

INTRODUCTION

When Marju Lepajõe, a famous cultural historian and literary critic in Estonia, was asked what she wished for the Estonian people for the country's centennial anniversary, she said simply 'I wish that everyone would have style.'¹ Style, not in the sense of following the latest fashion outbreak, but as a cultivated surface reflection of one's deeper (examined) self. In this sense, style is an intrinsic part of one's self-manifestation and in order to have style, she suggested, one has to spend time trying to figure out who one really is and how to translate that deeper internal understanding of oneself to the outside world. Socrates had style and Marju Lepajõe herself, widely erudite and painstakingly careful about the words she used, certainly had lots of style. People with style, one might add in passing, often acquire cult status, and so did she (and of course, so did Socrates). Two important topics emerge from what appears to have been expressed as a very casual insight: first, style is undetachable from thought, and secondly, style is something that can be cultivated and learned, practised and improved upon.

One might say that connecting style with thought (and with a deeper reflection of oneself) is a commonplace.² It is nevertheless true that many studies in rhetorical theory and practice from antiquity onwards have focused either on the one or the other side: Plato's *Phaedrus* (266c–9d) reacts against an

¹ Interviewed on 3 February 2015 for 'Plekktrummm': <http://arhiiv.err.ee/vaata/plekktrummm-marju-lepajoe/similar-177897> (last accessed 23 December 2019).

² I am conscious here of the fact that my concept of style itself requires deeper reflection, especially as far as the fascinating relationship between style and rhetoric unfolds in the history of rhetoric. For present purposes, however, it suffices to think of style as a study of 'how to say' things (as opposed to 'what to say'), as suggested in Ar. *Rhet.* III.1.2 1403b17 (ὡς δεῖ εἰπεῖν).

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apparently established practice among textbook writers and teachers of rhetoric to conceive of good rhetoric primarily in terms of appropriating preconfigured models, tropes and arrangement. Aristotle is even more illuminating as an example. For all its polemic engagement with rival conceptualizations of rhetoric, his *Rhetoric* makes a sustained effort to bring together the content (i.e. the argument) with the presentation (i.e. style). And yet the third book dedicated to style has long been regarded as a dubious afterthought to his ‘real’ contribution to rhetoric – the enthymeme.³ The idea that rhetoric is divided, or divisible, seems to go at least as far back as the aforementioned authors and the debates that their works contain. Hence, when contemplating studies that would exemplify this insight, it does not seem to me too far-fetched to suggest that Heinrich Lausberg’s *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaften* (München, 1960) could be conceived of as an example of rhetorical theory concerned strictly with style and ornamentation, developed to its fullest expression. Indeed, as an invaluable sourcebook for elements of style and rhetorical composition, it is a compulsory reading for everyone interested in concepts and applications of style and arrangement in classical authors. It has less to say about the philosophical, argumentative and educational aspects of rhetoric. And similarly, it may be argued that Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s *Traité de l’argumentation – la nouvelle rhétorique* (Paris, 1958), a fundamental contribution to argumentation and logic, goes in the other direction of regarding rhetoric as a theory of argumentation and logic (or *logos*), obliterating the aspect of style from this conversation. The list could easily be expanded (though there are surely exceptions to this broad generalization),⁴ but the overall point is clear

³ Burnyeat (1996), 91: ‘Aristotle’s doctrine of the enthymeme is one of his greatest and most original achievements.’

⁴ In academic circles, one would be hard pressed to find scholars working, for example, on stylistics who would deny the intricate connection between these two sides of rhetoric – style (expression) and thought (argument) or content and form. Nevertheless, works on style – manuals, handbooks, reference works – do seem to

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enough: even though style and thought seem so intricately connected in our conceptualization and use of rhetoric, they are not at all easy to combine in one work.

