A common topic of discussion in ancient rhetoric is the untrustworthiness of those that practice eloquence. Plato’s works discuss the reasons why those that practice eloquence and rhetoric can’t be trusted. This notion that those that practice eloquence when attempting to persuade an audience are not to be trusted is also subtly addressed by Aristotle, Cicero, and in the non-western rhetoric of the Egyptians. It can’t be definitively known that if Plato among other philosophers is solely responsible for this view of eloquence, but for this paper his dialogue *Gorgias* will serve as the starting point of the negative view of eloquence and rhetoric. It must also be noted that each work may not use the term rhetoric as opposed to eloquence. For that reason it is understood in this paper that the terms are interchangeable due to the nature in which each author uses them. Eloquence and rhetoric are concerned with persuading an audience. However, eloquence may be understood as the specific practice of using flattery, and/or flowery language to persuade an audience. Rhetoric is commonly defined as the art of persuasion, courtesy of Aristotle, however there is no general consensus on the definition of rhetoric. Therefore, when an author uses the term rhetoric in regards to the practice of attempting to persuade it results in the interchangeable use of the terms eloquence and rhetoric.

The distrust of eloquence by ancient philosophers has its roots in the perceived lack of knowledge necessary to be effective in eloquence, or persuasion. Plato views the Sophists and their teaching of eloquence as problematic because he views their practice of eloquence is as a skill, and not an art. The tension between philosophers and orators centers not only around their differing uses of dialectic and eloquence. Philosophers use the dialectic to gain knowledge. Orators use speeches to persuade, and with persuasion as their goal and not knowledge, philosophers distrust the use of eloquence. He addresses this difference in *Gorgias* when Socrates asks “do you think that the state of having been taught something is the same as the state of having been convinced? Is learning the same as conviction, or different?” (p.16). The process of attempting to gain knowledge leads to learning. Being taught, according to Plato, leads to a different state of being than convincing. There is a process to learning, and seeking knowledge that Plato does not see in eloquence. This is due in part to the lack of a necessary expertise in any given topic to be successful in persuasion.   
 In *Gorgias* Plato also addresses the place in which much of the persuasion a rhetorician practices occurs. With much of the persuasion focused on the courts, and public policy Plato draws attention to the fact that a rhetorician “isn’t concerned to educate the people assembled in lawcourts and so on about right and wrong; all he wants to do is persuade them. I mean, I shouldn’t think it’s possible for him to get so many people to understand such important matters in such a short time (p. 17).” This critique of the use of rhetoric in the courts suggests that there is not sufficient time to attempt to get an audience to comprehend a speech. This further supports Plato’s claim that rhetoric is not concerned with education, and therefore can’t be trusted. If it’s sole purpose is to persuade, then it will likely ignore anything that may result in knowledge, because knowledge isn’t a priority in persuading. That knowledge serves a long-term purpose, while eloquence (rhetoric) seeks to achieve the short-term goal of persuading audiences in a given situation is one of Plato’s reasons for distrusting eloquence. Without the pursuit of knowledge as a primary goal and purpose of eloquence/rhetoric the orator/rhetorician need not be an expert on any given subject he/she addresses in a speech. This, for Plato and other philosophers, is extremely troublesome. Not only do they disagree with the fundamental practices of orators and their uses of eloquence, but they also see the lack of expertise, knowledge, and as a reason to distrust those that practice eloquence.  
 Plato’s distrust of eloquence goes beyond the Sophists teaching persuasion as opposed to knowledge. The Sophists, and those that practice rhetoric and eloquence do not focus their teachings on morality and virtue. Rhetoric doesn’t teach morality or virtue. Plato addresses this in *Gorgias*,“What a real man should do is leave matters in God’s hands, believe his womenfolk when they tell him that no one can escape his fated end, and then consider how best to live however many years he still has left to live (p. 113).” The use of rhetoric/Eloquence does not lead to those things, which only increases the level of distrust Plato has towards those that teach and practice rhetoric.   
