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From ‘Rhetoric’ to ‘Rhetoricity’: A Literature *Re*-view

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ABSTRACT

Rhetoric has always been an essential, inevitable and ubiquitous phenomenon of human life. Throughout its history, it has maintained its status as an art of suasion and persuasion, being largely *logocentric* in its nature and practice(s). However, among recent academia, the study of rhetoric has evolved significantly from its logocentric origins in ancient Greece to its varied applications in modern society. Marking the reason behind rhetoric’s such flouting from *logocentrism*, the present study aims at providing a thorough literature review, not only of its theoretical foundations, but also of its practical gateways. In this exploration, we will delve into rhetoric’s historical roots and trace its transformation through the classical era to the modern age, shedding light on its enduring relevance and impact on our daily lives. The purpose behind such *re*-view of ‘Rhetoric’ is to help understand the present by seeing it in context and providing it with a sense of continuity. The study has highlighted the emergence of ‘rhetoricity’ as a compelling cause behind the intricate interplay between rhetoric and its modern societal dynamics, where rhetoric is no more a singular resource which could be called upon by the skilled orator only. Recommending its context-specific definition(s), any exploration of rhetoric must go beyond a mere pursuit of persuasion and instead seek to unravel its profound impact on shaping the world we live in.

Key Words: Rhetoric, rhetoricity, suasion and persuasion, oratory, rhetoric and discourse

“Whoever does not study rhetoric will be a victim of it.”
(Ancient Greek wall inscription)

1. INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric has always been an essential, inevitable and ubiquitous phenomenon of human life. Throughout its history, it has maintained its status as an art of suasion and persuasion, being largely *logocentric* in its nature and practices. Words, whether spoken or written, listened to or read, have been its essence from its origination to its development. However, among recent academia, the study of rhetoric has evolved significantly from its origins in ancient Greece to its contemporary applications in modern society. Nowadays, it has so penetrated into the ways of human interaction that “nearly all human acts of communication engage rhetorical practice” (Eyman, 2015, p. 12). In almost all the social practices, either we are employing rhetoric implicitly or we are exposed to it explicitly. By and large, from ancient Greece to the early 21st century, rhetoric has played a central role in training orators, lawyers, counsellors, historians, statesmen, advertisers and poets (Herrick, 2021). Quite aptly, Corbett and Connors (1999) have noted that “everyone living in community with other people is inevitably a rhetorician; a parent constantly uses rhetoric on a child; a teacher, on his or her students; a salesperson, on customers; a supervisor, on workers” (p. 29). Thus, rhetoric has forged itself into an inescapable activity of our daily lives, which warrants a critical *re*-view, not only of its cumulative attributes but also of its semantic promiscuity.

Until 1970, this centuries-old discipline of rhetoric has increasingly been associated with the verbal discourse(s); however, in that year, at the National Conference on Rhetoric, the first formal call was initiated to include visual images in the study of rhetoric; and the scholars went on to suggest that a rhetorical perspective “may be applied to any human act, process, product, or artifact [that] may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behavior” (Sloan et al., 1971, p. 220). Today, in contrast to its traditional conception and usage, it is not just in speech and writing that rhetoric operates; there is a range of modes—the verbal arts, the image, the moving image, sound, gesture, movement—and these can be (and usually are) used in such crafty combinations, that “most of the time we are unconscious of rhetoric” (Andrews, 2014, p. x). Rather convincingly, in recognition of the centrality of ‘Rhetoric’ in modern life, it has been suggested that *homo sapiens* are, in essence, *homo rhetoricus*—

the rhetorical animal who uses signs/symbols to co-create meaning, share ideas and motivate actions persuasively (Oesterreich, 2009) i.e., a human being entirely formed by rhetorical practices¹.

Consequently, there has been a notable (re)turn toward the classical rhetoric in many academic disciplines that the scholars of law, history, anthropology, digital technology, political science, semiotics, sociology, management, marketing, and literature have all drawn on the rhetorical tradition, whether directly or indirectly (e.g., Lhlen, & Heath, 2018; Miles, & Nilsson, 2018; Rasmussen, 2017; Heath, 2011; Tonks, 2002). In all social praxes, such enormous prevalence of rhetoric and its morphic resonance from its verbal to non-verbal counterpart(s), naturally incites a query that “What does the word ‘rhetoric’ actually mean?” And, the present undertaking is at hand in finding its adequate answer(s) by providing a thorough literature review, not only of its theoretical foundations, but also of its practical gateways. In this exploration, we will delve into its historical roots and trace its transformation through the classical era to the modern age, shedding light on its enduring relevance and impact on our daily lives. One key aspect of this evolution is the recognition that rhetoric’s original purpose as a means of convincing others has been diluted to the point of volatility; and, now, has gone beyond mere persuasion. Concisely, the purpose behind such a thorough *re-view* of ‘Rhetoric’ is to help understand the present by seeing it in context and providing it with a sense of continuity.

2. On Defining Rhetoric

If truth be precise, the opinion about rhetoric has always been divided and diversionary. When the word *rhetoric* is used today, the meaning frequently is pejorative. Its pejorative sense generally suggests the entailment of such adverse remarks as spinning the truth for purposes of guile, trickery, subterfuge, dishonesty, duplicity, coercion and so on. More than often, it refers to “empty, bombastic words with no substance” (Foss et al., 2014, p. 1). For some people *rhetoric* is synonymous with “empty talk”, or even “deception” (Herrick, 2021, p.1); and “the terms ‘tired rhetoric’, ‘hollow rhetoric’, ‘heated rhetoric’ or ‘empty rhetoric’ are commonplace” (Tonks (2002, p. 807). We may hear clichés like “That's mere rhetoric”, or “That's just empty rhetoric” used as an insult when directed at someone else's comments on a subject. It has also been asserted that “rhetoric is flattery, display, quibbling, sophistry, captious reason, empty verbiage, and demagoguery” (MacDonald, 2017, p. 4). Booth (2004) has provided even a longer list for the pejorative synonyms of rhetoric as: “*propaganda, bombast, jargon, gibberish, rant, guff, twaddle, grandiloquence, purple prose, sleaze, crud, bullshit, crap, ranting, gutsy gambit, palaver, fluff, prattle, scrabble, barangue, tirade, verbiage, balderdash, rodomontade, flapdoodle, nonsense, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing*” (pp. 11-12, italics original). Within management and marketing disciplines, references to rhetoric are usually “derogatory”, where ‘rhetoric’ is considered as “a synonym for slippery language” (Tonks, 2002, p. 808). In such contexts, the fundamental objection to rhetoric—that powerful instrument of error and deceit (John Locke, 1690, p. 827)—“is its motivation to influence, a motivation betrayed by the *lingua suspecta*, speaking with a ‘clever tongue’, to make us do things we do not want to do” (Miles & Nilsson, 2018, p. 1261). Finally, like wielding a blow, Richards (2008) has remarked that “the implication is clear: phrases that sound good but express little of a speaker’s or writer’s ‘real’ beliefs count as rhetoric” (p. 3)

Rhetoric, however, must not *always* provoke the negative connotations only. Rhetoric exhibits “a distinguished history of largely positive meanings” (Foss et al., 2014, p.1); and, in Greco-Roman society, it was considered to be an art of advantage and opportunity. In Greece, rhetoric took hold as a major aspect of education and culture—a position it continued to uphold for much of the subsequent Western history. It was adored as an important aspect of trivium—the second division of the subjects of grammar, logic and rhetoric among seven liberal arts of classical antiquity (the first being quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy). In fact, in Greece, being proficient in rhetoric was viewed “as a natural talent or even as a gift from the gods” (Herrick, 2005, p. 33). In Roman society, the training in rhetoric was necessary for leadership in the Assembly, Council and courts (Herrick, 2021). The subject of rhetoric was studied to enhance the verbal skills that signaled refinement, wisdom, and accomplishment. In other words, in order to play a significant role in Roman society, the rhetorical education was vitally important and virtually a requirement to achieve position in any public office. Barthes (1988) has pointed out that by the second century AD, rhetoric “encompasses everything” and was well on its way to attaining the status of a “national education” (p. 28). From the early Middle Ages to the Renaissance, rhetoric, however, dominated the national curriculum increasingly (Richards, 2008). In fact, in the universities of seventeenth-century France, Barthes (1988) has noted that “the only academic prizes are the prizes for Rhetoric, for translation, and for memory, but the prize for Rhetoric, awarded at the conclusion of a special contest, designates the first pupil, who is henceforth called (and the titles are significant) *imperator* or *tribune*” (p. 44). Thus, over the extensive stretch

¹ Miles & Nilsson (2018), however, are of the view that “the conceptualisation of *homo rhetoricus* lacks analytic precision but it might still be analytically useful as model ‘to think with’ when analysing the *rhetorica utens* [rhetorical practice] of marketing practitioners” (p.1266). For its detailed discussion, see, Fish (1989) & Lanham, (1976).

of history, rhetoric has relished a distinguished position with a pretty positive appreciation of its theory and practice.