Scholars working on (the history of) rhetoric, from antiquity onwards, have recognized the difficulty of conceiving rhetoric as a unified comprehensive set of theories, authors and practices and have therefore often felt compelled to supply an overarching narrative for the art that would create a sense of continuity in thought and practice.⁵ Even though such sweeping narratives have become very rare among Classicists, they are a central focus of study for rhetoric scholars working primarily in the English and Communication Studies departments in the US,⁶ where the rhetorical tradition and their readings are often interpreted and viewed against the urgency of contemporary academia in their respective fields.⁷ These studies tend to be highly ambitious and provocative in their outlook (e.g. to change existing narratives of rhetoric and degravitate the field away from canonized authors), though they seem to end up exercising little (if any) impact on mainstream Classics. This may be due to the fact that their interpretations sometimes exhibit lack of sophistication and understanding of the ancient rhetorical context which they claim to make

operate with an underlying divide in mind between the person (developing an argument) and the means of expressing herself (and the argument).

⁵ Attempts to offer classifications of the art and its practitioners are present in various forms in all writers of ancient rhetoric. This approach is equally well represented in groundbreaking works on rhetoric of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See, for example, Blass' distinction between sophistic and practical oratory (*sophistische und praktische Beredsamkeit*) (1887), 4. Kennedy's outdated study of the art of persuasion recognizes the division into 'practical and philosophic tradition', but then somewhat surprisingly defies his instincts and regards the history of rhetoric ultimately as 'the growth of a single, great, traditional theory to which many writers and teachers contributed' (1963, 9).

⁶ Even though it seems odd to mark such division along the (arbitrary) disciplinary boundaries at universities, the isolation of the two groups from one another is very much real and evident from the fact that they rarely (if at all) contribute to the same edited volumes or participate in the same conferences. There are a few exceptions, e.g. Poulakos and Depew (2004).

⁷ See, for example, O'Gorman's (2006) review of Graff, Walzer, Atwill (2005), where he considers the too lightweight engagement with contemporary academia and its power and economic struggles relations a legitimate shortcoming of the otherwise respectable volume.

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contributions to.⁸ Whatever the reasons for their mutual disregard, the concept of ‘rhetorical tradition’ is something that a good number of (American) rhetoric scholars are interested in and, much in line with the way in which Classicists have been prompted to rethink the use and influence of canons, traditions and classics in their broadest and narrowest senses,⁹ so too the rhetorical tradition has become a widely questioned and challenged concept in studies on the history of rhetoric.¹⁰ By now, there is no doubt that the ‘rhetorical tradition’ is a contentious topic and that even the assumption of the existence of some monolithic tradition of rhetoric itself requires an explanation.

The title of this book, *Creating the Ancient Rhetorical Tradition*, refers to a conscious and perhaps even somewhat polemical engagement with this discourse, primarily in two ways. First, when contemporary scholars of rhetoric dispute the continuity or existence of a single ‘rhetorical tradition’ they generally tend to assume that the ancient rhetorical tradition was one unified single entity and that the ‘tradition’ of rhetoric becomes questionable when traced as a discipline over time.¹¹ By explicitly discussing the ‘ancient rhetorical tradition’, this study parts from those approaches that think of tradition as a continuity from the ancients to contemporary uses of rhetoric. This is not to say that an idea of continuity is implicitly in the background, but the explicit focus of this present book lies elsewhere and thus it claims no particular insight into the

⁸ Gaines (2005), 64. See also Usher’s (1989) review of Vickers (1988).

⁹ Most helpful guide to date on the ‘classical tradition’ is Silk, Gildenhard, Barrow (2014). See also Greenhalgh (1990), especially where he distinguishes classicism from the ‘classical tradition’ (p. 10); and the various essays from the edited volume by Porter (2006) with bibliography.

¹⁰ The edited volume by Graff, Walzer, Mailloux (2005) offers thought-provoking though also not unproblematic material on this subject. For a brief overview of the ways in which scholarship has dealt with the concept of rhetorical tradition in the recent past, see Graff and Leff (2005) from this volume. Many contemporary rhetoric scholars have responded to the challenge of rethinking the rhetorical tradition by dividing it between two rather different pulls: one to theory and another to education or teaching (e.g. Hauser 2004 seems to summarize the view held by many).

¹¹ This certainly seems to be the basic assumption of Halloran (1976), which is sometimes regarded a foundational study for the emergence of ‘tradition’ criticisms in rhetoric scholarship.