 Similarly Aristotle in *On Rhetoric* defines the use of eloquence/rhetoric as a means of persuasion. Specifically he defined rhetoric as the ability to “see available the means of persuasion (1355b).” However, in his writing Aristotle does not discuss rhetoric with the same disdain and distrust that is commonly associated with Plato. Aristotle in his work does pay attention to the ways in which an orator can establish credibility and trust with an audience. It is clear that while Aristotle does not view rhetoric as negatively as Plato, but this does not excuse him from addressing the issue of how the public can trust those practicing eloquence when their goal is persuasion. Therefore, Aristotle doesn’t necessarily distrust rhetoric/eloquence, but he does address how one can have good character, or credibility/ethos. For Aristotle this trust comes from the speech itself, and not the person speaking. It is the way in which the speech is spoken that helps the speaker gain the trust of the audience. According to Aristotle when “the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence” (p.38), it can make the speaker trustworthy. For Aristotle eloquence under certain circumstances can be deemed untrustworthy. However, Aristotle does not display the same distrust of eloquence that Plato did in his works, but he clearly understands that there exists a need for orators to establish their credibility with an audience. Trusting those that speak only to persuade may be difficult for an audience, therefore Aristotle brings to our attention that an audience is more likely to believe “fair-minded people” quicker and easier “on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt” (p.38). Any preconceived notions of the person, or their practicing of eloquence can be overcome if their speeches reveal their good character and trustworthiness. Unlike Plato, Aristotle believes that trust can be gained, or earned, from the speech itself.   
 In non-western rhetoric issues of morality and trustworthiness influence the practice of rhetoric/eloquence. An example of this is the concept of MAAT. Carol Lipson’s “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric: It All Comes Down to Maat,” researches the ways in which the concept of MAAT influenced the writing of the ancient Egyptians. The concept of MAAT commonly refers to “truth, justice, or order, ” but Lipson translates MAAT as “what is right” (81). This understanding of MAAT refers to the “premise that humans must not disturb the balance state of creation, but instead must respect and live in accord with the cosmic harmony and natural order” (81) as introduced by Lipson. Lipson claims that MAAT influences the writing done in ancient Egypt, as it must always be in accordance with the key concepts of practicing MAAT. Therefore, all of the writings could not upset the natural order, MAAT, and reflect deliberate choices made by the authors to appeal to MAAT. The arrangement, and the entire MAAT system not only reflect the concepts and values of MAAT, but of their culture. The group worked to please their leader. This understanding of MAAT refers to the “premise that humans must not disturb the balance state of creation, but instead must respect and live in accord with the cosmic harmony and natural order (81).” MAAT, and its use of eloquence influence the writing done in ancient Egypt. It must always be in accordance with the concepts of practicing MAAT. Therefore, all of the writings could not upset the natural order, MAAT, and reflect deliberate choices made by the authors to appeal to MAAT. Eloquence was not viewed unfavorably so long as it served the greater purpose of abiding by MAAT. However, if eloquence were used in a way that strays from the concept of MAAT, then it would be viewed negatively. Eloquence would have been untrustworthy if it went against societal norms. In this sense eloquence under MAAT was used to maintain hierarchy. In this sense eloquence was celebrated if it remained in service to MAAT, and condemned or treated with distrust when it went against MAAT.

Interestingly each author, whether condemning, questioning, or embracing certain elements of eloquence and/or rhetoric, use elements of eloquence and/or rhetoric to convey or persuade their audience. Each directs their attention toward a specific audience by using specific language, and forms or process such as dialectic to communicate with their audience. Plato despised writing, but wrote a dialogue to condemn the practices of Sophists and their teachings. Aristotle’s view of rhetoric was more favorable than Plato’s, but his attention to how to build credibility from the speech itself suggest that rhetoric found itself still criticized for how it could be used to deceive. The weariness and/or outright distrust of eloquence, ironically, did not stop any of the authors, and ancient Egyptians writing within MAAT from practicing eloquence.

