

# Retoryka zreinterpretowana

## Rhetoric reinterpreted

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### Logos in ancient Greek discourse on rhetoric: An overview

#### Logos w antycznym greckim dyskursie o retoryce – zarys tematyki

#### Abstract

Ancient Greek rhetoric gave rise to and contributed to the (initial) development of many terms that even today attract the interest of philosophers and rhetoricians round the globe. Among those terms is *logos*, perhaps most characteristically described by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*. But Aristotle is not the sole ancient Greek representative of rhetoric who considered the term. In this essay, I explore how selected ancient Greek figures—i.e. the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and a few others—understood *logos* in the context of rhetoric. I assert that, despite some differences, they essentially viewed the term similarly, as connected to discourse involving argumentation intended to exert influence for socio-political or philosophical purposes.

Antyczna grecka retoryka dała początek i przyczyniła się do (wstępnego) rozwinięcia wielu pojęć, które nawet dziś zwracają uwagę filozofów i retorów na całym świecie. Jednym z tych pojęć jest *logos*. Zapewne najbardziej charakterystycznie opisał je Arystoteles w swojej *Retoryce*. Ale Arystoteles nie jest jedynym przedstawicielem antycznej greckiej retoryki, który poddał to pojęcie namysłowi. W szkicu tym zgłębię to, w jaki sposób wybrane antyczne greckie postaci — tj. sofści, Sokrates, Platon, i kilku innych — rozumiały *logos* w kontekście retoryki. Twierdę, iż pomimo pewnych różnic postaci te postrzegały *logos* w podobny sposób — jako powiązany z dyskursem zawierającym argumentację obliczoną na wpływ dla celów społeczno-politycznych bądź filozoficznych.

#### Key words

influence, *logos*, persuasion, philosophy  
wpływ, *logos*, perswazja, filozofia

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## **Logos in ancient Greek discourse on rhetoric: An overview**

### **1. Introduction**

Rhetoric is an “intellectual art [...] of persuasion” (Worthington 2003, viii), a linguistic craft which involves eloquence and other oratorical skills (cf. Bralczyk 2000, 5). One of the elements of rhetoric is a *logos*<sup>1</sup> conveyed by language. This seems clear from many texts by and about ancient Greek thinkers who reflected on rhetoric. In this essay, I focus on a selection of such texts with an attempt to outline how ancient Greek discourse on rhetoric contributed to foregrounding, crystallising, and consolidating a semantic dimension of *logos* oriented to persuasion—a process extended over at least several centuries.

Before I move on to discussing *logos* from the perspective of ancient Greek rhetoric, let me briefly explain that we are dealing here with an extraordinary term with many dimensions (i.e. polysemy) and applications (i.e. versatility), one of which is rhetorical. *Logos* is a noun derived from the verb *lego* and generally corresponds to the latter’s second (i.e. count, tell) and third (i.e. say, speak) groups of meaning, as delineated under the verb’s B entry in the Greek-English Lexicon by Liddell and Scott (1996, 1033-1034, 1057-1059). *Logos* may refer to a computation, description, explanation, reason, reckoning, story, words, etc. Although this brief enumeration shows that *logos* is polysemous, it does not exhaust that polysemy, neither does it exhaust the term’s versatility. Because the sample references apply for the most part to everyday life. Let us be aware, thus, that *logos* may well refer to: (i) a rational principle ensuring cosmic balance and apply to philosophy; (ii) to the materialisation of divine discourse (i.e. the Word) and apply to theology; and,

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1. Throughout this essay, for simplification purposes I refer to and cite the word *logos* (transliterated) in its basic two forms: nominative singular (*logos*) and nominative plural (*logoi*).

most importantly for this piece of writing, (iii) to discourse involving arguments with a potential to exert influence and apply to rhetoric (Craig 2005, 608-609).

Now, the philosophical, theological, and rhetorical applications of *logos* followed those typical of everyday life—*logos* was in common use in antiquity, years before serious philosophical, theological, and rhetorical pieces in Greek saw daylight. Essentially, what allowed *logos* to make its way from everyday life to philosophy, theology, and rhetoric was the development of rational thought and prevalence of oral communication (Kennedy 1963, 3-4). Both circumstances appear favourable to the evolution of both rhetoric and a *logos* connected therewith.

Among those who discussed *logos* in the context of rhetoric are the Sophists, Socrates and Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Democritus, Hermagoras, Philodemus, and Sextus Empiricus. The writings of the selected figures and their observers give a fairly decent and uniform picture of *logos* in ancient Greek discourse on rhetoric and should suffice to show the contribution of that rhetoric to the semantic enrichment of the term.

## 2. *Logos* in the Sophists' discourse on rhetoric

In the fifth century B.C., the ability to persuade the masses to something through speech was instrumental in gaining power and influence. Well aware of that were the Sophists—a group in ancient Greece who had knowledge of different areas (e.g. mathematics, politics) and who taught people for fees. To be persuasive, the Sophists disputed with each other at teachings with the use of skilful language and sound arguments, including contradictory ones. Good persuasion—the Sophists argued—can convince anyone to anything. But since persuasion has such a potential, knowledge and truth cannot be universal. They are relative and elusive. Lasting and universal is only belief. (Guthrie 1977, 44, 50, 51; Pepe 2013, 21)