Historically, concerning its semantic promiscuity, it has been dealt within literally thousands of books and articles, but its definition and conception remained as elusive and confusing as ever. It “defies definition in part because of the elusiveness of its subject matter and in part because definition itself is a rhetorical act that imposes a point of view on its subject and may even call it into being” (MacDonald, 2017, p. 4). That was why, Wayne Booth (1988), one of the twentieth-century’s leading figures in literary studies, complained that “my first problem lies of course in the very word ‘*rhetoric*’, as it held entire dominion over all verbal pursuits; logic, dialectic, grammar, philosophy, history, poetry, all are rhetoric” (pp. xiv-xv). Similarly, James Jasinski (2001), reflecting on its definitional ambiguities had remarked that “rhetoric has, and seemingly always has had, multiple meanings” (p. xiii).

Nevertheless, rhetoric has a standard history (Richards, 2008), has several centuries of established usage behind it (Herrick, 2021), and has seemingly won the battle against “the dominant view of rhetoric as a poison, something to be avoided, discouraged, shunned” (Miles & Nilsson, 2018, p. 1259). For more than two millennia, philosophers, teachers, scholars, and advocates have discussed the concept of rhetoric and formulated crucial definitions of it. Precisely, the Sophists (see, Gorgias’ *Encomium of Helen*, 425 BC and Protagoras’ *Overthrowing Arguments*, 429 BC), Plato (see, *Gorgias*, 386 BC; *Phaedrus*, 370 BC) Aristotle (see, *Rhetoric*, 335 BC), Cicero (see, *De invention*, 87 BC; *De oratore*, 55 BC; *Orator*, 44 BC), Longinus (see, *On the Sublime*, 50 CE), Quintilian (see, *Institutio oratoria*, 93 CE), Tacitus (see, *Dialogue on Oratory*, 97 CE), St. Augustine (see, *On Christian Doctrine*, 426 CE), Boethius (see, *An Overview of the Structure of Rhetoric*, 523 CE), Erasmus (see, *De ratione studii*, 1511, *De copia*, 1512 *Ciceronianus* 1528), Machiavelli (see, *The Prince*, 1532), Ramus (see, *Dialectique*, 1555), Bacon (see, *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605; *The New Organon*, 1620), Hobbes (see, *Art of Rhetorique*, 1637) Locke (see, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690), Campbell (see, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1776), Newman (see, *Practical System of Rhetoric*, 1827), Whateley (see, *Elements of Rhetoric*, 1828), Nietzsche (see, *Lecture Notes on Rhetoric*, 1873), I. A. Richards (see, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1936), Kenneth Burke (see, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1950), Barthes (see, *Mythologies*, 1957), W. C. Booth (see, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 1961; *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, 2004), and Hill and Helmers (see, *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, 2008)² can be regarded as touchstones in the ongoing debate over what *rhetoric* means.

Moreover, the concept of rhetoric has so turned up under virtually every academic column that, in its most modern sense, it has become an “interdisciplinary enterprise” (MacDonald, 2017, p. 662). Rather than studying rhetoric in isolation, nowadays, scholars, rhetoricians and philosophers are more interested in studying its relationship with other disciplines i.e., rhetoric and law (e.g., Goodrich, 1998, 2017; Sickinger, 2007; Sherwin, 2011; Gargarin, 2017), rhetoric and politics (e.g., Bloch, 1975; Badian, 1992; Connolly, 2007; Harris, 2017), rhetoric and pedagogy (e.g., Ford, 2001; Heath, 2009; Mack, 2017), rhetoric and poetics (e.g., Batstone, 1993; Wray, 2001; Ross, 2017; Walker, 2017), rhetoric and fiction (e.g., Booth, 1961; Hock, 1997; Webb, 2007, 2017), rhetoric and science (e.g., Vickers, 1986; Slawinski, 1991; Gross, 1990; Walmsley, 2017), rhetoric and the visual arts (Puttfarken, 2000; Gronbeck, 2008; van Eck, 2017; Carruthers, 2010), rhetoric and philosophy (e.g., Campbell, 1998; Howell, 1971; Potkay, 1994, 2017), rhetoric and feminism (e.g., Lunsford, 1995, Glenn, 1997, 2004; Glenn & Lunsford, 2017), rhetoric and psychoanalysis (e.g., Dyck, 1989; Chaitin, 1996, 2017), rhetoric and deconstruction (e.g., Zuckert, 1996; Miller, 2017) rhetoric and semiotics (e.g., Barthes, 1977; Bakhtin, 1984; O’Toole, 1994; Martinec, 2003; van Leeuwen, 2017) and, rhetoric and digital media (e.g., Lanham, 1992; Welch, 1999; Grasso, 2002; Warnick, 2007; Bogost & Losh, 2017; Britten, 2020; Cepak & Mesyn, 2020). In fact, virtually all social theorists, leading linguists, and political philosophers have a concept of rhetoric, in one way or another, which surely licensed it as one of the most versatile concepts of human epistemology. It has been dealt in such a prolific manner that the term has become so overlaid with multiple meanings that it has become a victim of its own popularity. Certainly, it now means too much.

Admittedly, one is struck not only by the cumulative number of different attributes that many rhetoricians find essential, but also of their more than occasional contradictions. Classically, Isocrates—one of the early Greek thinkers in the sophistic tradition—celebrated rhetoric as a force for civilization, and maintained that “there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech [rhetoric] has not helped us to establish” (cited in Jasinski, 2001, p. xiv). However, for Plato—a principal critic of sophistic tradition—rhetoric was a pseudo art and, like poetry, an ignoble public practice. He associated rhetoric with “trickery, deceit, immorality and superficiality” (cited in Tonks, 2002, p. 807). Then again, Aristotle defended rhetoric as “the art of persuasion” positively (Aristotle, 1984) and provided one of the most complete, systematic and insightful treatment of the art with his famous division of logos, pathos, and ethos in his *Rhetoric* (Book I, section 1355-1359). Following that, for Cicero and

² This must not be taken as an exhaustive list and is based on MacDonald’s (2017, pp. xix-xxiii) famous Timeline, in which he has charted the works chronologically from Tisias/Corax (fifth century BCE) to Marshall McLuhan (1964).

Quintilian—who defined rhetoric as “eloquence” (Richards, 2008, p. 4)—it is almost impossible to imagine a society without rhetoric.

And, in contrast to Greco-Roman scholarship of rhetoric, modern scholars are far more diverse over the definition of this octopoid term. To quote some: Habermas (1987, p. 15) defined rhetoric as “a form of practice”, Paul de Man (1979) as “the study of tropes and figures” (p. 6), Derrida (1990) rejected the trope-scheme dichotomy and re-defined it as “the study of pragmatics” (pp. 15-16), Bizzell (1992) as “the study of the personal, social, and historical elements in human discourse” (p. 218), Farrell (1993) as “the collaborative art of addressing and guiding decision and judgment” (p. 1), Liska (1993) as “the MANIPULATION of signs in the service of social influence [emphasis original]” (p. 34), Aune (1994) as “the art of synthesizing contradictory social reality” (p. 6), Covino (1994) as “the invocation of invisible powers” (p.19), Foss (1996) as “the flowery, ornamental speech that contains an abundance of metaphors and other figures” (p. 4), Mailloux (1998) as “the study of textual effects, of their production and reception” (p.xii), Booth (2004) as “the whole range of arts not only of persuasion but also of producing or reducing misunderstanding” (p. 10), and Josephson et al., (2020) as “the communication of visual rhetoric” (p. xx). One may continue along the same line leading to infinity and getting nought like peeling an onion layer by layer. Exhausted by such versatility of *rhetoric*, Ehninger (1968) has posited that “the continuing dialogue on the question, ‘what is rhetoric?’, except as an academic exercise, is largely profitless...[and] the search for a defining quality can only end in error or frustration” (p. 140). Bryant (1973, p. 3) also identified the same fault that “Other disciplines such as literary studies have evolved a full complement of useful differentiating terms for artist, art, and output-poet, poetics, and poetry...But with rhetoric, we are in something of a mess” (for further debate, see Gaonkar, 1993; Jasinski, 2001, pp. xiii-xxxv).

