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Author(s): Yosef Z. Liebersohn

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YOSEF Z. LIEBERSOHN

The Problem of Rhetoric's *Materia* in Plato's *Gorgias* (449c9–d9)

Abstract: In this article I shall concentrate on ten lines in Plato's *Gorgias* (449c9–d9) dealing with what has come to be known as "rhetoric's *materia* question." By taking Gorgias as a representative of the first stages of rhetoric in ancient Greek thought, and by a close analysis of Socrates' move in the above section, I shall pinpoint exactly where Plato located rhetoric in the consciousness of Gorgias, and by this offer a new perspective on one of the hot questions in secondary literature nowadays—the origin of ἡ τέχνη ῥητορικῆ.

Keywords: rhetoric, Plato, Gorgias, Schiappa, art, *materia*

1. INTRODUCTION

The subtitle of Plato's *Gorgias*, as we have it in our manuscripts, reads *peri rhetorikes* ("On Rhetoric").¹ Yet, out of the three conversations which constitute this dialogue, it is rather the first—Socrates and Gorgias' conversation—which deals straightforwardly and explicitly with rhetoric. The next two

¹E. R. Dodds, *Plato's Gorgias* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 1. The Greek text I use is Burnet's edition in the OCT: J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959). For the convenience of readers unfamiliar with the ancient languages, all the Greek words within the text are transliterated, and translated when they first appear. In the two cases of long citations, the original Greek is followed by an English translation. All English translations are taken from the various volumes in the Loeb Classical Library. Readers may locate these translations according to author and work.

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conversations with Gorgias' pupils, Polus and Callicles,² deal with what one could call rhetoric's impact and influence.³

Socrates' conversation with Gorgias consists of two moves: the first which ends at 449b3 and need not concern us here,⁴ and the second which begins at 449c9.⁵ It is this second move which ends with Socrates' refutation of Gorgias at 461b2. This move actually begins at 449d1 with Socrates' question: *he rhetorike peri ti ton onton tunchanei ousa?* ("with what particular thing is rhetoric concerned?"). This question is concerned with what we may call "the *materia* question,"⁶ namely what is the subject-matter of rhetoric. Indeed looking retrospectively at the Socrates-Gorgias' conversation, one identifies in this

²Socrates-Gorgias' conversation is very brief compared with the next two conversations with Polus and Callicles, but this fact should not bother us. As I argued elsewhere (Y. Z. Liebersohn, "Art and Pseudo-Art in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Arethusa* 38 (2005): 303–29) the *Gorgias* actually includes only one conversation—that of Socrates and Gorgias—and concentrates on the essence of what Gorgias is teaching. Yet as Gorgias is not fully aware of the real thing he is teaching, he needs his students, Polus and Callicles, to teach him about his art, since they are the ones who apply his education in practice. It is, therefore, no surprise that rather the next two conversations with Polus and Callicles—where the real essence of rhetoric is revealed—are the longer ones. For a detail discussion see Liebersohn, "Art and Pseudo-Art," pp. 308–10.

³See W. H. Thompson, *The Phaedrus of Plato* (London: Whittaker, 1871), ii. Thompson cites Olympiodorus who considers the aim (*skopos*) of the dialogue to be *peri ton archon ton ethicon dialechthenai ton ferouson hemas epi ten politiken eudaimonian* ("to discuss the ethical principles which will lead us towards political success"). See L. G. Westerink, *Olympiodorus in Platonis Gorgiam Commentaria* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970), 3; also T. Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 8. Thompson goes even further and regards the Socrates-Gorgias conversation as being of little worth: "But however its philosophical value . . . but [it] leads, as we shall see, by an easy and natural sequence to the later and more important discussions." Indeed, most of the secondary literature presents a similar view ("the majority of its students concentrate on the second two-thirds of the dialogue, in which Gorgias is replaced as chief interlocutor first by Polus, and then by Callicles," R. Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato and their Successors* (London: Routledge, 1996), 56). In a sense, this article—which will deal only with this first conversation—will challenge this assumption.

⁴I shall deal with this first move in a separate and detailed study, which I hope to complete soon.

⁵449b4–c8 constitute what could be called *protreptikos logos*, which is by itself an indication of a new move.

⁶This term—*materia*—will be used throughout the article, as well as another two terms—*opus* and *instrumentum*. These are the Latin terms for the Greek *hule*, *ergon*, and *organon* respectively. Gorgias is apparently not aware of these terms, at least not concerning his occupation, and this is exactly what constitutes his problems. I prefer using the Latin terms because of their prevalence in scholarly literature. To illustrate the functions of these three terms one can use carpentry. The *materia* is wood, the *opus* is a chair, and the *instrumentum* is a saw (see also n. 12 below).

question the kernel of the refutation. If rhetoric's *materia* is what is just and unjust (454b7) and if Gorgias' students know what justice is, either by themselves or by learning it from their teacher (459c8–460a4), and if one who knows what justice is must be righteous (460b7), none of Gorgias' students can wish to do injustice (460c4–6). In which case, how could Gorgias have even one bad student (460e2–461b2)?

This brief description of Socrates' move is far from being simple, and scholars have already noticed most of its problems, inconsistencies, and even what one might call fallacies. If one who knows how to build is a builder it does not make one who knows what justice is a righteous man; if one does not know something it does not mean he knows absolutely nothing; and eventually, the whole nutshell of the refutation, namely the existence of the bad pupil and the way Socrates reaches it, seems to be mere sophistry. The problems with this move made some scholars, like Beversluis,⁷ attack both Socrates and Plato. Others have tried to reconcile the reader with Socrates by interpreting the strategy as psychological, therapeutic, and the like.⁸ What most of the secondary literature shares is the assumption that Socrates' move begins with finding out what is rhetoric's subject matter (*materia*). This assumption is to be found in many commentaries, interpretations, and even in translations of this question.⁹ Challenging this assumption is my objective.

In this article I shall concentrate on 10 lines of the dialogue—449c9–d9—where this Socratic move begins. I shall argue that un-

⁷J. Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates: A Defense of the Interlocutors in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 297–98.

⁸See Richard Mckim, "Shame and Truth in Plato's *Gorgias*," in C. L. Griswold (ed.), *Platonic writings/Platonic readings* (New York: Routledge, 1988): 35–48 (especially p. 37). Mckim does not refer to our section, but generally argues for a psychological approach in treating Socratic moves which seems problematic on a logical level.