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subsequent post-classical development of the rhetorical tradition. It is the unity of the ancient rhetorical tradition that is itself under investigation. Secondly, unlike many other rhetoric scholars, ancient and modern, who maintain that continuity and comprehensiveness in the field of ancient rhetoric emerge through a set of theories or practices of rhetoric, I will explore the possibility that the rhetorical tradition might have been more reliant on the perception and role of individual authors as guides to a particular way of approaching rhetoric. Hence, the following chapters will take a closer look at two critical moments that were crucial for establishing the overarching framework of the ancient rhetorical tradition, first as a sketch of Lysias and Isocrates in Plato (fourth-century BCE Athens) and then further elaborated and fixed in the critical works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first-century BCE Rome).

The dissimilarity of all these four authors to one another is obvious: Lysias counts among the most obscure of the wildly prolific authors from the period and Isocrates, by contrast, is an author who puts himself on every page he writes.¹² Plato is the most revered philosopher of all time, whereas Dionysius of Halicarnassus has only recently received appreciation as an author in his own right beyond being conceived simply as a valuable compendium for poetry and criticism.¹³ Bringing together those four authors in one study will inevitably put pressure on the readers' imagination, since dissimilarities between the authors are in turn reflected in the ensuing dissimilarities in the respective treatments of these authors. But embracing the perceived asymmetry between our writers will also help us comprehend the broad reach of rhetoric as a discipline in the making. All these four very different authors were contemplating the use and meaning of rhetoric as an

¹² On problems with Lysias and his corpus, see the provocative (though still highly valuable) contribution by Dover (1968). Isocrates is sometimes counted among the earliest biographers (or autobiographers) – see Momigliano (1971), esp. 43–65; Hägg (2012), 30–41.

¹³ This may be an exaggeration, though 'Dionysius' revival' (or the need thereof) is discussed in the introductory pages of most recent contributions on this author. See, for example, Luraghi (2003); de Jonge (2008); Wiater (2011); de Jonge and Hunter (2018).

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object of study that could range from the technical and philosophical to the literary, from visual to aural, from poetic to the political. Hence, the breadth of authors represented in this project will hopefully result in a more wide-ranging and inclusive overview of the rhetorical tradition as it was first conceived of in antiquity.

I From Plato to Dionysius of Halicarnassus ...

Plato's *Phaedrus* famously starts with a discussion of Lysias, the cleverest writer of the time (δεινότατος ὦν τῶν νῦν γράφειν, 228a2), and with an examination of his playful speech about love. Whether or not the speech is actually by Lysias or presents (more plausibly) a Platonic exercise in Lysianic style,¹⁴ there is a suggestion running through the whole dialogue that Lysias' speech is representative of a kind of rhetoric that was practised and presumably popular at the time.¹⁵ Indeed, the dialogue ends with Socrates sending a message to Lysias about what 'true' rhetoric ought to be about, in the hope that the latter will reconsider his practice (καὶ σὺ τε ἐλθὼν φράζεε Λυσίῳ [. . .], 277b–8d).¹⁶ It is also worth pointing out that in the course of the dialogue, many more rhetoricians and speechwriters are mentioned and discussed, giving the reader a sense of liveliness that may have surrounded the topic of rhetoric at the time. But not only that, Plato characterizes and categorizes the practitioners he mentions (266d–68a) and thus offers a more structured approach to this buzzing field. By the end of the dialogue, *Phaedrus* realizes that an important, perhaps even crucial, player of the contemporary rhetorical stage has been left out – Isocrates. The question about how to

¹⁴ The most recent commentator on the *Phaedrus* does not even consider the possibility that it could have been Lysias' own composition – Yunis (2011), 3: 'Plato, who composed the speech attributed to Lysias in the dialogue ...'. Hermeias of Alexandria, the earliest ancient commentator on the *Phaedrus* (fifth century CE), appears to have considered Lysias' speech as authentic; see Bernard (1997), 37.

¹⁵ Cf. Yunis (2011), 8. I am very sympathetic to the discussion in Usher (2004) on the popularity of Lysias.

¹⁶ Lysias is portrayed repeatedly throughout the dialogue as someone who needs to be turned to philosophy. See also 257b.

