse to be employed in pleadings in court and speeches in popular assemblies [*contionum*] and in the senate; conversation should find its natural place in social gatherings, in philosophical discussions, and among friends, and at dinner parties [*convivia*].” And in *De finibus* 2.6.17, he talks about the “rhetoric of the philosophers” and the rhetoric of the courts. Cicero’s lament, that no one teaches the art of conversation, is reminiscent of Plato’s: the rhetoricians teach the young aristocrats how to use speech to make a career and gain power, but no one teaches them how to reason to virtue and to acquire *humanitas*. As he notes in *De officiis* 1.37.134, the Socratics offer the best models for speech as conversation.

82. See Remer, “Political Oratory and Conversation,” for an extended discussion.

83. Nederman, “Rhetoric, Reason, and Republic.”

who are rational are able to rule, and the people must be guided and led by rulers who know what is just and virtuous. Cicero's argument for natural law and natural reason leads to the distinction between the wise, who are the natural rulers, and the ignorant or foolish, who are necessarily the followers. Since the wise not only know the good, but use reason to discipline their appetites and desires, the ruler "considers the welfare of the people rather than their wishes."⁸⁴ Here the statesman is not only an orator, but also a philosopher: he does not merely wish to gain the consent or assent of the people, but also wants to guide and lead them to the good life, one which, of course, only the wise ruler can ascertain. Cicero's ideal state attempts to institutionalize the divorce between the few who are rational and the many who are not by making the Senate the center of power and leadership.⁸⁵ In effect, rhetoric or speech presupposes an active citizenry, whereas reason or philosophy presupposes a passive one. In one case speech is used to lead the people to a particular action; in the second, reason is used by the wise to discover the moral good and impose it on the ignorant.

The distinction between rhetoric and philosophy, *contentio* and *sermo*, appetite and reason, brings up two crucial points that underlie most arguments regarding democratic and republican politics. One is the position taken on the relative competence (or lack thereof) of the people. Rhetoric and open debate are possible only if one assumes, as, for example, Machiavelli does, that the people are rational and competent. Certainly Machiavelli is conscious of going directly against a long tradition of regarding the people as incompetent and inconstant.⁸⁶ Underlying critiques of rhetoric as an

84. Cicero *De re publica* 1.6.8.

85. Cicero's espousal of the *concordia ordinum*, and of the *consensus universorum bonorum*, under the leadership of the *nobiles* organized and institutionalized in the Senate, seems curious for an orator whose skill and power depends upon conflict and antagonistic debate. On the other hand, such an alliance of "honest men"—the senatorial oligarchy—is the only kind of republican alternative he could offer to oppose the rise of the *imperatores* such as Pompey and Caesar. Cicero's position, both in relation to the factional leaders within Rome, and to Caesar the proconsul exercising the *imperium militiae* in Gaul, shows the weakness of oratory when not used to mobilize and to harness the plebs into a disciplined fighting force, either politically as a faction or militarily into an army.

86. *The Prince*, 9. See also, the *Discourses*, 1.58, in Machiavelli, *Chief Works*, vol. 1, where he tries to refute the opinion of Livy and "all other historians" that the multitude is "unreliable and inconstant . . . arrogant" and domineering. In Machiavelli, though the people are capable of being rational and competent, they may not always act so. It is significant that Machiavelli believes that the many, when misguided and in error, may be led back to reason and guided by the use of "words" and "arguments," while a prince, once having become

agonistic form of public speaking is an open or tacit belief that the many—the masses, the *demos* minus the *oi agathoi* of Plato, the *boni* and the *honesti* of Cicero, the *uomini savi e di buone case* of Guicciardini, to mention a few of many examples—as a collective entity are dominated by passion, and are undisciplined and ignorant. They do not reason; they feel. Subject to the exigent and irrepressible forces of diverse and sometimes conflicting appetites, they lack the rational self-control necessary to ruling. For rule implies self-mastery, the ability to command and obey oneself. The demagogue and the tyrant, whether Plato's or Machiavelli's, whether issuing from the many or the few, exhibit political and psychological traits similar to those of the masses. They may have mastered the techniques of persuasion and flattery, but their *cupido dominandi* has mastered their minds and souls.

