1. A recurrent theme throughout the discussion of the rhetorical theorists in the History of Rhetoric I class is a distrust of eloquence, either in general or under certain circumstances. Plato, for example, eloquently condemned the Sophists for using persuasion to make the worst case seem the better. Beginning with Plato, discuss how at least three rhetoricians or rhetorical traditions (including at least one non-Western rhetoric such as Confucian or ancient Egyptian) display a distrust of eloquence and give your reaction to their use of eloquence to condemn eloquence.

The distrust of eloquence is found across Platonic, ancient Egyptian, and Confucian thought. The underlying notion surrounding the denunciation of eloquence varies across all three schools of thought, yet is ironically employed to endorse their respective philosophies.

Plato believed in the existence of a Transcendental Truth, attainable through “good rhetoric”—the persuasion to knowledge. He stands in contrast with the Sophistic movement, whom according to Plato, “concerned themselves only with probabilities…[or] mere appearances of truth…[sought] to induce belief without regard for whether the belief is transcendently true” (Bizzell and Herzberg, 81). Plato’s *Gorgias* denounces rhetoric, condemning eloquence as rhetoric’s persuasive tool wherein the spoken word could be used to persuade the masses, placing a speaker in total command (452e). A display of uniformed persuasion, lacking Truth, is condemned in *The Phaedrus*, as it is argued that “mere persuasion without knowledge is denigrated: without a grasp of truth, rhetoric will remain ‘an unsystematic knack’ (260e)” (Waterfield, Phaaedrus, xxxii). Additionally, Plato condemns rhetoric as mere “flattery” stating it “traps and deceives foolish people with the promise of maximizing immediate pleasure, which makes her seem better than any alternative” (Gorgias, 464d). Furthermore, he compares eloquence metaphorically to ornamentation, linked to physical exercise, stating “ornamentation is counterpart to exercise, in the sense that it is fraudulent, deceitful, petty, and servile” (Gorgias, 465b). In essence, Plato’s distrust of eloquence is rooted in his distrust of Sophistic rhetoric, lacking of the Platonic transcendental Truth. Good Rhetoric however—dialectic rhetoric is much closer to what Plato defines as philosophy: “unlike rhetoric, philosophy involves careful thought and rational procedure, and he [Plato] expects that this is the only way the good will be attainable” (Waterfield, Gorgias xxxii). Sophistic rhetoric, he claims is both based on and pander(s) to ignorance (Waterfield, Phaedrus xxxvi), and connects rhetoric to the chaos in Athenian democracy for which he places much blame (Bizzell and Herzberg, 29). McComiskey (2002) elaborates upon Plato’s critical view of democracy, stating “rhetoric supplies the necessary tools for mastery over opinion and, consequently, the ability for anyone to function effectively in a democratic society” (20). Plato’s distrust eloquence is connected to Sophistic rhetoric which differs from what he calls good or true rhetoric wherein he argues, good rhetoric must include transcendental truth and persuasion that leads to true knowledge.