⁹"... it is important to be clear about the subject matter with which it is concerned" (Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates*, cited in n. 7 above, p. 294); "It begins with a request for a definition of rhetoric, which is assumed to be an art, a *techné*, whose definition will be sought in terms of its subject matter ..." (R. E. Allen, *The Dialogues of Plato*. 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984–1991), 193); "Socrates turns to Gorgias ... and asks him what is the object of the knowledge and education on which he prides himself" (P. Friedländer, *Plato: the Dialogues*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff. 3 Vols. (New York: Bollingen, 1964), 247); "dis-moi à quel objet se rapporte cette rhétorique" (A. Croiset, *Platon: Oeuvres complètes, tome III, 2e partie, Gorgias—Menon*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), 112); "Zunächst wird die Frage ausgeworfen, mit welcher Realität es die Rhetorik zu tun habe" (H. Gaus, *Philosophischer Handkommentar zu den Dialogen Platons. II/1* (Bern: Lang, 1956), 31).

derstanding Socrates' question *he rhetorike peri ti ton onton tunchanei ousa?* as asking straightforwardly for the subject matter of rhetoric (henceforth "the *materia* question") is sheer anachronism. Moreover it begs the question and is therefore disastrous for understanding the whole of Socrates' move, the conversation of Socrates and Gorgias, and even the entire dialogue and Plato's intention in composing it. And at last, if my analysis is accepted, one of the hot questions in secondary literature nowadays—the origin of *he rhetorike techne*—could be given a new perspective.¹⁰

2. THE PROBLEMS¹¹

Taking Socrates' question at 449d1–2 as asking Gorgias straightforwardly for the subject matter of his art raises serious problems. Gorgias' final refutation is clearly based upon his statement concerning the *materia* of rhetoric at 454b7—*dikaia te kai adika* ("what is just and unjust"). Yet, if Gorgias has already been asked for the *materia* at 449d1–2 why does it take him more than seven Stephanus pages to answer such a simple question? A carpenter asked about his *materia* needs no more than a few seconds to say "wood," and the same is

¹⁰Until the end of the 20th century, the prevalent view about the origin of rhetoric was that of Aristotle (referred to by Cicero, *Brutus* 46 and Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.1.8), who held rhetoric to be invented by Corax and Tisias in Sicily in the 5th century BCE. The first to challenge this accepted view was Edward Schiappa, "Did Plato coin Rhetorike?" *AJPh* 111 (1990): 457–70, and in more detail in *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Schiappa wants to date the beginning of rhetoric as late as the 4th century and even suggests that we should ascribe the invention of the term *rhetorike* to Plato himself. Since then a lively dispute has arisen. See among others N. O'Sullivan, "Plato and the kaloumene rhetorike," *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993): 87–89; G. J. Pendrick, "Plato and ῥητορικὴ," *RhM* 141 (1998): 10–23; T. Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); G. A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7 n. 3; M. Gagarin, "Probability and Persuasion: Plato and early Greek Rhetoric," in I. Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (London: Routledge, 1994), 46–68; S. Halliwell, "Philosophy and Rhetoric," in I. Worthington (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (London: Routledge, 1994), 222–43; Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 3 above. On this issue in detail and the contribution of this study to it, see section 6 below.

¹¹The problems listed in this section differ from those cited in the previous section in that here I list problems which concern the very adoption of the "*materia* question" as describing Socrates' question at 449d1–2, while the problems enumerated in the previous section concern Plato taking for granted that Socrates' question is indeed a "*materia* question." Thus by offering an alternative to the "*materia* question," these problems which concern Plato can be solved.

true of many other arts.¹² Moreover, as it seems, Gorgias has already given an answer at 449e1—*peri logous* (“with *logoi*”).¹³ If this answer is wrong, it should be refuted, and if it is correct, it should be accepted. Yet, if we are to be precise, this answer is neither refuted nor accepted. The *peri logous* answer is rather being refined and developed throughout the seven Stephanus pages mentioned above, until it ends with the statement of rhetoric's *materia* at 454b7: *dikaia te kai adika*.¹⁴ Can we assume, therefore, that Gorgias' *peri logous* is needed for reaching the *materia* of *dikaia te kai adika*? Indeed, one may wonder why Gorgias cannot say immediately and straightforwardly *dikaia te kai adika*. Whatever the answer may be,¹⁵ one thing is clear: as things are presented in the text, it is only through *peri logous* that Socrates will bring Gorgias to be aware of the *materia* of his own art.

This assumption may presuppose that *peri logous* is an answer that Gorgias is led, or even forced, to give. This is exactly my claim. Socrates does not ask Gorgias at 449d8–9 an open question about the *materia* of his art, and *peri logous* cannot be taken as a free answer given by Gorgias who understands Socrates' question as concerning the *materia* of his art.¹⁶ I want to argue that Socrates, because of reasons concerned with the status of rhetoric in his time,¹⁷ cannot ask Gorgias straightforwardly about the *materia* of his art. He has to ask a different question, and by way of subtle techniques he leaves Gorgias no option but answering *peri logous*. Only then—after more

¹²In principle there is no difference between “wood” as carpentry's *materia* and “what is just and unjust” as rhetoric's *materia*. One can call the first “raw material” and the second “subject matter,” and rightly so. But these different terms just emphasize the different kinds of *materiae*. As wood is the raw material out of which the carpenter makes a table, the speaker makes a speech (*logos*, on which later) out of things which are just and unjust, i.e. political affairs (= affairs of the *polis*).

¹³I leave here (and henceforth) the word *logoi* untranslated. As I shall argue later, the exact meaning of this word in Gorgias' consciousness cannot be fully translated into any modern language. See my discussion in section 5 below.

¹⁴This is done especially by means of condensing and limiting the scope of rhetoric's *logos*. Socrates makes Gorgias understand that the *logoi* of his first answer are only the instrument rhetoric uses, while Gorgias has been asked about the *materia* on which rhetoric uses these *logoi* to achieve its goal.

¹⁵See section 4 below.

¹⁶Most of the secondary literature takes *peri logous* as Gorgias' first attempt, namely Gorgias is freely asked for the *materia* of his art, and no less freely gives his first answer (see among others Dodds, *Plato's Gorgias*, cited in n. 1 above, p. 195; Friedländer, *Plato: the Dialogues*, cited in n. 9 above, pp. 247–48). According to what I am about to argue, *peri logous*, strictly speaking, cannot be ascribed to Gorgias in the sense that he has other options for answering Socrates.

¹⁷See my discussion on pp. 12–13 below.

than seven Stephanus pages—can Socrates reach the *materia* of *dikaia te kai adika* upon which he will refute Gorgias. Let me now turn to the text and try to substantiate my claim.