The above points to (extreme) relativism, in some respects even nihilism, on the part of the Sophists, focused primarily on using discourse for the sake of effectiveness to prove a point rather than seek deeper sense in something. This approach is arguably well reflected in the philosophical assumption “nothing exists” attributed to Gorgias, one of the first generation Sophists alongside Protagoras (both born c. 490). There are likely two main factors that led to that assumption. First, it was the adoption of the pre-Socratic Parmenidean definition of being as equal to reason with its completeness, eternity, indivisibility, and unchangingness. Second, it was reliance on sensualism, with senses being the primary means of gaining knowledge. Now, as these two necessarily collide, the Sophists—leaning towards sensualism—took refuge in the Heraclitean concept of flux (cf. Heraclit. frag. L, LI, trans. Kahn 2004: 52-53), devoid of anything “unchanging” typical of

the Parmenidean being. As a result, the connexion between discourse (*logos*) and the reality was broken, with discourse becoming an independent, non-verifiable creation, later subject to Plato's and Aristotle's criticism. (cf. Cross 1954, Copleston, 1985, Reale, 1995)

A characteristic statement expressing the Sophists' mindset is given in *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius. Therein, the author paraphrases Protagoras' perspective on the *logos*: "Protagoras was the first to say that there are two sides (*logos*) to every question, opposed to each other" (Laertius 2018, 461). Schiappa objects to translating the *logos* into *sides*, and suggests translating the term otherwise to reflect its meaning in English better. Guthrie's translation addresses Schiappa's suggestion: "Of every thing two contrary accounts (*logos*) can be given" (Guthrie 1977, 182). Protagoras believed that we can speak of anything from opposing perspectives. Schiappa interprets this as the continuation of the Heraclitean unity of opposites proposition. He insists that this is what naturally results from the focus of ancient Greeks on opposites. Here, language is a means of referring to the reality (Schiappa 2003, 90-94, 99-100).

A fragment from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* sheds more light on the *logos* of Protagoras: τὸ τὸν ἥττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν τοῦτ' ἔστιν. (Arist. *Rh.* 1402a, Aristotle 1995, 4789, trans. "This sort of argument illustrates what is meant by making the worse argument (*logos*) seem the better."). The translation provided mistakenly introduces the verb *seem* (and thereby a suggestion of, perhaps, trickery or deceit), despite that the original Greek does not include any word that could be translated like so; Schiappa elaborates on the matter, with examples of other corrupt translations, and opts for translations without such additional elements (Schiappa 2003, 103-107). A refined translation on this pattern, juxtaposed with that by Guthrie cited above, would show that practically everything involves two opposing *logoi*—one superior and the other inferior. Protagoras probably taught his students how to enhance the inferior *logos*, thereby questioning the status of the *logos* in opposition.

It appears that the *logos* of Protagoras revolves round discourse implying argumentation. Drawing on the Heraclitean unity of opposites proposition, the *logos* is linked to two contrary arguments (cf. Empiricus 1996, 117). It may be stronger or weaker, well- or poorly-grounded. How one sees it is relative. Because for somebody a weak argument may seem strong, and for somebody else a strong argument may seem weak. Speakers can strengthen a weak argument or weaken a strong one. They can do that so long as they explain something well. The *logos* relies on the power of language.

We learn more about the *logos* of Sophists from *Encomium of Helen*, a text by Gorgias about the influence of *logos* on people. Gorgias assures us that *logos* can evoke and alter feelings: "Speech (*logos*) is a powerful lord, who with the

finest and most invisible body achieves the most divine works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity.” (Gorg. *Hel.* 8, trans. Dillon and Gergel 2003, 79; cf. Gorg. *Hel.* 9-10, trans. Dillon and Gergel 2003, 80). People submit to the charm of speech. They are in a way vulnerable to it. So strong is the influence of *logos* on people that we can even compare it to the influence of medicine on physical condition<sup>2</sup>. A persuasive *logos* (speech) is like physical pressure. It constrains the freedom of choice. It is coercive. And since rhetoric as seen by the Sophists resorts to *logos* (speech) and prioritises effectiveness over ethics, it may involve unethical means of influence. (Johnstone 1996, 5; Jost and Olmsted 2004, 222). An example of such means is (psychological) manipulation, that is deliberate and underhanded action aimed to influence how individuals or groups think and behave, of which the individuals or groups are unaware (Golka 2008, 112; cf. Schopenhauer 2014).

Manipulation is unethical because it distorts the reality and exploits human weaknesses, which contributes to distrust hindering social stability and advancement. Manipulators make use of fake, dubious, and vague information; they present important information as information of low or even no importance and vice versa; they do not present important information and present information of low or even no importance instead; and they contribute to information overload (Lepa 1997). Manipulators dull the judgement of the manipulated through blackmail, exaggeration, flattery, generalisation, loaded language, understatement, etc. When manipulators resort to any of the above, they increase the chances that the manipulated will submit to their will in judgement and action. Manipulators often claim that what they do furthers noble ends. But since they further noble ends through unethical means of influence, they still do something unethical. All this backs the view that ethics do not bind the *logos*. Effectiveness does. If well balanced, the *logos* can even “free a guilty person of blame” (Corey 2002, 70).

Gorgias also writes that *logoi* and persuasion taken together have the power to freely shape the soul<sup>3</sup>. This combination can be considered an intellectual guide, which guides people through the world, offers them a chance to learn and gain much knowledge. The power of a persuasive *logos* is, indeed, overwhelming.