Nonetheless, as far as mere definition of ‘rhetoric’ is concerned, some scholars have tried to address the problem by listing the plethora of definitions that existed in literature, expecting that the target may be achieved from the pattern of firing. But all in vain³. A further difficulty in defining rhetoric, as pointed out by Michael J. MacDonald (2017, p. 5) is that “the meaning of the English word ‘rhetoric’, like the Greek word *logos*, encompasses both the art of rhetoric and its products (e.g., persuasion, speeches, texts, advertisements, etc.)”. Therefore, frustrated by the drastic problem(s) of definition inherent in the conception of *rhetoric*, some writers are in the favour of abandoning the term for the more encompassing terms (e.g., rhetoric for Big Rhetoric⁴; rhetoric for Rhetorics⁵) or at least severely circumscribing its old usage and outmoded parameters (e.g., Bender & Wellbery’s [1990, p. 25] concept of ‘rhetoricity’)⁶. And, as a discipline, it poses an unusual dilemma that “rhetoric is both an analytic method and a heuristic for production” (Eyman, 2015, p. 12), and, as a result, the terms “rhetoric” and “rhetorical” are used to describe the baffling array of various practices and a number of artifacts that are of both verbal and non-verbal in their nature. Probably, that was why, Richard McKeon (1987) was fair in his opinion that rhetoric should best be understood as “a universal and architectonic art” (p. 108). Undoubtedly, rhetoric is “universal” because it is present everywhere we turn. And, by *architectonic*, it is meant that rhetoric is a kind of meta-discipline that provides structures or raw concepts to the other arts and disciplines—a maestro branch of knowledge that held entire dominion over all disciplines and pursuits.

In short, rhetoric comes out to be intrinsically a self-defeating notion. Its operations and practices seem to pop up precisely when we attempt to avoid it, while fails to appear where one would clearly expect it to find out. In fact, ‘Rhetoric’ is a slippery subject that presents a unique glitch that “any dialectic on any subject will contain elements of rhetoric so any explication of rhetoric is potentially rhetorical, and perhaps inevitably rhetorical—thus leading to a metacommentary of discourse on discourse and a confusing hall of mirrors” Tonks (2002, p. 808). Barthes (1988) has referred to the definitional activity of rhetoric as the ‘*delirious activity of language upon language*’ and a danger of such metacommentary is that little results which is new and useful beyond an alternative language. Inherently, rhetoric is essentially and inescapably rhetorical. Such state of affairs, in fact, leads to the necessity of the ‘context-specific’ conception of rhetoric, and concludes that it would be illogical to construct a single universally-agreed all-purpose definition of rhetoric that may be usable for all times, domains, and purposes. Arguably, rhetoric as a term has been so appropriated over the past several centuries that it cannot bear the burden of its own definitional traits.

³ For a comprehensive account of “nine senses” of rhetoric, see Benson (1978). For its more recent description, see Kinney (2007), who elaborated for 114 pages of definitions or various conceptions of rhetoric, arranged chronologically from Sappho, c. 600 BCE, to John Ramage, 2006.

⁴ The term ‘Big Rhetoric’ was originally coined by Alan Gross and William Keith (1997) to the celebration of the phenomenon what Herbert W. Simons (1990) calls the “rhetorical turn” in a variety of disciplines. The term refers to the theoretical position that everything, or virtually everything, can be described as “rhetorical”. For the criticism on this term, see Schiappa (2001).

⁵ For details, see Sung-Gi (2011); (Booth, 2004, Chapt, 1 titled *How many “Rhetorics”*); MacDonald (2017, p. 5)

⁶ For critical account of ‘rhetoricity’, see Richards (2008, Chapter, 3).

Probably, we do not need ‘a definition of rhetoric’; rather, we need ‘a theory of rhetoric’ that must embrace a restricted ambit of applicability in exchange for a wide range of conflicting attributes.

3. Classical Theories of Rhetoric

Historically, in Western tradition,⁷ the systematic study of rhetoric (or oratory) dates back to the fifth century B.C., when it is believed to have originated “as a self-conscious practice” (Richards, 2008, p. 19). In actual, no texts survived from this period, but a legend or myth does: A revolution took place in Syracuse, a Greek colony on the island of Sicily, in about 465 B.C., when the tyrant Thrasybulus (466 BC– 465 BC) was overthrown and a sort of democracy was instated. The disputes arose over the conflicting property claims of rightful ownership and the courts had to resolve whether a piece of land belonged to its original owner or to the one who had been allotted the land during the tyrant’s rule. The Greek legal system, in contrast to the practice of hiring attorneys, demanded

⁷ A pertinent fact to be acknowledged here is that there exist several rhetorical traditions outside the Western one, which has its origins in ancient Greece. For an example of the ethnocentric picture of Western rhetorical scholars, note James J. Murphy (1983), who proclaimed that rhetoric is “an entirely Western phenomenon” (p. 3). He asserted sweepingly that “no evidence of interest in rhetoric exists in the ancient civilizations of Babylon or Egypt, for instance; neither Africa nor Asia has to this day produced a rhetoric” (Murphy, 1983, p. 3). Similarly, Morrison (1972) declared that “Japanese culture before World War II evidenced no rhetorical tradition” (p. 101). However, in contrast, modern scholarship is not of the same view. William Hallo (2004, pp. 26-45), in *The Birth of Rhetoric*, has intensely expressed that rhetoric originated in Mesopotamia (see also, Binkley, 2003; Ponchia, 2007; Johandi, 2015). Both Binkley (2004) and Foster (2005) argued persuasively that some of the earliest examples of rhetoric can be found in the Akkadian writings of the princess and priestess Enheduanna (c. 2285–2250 BC), while later examples can be found in the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the time of Sennacherib (704–681 BC) (Hoskisson & Boswell, 2004).

In ancient Egypt, David Hutto (2002) identified that rhetoric had existed since at least the Middle Kingdom period (c. 2080–1640 BC). According to him (Hutto, 2002), the Egyptians held eloquent speaking in high esteem, and it was a skill that had a very high value in their society. The “Egyptian rules of rhetoric” also clearly specified that “knowing when not to speak is essential, and very respected, rhetorical knowledge” (p. 213). Their “approach to rhetoric” was thus a “balance between eloquence and wise silence” (p. 213). Their rules of speech also strongly emphasized an “adherence to social behaviors that support a conservative status quo” (p. 213) and they held that “skilled speech should support, not question, society” (p. 213, for details on Egyptian Rhetoric, see, Fox, 1983; Sweeney, 2004; Lipson, 2004; Ababio, 2006; Crawford, 2007; Horne, 2010; Karshner, 2011; Glenn & Krista, 2014).

In ancient China, rhetoric dates back to the traditions of Confucianism and Daoism (Zhao, 2010, p. 100), and continued with later followers consistently. The former evolved from the teachings of Confucius (551– 479 B.C.), the latter from a book titled *Dao De Jing* by Lao Zi (c. 604–517 B.C.). Daoism, on the other hand, did not care much for man-made codes, rules, or rites. Central to its philosophy was the concept of *dao*, which some contemporary researchers consider to be the Chinese equivalent of “discourse” (Callahan, 1989). For more examples of the treatment of Chinese rhetorics see: Kao, 1986; Jensen, 1987; Zhao, 1990; Liu, 1991; Lu, 1998; Lu & Frank, 1993; Heisey, 2000; Xu, 2004 and Jiazou, 2008.

In ancient India, rhetoric can be traced as back as to the seventh century BCE, when some Indian rhetors, like Greek Sophists, held public debates on religion to the public’s amusement (Kennedy, 1998). For the Western tradition, India’s rhetoric could be said to be a link between the West and the East, in the sense that, like Greeks, it utilizes the systems of categorization (Kennedy, 1998). According to David Metzger (2010), “Sanskrit scholars, however, invariably treat rhetoric as the study of figuration (*alamkara*). At the root of all figures is some element of exaggeration (*artisyokti*), or “crooked” or oblique manner of speech (*vakrokti*)” (p. 346). Like Plato and Aristotle, Bhamaha (700–800 C.E.), one of the first writers on rhetoric per se, argued that even the simplest figures require a comparison of dissimilar objects (Metzger, 2010, p. 346). For more details on Indian rhetoric, see: Misra, 1971; Gangal & Hosterman, 1982; Lloyd, (2007, 2011, 2013 & 2015) and Harley, 2017.

In response to Morrison’s (1972, p. 101) stance that “Japanese culture before World War II evidenced no rhetorical tradition”, Tomasi (2004, p. 161) has maintained that “Western rhetoric was introduced to Japan as a coherent system a few years after the Meiji Restoration (1868)”. Studying the history of rhetoric in Japan between the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of the Taishō era (1912-1926), he clarified the “crucial role played by rhetoricians Shimamura Hōgetsu and Igarashi Chikara, in conceiving a rhetorical theory capable of granting rhetoric a place of continued relevance in the literary debates of the time” (Tomasi, 2004, p. 161). For more discussion about the Japanese tradition, see: Ishii, 1982, 1992; Fowler, 1988; Okabe, 2000 and Tomasi, 2000, 2002.

For more details of the diverse rhetorical traditions, see: Kennedy, 1998; Hum & Lyon, 2009; Habib, 2011, Chap. 2; Stroud, 2019 and Lloyd, 2020.

that the citizen must represent themselves in court. Thus, the burden of proof, then, was on the claimants to make the best possible arguments and to present them persuasively to the jury.