3. GORGIAS IS FORCED TO DECLARE *PERI LOGOUS*: ANALYSIS OF 449C9–D9

Socrates' question *peri ti ton onton estin episteme?* ("with what particular thing is its skill concerned?") at 449d9, to which Gorgias answers *peri logous*, is not the question which opens the Socratic move. Nine lines before this question, another question appears which is almost identical with the second—*he rhetorike peri ti ton onton tunchanei ousa?* ("with what particular thing is rhetoric concerned?")—and even makes use of two examples from weaving and music. The relation between these two questions, and especially what appears between them, is very important for understanding Socrates' strategy. Due to the importance of these lines, I shall quote them in full:

ΣΩ. φέρε δὴ· ῥητορικῆς γὰρ φῆς ἐπιστήμων τέχνης εἶναι καὶ ποιῆσαι ἂν καὶ ἄλλον ῥήτορα· ἢ ῥητορικὴ περὶ τί τῶν ὄντων τυγχάνει οὐσα; ὡσπερ ἡ ὑφαντικὴ περὶ τὴν τῶν ἱματίων ἐργασίαν· ἢ γάρ;

ΓΟΡ. Ναί.

ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ μουσικὴ περὶ τὴν τῶν μελῶν ποίησιν;

ΓΟΡ. Ναί.

ΣΩ. Νῆ τὴν Ἥραν, ὦ Γοργία, ἄγαμαί γε τὰς ἀποκρίσεις, ὅτι ἀποκρίνη ὡς οἶόν τε διὰ βραχυτάτων.

ΓΟΡ. Πάνυ γὰρ οἶμαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐπιεικῶς τοῦτο ποιεῖν.

ΣΩ. Εὖ λέγεις. Ἴθι δὴ μοι ἀπόκριναι οὕτως καὶ περὶ τῆς ῥητορικῆς, περὶ τί τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη;

ΓΟΡ. Περὶ λόγους.

449c9–e1

SOC. Come then; since you claim to be skilled in rhetorical art, and to be able to make anyone else a rhetorician, tell me with what particular thing rhetoric is concerned: as, for example, weaving is concerned with the manufacture of clothes, is it not?

GORG. Yes.

SOC. And music, likewise, with the making of tunes?

GORG. Yes.

SOC. Upon my word, Gorgias, I do admire your answers! You make them as brief as they well can be.

GORG. Yes, Socrates, I consider myself a very fair hand at that.

SOC. You are right there. Come now, answer me in the same way about rhetoric: with what particular thing is its skill concerned?
 GORG. With *logoi*.¹⁸

Why are there two questions? Is one question not enough?¹⁹ Why does the first question use two examples and the second none? Is there anything special in these examples requiring them to be brought after the first question and not the second? Moreover, at d5–7 we find Socrates complimenting Gorgias for his short answers, and the latter takes care to use this compliment to increase his reputation in front of Socrates and the other hearers. Is Socrates making a fool of Gorgias? After all, Socrates' questions are formulated in such a way that Gorgias can only answer either "yes" or "no." What is Socrates up to? Perhaps mockery is not the issue here. Gorgias at least does not show himself to be insulted. He rather takes it very seriously.

Socrates' first question is aimed at the *materia*, and the discussion which follows in the next pages is surely dealing with the *materia*, but the question itself, so it seems on a meticulous reading, is *not* asking about the *materia*, but rather about what we can call the *opus* of rhetoric, namely the activity of the art and its products.²⁰ This is clearly proved by the examples attached to the question. In weaving we find *he ton himation ergasia* ("manufacture of clothes") and in music *he ton melon poiesis* ("making of tunes"). Thus, while the question, taken in itself, may be understood as asking about the *materia*,²¹ the examples shift its meaning to the *opus* or the activity of the art.

¹⁸See n. 13 above.

¹⁹One may note that these two questions are not identical. The subject *he rhetorike* in the first question is substituted with *episteme* in the second. Thus the second question may not be regarded merely as a repetition of his first question. On this substitution see p. 18 below.

²⁰This point was first identified by G. K. Plochmann and F. E. Robinson, *A Friendly Companion to Plato's Gorgias* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 24, but without fully understanding its implication. Moreover they write "The first question (449c-d) With what thing is rhetoric concerned? asks not about the subject matter but about the activity and means used." This is inaccurate since no means appear here. It is precisely Socrates' aim to show Gorgias that *logoi* are nothing but means. Ascribing to Socrates' question the means makes the whole of the Socratic move inexplicable. On the tension between *materia* and *instrumentum* within *logoi* see section 5 below.

²¹Socrates' question consists of three components: the preposition *peri*; the demonstrative pronoun in neuter singular *ti*; and a noun in neuter plural *ta onta*. This phrase is wide enough to be understood in several senses, of which the *materia* is only one option. Thus, Socrates can shift the meaning of the question whenever he wishes by using the appropriate examples.

Why is that so? If Socrates is aiming at the *materia*, and this is clearly shown by the discussion which follows, why not ask for it directly? Even if the question itself, for reasons we still do not know, should be phrased in a somewhat vague way, at least the examples could have pointed to the *materia*; weaving deals with cloth and music with notes and sounds. Yet the examples which apparently are brought to demonstrate the *materia* question do exactly the opposite. They rather shift the discussion towards the *opus*. Thus we are forced to conclude that Socrates deliberately formulates the question in such a wide and vague way that what is naturally a question concerning the *materia* could be easily deflected, by means of his examples, towards the *opus*. Put differently, Socrates aims at the *materia* but chooses a tortuous way—the *opus*.

Gorgias seems to understand Socrates' question and the way he should answer, and the reader expects an answer concerning rhetoric. However, Socrates does not let Gorgias answer, but instead praises him for his short answers.²² Indeed, Gorgias has boasted, earlier in the conversation, of his ability to give long and short answers (449b9-c8) and still it is very hard to consider "yes" as a proof of this ability, especially since Socrates formulates his questions exactly in such a way that all Gorgias can do is answer with one word. The attentive reader must conclude that Socrates has another motive for praising Gorgias.²³ It is only after this compliment that Socrates repeats his question²⁴ and asks Gorgias to make his answer concerning rhetoric as short as possible. Gorgias, who is eager to impress every audience, including Socrates, responds to the challenge and gives a short answer—*peri logous*.

We can start exposing Socrates' intentions by imagining what Gorgias would have answered had Socrates not encouraged him to make his answer as short as possible. Gorgias would have followed one of the examples Socrates had just given him and would have

²²The form of *Ne ten Heran* which is not so frequent in Plato (see H. Sauppe, *Platons ausgewählte Dialoge: Gorgias* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1897), *ad loc.*), compared with other forms of oath, is evidently aimed at making Gorgias' answer (concerning rhetoric) as short as possible. See immediately below.

²³This fact rules out an alternative explanation which sees in Socrates' encouragement an attempt at getting an answer as lucid as possible. This explanation may be possible in other cases where we find an encouragement on the part of Socrates, but in our text it is impossible, since Gorgias cannot give a lengthy reply even if he wishes so. The explanation must, therefore, be found elsewhere. See immediately below.