In *Gorgias* Plato, through the speaker Socrates, gives forth a very unfavorable view of rhetoric, and any person that teaches and practices rhetoric. In the dialogue the speaker Socrates is very critical of the practice of rhetoric. One of his critiques of rhetoric in is the lack of expertise needed to practice rhetoric. In 459c (p. 24) Socrates addresses this when he brings to the attention of Gorgias that the rhetorician “never has to know the actual facts of any issue; instead he’s equipped himself with a persuasive ploy,” and it is that ploy which allows him to make members of the audience that are non-experts believe he knows more than any experts. This causes trouble for Socrates. He begins to liken this lack of expertise and knowledge needed to be persuasive as a reflection of the morality of the rhetorician. He views it as dangerous that a rhetorican “lacking expert knowledge of good or bad, morality or immorality, or right or wrong,” can “make non-experts think he’s more of an expert than an expert, even though he isn’t” (459d: p. 24). Without the knowledge or morality Plato, through Socrates, views the practicing rhetorician as untrustworthy. It is the skill of using rhetoric, and what he calls “persuasive ploys” that the rhetorician relies on to be successful in their persuasion as opposed to knowledge and truth. Plato in Gorgias does not use the term ethos, nor does he outright address character in the exchange in 459c, but he does bring up the general concerns of practicing rhetoric without good character, knowledge and trustworthiness, which are commonly understood as elements that make up a speaker’s ethos. One who practices rhetoric does not need to be an expert in a given subject. It is viewed as a skill, and not an art. This specific criticism sets up the relationship between a successful rhetor and ethos, which may be referred to as credibility, and/or trustworthiness. For Plato, the rhetor is not of the same level of trustworthiness because he does not need to be an expert. His speech is not made up of credible information.

Character, or ethos, comes about differently for the rhetorician in Aristotle’s work *On Rhetoric*. Aristotle is not as critical of rhetoric as Plato, however does not praise it in the same way that Isocrates did. For Aristotle rhetoric is defined as “an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion” (1356a). Establishing ethos is one means used to successfully persuade an audience. Persuasion through character, for Aristotle, is the use of ethos in rhetoric. This persuasion can be accomplished through the person giving the speech. That is to say that “the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence” (1356a: p.38). Aristotle goes on to explain that an audience is more likely to believe “fair-minded people” quicker and easier “on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt” (1356a: p.38). This is not established solely on the good character of the speaker, as Isocrates stated. Rather, for Aristotle the character of the speaker comes from the speech itself, and not any opinion or judgment of the speaker based on previous actions or perceptions. In this sense ethos comes from the speech and how the speaker delivers it to an audience. There are necessary ways in which to expand ethos by taking into account the audience that will hear the speech. For Aristotle, the most authoritative form of persuasion is the character established in the speech. It is the character that is “distinctive” and “most persuasive” and it is the “deliberate choice directed to an end” (1366a, p. 74). It is necessary that the speaker understand not only ethos, but also how to establish his ethos for each audience.

Up to this point rhetoric has been criticized in Plato for not being trustworthy, due to lack of expertise by the rhetorician. Isocrates and Aristotle understand the persuasive nature of rhetoric, and elements that help the rhetorician successfully persuade an audience. Each believe character, or ethos, as a necessary component, but differ in how the rhetorician can establish ethos. Isocrates, as previously stated that the good character of a man establishes him as trustworthy, which will aid his persuasiveness. Socrates presents ethos as a means to persuading that comes from the speech itself, and not any previous opinion of the speaker. Cicero’s ethos differs from both, but in his definition of both rhetoric and ethos one can see the ways in which it was built upon previous notions and ideas about ethos, or character, and it’s effectiveness in persuasion.