Corax, “the mythical inventor of rhetoric”⁸ (Swartz, 2010, p.559), offered training in judicial pleading to citizens arguing their claims in court. Corax is also “believed to have played a role in directing Syracuse toward democratic reform” (Herrick, 2005, p. 32). Whatever the origin of the tradition, however, the central point to his rhetorical system was “the doctrine of general probability” (Katula & Murphy, 2003, p. 24)—the rhetorical principle of reasoning that, of two propositions, one is more likely (*eikos*) to be true than the other one (Swartz, 2010, p. 559). To Corax and his student Tisias are attributed the compilation of the first handbook of rhetorical precepts called the “Art of Rhetoric” (Foss et al., 2014, p. 5), though, no copies the work survived. However, for the discipline of rhetoric, Corax is credited with “the first formal treatment of the effective speech structure, a schematized rhetoric” (Burroughs, 2010, p. 630). He discussed that speeches consist of three major parts—the *proimion* (an introduction), the *agôn* (an argument or proof), and the *epilogos* (a conclusion)—a taxonomy that was enlarged or elaborated by later scholars of rhetoric (Kirby, 2010).

Specifically, Corax’s pupil, “Tisias is credited with introducing Corax’s rhetorical system to mainland Greece” (Foss et al., 2014, p. 5). His logical approach of teaching oratory, as advanced by Tisias, was quickly taken by others, and was carried to Athens and other Greek city-states by professional teachers of rhetoric known as Sophists (e.g., Protagoras, Gorgias & Isocrates)—a term stemmed from *sophos*, which means knowledge or wisdom. A sophist is, then, a “wisdom-bearer”. Under the umbrella of rhetoric, the Sophists, then, “offered Greek citizens education in the arts of verbal discourse, especially training in inventing arguments and presenting them in a persuasive manner to a large audience” (Herrick, 2005, p. 33). Thus, developed and taught by a group of itinerant intellectuals, “ancient Greeks considered rhetoric to be a discipline, accepted it as part of their education and, saw it as practical for the workings of their communities” (Enos, 1993, p. ix).

Protagoras was a central figure in developing the philosophy underlying rhetorical practices. Protagoras is alleged to have been “the first person to charge for lectures” (Herrick, 2005, p. 42) and is considered by some to be the first of the Greek Sophists. His most acclaimed aphorism is that “man is the measure [*metron*] of all things; of things that are not, that they are not; of things that are, that they are.” (cited in Kerferd, 1981, p. 85). But what he meant by this claim, in true sophistic fashion, has been the subject of much debate. Simply, he proposed a subjective understanding of reality and truth. Protagoras taught rhetoric by a method known as *antilogike*, i.e., requiring students to advance arguments for and against a variety of claims. In essence, Protagoras’ notion of *antilogike* provides a worldview with rhetoric at its center.

Another notable of Sophists was Gorgias—the father of impromptu speaking—who defined rhetoric as “the ability to persuade with words” (cited in Herrick, 2005, p. 6). In his famous speech, *Encomium of Helen* he argues the unlikely thesis that Helen cannot be blamed for deserting Menelaus. As George Kennedy (1999) summarizes that Gorgias specified four possible reasons for Helen’s action: “it was the will of the gods; she was taken by force; she was seduced by words; or she was overcome by love” (p. 35) and, then, refuted each one them. Gorgias is best remembered in the history of rhetoric for developing stylistic devices patented in modern scholarship as “Gorgianic rhetoric” (Schiappa, 2010).

Another important figure often associated with the Sophists in Athens is Isocrates (436-338 B.C.). Around 390 B.C., he founded a school in Athens, the first of the rhetorical schools, and eventually became the most respected teacher of rhetoric in the city. For Isocrates, it was rhetoric—the power to persuade each other—that made human civilization itself possible. Herrick (2005, p. 44) has noted that “he taught rhetoric in part by the use of model speeches that he himself composed”. In fact, it was Isocrates whose trend of writing out his own speeches and to

⁸ Skepticism over the acceptance of precise date (i.e., 467- 466 B.C.) of rhetoric’s origin, and Corax as the founder/originator/inventor of rhetoric is evident among current scholars, particularly Edward Schiappa (1990 & 1999). While in actuality, ancient historians and Byzantine scholars consistently credit Corax with rhetoric’s origin. The controversy over this topic is so acute that some researchers even doubt Corax’s existence (see, Cole, 1991). However, Enos’ (1993, p.4) opinion seems plausible that “Rhetoric did not originate at a single moment in history; [Rather], it was an evolving, developing consciousness about the relationship between thought and expression”. For more details, see: Hinks, 1940, Cole, 1995; Murphy, Katula, & Hoppmann, 2014 and Herrick, 2021.

⁹ The Sophists were, in practice, itinerant professional teachers. They taught for pay. Some of the most famous Sophists, such as Hippias, Protagoras, and Gorgias, charged enormous fees for their services and became extremely wealthy. Herrick (2005, p. 37) has noted that, “the fees charged by famous Sophists for a course in rhetoric remained out of the reach of most ordinary working Athenians”. Ford (1993, p. 37) has helped us to calculate just how much money Isocrates could make for his course of rhetoric: “The fee for his course was 1,000 drachmas, at a time when a day laborer was paid about 1 drachma a day”. And, that was why, less affording Greeks branded them “overpaid parasites” (Ford, 1993, p. 37).

circulate them as written documents marks a general shift in Greek rhetoric from a predominantly spoken medium to one emphasizing written discourse.

Nonetheless, despite such fame and influence, the Sophists were controversial from the moment they appeared in Greece, and thus, remained “the negative starting point of standard histories of rhetoric” (Richards, 2008, p. 23). They earned a reputation for “extravagant displays of language” and for bewitching audience with their “brilliant styles...colorful appearances and flamboyant personalities” (Poulakos, 1993, p. 58). Plato called them simply “masters of the art of making clever speeches” and Xenophon reduced them to the level of “masters of fraud” (cited in Herrick, 2005, p. 36). One of the controversial convictions, behind the Greeks’ distrust of the Sophists, was their radical view of ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. For Sophists, like Gorgias and Protagoras, absolute truth was not to be found in transcendent sources such as the gods or the Nature¹⁰. Rather, Sophists believed that truth emerged from a clash of arguments, i.e., through the method of dialectic (Greek: *dialektike*)—the practice of inventing arguments for and against a proposition, of arguing either side of a case. They also promoted a philosophy of language and knowledge that posited: the only accessible reality lies in the human psyche, which is malleable and susceptible to linguistic manipulations (Herrick, 2021). John Poulakos (1995) confirms that the Sophists believed “the world could always be recreated linguistically” (p. 25), and thus, rhetorically. Thus, Truth, at the hands of Sophists, became a completely subjective notion, with the individual capable of creating a private view of morality and even of existence. Such a radical view of truth was a threat to conservative Athenians, that is to say, if truth and reality depend on who can speak the most persuasively, what becomes of justice, virtue, and social order? Nevertheless, recent scholars present the Sophists as important intellectual figures who have received a somewhat unreservedly negative press. Nowadays, a growing appreciation of the sophistic legacy, that proved to be influential for the contemporary rhetorical theory and practice, can be noted among the scholars (e.g., Gagarin, 2001, 2007; Jarratt, 1991; Mann, 2003; McComiskey, 2002; Muckelbauer, 2001; Crick, 2010; Cassin, 2017).

The untiring bad overtones that Sophistry in particular and rhetoric in general, has maintained in Western tradition can be traced directly to Plato’s long-lasting attack on the Sophists in his *Gorgias*¹¹ (c. 387 BC) that “is deemed the foundational example of anti-rhetorical thinking” (Richards, 2008, p. 23). In this dialogue Plato, a student of Socrates, who was executed by the civic authorities in Athens in 399 BC for impiety, “condemned rhetoric as ‘a knack of flattering with words’, a criticism the art has never lived down” (Herrick, 2005, p. 37). The Sophists’ rhetoric, according to Plato, aimed at persuasion about justice through the manipulation of public opinion (*doxa*), whereas an adequate view of justice must be grounded in true knowledge (*episteme*), and aim at the well-being of the individual and of the city-state (*polis*). There is “no real substance to rhetoric; it is simply a collection of discursive tricks”, Jasinski (2001, p. xix) abridged Plato’s critique. Plato’s, major objection has been that “the sophists are concerned with suasion rather than the truth; [they] argue any side of the question so long as it pleases and gratifies the audience” (Plato 1964: 462c–d), thus, lack rational understanding of the moral issues they defend or contest.

Curiously, some fifteen years later Plato wrote another dialogue, *Phaedrus*, in which he recommended, in contrast to sophistic rhetoric, the basis of a philosophical rhetoric. It hints at Plato’s version of the “true rhetoric”—“a science of dialectics” (Romilly, 1992, p. 71). However, the description of a philosophical rhetoric in *Phaedrus* is not taken seriously among the scholars. Richards (2008, p. 31) has objected that “Socrates’ insistence that the true rhetorician should study the different types of soul and understand how each one is affected by different events is considered impossible to put into practice”. Plato’s “first reaction as expressed in the *Gorgias*, where, in the name of morality, he desired to reject rhetoric utterly” (Romilly, 1992, p. 71), however, in *Phaedrus* his promotion of a rhetoric utilized for the good of the individual and of the society, without retracting his criticism of sophistic rhetoric, seems nothing but partiality. In short, “the true rhetorician, it turns out, must be a philosopher like Plato” (Herrick, 2005, p. 63).