²⁴On the difference between these similar questions (emphasized in the citation above) see n. 19 above.

answered with either *peri ten ton logon ergasian* ("with the *ergasia* of *logoi*") or *peri ten ton logon poiesin* ("with the *poiesis*²⁵ of *logoi*").²⁶ We cannot know which of the two options Gorgias would have chosen, since Socrates does not let him make any choice. Immediately after getting his consent to the examples (*Nai*), Socrates praises him for his ability to give short answers. This can have only one explanation. Socrates' encouragement is needed to prevent Gorgias from using either *ergasia* or *poiesis*. Put differently, Socrates has a clear interest in not having Gorgias answer according to the models he himself, Socrates, has given him a moment ago, but rather with the answer Gorgias actually gives—*peri logous*.²⁷

Why does Socrates give Gorgias two examples for an answer, if he does not expect to get an answer using either of them?²⁸ Moreover, why should he give him these two particular examples? There is one explanation, and it should be understood in terms of the interesting and complicated relation between these two examples and rhetoric. Examining rhetoric in relation to *ergasia* and *poiesis* will expose Socrates' subtle strategy.

Ergasia and *poiesis* can be used in certain contexts as interchangeable terms, and still they differ from one another. *Poiesis* has a much larger range of meanings than *ergasia*.²⁹ *Ergasia*, cognate with the verb *ergazomai* ("produce"), is aimed more often at an activity which has

²⁵I have kept here the original Greek terms *ergasia* and *poiesis* (respectively "manufacture" and "making" in the translation above), for the following discussion which exposes Socrates' maneuvers by examining the exact meaning and nuances of these terms in Greek.

²⁶We cannot know what Gorgias would have answered without Socrates' examples. Perhaps he would have given a nice speech as Polus did before, and speak about *ta megista ton anthropeion pragmaton kai arista* ("the greatest of human affairs," 451d7–8). Yet, Gorgias, as a good teacher, is busy with practice. This means that in his consciousness every question dealing with his art is automatically concerned with *logos* (*techne logon* was probably the term used before *rhetorike*; see Arist. *Rhet.* 1354a12). Thus all Socrates should do is direct him towards the *logos* which already exists in his consciousness. This is done by the examples which use *ergasia* and *poiesis*.

²⁷Short and long answers are to be measured according to context. Thus, as things are presented in our context, an answer such as *peri ten ton logon ergasian* or even *peri logon ergasian* (omitting articles) are long answers compared with *peri logous*. Moreover one must be aware of Socrates' exact quest—*hos oion te dia brachutaton* ("as brief as they well can be," 449d6). His ulterior motive is to have Gorgias give the answer he actually gives, which happens to be shorter than the answer he might otherwise have given. For the reasons see immediately below.

²⁸In what follows I will show that Gorgias cannot choose either *ergasia* or *poiesis*.

²⁹Cf. Plat. *Sym.* 205b8–c10, especially the words *oisth' hoti poiesis esti ti polu ... hoste kai hai hupo pasais tais technais ergasiai poieseis ...* ("you know that *poiesis* is more

as its end a concrete and tangible product,³⁰ while *poiesis*, cognate with the verb *poieo* ("make"), can refer to activities whose ends are not necessarily tangible.³¹ At first glance Socrates seems to use these different terms for the sake of diversification, but according to the thesis I offer here, Socrates exploits the tension between the slightly different meanings of these terms for his (and Gorgias') benefit.

Are *logoi* in rhetoric to be considered a product of *ergasia*? This question is far from simple. On the one hand, a speech is not something material. It is surely not tangible like the clothes in weaving, which I possess after the activity of the art is finished. On the other hand we should not forget the written speech. Even if it is hard to consider the paper and the letters written on it as the speech itself, still what we have here can be seen as an outcome of *ergasia*. When we turn to the second example—music as a *poiesis*—our problems become even more complex. Is rhetoric's activity a *poiesis*? On the one hand, rhetoric has clear musical characteristics such as sound and volume, but on the other hand, one should not overlook the arguments, conclusions, and everything which has to do with the word *logos*. All these components have nothing to do with a tune (the *opus* of music). Moreover, what shall we say about rhetoric's end—persuasion?³² Is it *ergasia* or *poiesis*? It might have to do with both, but surely it cannot be exclusively related to one of them. In short, Gorgias has good reasons to choose both options, but he has no reason to prefer one over the other.

If Socrates is not interested, either in the *ergasia* or in the *poiesis*, why does he bring them in at the very beginning? The answer is in *logoi*. Both *ergasia* and *poiesis*, each taken separately, should lead

than a single thing ... so that the *ergasiai* of all arts are *poieseis* ..."). See also Plat. *Charm.* 163b9-c4.

³⁰Cf. Plat. *Charm.* 161e6-8: ... *kai to oikodomein kai to huphainein kai to hetinioun techne hotioun ton technes ergon apergazesthai* ... ("... and building and weaving and producing (*apergazesthai*) anything whatever that is the work (*ergon*) of any art"), 161e10-162a2: *Ti oun? ... to heautou himation hekaston huphainein ... ta de heautou hekaston ergazomai te kai prattein?* ("Well then ... that everyone should weave and scour his own coat ... performing (*ergazesthai*) and doing his own for himself?"). One notes that the verb *huphainein* and its object *himation* cited above both appear in our text as well. See also Thuc. 2.72.3, 75.5, 76.3; LSJ s.v. I-II.

³¹Most often its subjects are war, speech, and all kinds of poetry. See Astius' *Lexicon Platonicum* s.v.; see also LSJ s.v. I.2.

³²One should only be reminded of rhetoric's definition—*peithous demiourgos* ("producer of persuasion," 453a2)—which Socrates will suggest before Gorgias in the discussion which follows our paragraph. The reminiscence of *ergasia* within *demiourgos* is surely no accident.

Gorgias towards *logoi*.³³ Yet by these two examples Socrates is indeed creating the frame which ought to lead Gorgias to *logoi*, but takes care that this frame will disappear the moment it has fulfilled its aim. The disappearance of the frame is made possible by two strategies which complete each other. On the one hand, Gorgias gets two examples neither of which he can choose, simply because the other example is not less correct. On the other hand he is encouraged by Socrates to make his answer as short as possible. The result is *peri logous*. To conclude: if we said before that these two examples are intended to lead Gorgias to *logoi* we should slightly correct ourselves. These two examples are intended to make sure that it is only *logoi* which will appear in Gorgias' answer. Either example is sufficient to lead Gorgias to *logoi*, but in that case he will probably attach to the *logoi* an action noun which denotes his practice. This is what Socrates is afraid of. Socrates needs the *logoi* alone,³⁴ and this is done by deliberately raising these two options, *ergasia* and *poiesis*,³⁵ together with the encouragement to give a short answer.