Thus, Plato in the *Gorgias* attacks rhetoric as simply catering to the people, flattering them and manipulating their appetites, while in the *Phaedrus* he tries to devise a form of rhetoric that will combine the rationality and wisdom of the philosopher with the rhetorical art. Yet his basic understanding of the many does not change: whether it is used by the orator/politician to manipulate the desires of the people in order to gain power, or whether the philosopher resorts to rhetoric in order to teach and to control the people, the basic antinomy between the competent few and the ignorant, irrational many remains. In the *Protagoras*, Protagoras says that politics, because it issues from speech and language, is an art that may be shared by all—in the same way that in Aristotle speech and polis determine each other. But this is not good enough for Plato. What he wants is not life or power, but the *good* life as given by the philosophic *logos*, and to him this leads to a hierarchy of value distinctions that is incompatible with Protagoras's refusal or inability to make such distinctions. Socrates may agree with Protagoras's founding myth, yet the agreement is more apparent than real, for later Socrates forces Protagoras to agree that all virtue, since it is knowledge, is one. Thus Socrates implies that teaching only one kind of excellence is impossible. On the other hand, there is no question that Plato uses and appropriates Protagoras's teaching about politics and rhetoric. Protagoras begins by looking at the polis as an association or institution necessary for the preservation of life, and concludes by seeing it as an association of people united by mind and established for the good life.

tyrannical, requires steel—a remedy which, though mute and speechless, is nevertheless quite meaningful and effective.

This leads to the second point, which is somewhat epistemological, and deals with the status of philosophy, and its basis, reason. Either reason is an autonomous faculty capable of discovering a preexisting or a given good, such that only the select rational few are able to rule; or reason is contingent, inextricably interwoven with socioeconomic interests, and thus dependent upon the social and political activity of the people. In the first case reason and appetite are opposed, with reason superior to appetite. In the second, each informs the other, and is shaped by the other; the good and public reason are now the products of the competitive activity of the antagonistic factions that constitute the people.

While Plato and Aristotle, despite their differences, are quite clear on the matter, Cicero seems to be ambivalent, or rather, somewhat contradictory. He certainly prefers the narrow circle of the senatorial aristocracy, within which he may pursue the gentlemanly activities of politics, philosophy, and literature. Yet he knows, as a consummate orator, that the power and position of the ruling notables depend upon the support and manipulation of the Roman *populus*—those very masses to whom he directs such contempt and disgust.⁸⁷

Cicero's contrast between *contentio* and *sermo* highlights these distinctions. What he also shows is that there is a relation between political and

87. On the one hand, Cicero insists on the importance and primacy of politics, of the statesman, and of the man of action. Politics and action are crucial to the public good of the *patria*, which to Cicero is the supreme end. The good of the statesman is closely related to the good of his country. Thus Cicero says, statesmen “must strive . . . by whatever means they can, whether in war or at home, to increase the republic in power [that is, expansion and empire], in land, and in revenues. Such service calls for great men.” *De officiis* 2.24.85. On the other hand, to achieve the good, one must also know what is good, and thus the statesman needs the philosopher's knowledge, or in Plato's words, the statesman must become philosopher, or the philosopher statesman. Not only must the statesman concern himself with necessity and with life—that is, with the useful and the instrumental—but also with the good life, that is to say, with the generation and dissemination of the moral virtues. Cicero wants to show that the morally good is instrumentally useful, in the same way that the useful is also moral. Machiavelli regards this argument as counterproductive and forced. Either philosophy trumps politics, or politics is “autonomous,” that is, it is an activity independent of other spheres of human endeavor, and thus a sphere possessing a knowledge and a technique independent of other forms of knowledge. The question regarding the autonomy of politics is related to Cicero's conflation of rationality and sociability, or reason and speech, *ratio et oratio*. To Cicero community is based on speech and reason. Indeed, each would seem to presuppose the other. Cicero's depiction of the origin of community and civilized life as emerging from the *ratio et oratio* of an original orator-founder underlines Cicero's belief in the complementary character of reason and speech, philosophy and rhetoric. In any case, Machiavelli explodes such a conflation. *Ratio et oratio* to Machiavelli assumes a political and social condition which must be established, because it is not given in

institutional structures and kinds of speech and discourse. Conversation presupposes a closed—even elite or aristocratic—space, for it is here that reason finds its domain; whereas rhetoric requires a wider, open, and more popular forum.

In addition, the distinction between the two forms of speech recalls the dual nature or meaning of the Greek *logos*: speech as reason, and speech as language or rhetoric. It also recalls Plato's dichotomy between rhetoric used to address and merely to persuade (*demagogia*) the masses, and rhetoric used to lead the wise to truth and knowledge (*psychagogia*). Yet *contentio* takes into account the entire complex of human nature, whereas *sermo* addresses the purely rational (as well as, perhaps, the aesthetic). Thus, the orator addressing a mass audience must use not merely *logos* (reason or argument) but also *ethos* and *pathos* in order to move his audience to action.

nature, as Cicero assumes. Thus, while Cicero sees the orator as the exemplar of the founder, Machiavelli uses two images as *exempla* of the founder: the armed prophet and the centaur. Law (that is, deliberation and thus speech) and force are together necessary both for the founding and for the maintaining of a state (not to mention its expansion). Machiavelli, in his reference to Sallust and to the conspiracy of Catilina, is alert to the paradox of Cicero's use of extraconstitutional (extra *ordine*) means in order to save the constitution (*ordine*).