2. “The effect of speech (*logos*) upon the structure of soul is as the structure of drugs over the nature of bodies; for just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease, and others to life, so also in the case of speeches (*logoi*) some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others embolden their hearers, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.” (Gorg. *Hel.* 14, trans. Dillon and Gergel 2003, 81-82)

3. “That persuasion, when added to speech (*logoi*—translation is inconsistent since the original Greek text features the term in its plural form), can impress the soul as it wishes, one may learn first from the utterances (*logoi*) of the astronomers who, substituting opinion for opinion, taking away one but creating another, make what is incredible and unclear seem true to the eyes of opinion; and second, compelling contests in words (*logoi*), in which a single speech (*logos*), written with art, but not spoken with truth, may charm and persuade a large multitude; and third, the struggles of philosophic arguments (*logoi*), in which swiftness of thought is also shown making belief in an opinion easily changed.” (Gorg. *Hel.* 13, trans. Dillon and Gergel 2003, 81)

Those who are aware of this use *logos* especially in ethical, philosophical, and political contexts. Because they are aware that if they did not do that, they would most probably fail to persuade others. (Corey 2002, 71; Crowley 1979, 281; Pepe 2013, 24)

Has *logos* (speech) become a means of influence? Given the importance of communication in general between individuals and groups—certainly. It is not surprising, therefore, that those who communicate with others not for the sake of pleasure and socialisation but for the sake of influence tend to “impress the soul” (Dillon and Gergel 2003, 81) through a persuasive *logos*. The more people they persuade to something, the more support they will have, thereby increasing the chances to fulfil own interests and the interests of those who employ them to do persuasion (or propaganda).

To sum up, the Sophists used the term *logos* to define discourse involving argumentation meant to exert influence rather than meeting formal criteria, typical of logic. They taught that a well-thought-out and persuasive *logos* may influence not merely individuals but groups, revealing great, impressive, non-negligible potential in social context. And whether a *logos* reflects truth or not is essentially meaningless. Because what matters—the Sophists would say—is effectiveness, not truth. *Logos* as understood by Sophists is an effective means of influence among those who are experienced and well-trained in its use. Given the Sophists’ clear lean towards eristic and far reaching relativism, little wonder that they met with criticism from philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle, to name but a few), and that today the word *sophist* and its derivatives have derogatory, pejorative sense (cf. Hornby et al. 2005, 1459-1460; Perrault 2014, 1563).

### 3. *Logos* in Socrates and Plato’s discourse on rhetoric

Socrates (born c. 470 B.C.) and Plato (born c. 427 B.C.) were, of course, primarily interested in philosophy. Nevertheless, their interest in rhetoric and its *logos* is undoubted and noteworthy. Before I explain this, I must first explain that I treat of the two together here for two main reasons. First, Socrates and Plato had a similar mindset. Plato was Socrates’ student. The former would observe, learn from, and imitate the latter when in dialogue with people. That is at least what some of Plato’s texts point to. Second, Socrates did not write anything. Texts on Socrates—texts that largely differ, giving rise to the so-called Socratic problem—were written by, among others, Aristophanes (a comedy writer, almost a contemporary of Socrates), Xenophon (a student of Socrates), and Aristotle (a student of Plato born after Socrates’ death). It is Plato, though, who wrote on Socrates most extensively (Craig 2005, 794, 970-972; Guthrie 1975, 5-7, 29-31, 58).

That Socrates and Plato were interested in rhetoric we learn not merely from Plato's dialogues which portray Socrates as someone who forms good arguments, good enough to impress and convince his interlocutors that he is right. Diogenes Laertius, for instance, cites several opinions on the rhetorical lean and *logos* of Socrates:

[Socrates] was formidable in rhetoric as well, according to Idomeneus; and Xenophon reports that the Thirty prevented him from teaching the art of speech (*logoi*). And Aristophanes portrays him in a comedy making the weaker argument (*logos*) the stronger (cf. Plato: 1997, 19, 20, 23). For he was the first, as Favorinus says in his *Miscellaneous History*, with his student Aeschines, to teach rhetoric; Idomeneus confirms this in his work *On Socrates and His Associates* (Laertius 2018, 71).

Diogenes Laertius' account implies that Socrates was a great speaker, even to the point that the Thirty—i.e. an oligarchic regime that ruled Athens for several months from the city's defeat in 404 B.C. (Plato 1997, 29)—disallowed him to teach rhetoric. Moreover, we are told that Socrates (and later his student Aeschines) is the first who taught rhetoric. This is likely given that Socrates knew what rhetoric was about and knew how to speak and persuade. Plato's *Phaedrus* (a dialogue centred on the art of persuasion) supports this view. In the text, Socrates, having drawn inspiration from the Muses, begins speaking, stops at some point, and enquires if he is persuasive. In this way, that is through a speech and enquiry into it, Socrates expresses the art and theory of speaking—the foundations of rhetoric. (Guthrie 1975, 398; Worthington 2003, 3-4)

What further backs the view that Socrates and Plato cherished rhetoric are *Apology* and *Crito*—they include many examples of use of the Greek lexeme *peitho* (Plato 1995, 41, 47, 48, 55, 58, 70-71, 73, 80) and its English counterpart *persuade* (Plato 1997, 19-20, 26, 28-29, 31-33, 40, 43, 45-47). Now, in *Crito*—which foregrounds Socratic response to injustice, namely “peaceful persuasion” (Guthrie 1975, 97-98)—Socrates states that he accepts only such an “argument (*logos*) that on reflection seems best to [him]” (Pl. *Cri.* 46b, Plato 1997, 41). A strikingly comparable view is presented in Plato's *Phaedo*, with Socrates “taking as [his] hypothesis in each case the theory (*logos*) that seem[s] to [him] the most compelling” (Pl. *Phd.* 100a, Plato 1997, 86). Although the translations of *logos* differ, they essentially refer to the same thing, i.e. an argument supporting a case. Socrates, thus, would first deliberate on a *logos* to assess its merits, establish its true value, irrespective of its superficial persuasiveness (Senn 2012, 10-12). If a *logos* actually turned out convincing, he would treat it as an indisputable, non-negotiable thing, the central point, the basis for initiating any debate whatsoever, with its refutation possibly leading to his withdrawal (Thanassas 2003, 12-13).