The next question is inevitable: Why should Socrates want the *logoi* in the first place? In order to answer this question we need to refer, as briefly as possible, to two issues. The first is the exact meaning of *logos*, both in the singular and the plural, and the second is the exact place of the *materia* in Gorgias' consciousness. Let us start with the second issue.

4. GORGIAS AND THE *MATERIA* OF RHETORIC

Looking at Socrates' move retrospectively, one identifies a clear strategy in which Socrates is trying to make Gorgias understand that his first answer—*peri logous*—is only the *instrumentum* of the art. The speaker uses *logoi*, but *logoi* are always about something, and it is rather this "something" which constitutes the *materia*. Gorgias needs time and effort (seven Stephanus pages) to understand it, and eventually, as we have already noted, he arrives at the *dikaia te kai adika*

³³See n. 21 above.

³⁴The reasons will be discussed on pp. 15–17 below.

³⁵One may wonder if there are any other action nouns to denote an activity which can be attached to what Gorgias is dealing with. No matter what the answer is (the only option I managed to think of is *praxis*, but as this noun, based upon *pratto*, has a clear association of behavior and conduct, Gorgias cannot use it, since rhetoric in his consciousness must have an *ergon* (*opus*; see n. 20 above)), in any case, these two options are the choice of Plato the playwright who presents them as exclusive.

("what is just and unjust"). However, here we have a great problem since, if we are to try to understand what Gorgias is thinking of by answering *peri logous*—whether he thinks of the *materia* or the *instrumentum*—each answer is impossible. If it is the *materia* of which Gorgias is thinking, one needs to explain how Gorgias makes such a trivial mistake and substitutes the *instrumentum* for the *materia*. Moreover if at last he declares *dikaia te kai adika* to be the *materia* of rhetoric, why could he not declare it already at 449e1? On the other hand if Gorgias takes the *logoi* to refer to the *instrumentum*, our problems are even more complex. First, Gorgias is found to be absolutely stupid. Is there any carpenter who, being asked about the *materia* of his art, will answer a hammer?³⁶ Second, Socrates' strategy is very strange. Why should Socrates take pains to make Gorgias understand that *logoi* are only the *instrumentum* of rhetoric when this is exactly the meaning Gorgias was thinking of?

This situation, where either option is impossible, is not unanswerable. Gorgias and rhetoric, as they are presented in our dialogue, are in an intermediate stage, which by definition has ambiguity and vagueness as its main characteristics. Rhetoric in Gorgias' consciousness is not yet fully defined. One is to be reminded that even the term *rhetorike* is not used either by Gorgias or by Polus or Callicles until Socrates uses it on his own initiative at 448d9.³⁷ Hence I wish to argue that rhetoric in Gorgias' consciousness vacillates between two levels. For Gorgias rhetoric is only an aspect of politics,³⁸ and a

³⁶See n. 12 above.

³⁷See n. 10 above; also Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 14–23, where he answers his opponents. In my view, however, this *ambulando* way, by which *rhetorike* is brought into the conversation, indicates the possibility of using this term to describe what Gorgias and his pupils are occupied with. This is shown by its place, namely between Polus' speech at 448c4–9, which does not mention this term (although it could have used it), and the discussion following the mentioning of *rhetorike*, which uses it abundantly. Schiappa is well aware that the term itself might have been in use before (*The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 15–16), but insists that Plato, if he had not originated it, at least had given it a novel use (p. 19). This thesis, in my opinion, fits best the text in the *Gorgias*. The term is perhaps known, but not necessarily and specifically connected with what Gorgias is doing. Once Socrates attaches it explicitly, Gorgias can accept it and even use it naturally.

³⁸One notes that *dikaia te kai adika* refers to politics (unlike Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates*, cited in n. 7 above, who wrongly criticizes Gorgias, not taking into account the context). Moreover, Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias*, cited in n. 3 above, p. 115, has already noted that Gorgias' words at 451d7–8 (*ta megista ton anthropeion pragmaton, ho Sokrates, kai arista*) evidently refer to politics ("he thinks that political skill and power are the most important things"); compare also Arist. *Pol.* 1253a31.

rhetor is a politician who "speaks finely."³⁹ However, all this is only in Gorgias' consciousness. In practice what Gorgias and other teachers of rhetoric do is found a new art which is formal, which means that it has no *materia* (= not an art at all). Rhetoric as it is being shaped by Gorgias can speak about everything. The fact that rhetoric has developed out of politics gives rhetoric, at least at this transitional stage, the *materia* of politics—*dikaia te kai adika*. However, Gorgias is not aware of all this, and he is not to blame. It is only Socrates who can foresee what this new occupation is about to become. Yet Socrates wants to make Gorgias understand that his art is actually not an art at all, precisely because it has no *materia*.⁴⁰ How can he do it?

The first thing to notice is what Socrates *cannot* do. He cannot ask Gorgias straightforwardly "what is rhetoric's *materia* (*hule* in Greek)?" Gorgias is not skilled in analyzing what he is doing, especially not by using terminological terms. Moreover, rhetoric is unlike other arts such as carpentry where the *materia*—wood—is easy to discern. Thus, even if Gorgias had been able to understand what *materia* is and how it is differentiated from *instrumentum*, still with what concerns rhetoric, where everything rotates around words, he would have probably been confused, since *prima facie* words are both the *materia* and *instrumentum*. To all this one may add the intermediate stage of rhetoric in Gorgias' consciousness (above), which makes the "*materia* question" almost unanswerable for him. Gorgias is wholly engaged in what he practices and Socrates knows it. Socrates, therefore, turns to Gorgias' natural *milieu*, and asks him about his activity. Yet, this inability of Gorgias to answer the *materia* question does not mean that in Gorgias' consciousness rhetoric has no *materia*, nor that it has one. The existence of a *materia* for rhetoric is rather embodied

³⁹"The word *rhetor* was used in Isocrates' time to designate a very specific group of people; namely, the more or less professional politicians who spoke often in the courts or in the assembly" (Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, p. 169). See also Isocrates, *Antid.* 256: *kai rhetorikous men kaloumen tous en toi plethei legein dunamenous* ("while we call eloquent (more literally: rhetoricians) those who are able to speak before a crowd").

⁴⁰In modern scholarship on rhetoric the *materia* of rhetoric is taken to consist of theories and rules of how to speak/persuade (Ch. Perelman, *L'Empire rhétorique: rhétorique et argumentation* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1977)). This is a modern approach which could not have been endorsed by Gorgias as he is presented in our dialogue and is shown in our text in practice. Gorgias would not have struggled to find a *materia* such as *dikaia te kai adika* if he had this modern option. Moreover, in Gorgias' eyes all these theories and rules are nothing but *instrumenta*, and the art still lacks a *materia*, which means that it is a formal art, i.e. not an art at all.

in the very occupation of rhetoric which in Gorgias' consciousness is nothing but an aspect of politics. This is why *dikaia te kai adika*—which is actually rhetoric's *materia* in Gorgias' consciousness—does not appear as a direct answer to the *materia* question, but only as a clarification concerning the *peri logous*.⁴¹ In short, the *materia* question needs the *peri logous* as a mediator.