In fact, Plato’s negative view—of rhetoric in general and of the Sophists in particular—was unjustified and has been emphasized by several scholars. Brian Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* (1988), has described Plato’s thirty-year-long attack on rhetoric as “idiosyncratic and extreme” (p. 148). Herrick (2005, p. 53) reminds us that “it should also be borne in mind that because Plato is arguing against the Sophists in *Gorgias*, his own ability as a rhetorician is itself on display”. George Kennedy (1999, p. 54), the historian of rhetoric, calls Plato “a consummate rhetorician; [and that] no dialogue of Plato is untouched by rhetoric”. Enos (1993, p. 92) writes more assertively that Plato’s case in *Gorgias* should be viewed as “rhetorical argument of the kind associated with sophistic rhetoric; [and] the biased characterization of Gorgias of Leontini in Plato’s famous dialogue was a gross misrepresentation” (p. 72).

¹⁰ For example: Gorgias’ surviving speech *On Nature* evinces a radical scepticism: “nothing exists, or if it exists it cannot be known, or if it can be known then it cannot be communicated” (cited in Richards, 2008, p. 23).

¹¹ Plato’s *Gorgias* is credited with the earliest recorded use of the Greek term *rhetorike* (rhetoric), which has led some scholars to conclude that Plato coined the term. For a detailed debate on the origins of the term, see, Schiappa (1990).

The great Roman orator, Cicero, wrote after reading *Gorgias* during a visit to Athens—more than two centuries after it was written—“What most surprised me about Plato in that work was that it seemed to me that as he was in the process of ridiculing rhetors he himself appeared to be the foremost rhetor” (*De Oratore*, 1.11.47, cited in Enos, 1993, p. 91). Schultz (2017, p. 385) has pointed out that “the tension between sophistry and philosophy that recurs throughout these dialogues is, in fact, a carefully constructed Platonic labyrinthine garden”, that is, you approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same point from another side and no longer know your way about. Rountree (2010, p. 682) is probably right in revealing that “History has been less kind to the Sophists, perhaps, than their contributions warrant...[as] Little of the sophists’ writings have survived, while Plato’s criticisms of them are readily available”. Nevertheless, the ongoing debate over the justification of Plato’s attack on Sophists contributed a lot to the field of rhetoric, generally. Drawing attention to the differences between sophistry and philosophy laid an excellent foundation stone, on which Aristotle built a stronger architecture of rhetoric later. Thus, if we dig a little deeper surrounding the inquiry, a much more radical claim blossoms that “Plato both wrote about rhetoric and practiced it...hence; Plato’s writing on rhetoric is critical and constructive, in both cases contributing to rhetoric’s formation as a discipline” (Yunis, 2017, p. 121).

While Plato offered the beginnings of a philosophical position on rhetoric, the codification of rhetoric was left to no one but the great Greek philosopher, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.). “Perhaps no single figure has had as much influence on rhetoric’s disciplinary character as Aristotle”, noted Janet M. Atwill (2010, p. 26). In *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, Plato paints two different pictures of rhetoric—one evil and one virtuous. His observation of the evil uses of rhetoric was generally exaggerated, whereas his view of a good rhetoric was largely utopian. However, precluding the moralizing tone of his beloved teacher of twenty years, Aristotle’s approach to rhetoric is ‘both pragmatic and scientific’ (Herrick, 2005). In contrast to Plato’s excoriation of rhetoric as “a mere knack” and “a branch of flattery” that is concerned with suasion rather than the truth, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (c. 332 BC)—“a text which has shaped all subsequent understanding of the subject” (Richards, 2008, p.19), defended rhetoric as a complete discipline and as a true art (*technê*). The opening words of the *Rhetoric* assert that “rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 1354), a direct answer to Plato’s *Gorgias* where Socrates asserts that rhetoric is the “counterpart of cookery” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 465). In fact, Aristotle answers his teacher’s claim that rhetoric is ‘a mere analogy to the knack of cooking’ by emphasizing that rhetoric is the counterpart to the *technê* of dialectic. Besides, he also affirms that a rhetorician must be able to argue ‘on opposite sides of a question’—an ability of the Sophists condemned by Plato in *Gorgias*. In direct contrast to Platonic and Sophistic conception of ‘arguing on both sides a case’, Aristotle’s dialectic is “a logical method of debating issues of general interest, starting from widely accepted propositions” (Herrick, 2005, p.74, emphasis original)¹². After defending rhetoric as a *technê*, Aristotle advances “the most famous definition of rhetoric ever formulated, and the most influential one” (Herrick, 2005, p.75) as: “Rhetoric is the faculty (*dunamis*) of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, 1984: 1355b). Thus, Aristotle establishes that rhetoric’s domain is about discovering the “available means of persuasion”, rather than to memorize great speeches and to debate in order to learn persuasion by imitation and practice.

If rhetoric is an art (*technê*), as Aristotle has argued, then what is it the study of? A major question answered unsatisfactorily in Plato’s *Gorgias* in which rhetoric was defined as an art concerned “with words”. However, Aristotle answered the question by identifying three technical or artistic proofs (*entechnoi pisteis*) that make up subject matter of the *technê*, or the art of rhetoric: (1) (*logos*) logical reasoning, (2) (*pathos*) the names and causes of various human emotions, and (3) (*ethos*) human character and goodness. Further, categorizing the structure of speech, Aristotle described three activities of an orator: invention (*inventio*), disposition (*dispositio*) and style (*elocutio*). Moreover, Aristotle also outlined rhetoric’s functions in three crucial genres: First, deliberative rhetoric—concerned with future events; its action is exhortation or dissuasion. Second, demonstrative rhetoric—concerned with the present: its context is usually commemorative occasions and its function is praise or blame. Third, forensic or judicial rhetoric—concerned with past events; it is used primarily in law-courts to accuse or defend. Based on these functions, Aristotle invented what has become a famous division of speeches into three categories:

¹² Aristotle’s conception of ‘dialectic’ is unique and should not be confused with the Sophistic practice of arguing equally on opposite sides of a case. Herrick (2005) has clarified that by identifying rhetoric the “counterpart of dialectic”, Aristotle wanted to differentiate rhetoric from sophistry or groundless persuasion. He discussed sophisticated fallacies and how to guard against them in his work, *Sophistic! Elenchi*, or *On Sophistical Refutations* elaboratively. He also hoped, however, to distinguish rhetoric from the strict logic of formal philosophical inquiry as discussed by Plato. Aristotle, thus, sought to improve on the shallow rhetorical treatises of Sophists circulating in Athens. But at the same time he wanted to answer Plato’s charges that rhetoric was not a *technê*, or true art. Aristotle addresses more assertively in his *Poetics* that “Rhetoric is something other than sophistry, logic, or poetry” (cited in Herrick, 2005, p.74)

Deliberative Oratory, Epideictic Oratory, and Forensic Oratory (Aristotle has discussed these three categories in Book I of the *Rhetoric*, Chapters 4-15).

For the discipline of rhetoric, Aristotle's contribution is considered to be canonical. His *Rhetoric* marks the beginning of the rhetorical canon in the sense that it defends rhetoric as an essential art. He was "responsible for first systematizing rhetoric into a unified body of thought" (Foss et al., 2014, p.7), and provided "an exhaustive collection of rhetorical precepts, encompassing discourse classification, invention, modes of proof, arrangement, and style" (Atwill, 2010, p. 29). Gross and Walzer (2000), in *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*, have indicated that "all subsequent rhetorical theory is but a series of responses to issues raised by Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" (p. ix), and have further revealed that "there is no comparable situation in any other discipline: No other discipline would claim that a single ancient text so usefully informs current deliberations on practice and theory" (p. x). In line with Barthes (1988), one can assert that, in fact, all rhetoric is fundamentally 'Aristotelian'.

Romans, from the domes of Greek courts and the theoretical world of debate and dialogue, brought rhetoric into the political arena. "Rhetoric" writes Manfred Fuhrmann (2012), "like all subjects of instruction in the ancient world, was created by the Greeks; the Romans dutifully adopted both its forms and its subject-matter" (p. 18). At the hands of Cicero (106-43 B.C) and Quintilian (35-95 AD), rhetoric was a means of achieving personal success in politics and a method for speaking well on public places in Roman Empire. However, Roman rhetoricians were mostly borrowers and "added little that was new to the study of rhetoric; rather, they organized and refined it as a practical art" (Foss et al., 2014, p. 7).