Through deliberation Socrates did not only examine the reasoning of others, but he also developed his own reasoning (Plato 1997, 21, 27, 35-36). But what does

the *logos* say about rhetoric? Socrates reveals that in the *Phaedrus*. He points to hearing “certain arguments (*logoi*) approaching and protesting that [...] rhetoric is not an art but an artless practice”, and says that “no genuine art of speaking [exists] without a grasp of truth [...]” (Pl. *Phdr.* 260e, Plato 1997, 537). By indicating absence of truth, the great thinker expressed disapproval of what could be termed conventional rhetoric, as performed by the Sophists. Such version of rhetoric involves persuading men to things that are not true, that do not exist. Its outcome is an illusion of reality.

In reaction to (or, perhaps, to counter) the spread and selling of questionable teachings and false or pseudo-knowledge by the Sophists, Socrates and Plato developed a method of reasoning which, in their view, led to actual knowledge and truth. That method is dialectics, divided into synoptic (i.e. integrating perceived things under one category by analogy), hypothetical (i.e. putting forward, contrasting, developing hypotheses to arrive at something that is no longer a hypothesis but a basic idea), and diairetic (i.e. categorising and defining general concepts by induction to discover their underlying structure and relations between their components). For Socrates and Plato, sense perception so deeply cherished by the Sophists was insufficient to acquire knowledge and grasp truth; it could only lead to opinions of things in the state of becoming, ever-changing in the physical world. Dialectics, deep philosophical enquiry allowed going beyond such mere opinions, allowed reaching the true nature of being construed as ideal, unchanging, non-physical “forms”. (cf. Cross 1954, Gajda-Krynicka 2008)

The above implies that knowledge and truth were in the centre of many, if not all, of Socrates and Plato activities, including those associated with rhetoric. This becomes clearer upon juxtaposition of Plato’s *Phaedrus* with *Gorgias*. Both texts treat of rhetoric, albeit the former is rather neutral or even positively slanted towards its use, whereas the latter—negatively, especially in legal and political contexts (cf. Plato 1997, 506-507, 791-792). This is because the first text essentially describes philosophical rhetoric—a version of rhetoric different from its conventional one, characteristic of the Sophists and criticised in the second text.

In general, rhetoric facilitates influence over people in serious and trivial circumstances<sup>4</sup>. Hence, with its use we can persuade others to things of both great and little importance. However, to persuade anyone at all without the danger of being accused of unethical persuasion, of painting a false image of reality, of deception, we need to immerse ourselves not in conventional but philosophical rhetoric. (Batchelder 2009, 127-128; Plato 1997, 537). Philosophical rhetoric

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4. “[I]sn’t the rhetorical art, taken as a whole, a way of directing the soul by means of speech (*logoi*), not only in the lawcourts and on other public occasions but also in private? Isn’t it one and the same art whether its subject is great or small, and no more to be held in esteem—if it is followed correctly—when its questions are serious than when they are trivial?” (Pl. *Phdr.* 261a-b, Plato 1997, 537)

does not conceal facts, nor does it distort them. It leaves the choice to submit to persuasion or not to the persuaded. It is an art, where adherence to truth is fundamental. Conventional rhetoric, by contrast, and any other rhetoric which is detached from truth cannot be called an art because “the art of a speaker (*logos*) who doesn’t know the truth and chases opinions instead is [...] not an art at all!” (Pl. *Phdr.* 262c, Plato 1997, 539).

Of course, since philosophical rhetoric is about truth, so are its *logoi* (speeches). The *logoi* of philosophical rhetoric are not merely about truth, though. They are also about wholeness. Each *logos*, thus, must include interlinked and complementary elements, forming a coherent structure. That structure, in turn, must form a whole and resemble an organism<sup>5</sup>. Socrates would not accept any *logos* that fell short of this definition. Because in his philosophical rhetoric each *logos* was a work of art. (Burger 1980, 3; Ferrari 1990, 52)

Artful *logoi* may impress, but they may also, and more importantly, influence. And influence is, perhaps, the primary reason why people in general form and use *logoi*, not necessarily in line with the philosophical standards of Socrates. This is understandable given that influence, as opposed to impression, involves a change in behaviour or attitude, serving the interests of the influencers or of their sponsors. And Socrates, even if willing to exert influence over others via his *logoi*, most likely strived towards this end peacefully (i.e. without imposing his views on others), with the *logoi* being kept coherent and truthful.

Now, we return to Plato’s *Gorgias* in which Socrates resorts to different persuasion techniques to increase the likelihood of persuading his interlocutors (Plato 1998, 15-17). After all, he converses with “the wisest of the Greeks of [his times]”, i.e. Callicles, Gorgias, and Polus (Pl. *Grg.* 527a, Plato 1997, 869). Socrates wants to persuade them as to what the ultimate doom for man is, among others. To do this, he presents a myth<sup>6</sup>, calling it a *logos* (account) (cf. Hdt. 2.123, Herodotus 2004; Hes. *Th.* 721-819, trans. Most 2006). He calls it thus likely due to his belief in its credibility. But whether the *logos* is credible or not remains debatable as Socrates based it on, e.g. Homeric works on deities. (Stauffer 2006, 168-169)

The *logos* that Socrates presents describes people’s fate after death. He holds that after death the spirit separates from the body. Next, the deities examine the spirit and, without knowing to whom it belongs, they pass the divine judgement. People

5. “Every speech (*logos*) must be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own; it must be neither without head nor without legs; and it must have a middle and extremities that are fitting both to one another and to the whole work.” (Pl. *Phdr.* 264c, Plato 1997, 541; cf. Plato 1997: 285-286)

6. “For to arrive in Hades with one’s soul stuffed full of unjust actions is the ultimate of all bad things. If you like, I’m willing to give you an account (*logos*) showing that this is so [...] Give ear then—as they put it—to a very fine account (*logos*). You’ll think that it’s a mere tale, I believe, although I think it’s an account (*logos*), for what I’m about to say I will tell you as true.” (Pl. *Grg.* 523a, Plato 1997, 865)

who lead unjust lives go to the Tartarus (i.e. the place of eternal punishment), others—to the Blessed Isles (i.e. the place of eternal happiness). Therefore, how people live affects the divine judgement. (Plato 1997, 865-869). But this is not all.