Now we can answer the questions asked at the beginning of this article. Socrates is interested in the *materia* of rhetoric which is *dikaia te kai adika*,⁴² but he knows that he must arrive at it obliquely. Socrates knows that Gorgias is wholly occupied with practicing rhetoric. Gorgias is not capable of what we call today "meta-rhetoric."⁴³ The most Socrates can ask Gorgias is about his activity. Socrates, therefore, leads Gorgias to the *logoi*. This is done by means of *ergasia* and *poiesis*. Both nouns can refer to the *logoi*, but as we have already noted, Socrates wishes Gorgias to say *logoi* without mentioning either noun. This is done by presenting two nouns neither of which is better than the other. Together with the encouragement to make his answer as short as possible, Socrates gets what he wants—*peri logous*.

The next question is twofold. First, why is it so important for Gorgias to have the *logoi* alone? Second, why is it *logoi* in the plural and not *logos* in the singular (*peri logon*)?⁴⁴ The answer to this

⁴¹After *logos* becomes a kind of persuasion one might ask *poias de peithous kai tes peri ti peithous he rhetorike esti technē?* ("Then of what kind of persuasion, and of persuasion dealing with what, is rhetoric the art?" 454a9).

⁴²This *materia* is needed for the refutation. But the refutation itself, namely the relation between this *materia*, the knowledge of this *materia*, and its relation to the bad pupil, is not our concern in this article.

⁴³If he is engaged in "meta-rhetoric," it is because he is forced to do so (mainly by Socrates), and even then it is taken as an integral part of an *epideixis* (performance) which in Gorgias' consciousness is nothing but practicing his art. In an *epideixis* the teacher can give a sample speech but can also answer various questions concerning his art. Sometimes he might not wait for questions and on his own initiative preface a "meta-rhetorical" introduction. This is clearly shown by Callicles' answer to Socrates' wish for *dialegesthai* (447c1) emphasized by *ten de allen epideixin eis authis, hosper su legeis, poiesastho* ("As for the rest of his performance, he must give it us, as you suggest, on another occasion," 447c3–4). Callicles' response is *ouden hoion to auton erotan, ho Sokrates. kai auto hen tout'* [sc. *dialegesthai*] *en tes epideixeos* ("The best way is to ask our friend himself, Socrates: for indeed that [sc. discussion] was one of the features of his performances," 447c5–6). See also the interesting interplay between *dialegomai* and *epideiknumi* at the beginning of the dialogue (cf. also Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 3 above, p. 57).

⁴⁴One notes that Socrates deliberately leads Gorgias to the plural. This is done by the two examples which evidently present their end of activity in the plural—*himatia* ("clothes") and *mele* ("tunes").

question should make us deal briefly with the first issue mentioned above, namely the meaning of the word *logos* as it appears in our context.

5. THE WORD *LOGOS* AND ITS MEANINGS

Logos is usually translated as “speaking” and “thinking,” or as containing both. However, many words—and surely *logos*—change their meaning from one period to another. Moreover, within one period and the same general meaning one can emphasize different elements. When it comes to Plato, who is very sensitive to linguistic associations and very often uses them for his purposes, one should be very careful in deciding the exact meaning of such an important term as *logos*.

Nowadays, whoever wishes to translate the word *logos* in Gorgias' answer at 449e1 cannot get away with these two meanings, thinking and speaking, and is bound to fail.⁴⁵ For Gorgias no separation exists between these two meanings. Moreover, his use of the plural *logoi*—which can refer to a “speech” (= a collection of words) or “speeches”—even strengthens this non-separation between “thinking” and “speaking,” since the speech does not distinguish between the content of speech and its expression by means of words. The modern reader might translate Gorgias' answer *peri logous* as “concerning speeches”⁴⁶ and yet, unlike Gorgias, he must discern within the term *logos* speaking and thinking. The most he can do is to include both terms. Gorgias, however, does not distinguish between them. The following paragraph shows it clearly:

⁴⁵Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias*, cited in n. 3 above, p. 114, supplies a long comment on *peri logous*. Having enumerated all options of translating *logos*, he concludes: “Here Gorgias has in mind the general sense, that rhetoric is about speaking.”

⁴⁶Indeed, translating *logoi* in Gorgias' answer as “speeches” is the best translation (see Allen, *The Dialogues of Plato*, cited in n. 9 above), only if we understand that within this word no distinction is made between speaking and thinking (see also Croiset, *Platon: Oeuvres complètes*, cited in n. 9 above: “Des discours”; I. Bekker, *Platonis Dialogi Graece et Latine* (Berlin: Black, 1817): “sermones”; F. Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke*, vol. 2/1 (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1818): “Auf Reden”). Others have made the mistake of translating it as speaking alone (Woodhead in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961): “words”). Others have overlooked the plural (B. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, ed. R. M. Hare and D. A. Russell, 4 vols. (London: Sphere, 1970): “with discourse”; W. Hamilton, *Plato: Gorgias* (London: Penguin Classics, 1960): “speech”; Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias*, cited in n. 3 above: “About speech”).

ΣΩ. Οὐκ ἄρα περὶ πάντας γε τοὺς λόγους ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἐστίν.

ΓΟΡ. Οὐ δῆτα.

ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν λέγειν γε ποιεῖ δυνατοῦς.

ΓΟΡ. Ναί.

ΣΩ. Οὐχοῦν περὶ ὧν περ λέγειν, καὶ φρονεῖν;

ΓΟΡ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ;

449e3–6

SOC. Then rhetoric is not concerned with all kinds of speech.

GORG. No, I say.

SOC. Yet it does make men able to speak.

GORG. Yes.

SOC. And to understand also the things about which they speak.

GORG. Of course.

Gorgias, who uses *logoi* for the *materia* of his art, does not include within this word thinking and speaking. He does not have to do it, since from the very beginning he does not distinguish between them. It is rather Socrates who makes this distinction,⁴⁷ and Gorgias who is surprised—*pos gar ou?* (“how could it not be?”⁴⁸)—at the very question *oukoun peri honper legein, kai phronein?* (“And to understand also the things about which they speak?”) undoubtedly accepts it.⁴⁹

Yet, all this is in his consciousness. In practice, and within his activity, this separation has already been made. The *rhetor* teaches merely “to speak finely.” Even if Gorgias is not aware of this, his activity is formal, i.e. has no *materia*. This is exactly Socrates’ aim and his great problem as well. Socrates has to make Gorgias understand this tension, while in Gorgias’ consciousness there is no tension at all. This difference between thinking of something and speaking of it corresponds to the difference between *materia* and *instrumentum* respectively. If Gorgias does not distinguish between the two within the

⁴⁷One is reminded of Cicero’s famous remark on Socrates’ innovation, i.e. *Hinc discidium illud exstitit quasi linguae atque cordis* (*de Orat.* III.61). Indeed, this is probably the reason why Gorgias is so surprised by Socrates’ question.