Regarding ancient Egyptian rhetoric, Hutto (2002) remarks upon the difficulties in translation, surviving available texts, and the mere vastness of the time period. Thus, ancient Egyptian rhetoric is examined, with knowledge that there remains controversy surrounding contemporary research. Ancient Egyptian rhetoric placed much value upon speaking truthfully, seeking justice, knowing when and when not to speak—wise silence, and adhering to *Maat* or “connective justice” (Hutto, 2002; Lipson, 2002; Parkinson, 1997). Hutto (2002) argues that ancient Egyptian rhetoric valued wise silence (213) as much as eloquent speaking—which for the Egyptians was predicated on being a good member of society and reinforcing the social status quo (214). He cites Fox’s Egyptian canons, consisting of maintaining silence, restraining feelings, finding the right moment to speak, speaking fluently, and speaking the truth (216). Lipson’s (2002) examination of *Maat,* details similar qualities, stating: *Maat* is referred to as “truth, justice, and order…it is defined as ‘what’s right’” (80-1) and is essentially “the value system that governs [Egyptian] culture”—“connective justice” (81, 87). Here again, truth and justice are guiding principles for ancient Egyptian rhetoric. Parkinson’s (1997) discussion of the ancient Egyptian poem *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* is presented as a wisdom text, wherein eloquent protest brings about truth and justice. Parkinson (1997) argues “the range of genres and styles expresses the universality of the Tale’s contention, that Truth is a prerogative of all mankind” (55). Truth is the underlying principle guiding ancient Egyptian rhetorical practice, making the Sophistic notion of eloquence involving probability or received wisdom equally distrusted within ancient Egyptian culture. Parkinson (1997) connects transcendental Truth to the Tale, taking note of the peasant’s belief in absolute Truth not found in this world, wherein “Falsehood is the withdrawal of Truth, and evil exists only as negation of the transcendent Truth” (56-7), thus striking similar notions of Truth necessary for “good rhetoric” found in Platonic dialogue. Moreover, Hutto (2002) connects truth and social governance—Lipton’s (2002) concept of *Maat,* to eloquence, stating, “a division into rules for being a good citizen in the public sphere, and rules for being a good person in private life…[involve] the proper use of language; Egyptian eloquence was joined with straight thinking” (226). Thus persuasion without knowledge or Truth, was also distrusted in ancient Egypt as it was in Plato’s ancient Greece.

Distrust of eloquence is found within the Chinese-Confucian tradition, which condemns “glib speech” as deceptive persuasion. In Ames and Rosemont’s translation of the *Analects of Confucius*, several passages discuss proper behavior, which include a distrust of “glib speech,” promote a sense of knowledge within the subject matter of one’s speech, a hierarchal respect for audience, and a clear value for restraint (5.25, 2.17, 5.5, 4.23). Xu (2004) describes a time of dramatic change in China wherein the philosophies surrounding the Hundred Schools and the politics surrounding the warring states both flourished and competed simultaneously, leading to the perception of eloquent speech as manipulative and deceptive, as “itinerant political operatives employed eloquent persuasion to exercise dramatic influences upon the politics of states at war with each other” (115). Additionally, Xu (2004) provides a contextual definition of rhetoric and eloquence: “rhetoric is broadly defined to include the practice and theory of the use of discourse to accomplish a didactic, aesthetic, or persuasive objective; and eloquence is the skillful, artistic verbal expression for rhetorical effect” (116). Xu (2004) discusses “glib speech” within Confucianism, citing the *Analects*: ‘Glib words corrupt the potentiality for virtue…glib people are dangerous’ (118). The perception of eloquence as dangerous derives in part, from the possibility to deviate from the established social order, which in turn was a severely punishable offence (124) thus “he [Confucius] recognized the devastating political powers of eloquent speech and the damages it could do to the stable hierarchical social order he valued so much” (Xu, 2004, p. 116). Eloquence is therefore deemed as deceptively and dangerously persuasive.

While Platonic, ancient Egyptian, and Confucian thought frowned upon eloquence, there exists an irony as the use of eloquence speech and rhetorical devices are the tools which each used to condemn eloquence itself. Specifically, on Plato, the Waterfield introduction states “Plato has criticized writing completely, yet Plato is a prolific writer who criticizes writing in a written work” (Phaedrus, p. xxxviii). On ancient Egypt and the Tale, Parkinson (1997) not only takes note of the eloquence and “ingenuity of the speeches” he also argues the Tale itself “is a moral anecdote, but one fissured with a deep irony. The eloquence which ensures the peasant’s success is also the cause of his prolonged suffering (55). Finally, on Confucianism, Xu (2004) states: “the Confucians of the ancient times under discussion were masterful speakers and writers themselves, but the resorted to several rhetorical devices to legitimize their own persuasive speech in attacking other’s glibness” (122). In essence, eloquence has been condemned across Platonic, ancient Egyptian, and Confucian thought while simultaneously being employed to propagate their respective philosophies.

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