Likely, Socrates wanted to persuade his interlocutors that a just life is beneficial, leads to happiness, and that people should choose it until someone demonstrates that it is unbeneficial and does not lead to happiness or that it is less beneficial and leads to less happiness than a different life<sup>7</sup>. Unfortunately, the philosopher's persuasion efforts failed. His conversation with Calicles, Gorgias, and Polus ended in disagreement over what life to choose. Up to the conversation's end, though, Socrates could have believed that he would make his interlocutors reconsider their views and accept his arguments or make them put forward arguments that would otherwise resolve the disagreement. This is plausible given that after he presented the *logos*, he referred to it several times (Stauffer 2006, 175-176).

In the end, the question that Plato's *Gorgias* leaves us with in the context of Socrates' *logos* (account) is this: why did Socrates and his partners in dialogue not agree on what life to choose? The answer to this question presumably comes down to dissimilar philosophies. While Socrates believed that justice, what is right and wrong are objective, his interlocutors promoted a relativistic perspective, where context (e.g. cultural, social, environmental, personal, situational factors) determines what is just or unjust, right or wrong. Through *Gorgias*, Plato probably attempted to expose and criticise rhetoric as a tool which allows rhetoricians and others to wilfully distort the reality, manipulate people into thinking that just is unjust, right is wrong, etc., without actually questioning these values as universal.

All in all, the *logos* of Socrates and Plato seen through the lens of rhetoric refers to an argument or a discourse (e.g. account, speech) with an implicit argument. Here, an argument seems the central point, with other elements surrounding it and serving as complements or additions, even if that argument is hidden in semantically wider discourse. Probably, the form of *logos* which should be pursued, one that from the perspective of Socrates and Plato is convincing and praiseworthy, is that resembling a work of art and reflecting truth. Obviously, the Socratic-Platonic *logos* has clear ethical implications—it explains what is right and what is wrong, suggests or advises (but does not order!) loyalty to what is right in thought, word, and action. No less relevant is the connexion of *logos* with rational thinking and related thereto dialectic method, owing to which the pursuit of knowledge and truth

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7. "But among so many arguments (*logoi*) this one alone survives refutation and remains steady: that doing what's unjust is more to be guarded against than suffering it [...] and that oratory and every other activity is always to be used in support of what's just. So, listen to me and follow me to where I am, and when you've come here you'll be happy both during life and at its end, as the account (*logos*) indicates [...] it's a shameful thing for us, being in the condition we appear to be in at present—when we never think the same about the same subjects [...]. So let's use the account (*logos*) that has now been disclosed to us as our guide, one that indicates to us that this way of life is the best, to practice justice and the rest of excellence both in life and in death." (Pl. *Grg.* 527b-e, Plato 1997, 869; cf. Plato 1997, 1093, 1057)

is possible. Perhaps, only philosophers who value ethics or personal liberty can develop a *logos* which meets this definition. Because not giving in the temptation to use various (unethical) means of influence to forcefully change or consolidate peoples' thinking and behaviour in support of own interests and those of sponsors demands accepting differences in how people think and behave—a thing out of reach of the Sophists and the like (even today).

#### 4. *Logos* in Aristotle's discourse on rhetoric

Born 384 B.C., Aristotle is highly likely the best known student of Plato (Guthrie 1975, 19-21). Similarly to Socrates and Plato, Aristotle valued rhetoric. This is plain from at least several of his works, the most notable of which is *Rhetoric*. Aristotle believed that rhetoric was ethically neutral, and that people could use it in support of what is right or wrong. He also defined three modes of persuasion (i.e. *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*—I discuss them below) upon which the success of all who practice rhetoric depends. The above outlines Aristotle's contribution to the development of rhetoric as an art (Aristotle 2007, x).

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, on which I would like to focus first, attracted the attention of not only ancient rhetoricians (e.g. Cicero, Quintilian) but also our contemporaries (e.g. teachers of communication) on account of how it treats of rhetoric. For in the text Aristotle gives thought not only to rhetoric as a means of influence, but also to ethics, philosophy, and other areas in the context of rhetoric. By other areas I mean, for instance, psychology (of behaviour and of attitude change) (Aristotle 2007, x-xi).

On one of the opening pages of *Rhetoric* Aristotle refers to *logos*<sup>8</sup>. He emphasises that it is characteristic of humans only and is related to discourse (Grimaldi 1972, 103). Now, discourse mediates three modes of persuasion:

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word (*logos*) there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech (*logos*) itself (Arist. *Rh.* 1356a1-5, Aristotle 1995, 4625).

The three modes of persuasion are *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. *Ethos* refers to one's ability to convince people that one is reliable; *pathos*—to one's ability to evoke emotions in people; and *logos*—to arguments and their (perceived) soundness. *Pathos* is more effective with the common people, whereas *logos* with

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8. “[T]hings that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and more persuasive. Again, it is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend himself with his limbs, but not of being unable to defend himself with rational speech (*logos*), when the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of his limbs” (Arist. *Rh.* 1355a37-b3, Aristotle 1995, 4623).

the non-common as “most people obey necessity rather than argument (*logos*), and punishments rather than what is noble. [...] [Only a] good man [...] will submit to argument (*logos*), while a bad man [...] is corrected by pain like a beast of burden” (Arist. *EN* 1180a4-11, Aristotle 1995, 3998). The effectiveness of *ethos*, which is implied here, depends mostly on the strength of *pathos* and *logos* (Aristotle 2007, x; Fortenbaugh 2006, 192, 361, 363).