⁴⁸My translation. See next note.

⁴⁹Thus, whoever has translated *pos gar ou?* as “of course” (in addition to W. R. M. Lamb, *Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias* (London: Harvard University Press, [1925] 1991) in the Loeb series, see also Allen, *The Dialogues of Plato*, cited in n. 9 above; Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, cited in n. 46 above; Croiset, *Platon: Oeuvres complètes*, cited in n. 9 above (Evidemment)) has not made a mistake, but surely has lost the sense of surprise which is so important in our context. Of all the translations I have checked that of James H. Nichols Jr., *Plato: Gorgias* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), is the only one who keeps this sense of surprise: “Indeed, how could it not?” Yet, in my opinion, the word “indeed” in Nicholas’ translation is redundant and even weakens the sense of surprise.

logos, this means that he does not distinguish between the *materia* and the *instrumentum*. Gorgias teaches merely an *instrumentum*. However, Gorgias cannot even understand that he presents this *instrumentum* as a *materia*, since in his consciousness the very distinction between *instrumentum* and *materia* within the *logos* does not exist. All he knows is one thing: his art deals *peri logous*.

Now we can understand why Socrates wishes the *logoi* to appear alone without reference to *ergasia* or *poiesis*, which would have focused the answer on the *opus*. It is only when *logoi* appear alone that the answer wavers between the *materia* and the *instrumentum*. In short *ergasia* and *poiesis* should lead Gorgias towards the *logoi*, but then they need to disappear, to pave the way for a conscious discussion about the *materia*.

If Socrates' aim is to develop a discussion which wavers between the *materia* and the *instrumentum*, and make Gorgias understand his mistake—confusing between them—we can understand Socrates' further stage. Socrates leads Gorgias to give his answer by using the plural—*logoi*. This is done in a very simple, but no less sophisticated, way. The objects of *ergasia* and *poiesis* are in the plural. In the first case we find *himatia* ("clothes"), and for the *poiesis* we find *mele* ("tunes"). Gorgias, who is expected to answer according to the examples he has been given, but do it as briefly as possible, is left with the *logoi* in the plural and without the action noun. Thus we get *peri logous*. Why is it so important for Socrates for *logoi* to be in the plural? *Logos* in the singular can refer to a speech but also to a word,⁵⁰ while in the plural *logoi* can refer merely to words or a collection of words, namely speech/es. In other words, in the plural, *logoi* cannot mean a single word. Socrates, who leads Gorgias to use the plural, wants to prevent Gorgias from using the sense of "a single word," since a word never creates a speech. It is only with the plural—*logoi*—that Gorgias enters the tension between the *materia* and the *instrumentum*. Socrates wants to make Gorgias understand that what he, Gorgias, presents as *materia* (unconsciously of course) is only an *instrumentum* by which one creates the speech. For such a strategy one needs more than a single word.

Only after this preparation can Socrates turn to a focused and conscious discussion concerning the *materia*. Indeed, now at 449d8–9 he repeats his first question of 449d1–3, but makes two changes. First

⁵⁰This is not to say that Gorgias could have used *logos* in the meaning of a single word, but rather that without Socrates' manipulation he could have responded in the singular with all the ambiguity that that entails.

there are no examples such as appeared in the first question. Second, Socrates substitutes the noun *he rhetorike* of the first question with *episteme*.⁵¹ The first change is easily understood. The examples of the first questions were needed for leading Gorgias towards the *logoi*. Once it has been achieved, and Socrates has no reason to doubt it, no further examples are needed. Yet the second change still needs to be explained, since one could see here merely interchangeable terms. Indeed, *episteme* can be a substitute for *technē*. Yet I want to argue that precisely this possibility of using these two terms as interchangeable terms in colloquial speech serves Socrates in his strategy. Gorgias can overlook this substitution, and this is what Socrates wishes him to do, since it is exactly here that Socrates shifts the discussion to the *materia*. One notes in the first question a kind of introductory hypothesis: *phere de: rhetorikes gar phes epistemon technes* ("Come then; since you claim to be skilled in rhetorical art"). The adjective *epistemon* ("skilled") is derived from the verb *epistamai* of which the principal meaning is to have a knack (= know to + inf.).⁵² The use of *epistemon* is not a matter of chance, since Socrates asks about weaving and music which refer to a knowledge to + inf. However, the attentive reader is aware of the fact that there is a noun—*episteme*—built upon the same verb—*epistamai*—but its meaning is a different kind of knowledge, namely to know that + a statement. It is precisely this *episteme* which now substitutes the *rhetorike* which appeared in the first question. This substitution is very important, since it is only now that the discussion turns to deal with the *materia*. In such a discussion it is rather the noun *episteme* which is needed. The *materia* is the object of knowledge and this object is what Socrates is trying to find in rhetoric.

This analysis of Socrates' two questions in the ten lines I have discussed clarifies the tension to be found in Gorgias' consciousness. The modern reader understands these questions as dealing with the *materia*, and justly so. However, the modern reader lives in an age where rhetoric has been an established discipline for many centuries. The modern reader identifies the difference between the *instrumentum* and the *materia* concerning rhetoric. Yet for Gorgias, who lives in an age where rhetoric is still in formation, this distinction is not yet fully observed. In such a case there is no sense in trying to ask him straightforwardly about the *materia*. Moreover, if this

⁵¹See citation on p. 6 above.

⁵²Already Chaerephon is using the verb *epistamai* when he asks Polus at 448b4 and c2. For this meaning of *epistamai* see also Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.9.

distinction itself is what Socrates is wishing for, asking about the *materia* is begging the question. And lastly, if Gorgias is confusing the *materia* with the *instrumentum*, Socrates is prohibited from asking the *materia* question. What is left is trying to get to the "*materia* question" obliquely. Socrates leads Gorgias to a discussion concerning the *materia* through a discussion concerning the *opus*.