Cicero (106-43 BC), an influential senator, a great orator and an unparalleled master of argument, represents the epitome of Roman rhetoric. For him rhetoric was the skill of eloquence—*wise* eloquence. His earliest treatise on rhetoric was *De Inventione* (87 BC), written when he was about nineteen only (Herrick, 2005, p. 96). In this treatise, Cicero advances what is probably his best remembered contribution to the discipline of rhetoric; the five canons of oratory: Invention (*inventio*), Arrangement (*dispositio*), Expression (*elocutio*), Memory (*memoria*), and Delivery (*pronuntiatio*). His mature work on rhetoric was, however, *De Oratore* (55 BC), in which he painted the picture of 'ideal orator' and imagined him as a moral guide of the state. Like Plato, he tried to restore the union of rhetoric and philosophy by stating that the power of words in the hands of a man without scruples or principles would endanger the whole community. In his works on rhetoric, Cicero drew heavily on Aristotle and Isocrates' ideas (Herrick, 2021); however, he built up the notion of style more comprehensively than did his forerunners. He devoted almost an entire treatise, *Orator* (46 BC), in differentiating three types of styles of speeches: the plain, the moderate and, the grand. Cicero's contribution to the discipline of rhetoric is considered to be so much practical and proficient that Herrick (2005) has claimed that "with the possible exception of Aristotle, Cicero's influence on subsequent rhetorical thought and practice was unparalleled" (p. 106).

Just as, in Greece, Isocrates was the most illustrious and successful teacher of rhetoric, in Rome was M. Fabius Quintilian (c. AD 35-100), whose scheme of rhetorical education achieved the highest degree of sophistication among Romans. Like Plato, the rhetoric of deception or of "mere persuasion" was of no concern to Quintilian. In the discipline of rhetoric, his massive work, *Institutio oratoria* (93 A.D.), is regarded as a *magnum opus*—"a 'cradle to grave' guide to achieving excellence as a public speaker" (Herrick, 2005, p. 106). In his approach of rhetoric, Quintilian was not rule bound and was "eclectic and flexible, drawing from Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, and Cicero" (Foss et al., 2014, p. 8). His most acclaimed contribution to the discipline of rhetoric, however, was the most comprehensive and systematic treatment of 'Tropes' and 'Figures'. He broadly defined rhetorical figures and was quite insistent that it is only expressions which are 'feigned and artificially produced' that can be regarded as 'Figures'.

Accounting for the contribution to rhetoric, Romans developed various treatises, handbooks and the methods of teaching and training in rhetoric. Two of the handbooks—the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennius* (c. 100 BC), and Quintilian's encyclopaedic twelve volume *Institutio oratoria* (c. 93 A.D.)—offered a complete education in rhetoric for school boys, and remained the textbooks during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe. Herrick (2005) has aptly pointed out that: "Never in human history has a subject and an approach to teaching that subject achieved such dominance in education as did rhetoric and the Roman methods of teaching that art" (p. 92). On the other hand, Richards (2008, p. 41) held forth that "the Roman contributions [to rhetoric] seem derivative and overly technical". Generally, Aristotle is respected because "he provides the art with a logical basis, and in so doing, defends it from Plato's influential attack in *Gorgias*, whereas the technical organization of the Roman handbooks tends to recall why Plato found the art so treacherous in the first place" (Richards, 2008, p. 41). Still, an important difference between Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the Roman handbooks indicates the treatment of style (*elocutio*) i.e., the divergence over the dealing of the stylistic devices, "the tropes and figures" which are used in the embellishment of speech mainly. Richards (2008, pp. 48-50) has complained that "Aristotle's treatment [of figures] is very brief, and his attention is taken by one trope, metaphor" (p. 47). However, comparing this with the detailed account dealt in the Roman manuals, "the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennius* lists some two hundred tropes and figures in

book IV of his treatise, while Quintilian dedicates two volumes to their elaboration; book VIII is concerned with tropes and book IX with figures of speech" (p. 47).

In summary, along with the 'self-conscious' rhetorical practice of Corax and Tisias, "Plato is the starting point of the standard histories of rhetoric, though he appears in the guise of its arch-antagonist" (Richards, 2008, p. 61). Persuasion being the chief mark of rhetoric, the subsequent history is invariably defensive: it begins by dismantling Plato's opposition, usually by emphasizing his anti-democratic views, and then proceeds to defend the importance of rhetoric to democratic debate, appealing to Aristotle's theorization of it as a pragmatic art. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is preferred to the technical Roman manuals of the first centuries BC and AD because it provides rhetoric with a logical basis, but it is to the Roman tradition that we are most likely to turn for our understanding of rhetoric as a system or a method.

4. The Decline in Rhetoric

The prime of rhetoric belongs only to democratic Athens and republican Rome, when there was an opportunity to think freely and debate publicly. In the later times of Roman Empire, the rise of imperial forms of government lead to the decline of rhetoric—"an era when it [rhetoric] essentially was divorced from civic affairs" (Foss et al., 2014, p. 8). Cicero, an emblem of Roman rhetoric, was ordered to be killed as the result of his enmity with Julius Caesar. His head and hands were cut off and hung in the forum over the podium as a symbolic memento to any other potential opponents of how eloquence employed against the emperor would be dealt with. Rhetoric, then, was demoted to a back seat and reduced to an art connected with style and delivery rather than with eloquence. This period, from about, 50 to 400 A.D., is frequently referred to as the Second Sophistic¹³ during which the overly display of oratorical elements associated with the Greek sophists was reintroduced in parts of the Roman Empire. In the West, the fall of the Roman Empire escorted the rise of Christianity. The Middle Ages (400-1400 AD) followed the second sophistic and, during this period, "rhetoric provided a valuable means of discovering, presenting, and defending the truth of scripture" (Herrick, 2005, p. 128). Augustine, the author of *On Christian Doctrine* (426 AD), showed himself to be the master of rhetorical practice. Between 1100 to 1300, the medieval European rhetoric came to be codified in manuals on preaching, letter writing, and poetry (see, Murphy, 1971). Thus, in the Middle Ages "rhetoric was eclipsed by logic and grammar, its partners in the *trivium*, surviving only as part of the highly technical *ars dictaminis*, the epistolary art" (Richards, 2008, p. 66).

In Renaissance (1400-1600), like later Roman Empire, rhetoric was reduced to the "painstaking process" of training programme, for schoolboys at least, one which involved the practice of classical figures of speech and Latin syntax to understand the 'rhetorical effect' of dialogues (Richards, 2008, p. 85). Another major blow, which sped up the decline of rhetoric noticeably, was from the Rationalism—epitomized by, Peter Ramus (1515-1572), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), and René Descartes (1596-1650). Rationalists, hunting for the objective, scientific truths that would exist for all time, had little patience for rhetoric. Bacon's definition of rhetoric—"the duty of rhetoric is to apply reason to imagination for the better moving of the will" (cited in Nordquist, 2017, para. 1)—implies his endeavour to bring the power of language under rational control.

Similarly, during the Enlightenment of 17th and 18th centuries, the significance of rhetoric in the Western world is usually seen to have waned, "a casualty of the interplay between science and theology" (Tonks, 2002, p. 807). The formal art of rhetoric was narrowed down to one activity or stage of composition i.e., style. Another way of depicting this decline is to note that rhetoric becomes "literary" (Kahn, 1985, pp. 38–39), and is reformulated as "criticism" (Richards, 2008); to some this is the precursor of what we now consider to be "English studies" (Rhodes, 2004), to others it represents "the betrayal of rhetoric" (Jarratt, 1991). However, it is a sad fact that dominated by the rationalism of Bacon and Descartes, rhetoric of Renaissance and Enlightenment was judged to be subordinate to science and philosophy.

5. Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric

For the narrative of declined rhetoric, the Western world of the twentieth century launched a renewed interest in rhetorical theory—"a different defence of rhetoric as a 'critical' method" (Richards, 2008, p. 63). Critics challenged the traditional description of rhetoric as an *art* of persuasion. How can we accept rhetoric as an art, asked the critics, when we cannot control its linguistic effects appropriately? They proclaimed that rhetoric could not be

¹³ The term *Second Sophistic* comes from Philostratus. Specifically, it is a literary-historical term referring to the Greek writers who flourished from the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68) until c. 400 AD and who were catalogued and celebrated by Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists*. Unlike the original Sophistic movement of the 5th century BC, the Second Sophistic was little concerned with politics. Most famous members of the Second Sophistic include: Nicetas of Smyrna, Aelius Aristides, Dio Chrysostom, Herodes Atticus, Favorinus, Philostratus, Lucian, and Polemon of Laodicea. They orated over topics like poetry and public speaking. They did not teach debate or anything that had to do with politics because rhetoric was restrained due to the imperial government's rules.

reduced to an 'art' (De Man, 1982); measured 'persuasion' only as one of the many functions of rhetoric, and believed that the handbooks of such rhetoric are largely irrelevant for the study of how rhetoric functions today (I.A. Richards, 1965). Modern rhetoricians considered language a vehicle of thought, thus, an inherent vehicle for rhetoric. In this respect, they complained that traditional rhetorical account does not tell us how language works; therefore, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the art of rhetoric substitutes itself for the study of 'a theory of language' or 'the science of language'.