Paradoxically, we are dealing here with two types of *logos*: the discursive *logos*, which refers to discourse, and the argumentative *logos*, which refers to arguments. Discourse, we are told, mediates arguments, aside from *ethos* and *pathos*. But if we look at arguments as things which encode information—just as we do with discourse—and as things which constitute discourse, it should become clear to us that they mediate *ethos* and *pathos* as well. In this way does the argumentative *logos* of Aristotle impose itself as the fundamental mode of persuasion. For arguments carry soundness and reliability (*ethos*); they, too, carry loaded language and other rhetorical means of influence used to evoke emotions (*pathos*). Of course, this is the case provided that arguments are well-thought-out and tailored to individuals or groups. Without arguments, neither *ethos* nor *pathos* would exist as modes of persuasion. In fact, persuasion itself would not exist but for arguments.

Truly effective persuasion relies on adequate combination of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*—a combination tailored to an audience. Because it is not necessarily true that the more reliable, loaded, and sound the arguments, the more effective the persuasion. Someone who addresses the common people with sophisticated arguments is unlikely to persuade them, however sound the arguments are, since the common people cannot understand such arguments without prior explanation (Arist. *Rh.* 1355a24-29, Aristotle 1995, 4622; cf. Arist. *Top.* 101a30-35, Aristotle 1995, 383-384). Common people may find unsound but loaded arguments reliable and convincing so long as the arguments are understandable.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle also explains that persuasiveness increases with the rise in knowledge of, fluency in, and appropriate modulation of discourse, particularly spoken discourse<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, what matters is not only what is verbal about spoken discourse (i.e. words) but also what is not verbal (i.e. diction, intonation, pace, etc.). I will risk a claim that the former is less important than the latter, at least

9. “[I]t is not enough to know what we ought to say; we must also say it as we ought; much help is thus afforded towards producing the right impression of a speech (*logos*) [...] [D]elivery [...] affects the success of a speech greatly [...] It is plain that delivery has just as much to do with oratory as with poetry [...] It is, essentially, a matter of the right management of the voice to express the various emotions—of speaking loudly, softly, or between the two; of high, low, or intermediate pitch; of the various rhythms that suit various subjects. These are the three things—volume of sound, modulation of pitch, and rhythm—that a speaker bears in mind[...] [...] [D]elivery is—very properly—not regarded as an elevated subject of inquiry. Still, the whole business of rhetoric being concerned with appearances, we must pay attention to the subject of delivery, unworthy though it is, because we cannot do without it” (Arist. *Rh.* 1403b15-1404a3, Aristotle 1995, 4794-4795).

in terms of persuasiveness. This is because words have arguably less potential to strengthen *ethos* and *pathos* than diction, intonation, pace, and other non-verbal elements of spoken discourse (cf. Fortenbaugh 2006, 355, 363).

Now, neither verbal nor non-verbal elements of spoken discourse exist without each other. It is impossible for spoken discourse to have words but lack diction, intonation, pace, etc. Spoken discourse expresses all of these things through intelligible sounds made one after another, preferably in an orderly sequence. These sounds, in turn, may influence us through verbal and non-verbal means. Verbal influence could be exerted through, for example, loaded language (i.e. words with strong connotations to evoke emotions) or euphemisms (i.e. words with light or neutral connotations instead of words with strong connotations not to evoke emotions); non-verbal influence, by contrast—through a raised voice, which draws our attention (cf. Arist. *SE* 177b34-178a2, 179a13-14, Aristotle 1995, 669-670, 674), or a scream, which puts us on alert. Undeniably, spoken discourse includes interdependent verbal and non-verbal elements, both of which can be used for influence purposes.

*Rhetoric* is connected with *Sophistical Refutations*, in which Aristotle focuses on Sophist fallacious argumentation. The text gives us reasons to believe that rhetoric (and other arts) has greatly developed since its conception. Since rhetoric has developed, so have its *logoi* (speeches)<sup>10</sup>. Aristotle contributes to this development by re-defining, albeit not necessarily directly, the *logos* of rhetoric as an art of persuasion. He believes that his *logos* should substitute that of the Sophists which has little, if anything, to do with an art. Because the art of persuasion is not about making people memorise speeches and arguments included in the speeches—which is true of Gorgias—but about offering people the knowledge of how to form speeches and how to speak to exert influence (Aristotle 2007, 12; Arist. *SE* 183b-184b, Aristotle 1995, 692-693).

The above suggests that memorising speeches is of questionable value. Indeed, although memorising speeches can help us persuade (potentially throughout our lives), it cannot help us form speeches ourselves to persuade. In the context of persuasion, hence, memorisation implies dependence. On the other side of the spectrum we have independence, which can only be achieved through knowledge and understanding. And the more knowledge and understanding of speeches as well as of the *logos* of rhetoric, the closer to independence as far as persuasion is

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10. “[T]he original discoveries generally make an advance that is small at first though much more useful than the development which later springs out of them. [...] This is in fact what has happened in regard to rhetorical speeches (*logoi*) and to practically all the other arts; for those who discovered the beginnings of them advanced them in all only a little way, whereas the celebrities of to-day are the heirs (so to speak) of a long succession of men who have advanced them bit by bit, and so have developed them to their present form[.] [...] [S]everal people have made their several contributions to it; and therefore it is not to be wondered at that the art has attained considerable dimensions” (Arist. *SE* 183b19-34, Aristotle 1995, 691-692).

concerned. This shows that within rhetoric the Aristotelian *logos* contrasts with that of the Sophists.