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understand this sudden reference to Isocrates at the end of the dialogue, after Socrates has set out the conditions for ‘true’ rhetoric, has puzzled readers since antiquity.¹⁷ Regardless of Plato’s own specific views about Isocrates and his art that are discussed at more length below, the mere fact that Isocrates is evoked at this point in the dialogue seems to suggest that Plato is making a statement about rhetoric more generally. In the midst of the seemingly disparate practitioners of rhetoric, Plato envisions the field as a dyad: rhetoric could either be conceived of in the vein of Lysias or in that of Isocrates.

Phaedrus, by calling Isocrates Socrates’ companion (ἑταῖρος, 278e4), certainly seems to associate Isocrates with the true (philosophical) art of rhetoric that Socrates had just outlined previously. The fundamentally opposing views regarding philosophy and its methods advocated by Plato and Isocrates make any easy link between Isocrates and ‘true’ Platonic rhetoric impossible. Hence, many have noticed that Socrates remains only half enthusiastic about his friend Isocrates, and thus interpret this entire paragraph as Plato’s ironical commentary on Isocrates’ career and contributions to philosophy.¹⁸ Interpreting Socrates’ words as negative irony seems wholly dependent on later developments of philosophy and the retrospective assessment of Isocrates as firmly belonging outside the history of this discipline. While Isocrates was surely his rival in their competing claims to philosophy and education, Plato’s dialogues reveal, however, the broad extent of different views and educational context available for contemporary Athenians, and of those, Isocrates’ school does seem to be among the more benign forms of education and one that stands closer to Plato than to many other contemporaries. Hence, it may be well worth taking Socrates’ statement at the end of the *Phaedrus* at face value. He does express a

¹⁷ See Cicero’s comments on this section in *Orator* 41–2, where the context suggests that his interpretation of this last section of the dialogue might be regarded as unorthodox (*me autem qui Isocratem non diligunt una cum Socrate et cum Platone errare patiantur*).

¹⁸ Many hold this view. See, for example, Yunis (2011), 22–3 and 243–6 with further bibliography.

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sentiment of hope in Isocrates' treatment of rhetoric and claims famously that 'there is some philosophy in this man's mind'.¹⁹ Unlike the exaggerated evaluations of previous rhetoricians and speechwriters, the qualification ('there is *some* philosophy') in the statement suggests that this might be Plato's first positive assessment of a contemporary writer and teacher. Isocrates is surely not perfect (i.e. he is not the consummate philosopher by any means), but there is something valuable in his teaching and work, something that sets him at a higher level than other practitioners of rhetoric. In other words, this final section of the dialogue shows Socrates comparing Isocrates' work favorably with all other teaching available at the time in Athens. Most specifically, however, the comparison is drawn between the Lysianic and Isocratean conceptions of rhetoric, and in this sense Plato's Socrates is not only creating competing notions of 'good' and 'bad' rhetoric, but he associates these conceptualizations with concrete figures – Lysias and Isocrates.

Plato's *Phaedrus* was a widely read and influential contribution to the subsequent development of rhetorical and critical thought.²⁰ His assessment of Lysias and Isocrates, but in particular of Lysianic style, in this dialogue paved the way for various critical engagements with Plato's own style. Dionysius of Halicarnassus clearly had this last section of the dialogue in mind when he wrote his critical essays on Lysias and Isocrates as part of his study of the ancient orators. When he tries to explain the differences between Lysias and Isocrates, Dionysius proposes that the latter is more impressive with grand subjects, perhaps because 'there is some grandeur in his nature',²¹ thus expressing a very similar assessment to that found in Plato's *Phaedrus* ('there is some philosophy').²²

¹⁹ ἔνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῆ τοῦ ἀνδρός διανοίᾳ (279b1–2).

²⁰ See Yunis (2011), 25–30 with further bibliography. Excellent discussions of specific moments in the reception of *Phaedrus* are Trapp (1990) and Hunter (2012), 151–84.

²¹ *Isocrates* 3.7: τάχα μὲν γὰρ καὶ τῆ φύσει μεγάλῳφρων τις ὢν.

²² Dionysius has a complicated relationship to Plato and some of his more outrageous assessments of the philosopher have certainly deprived him of benevolent scholarly attention. A helpful discussion of Dionysius' treatment of Plato (and Plato's style in particular) is Hunter (2011), chap. 4.