And, the most powerful blow, which classical verbal rhetoric does not seem to survive, has been struck by 'multimodality' (i.e., language is only one of the many meaning-making modes) and 'social semiotics' (i.e., meaning-making is a social practice). Resultantly, the centuries-old, single, coherent system of art of persuasion was subsumed into many generic subdivisions; like the rhetoric of social psychology, the rhetoric of anthropology, the rhetoric of science, the rhetoric of motives, the rhetoric of fiction, the rhetoric of fantasy, even into the rhetoric of rhetorics. Probably, that was why, Barthes found no other way but to announce "the death of rhetoric" (Barthes, 1988) figuratively. In fact, most of the modern critics seem to agree with Richards (2008) that "it is not desirable to defend a return to the classical art of rhetoric once our control of language is identified as a problem" (p. 177), and the call for a return to single mode of rhetoric (i.e., verbal) is unpersuasive, even impossible, once our confidence in meaning-making praxis is exposed as an hindrance. Besides, with the age of digitality, visuality and technology of 21st century, the decline of 'Old rhetoric' as a single key discipline seems irrevocable.

Moreover, rhetoric and linguistics stand for two opposing practices of theorizing and analysing language. Traditionally, rhetoric is related to the persuasive power of language, and concerned with recounting and cataloguing the devices that yield emotion, or develop a logical proof, and so sway the judgment of an audience. Central to this is the conception of the orator as an individual skilled in the 'art' of persuasion, as someone who can deploy, at will, a range of devices. To the surprise, these traditional notions of rhetoric are challenged by many modern critics quite sweepingly. The most famous among these critics is Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)—the paradigmatic philosopher of modernity and postmodernity and a German celebrity whose re-reading in the twentieth century came to shape "the agenda for the modernist reconceptualization of rhetoric" (Bender & Wellbery, 1990, p. 26). He was famous as a philosopher of nihilism but his training as a skilled philologist and classicist also involved him in the teaching of rhetoric at the University of Basel in 1872–73. In his "Lecture Notes on Rhetoric", probably written in 1874 for a later course which he never taught, he rejected the traditional notion of rhetoric as a resource which the skilled orator can draw upon. Nietzsche (1983) proclaims that "What is usually called language is actually all figuration" (p. 108); and he explains this by discovering the figural basis of words whose literal meaning is often taken for granted: for example, Latin "*serpens*." (snake), which literally means "that which crawls" (108). Stressing on the view that language is fundamentally figurative and duplicitous, Nietzsche (1983, pp. 107-08) is of the opinion that:

The naming of things, involves a three-stage process of transference: a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image, which is then transferred into a sound image. Words, or sound images, recall a prominent feature, an image, of the thing they represent: for example, the crawling of a snake. So accustomed are we to these 'literal' words that we have forgotten their figurative basis. Calling a snake a snake is no less 'rhetorical' than calling a person a snake. (Cited in Richards, 2008, p. 133)

In effect, Nietzsche has not only rejected the traditional distinction between 'natural' and 'rhetorical' expression, but also, in 'the transference of a nerve stimulus into an image' anticipated the visuality of rhetoric. Paul de Man (1979), an influential challenger of *rhetoric as an art*, has appreciated that "Nietzsche moves the study of rhetoric away from techniques of eloquence and persuasion . . . by making these dependent on a previous theory of figures of speech or tropes" (p. 105). He (de Man, 1979) himself concluded that "it is impossible to apply the tropes and figures 'artfully' in our speech and writing with absolute confidence; they are always in some way outside our control" (cited in Richards, 2008, p. 12). That is to say, tropes and figures are not the only artful means to communicate the thoughts of a speaker vividly and rhetorically. Rather, *all* words are tropes. If there is *no* literal language or *all* language is inescapably figural how can we ever grasp the traditional concept of 'persuasion' as achieved by a resourceful orator?—a far-reaching upsetting revision to the classical rhetoric.

In similar veins, I.A. Richards (1893—1979), one of the earliest philosophers of language, promoted the view of rhetoric as a theory of language. He rejected the traditional conception of rhetoric, and pointed out that 'old' rhetoric is restricted to a collection of rules such as, "be clear, yet don't be dry; be vivacious, use metaphors when they will be understood not otherwise; respect usage; don't be long-winded, on the other hand don't be gassy; avoid ambiguity; prefer the energetic to elegant; preserve unity and coherence" (I. A. Richards, 1965, p. 8). In contrast to the study of such rules, the study of rhetoric should be "a philosophical inquiry into how words work in discourse" (p. 8). In fact, he defines rhetoric as "the art by which discourse is adapted to its ends" (p. 8); and its task is "to distinguish the different sorts of ends, or aims, for which we use language, to teach how to pursue them separately and how to reconcile their diverse claims" (I. A. Richards, 1965, pp. 12-13). In short, rhetoric "should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (I. A. Richards, 1965, p. 3). Actually, what Richards suggested is

that the inherited assumptions about rhetoric, like its over-reliance on rules and terminologies, must be questioned and re-evaluated. Traditional rhetoric, he argues, is overly preoccupied with metaphor as 'verbal matter'. To refine our understanding of it, he introduced two new technical terms: "tenor", which refers to the "underlying idea or principal subject" of a metaphor, and the "vehicle", for what the "figure means", and meaning is derived from the "co-presence of the vehicle and the tenor" (I. A. Richards, 1965, pp. 96-97). Here, I.A. Richards is not only extending our understanding of metaphor, but also redesigning the verbal nature of rhetoric as the language of thought processes. Implicitly, he anticipated the existence of semiotics in rhetoric.

Pertinently, another indirect surprise to the traditional rhetoric came from Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)—the founder of modern structural linguistics. In his lectures, published posthumously as the *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), Saussure described language as a system of conventional signs. Each sign is divided into 'signifier' (the word/sound image) and the 'signified' (the mental image). Meaning or signification was recognized as depending, in the first place, on phonic difference. There is no natural relation between a sign, a signifier, and its signified. Rather, the meaning of a sign is recognized primarily by its difference from another sign. Thus, a sign and signifier coexist by convention to produce a meaning. To summarize, meaning is not present in words, Saussure insisted, but rather is constituted by systematic patterns of similarity and difference. This theory broke new ground by postulating that language is not primarily concerned with referentiality. Jennifer Richards (2008), assessing the negative impact of this theory on the study of rhetoric, has stated that "Saussure's linguistic theory presents an alternative way of seeing language, one which has little place for the resourcefulness of the [traditional] trained orator" (p. 122). The theory, actually, suggested a need for a fuller understanding and reinvestigation of the traditional rhetorical system, the one which was provided by Barthes, and Derrida.

Roland Barthes (1915—1980), a French semiotician, a leading proponent of structuralism, and one of the precursors of visual rhetoric, proclaimed in the mid-1960s that rhetoric, if not dead, was certainly on its crouching legs with no hope to stand astride again. His mind-blowing essay, *The Old Rhetoric: an aide-mémoire* (*L'Ancienne Rhetorique, aide-mémoire*), a transcription of a seminar given at *the Ecole pratique des hautes études* in 1964 and 1965, tells us how far traditional rhetoric has declined. In fact, its status can be ranked as a counter-handbook to the 'Old art of rhetoric'.

In this counter-handbook, Barthes (1988) has, in effect, confronted "the new semiotics"—the scientific study of language and signification—with the system that preceded it, the 'old rhetoric' that "has taken three centuries to die, and [which] is not dead for sure even now" (p. 15). Structurally, the essay is divided into two parts: the first half titled 'The Journey' offers a retold chronological overview of rhetoric, from its birth in antiquity to its 'rebirth' in Renaissance and, finally, its symbolic 'death' in modernity; the second half presents a renewed imperative to study rhetoric as "an ideological object", a Lazarus of old rhetoric "compelling us to take an indispensable critical distance" (p. 47) from the ancient "rhetorical empire", whose rule has been "greater and more tenacious than any political empire in its dimensions and its duration" (p. 14). Despite Barthes' credit that rhetoric "has been the only practice (with grammar, born subsequently) through which our society has recognized language's sovereignty" (p. 15), his revisionary manual does not call for a nostalgic return to an obsolete discipline, conventionally theorized as the art of persuasion. Indeed, Barthes insists on the importance of knowing "thoroughly . . . the rhetorical code which has given its language to our culture" (p. 92), but only so that we understand why it has 'died', so as to be reborn as a less 'imperialistic system'. Elucidating Barthes' central aim, Jennifer Richards (2008) has remarked that "he tells its history so thoroughly in order to ensure that we do not forget what was so seductive and oppressive about it; [Barthes] works with the system, painstakingly exploring its complex self-definition, but always with a view to highlighting its possessive origins, its servicing of power" (p. 127).