Aristotle's theory of rhetoric was meant to rival with the Sophists' one. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle acknowledged that as such "[r]hetoric is useful" (Arist. *Rh.* 1355a21, Aristotle 1995, 4622). This approach resulted from his metaphysical assumptions about the existence of things which are necessary (e.g. laws of logic or nature) and contingent (e.g. consequent upon the actions of men or other living creatures). Our knowledge of the latter realm, to which Aristotelian rhetoric is oriented, is limited—in that realm, nothing is certain but probable to various degrees. Despite this limitation, Aristotle insisted on the use of rational argumentation (*logos*) and rigid procedures leading to knowledge within rhetoric, similar to those of science. Thus, enthymemes in place of deductive reasoning, with their premises resting on probability or on opinions by the majority; and examples in place of inductive reasoning. And since rhetorical speeches are generally addressed to (large) groups of people (usually lacking proper education) with the aim to convince them of something, their reliance or emphasis on *pathos* and *ethos* over *logos* is understandable (cf. Lechniak and Stefańczyk 2019, Stefańczyk 1996, Stefańczyk 2000, Stefańczyk 2021).

Ultimately, the core element of all rhetoric and persuasion attempts is reasoning. In *On the Soul*, which discusses the nature of perception, Aristotle mentions reasoning as the last within the sequence involving opinion, belief, and conviction<sup>11</sup>. Reasoning is another type of *logos*, different from argument, but connected therewith. Persuasion fits this context well in the sense that it goes in parallel to or gives rise to reasoning and arguments. It goes in parallel to reasoning in the persuading resorting to arguments (*logoi*) and gives rise to reasoning (i.e. interpretation) in the persuaded, who sometimes may produce counterarguments in response. Reasoning paves the way for wise decisions and action, and is characteristic of humans only (Anton 1997; Fortenbaugh 2006, 166-167; Gendlin 2012, 50; Sorabji 2003, 200).

Inevitably, reasoning (*logos*) helps us make correct judgements, establish whether something is ethical or not. It helps us persuade someone to something as well as choose whether to submit to persuasion (if it is to our benefit) or not (if it is to our detriment). Many fail to use this type of *logos* correctly or ignore it altogether; hence, coercion instead of persuasion, and submission to coercion instead of resistance. Reasoning is necessary to combat negative tendencies of this sort, and should be careful and accurate to assist us well.

11. "[O]pinion involves belief (for without belief in what we opine we cannot have an opinion), and in the brutes [...] we never find belief. Further, every opinion is accompanied by belief, belief by conviction, and conviction by discourse of reason (*logos*), while there are some of the brutes in which we find imagination, without discourse of reason (*logos*)" (Arist. *de An.* 428a19-23, Aristotle 1995, 1489).

To recapitulate, in the context of rhetoric Aristotle's *logos* revolves round discourse and things that discourse involves, especially arguments, reasoning as well as discursive verbal and non-verbal elements. Aristotle's *logos* is peculiar to humans as the only species who can use reason to produce such discourse that—through its arguments together with verbal and non-verbal elements—communicates highly complex messages. Above all, the *logos* appears the most important mode of persuasion, the proper use of which may evoke emotions (*pathos*) and add up to speaker's reliability (*ethos*) and soundness of a message—factors critical for exerting influence over people. Successful persuasion rests on knowledge, understanding, and experience in the use of *logos* as defined by Aristotle.

### 5. *Logos* in the discourse on rhetoric after Aristotle

After Aristotle, many Greek figures in antiquity reflected on *logos* in connexion with rhetoric. For instance, Theophrastus (born c. 371), Aristotle's associate and later successor, discussed style and delivery of *logos* (speech), probably drawing upon the remarks of Aristotle (cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1408a, Aristotle, 4810-4811). He named purity, clarity, aptness, and ornateness as the four virtues of style, assuming the credibility of second-hand reports on which we are dependent inasmuch as none of his works survived (Fortenbaugh et al. 1993, 532-533; Fortenbaugh 2005, 5, 68, 266-271). A speech, thus, should be (i) correct in terms of grammar and other linguistic norms, (ii) understandable to an audience, (iii) adjusted to the situational context, and (iv) pleasing owing to uncommon or atypical use of language.

Demetrius (fl. round second century B.C., cf. Aristotle et al. 1995, 312-313)—a mysterious figure of whom not much is known—contributed to ancient Greek discourse on *logos* in rhetoric owing to his extensive work *On Style*. In the work, he distinguished four types of discourse style—"the plain, the grand, the elegant, and the forceful" (Demetr. *Eloc.* 36, Aristotle et al. 1995, 372-373). Of special interest to us is the last one. This is because its description (Demetr. *Eloc.* 240-304), references to orators (e.g. Lysias, Demosthenes, Theopompus) as well as the observations by Innes on the matter (Aristotle et al. 1995, 331) naturally point to the rhetorical *logos* (speech). Forceful style is characterised by brevity, wit (i.e. humour), intentional pauses, allusive language, presence of emotion and important subjects, unidiomatic or interrupted flow of thought, various rhetorical devices, non-verbal elements (e.g. harsh sounds, diction change), etc.