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Dionysius has, however, other plans with this material and his work on Lysias and Isocrates paved the way for expounding his educational program and practice in the Roman environment.²³ His observations on both writers have exercised a long-lasting impact, first, on the way these two authors have been received and read in the subsequent rhetorical and critical tradition, and, second, on the way rhetorical criticism itself has been practised in antiquity and beyond.²⁴ Even in most recent times, views on Lysias' importance as the leading figure of simple Attic style and the breakdown of the particular characteristics of his writerly skills go back to Dionysius' essay on the orator.²⁵ His contribution to Isocratean scholarship has been, similarly to his impact on the reception of Lysias, crucial for subsequent perceptions of Isocrates as a prose author with significant claims to political philosophy.²⁶ In fact, anyone planning to take a serious interest in philosophy amidst their rhetoric studies, ought to make Isocrates their frequent companion and source of philosophical education (*Isocrates* 4.4). Even though, as will be shown, Isocrates appears always to have had his loyal followers, Dionysius' aim to raise him from mere stylistic study to (what might be called) philosophical rhetoric was instrumental to conceptualizing Isocrates' position as central to the history of rhetoric and political thought. In Dionysius' essays, then, Lysias and Isocrates have become the pillars of the rhetorical tradition.

²³ Hidber (1996) is the *locus classicus* for showing how Dionysius of Halicarnassus' critical essays (and the introduction to *Ancient orators* in particular) functioned as a literary-political manifesto.

²⁴ In this context, see for example de Jonge (2005) on Dionysius' technique of 'metathesis'.

²⁵ See, for example, the introductions to the editions of Lysias' speeches, such as Carey (1989), 6; 'All modern judgements on Lysias' style take as their starting-point the perceptive essay of Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his collection *On the Ancient Orators*'; Avezzù (1991), 9–10; Edwards (1999), esp. 6–8; Todd (2000), 7–8. Dionysius is the predominant dialogue partner also in Usher's (1999, 54–118) discussion of Lysias' rhetorical technique.

²⁶ While his dependence on Isocratean thought has informed many recent studies of Dionysius' writings (e.g. Wiater 2011), Dionysius' influence on Isocratean scholarship appears to be a far less examined territory.

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But who were Lysias and Isocrates? And why would these two figures, of all important rhetoricians and orators of the ancient world, come to play such a central role in the development of the rhetorical tradition?

2 ... and from Lysias to Isocrates

Lysias, the famous speechwriter and one of our major sources for the socio-cultural history of the fourth century BCE,²⁷ is nowadays relatively rarely talked about as an artist and rhetorician in his own right. Plato's *Phaedrus* suggests that his contemporaries might have considered him not only a speechwriter for the law courts, but more like an intellectual whose entertaining skill in narrative and argumentation gained him many admirers.²⁸ Indeed, the ancient reception of Lysias suggests that his works were particularly appreciated as models for rhetorical writings and he appears to have played an important role in the literary-critical tradition from ancient to modern times. However, since Dover's provocative and groundbreaking work on Lysias (published in 1968), there has been very little work done on Lysias as a literary or rhetorical figure.²⁹ The first two chapters of this book aim to pay closer attention to the influence of Lysias' work on ancient notions of style and rhetoric, and to the perception and portrayal of Lysias amidst his contemporaries. By tracing the

²⁷ As has been long noted, Lysias' speeches provide an invaluable perspective on the lives of Athenian citizens, and not only of the wealthiest and most powerful. For a brief overview of Lysias' importance as a historical source, see the brief introduction (with further bibliography) of Todd (2007), 1–5. The relevance of Attic orators for history is illuminatingly discussed by Todd (1990). Recent work on Lysias seems to verge towards historical scholarship, and this tendency is illustrated in the literary overview of Lysias scholarship (between 1905–2000) in Weissenberger (2003).

²⁸ In his analysis of Lysias' rhetorical technique, Usher (1999), 116 argues that it was indeed his creativity in non-argumentative sections of the speech, and in particular in his narratives, that made his speeches stand out among previous and contemporary writers.

²⁹ Despite the dissenting responses to Dover's unsettling claims about Lysias and his corpus (especially vocally expressed in Usher (1976)), this work seems to have remained a difficult presence in Lysianic scholarship. Exceptions include (among others) Lateiner (1981), Carey (1994).