For Barthes, rhetoric is an ethic, a social practice, a technique, and a science. He has clarified that it is an 'ethic' in the sense that its role is "to supervise (i.e., to permit and to limit) the 'deviations' of emotive language", and it is a social practice in the sense of being a "privileged technique", the one which "permits the ruling classes to gain *ownership of speech*" (Barthes, 1988, pp. 13–14 emphasis original). He revealed that rhetoric begins "not from a subtle ideological mediation, but from the baldest sociality, affirmed in its fundamental brutality, that of earthly possession: we began to reflect upon language in order to defend our own" (Barthes, 1988, p. 17). The Western rhetorical tradition is usually supposed to have originated as a self-conscious practice in Sicily in the fifth century BC, after the overthrow of the dictator Thrasybulus. However, in Barthes' retelling, this practice is not appreciated as "the Proto-democratic origins of the art" (Richards, 2008, p. 127); rather the emphasis is very much on the nexus between its inception as a system and its first efforts to claim the ownership of property.

Barthes' imperative to study rhetoric as "an ideological object" seems revealing, when considered in Marx's (1845) concept of ideology as "pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e., as nothingness" that is "manufactured by who knows power" (cited in Richards, 2008, p. 160) or in Althusser's refined conception of ideology as "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser 1971). In contrast to the ideal resourceful orator of the 'old rhetoric', Barthes (1988) has, in actual, asserted the 'material existence' of rhetoric in society. Moreover, the standard historians reported the stories of rhetoric's acclaim and appraisal, Barthes (1988), in contrast, retold its story of intellectual colonization.

In short, in ‘The Old Rhetoric: an aide-me-moire’, Barthes is not only recollecting, retelling and but also maintaining “a critical distance” from this ancient oppressive system of rhetoric. As Richards (2008) has stated that Barthes’ lens of critical distance is, in fact, “an understanding not just of the ‘how-to’ persuade others to serve our interests, but also of the ‘how-to’ resist being persuaded” (p. 128)—a groundbreaking response to the traditional rhetorical system.

Another influential reviewer of the traditional rhetoric and the telling of its history is Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). In his important essay *Plato’s Pharmacy* (1972), Derrida found the slipperiness of the term *pharmakon* in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and exposed Plato as a rhetorician who has cunningly concealed his artistry so as to argue against the very skill he practised himself in that dialogue. In fact, he debunked the deeply-entrenched myth of opposition to rhetoric in the writings of Plato. Praising the power of Derrida’s arguments in *Plato’s Pharmacy*, critics are of the view that Deconstruction, in fact, stems out of the ‘Old Rhetoric’ (Richard, 2008). The view is also reiterated by Derrida himself (see, Derrida, 1990). Moreover, like Barthes and Derrida, Eagleton (1983), always recognized his ‘rhetorical’ analysis as a mode of ideology critique because it involves “an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social institutions, maintains its force” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 148).

Other critics and theorists, who extended the traditional notion of rhetoric as an art of persuasion include: the French structuralist, Gerard Genette, (1982), who challenged the “absolute, undivided rule of metaphor” in ‘Old Rhetoric’ (p. 117) and proposed that a “rational semiotics”—a more scientific rather than poetic study of language and signification—“must be constituted in reaction against this primary illusion” (p. 120); Paul de Man (1979), who “explodes the myth of semantic correspondence between sign and referent” (p. 6), and extends that the conception of rhetoric should take account of the advance of linguistics in terms of his “semiological enigma” (p. 10), and Kenneth Burke (1969, p. xiii), who claimed that “an intermediate area of expression that is not wholly deliberate, yet not wholly unconscious [and which] lies midway between aimless utterance and speech directly purposive is rhetorical”—i.e., any slight bias or even unintended error too. For Burke ‘pure persuasion’ is old-fashioned, idealistic and, hence, impossible. Similarly, Eagleton (1983) also argues for a fuller sense of rhetoric’s range which identifies that ‘speaking and writing’ are not just “textual objects, to be aesthetically contemplated or endlessly deconstructed” (p. 206) but instead are “*forms of activity* inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences...[and] conditions in which they were embedded” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 206, emphasis added).

Hence, in its strict sense of originality, classical rhetoric has no place in modern world, which has become a complex because of its increasing dependency on technology, digitality and visuality. Language, the vehicle of traditional rhetoric, is just one aspect of the complex what Foucault (1980) termed “discursive formations”—a complex and almost indecipherable set of language practices from which power flows like a fluid. “Even if” Burke (1966) wrote, “any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology, it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality” (p. 45)—the same is true about the terminology of rhetoric. Therefore, it is almost impossible to escape from the charming circle of ‘rhetoricity’—a modern phenomenon explained by Bender and Wellbery (1990) that:

Rhetoricity, by contrast, is bound to no specific set of institutions. It manifests the groundless, infinitely ramifying character of discourse in the modern world. For this reason, it allows for *no explanatory metadiscourse* that is not already itself rhetorical. Rhetoric is no longer the title of a doctrine and a practice, nor a form of cultural memory; it becomes instead something like the condition of our existence. (p. 25, emphasis added)

‘From Rhetoric to Rhetoricity’, it is significant to postulate that there is a marked break in the rhetorical tradition in modernity. In its essence, the modern situation of ‘rhetoricity’ is more insidious, much enigmatic, and difficult to grasp because it “is bound to no specific set of institutions”; one cannot learn specifically about its nature and practice as it has no “explanatory metadiscourse” too; one cannot position oneself outside this conception of rhetoric to rationalize its rules as it has become an “infinitely ramifying character of discourse”—the discourse, which itself is a transdisciplinary concept. Richard Andrews’ (2014) recent theory of rhetoric, however, is helpful in this respect. In *A Theory of Contemporary Rhetoric*, he objected that “it is not just in speech and writing that rhetoric operates” (p. xi), rather, “to widen the boundaries of rhetoric, we could say that the very layout of the breakfast table is rhetorical” (p. x). In effect, he suggested the pressing need of a whole new theory of contemporary rhetoric, a theory which should make sense of the range of discourses and the range of multiple modalities—printed words, spoken words, the digital images, the moving image, sound, gesture, movement, and the combination of these modes—that take place in the contemporary world. He, in fact, proposed a more generous view of rhetoric and defined it “as the *arts* of discourse” (Andrews, 2014, p. x).

6. CONCLUSION

Keeping in view the above debate, it is important to recognize that the understanding and use of rhetoric has evolved over time. It has adopted the aura of a highly flexible conceptual apparatus that has been appropriated over the past several centuries, with great thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Nietzsche, Derrida, Barthes and Burke aiming to pinpoint its operative principles with its defining attributes. However, the complexity of rhetoric defies a simple all-purpose definition that is usable for all times and purposes. Doing so would essentially deprive the concept of its utility precisely because its utility lies in its fluidity.

As such, the problem of defining rhetoric lies in capturing its expansive nature and its impact on human interaction and society as a whole. In modernity, rhetoric's essence extends beyond the mere manipulation of words; it delves into the intricate dynamics of human interaction and the power structures embedded within society, thus, playing a crucial role in shaping not only individual beliefs but also collective ideologies. One key aspect of rhetoric that adds to its intricate nature is its close connection to ethics and moral reasoning. From classical 'rhetoric' to the modern phenomenon of 'rhetoricality', the ethical implications of its persuasive impact and its potential for manipulation are deeply intertwined with its study and practice. Furthermore, the historical context in which rhetoric has evolved adds another layer of complexity to its definition. As societies and cultures have transformed over time, so has the nature and manifestation of rhetoric too. Understanding rhetoric necessitates an exploration of its historical roots, tracing how it has adapted and evolved within different social and political landscapes.

As a way of summarizing the shift 'From Rhetoric to Rhetoricality', it is to posit that the influence of modern rhetoric extends beyond the realm of language and verbal discourse. As a field of study, it has turned into be an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, or even a metadisciplinary, enterprise. This inter/trans/metadisciplinary approach, in fact, underscores the practice(s) of 'rhetoricality' that highlight the interconnectedness of rhetoric with diverse fields such as linguistics, semiotics, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies. In actuality, 'rhetoricality' has expanded the scope of study beyond traditional forms of rhetoric i.e., oratory and eloquence. Building on the foundations of classical rhetoric, this new *rhetoric of rhetoricality* invites scholars and practitioners to engage in a rich and nuanced exploration of its complexities, emphasizing the intermediation of words, symbols, and visual elements in shaping human communication and societal dynamics. As new rhetorics continue to evolve, they offer promising avenues for promoting inclusivity, drawing attention to marginalized domains, and fostering meaningful social change through the transformative potential of rhetoric and discourse. In conclusion, the study of new rhetorics offers a compelling framework for analyzing the intricate interplay among language, power, and various other neo-dynamics of a postmodern society, where rhetoric is no more a resource which could be called upon by the skilled orator only. Recommending its context-specific definition(s), any exploration of rhetoric must go beyond a mere pursuit of persuasion and instead seek to unravel its profound impact on shaping the world we live in.

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