6. THE ORIGIN OF RHETORIC

Since 1990 many scholars have argued for and against the prevalent view of positing the origin of rhetoric in the mid-fifth century BCE. The commonly accepted view until then was that rhetoric was invented in Sicily somewhere around 467 BCE, after tyranny was abolished and democracy was established. People had to appear at law-courts and assemblies and needed help for properly presenting their case. The tradition ascribes the first technical book or Art of Rhetoric (*techne*) to the two shadowy figures Corax and Tisias,⁵³ who together published what seems to be a rhetorical theory⁵⁴ consisting of some rules and techniques for speaking in a persuasive way.⁵⁵ Hence the birth of rhetoric.

In 1990 Edward Schiappa was the first to challenge this view.⁵⁶ According to Schiappa and others (e.g. Cole) rhetoric as a rhetorical theory (i.e. a conceptualizing of the praxis of rhetoric into formal rules, a division of the parts of a speech, definitions of rhetoric, and the like) was not to be found earlier than the first decades of the 4th century BCE. Basing his findings on the term *rhetorike*, which is absent in texts of the 5th century BCE, Schiappa argues that what scholars like Kennedy call "technical rhetoric," "sophistic rhetoric," and "philosophical rhetoric" need to be revised. Denying altogether

⁵³For the fragments ascribed to them see L. Radermacher, *Artium Scriptores* (Wien: Roher, 1951), 28–35. For recent discussions see Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*, cited above in n. 10, pp. 65–84, and "Who was Corax?" *Illinois Classical Studies* 16 (1991): 65–84.

⁵⁴See Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 18–19.

⁵⁵The contribution of Corax and Tisias is said to be mainly in identifying the parts of forensic speeches and the theory of the "argument from probability." See Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, p. 4.

⁵⁶A list of scholars who tacitly or implicitly accept this Corax/Tisias legend or "the standard account of rhetoric's beginning" (using Schiappa's phrase) is to be found in Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 4–5 and n. 10 above.

the story of Corax and Tisias as well as a common type of a sophistic rhetoric, Schiappa tends to ascribe the birth of rhetoric to Plato⁵⁷ and Aristotle. Both, as part of their struggle against what they saw in the praxis of the sophists, actually conceptualized their praxis, thus inventing *rhetorike*.

It is not the aim of this article to deal with the thesis of Schiappa and his followers *per se*. What I am concerned with is rather adding a third layer for considering rhetoric as an art.

Schiappa does not deny the existence of rhetorical theory in the 5th century altogether. He merely argues for a different kind of such theories before and after the Platonic use of the term *rhetorike*. His main argument touches upon what he calls a discipline. By "discipline" Schiappa refers mainly to two characteristics. The first is the necessary amount of conceptualizing such as *to eikos* (as against using *eikos* without the article),⁵⁸ a real division of the parts of speech (against a "ring composition"),⁵⁹ or definitions of rhetoric. The second is "rhetoric as a distinct subject matter or discipline . . . with the status of conceptual or metarhetoric that attempts to theorize about oratory."⁶⁰ Moreover, Schiappa connects, and virtually stipulates, the origin of rhetoric as a discipline with philosophy as its adversary. Accordingly, he argues that texts of the 5th century are to be considered "predisciplinary," since the distinction between rhetoric and philosophy was not yet established.⁶¹ As Schiappa puts it, the occupation with *logos* was holistic, which makes almost every differentiation anachronistic.

What both Schiappa and his opponents share is the assumption that what makes an occupation an art is its amount of conceptualizing and independence from what might be taken as its parent, which in the case of rhetoric is philosophy. Thus it is only in the 4th century BCE that one may speak of rhetoric in the real sense of the word. Here exactly lies my argument. Rhetoric might reach

⁵⁷Schiappa even believes that Plato himself coined the term *rhetorike*. However, he does not insist on it. According to Schiappa even if Plato did not coin it himself, he surely gave it a novel meaning. See also n. 37 above.

⁵⁸Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 35–36.

⁵⁹Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 45–46.

⁶⁰Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 21–22.

⁶¹See his interesting chapter on Isocrates (Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, pp. 162–84).

a very high level of conceptualizing and even a high status of a discipline and yet it should not be considered art in the full meaning of the word. What is still needed is a full consciousness of an art which depends on several criteria necessary for every art, first and foremost a clear consciousness of a unique *materia* of its own.⁶² It should be noted that Schiappa focuses his argument on the pair rhetoric-philosophy, and justly so. It is only when philosophy is being defined as an adversary of rhetoric by stating their different aims (seeking truth as against seeking political success) that rhetoric can be said to become a discipline. Yet rhetoric has another mate—politics.⁶³ I want to argue that rhetoric should be completely and consciously separated from this historical parent too in order to become a discipline. The indication of such a departure is a conscious recognition of a *materia*. This is not yet to be found in rhetoric as it is presented in Socrates-Gorgias' conversation in Plato's *Gorgias*.

According to what has been presented in this article, rhetoric is not yet an art even in the first decades of the 4th century BCE.⁶⁴ The *Gorgias* presents us with rhetoric in formation with what concerns the very establishment of a new art. As I have shown, rhetoric is in an intermediate stage. In the consciousness of those who teach it (represented by the Platonic character Gorgias), rhetoric is nothing but politics. The speaker is a politician who knows how to speak. Its sphere—if we are careful enough not to use the term *materia*—is the affairs of the polis, and its evaluation concerning its beneficence

⁶²Many scholars who have dealt with the criteria for art throughout history have detected the *materia* (= knowledge of a *materia*) as the first criterion. See F. Heinemann, "Eine vorplatonische Theorie der 'Τέχνη'," *Museum Helveticum* 18 (1961): 105–30; D. Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom; Plato's Understanding of techne* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) (see especially Roochnik's lists in the first part of his book, 17–88).

⁶³It is no surprise that neither Schiappa nor Cole refers to the pairing of rhetoric-politics in the sense of liberating rhetoric in order to become a separate and independent discipline. On the close interaction between rhetoric and politics, even as late as Aristotle's time, see Arist. *Rhet.* 1356a25–26. Aristotle conceives of rhetoric as *paraphues ti . . . tes peri ta ethe pragmateias, hen dikaion esti prosagoreuein politike* ("a certain offshoot . . . of the field concerning behavior which it is right to call politics").

⁶⁴380 BCE is the date Schiappa, *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece*, cited in n. 10 above, p. 14, accepts for the composition of the *Gorgias*. D. Nails, *Agora, Academy and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995) suggests the *Gorgias* is a "college brochure" to advertise the opening of Plato's Academy somewhere around 387 BCE. This date, however, is not unanimously accepted by all scholars, let alone taking into account the dramatic date. The whole range covering the dramatic date and date of composition is somewhere between 429–380 BCE. On this issue see Dodds, *Plato's Gorgias*, cited in n. 1 above, p. 30.

is wholly political. Yet in practice rhetoric is a formal art which can speak in principle about everything without any real knowledge of the subjects to which it refers. Rhetoric in the early 4th century BCE is still in a twilight stage.