Hermagoras (fl. 150 B.C.), a rhetorician and teacher of rhetoric, developed the so-called *stasis* procedure, helpful in categorising and resolving conflict situations relevant to rhetoric, especially in socio-political and legal contexts. All would start

with four baseline questions. The first relates to facts (e.g. Did Socrates corrupt the youth?); the second—to definition (e.g. What did Socrates do?); the third—to quality (e.g. Were Socrates’ actions justified?); and the fourth—to policy or jurisdiction (e.g. Can we try Socrates for what he did?). These would be asked in order, with satisfactory answers leading to the next question. They correspond to four *stases*: (i) conjectural, (ii) definitional, (iii) qualitative, and (iv) policy-based or translative. This methodical approach is aimed to assist rhetoricians in preparing the best possible line of argumentation (*logos*) in support of a case. Hermagoras *stasis* procedure was reproduced from surviving fragments and second-hand reports (Woerther 2012). It was adapted, re-interpreted, or developed by, among others, Posidonius (born c. 135 B.C.), Cicero (born 106 B.C.), Apollodorus (born c. 104 B.C.), Theodorus (fl. 33 B.C.), Quintilian (born c. 35 A.D.), Minucian (fl. second century A.D.), and Hermogenes (fl. 170 A.D.). (Nadeau 1959, Heath 1994)

Philodemus (born c. 110 B.C.), a poet and philosopher of the Epicurean school, deliberated on *logos* in the context of persuasion in his *On Rhetoric*—an incomplete treatise reconstructed from fragments found on surviving ancient scrolls. As it appears, in the majority of cases he uses *logos* with reference to either argument or speech. Argument is predominantly inductive, often includes unjustified or unverifiable assertions or assumptions, examples to support a case, and ambiguous key terms (cf. Phld. *Rh.* 1 *PHerc.* 1427, col. VI, Philodemus 2006, 22, 67, 71). In this way Philodemus defines arguments by those who do not consider sophistic rhetoric an art. Speech, on the other hand, relates to public speaking. Characteristically, Philodemus defends speeches belonging to sophistic rhetoric and criticises those of rhetoric oriented to political and legal ends. He believes that sophistic rhetoric with its “display pieces” in rather casual settings can actually make an audience “stirred in their souls”, somewhat “detached”, “psychological[ly] transport[ed]”—things inaccessible through political or legal speeches in formal settings at assemblies and trials due to serious matters being at stake (Phld. *Rh.* 2 *Pherc.* 1672, col. XXII, *PHerc.* 1674, col. XXI, XXII, XXIV, XXXVII, *Rh.* 3 *PHerc.* 1506 col. L-LII, Philodemus 2006, 31-32, 36, 50, 163-165).

Sextus Empiricus (fl. second century A.D.), a physician and philosopher, wrote *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* treating of philosophical scepticism which, according to Mates, is more “a way of life” than a doctrine, and potentially leads to “peace of mind” via “suspension of judgement” (Mates 1996, vi, 5-8). Here, suspension of judgement is an important concept, central to our enquiry—for it is supposed to result from consideration of ten *logoi*, synonymous with *topoi* (i.e. points or positions) as well as *tropon* (i.e. modes). Upon examination, the *logoi* seem related to arguments understood loosely as statements or reasons—all based on many examples of observed differences in flora and fauna in general—used to convince

others to suspend judgement on practically every matter (Sext. Emp. *PH* 1.36-1.86, cf. Perrault 2014, 73; Hornby et al. 2005, 67-68; Mates 1996, 57-60). It is precisely due to this loose understanding of *logoi* as arguments and their use with an attempt to convince people of philosophical scepticism's utility that they can be considered relevant to rhetoric, wherein such means are also used in pursuit of rhetorical ends.

## 6. Conclusion

What should we make of these somewhat different accounts of *logos* in ancient Greek discourse on rhetoric? After all, some of the discussed figures (i.e. Sophists or Philodemus) seemed focused on the potential of *logos* to exert influence over people in socio-political contexts, others (i.e. Socrates, Plato, and Sextus Empiricus) attempted to foreground its philosophical dimension, still others (i.e. Aristotle and Hermagoras) deliberated on its technical side and insisted on its methodical use for specific purposes, with the remaining (i.e. Theophrastus and Demetrius) analysing its detail in exceptional, poetic-like fashion against the background of public speaking. The differences are clear, yet this does not mean that there is no common ground here.

In principle, in all of the analysed accounts *logos* is connected with discourse, ranging from a single, brief argument to a long, public speech. *Logos* is a means of influence. It can be subtle and non-intrusive, where the aim is to convince somebody of something while staying kind and open to alternative viewpoints. But it may well be intense and forceful, where the aim is to shape people's thinking and behaviour with disregard for their rights, interests, and values. The former appears closer to philosophical enquiry, critical thinking, legal proceedings, with fewer participants or limited audience; the latter—to political quarrel, eristic trickery, propaganda, with many participants or larger audience.

Effective use of *logos* demands experience, knowledge, and understanding of verbal and non-verbal dimensions of language. Still, probably no universal key which guarantees success in this respect in all cases exists. This is due to differences in mindset of individuals and audiences (consequent upon upbringing, education, socialisation, etc.) on top of a broad spectrum of situational contexts—factors too complex to be embraced by a single formula. Thus, some groups (e.g. undereducated, indoctrinated) could be more prone than others (e.g. well-educated, analytical) to submit to persuasion or implicit coercion, especially such that incorporates rhetorical devices (e.g. hyperbole, euphemism) and psychological tools (e.g. authority, liking, social proof). This, in turn, suggests a complicated relation of *logos* with truth, where concern for truth could range from central to

marginal. So, while philosophical rhetoric would be expected to remain as close to truth as possible, political rhetoric could be highly selective therewith. Ethical implications of this observation are far-reaching.

As in this essay I touched upon only a handful of figures and their accounts, I cannot posit to have drawn anything more than a fragmentary sketch of *logos* in ancient Greek discourse on rhetoric. Nevertheless, it should not be an exaggeration to say that those figures and accounts taken together promote, sharpen, and solidify a rhetoric-oriented side of *logos*, and that this, accidentally or not, adds up to the enrichment of the term's polysemy in general. Were it otherwise, *logos* would have likely not been so uniformly understood across several centuries as associated with discourse involving arguments with a potential to exert influence.

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