

The Quarrel Between Rhetoric and Philosophy

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Abstract

The quarrel between rhetoric and philosophy is universally known. Many scholars of philosophy have undermined the importance of rhetoric. Samuel Ijsseling (1976) states that philosophy and rhetoric have not had good relations. It is very clear that they have always conflicted with each other and this “has dominated thought and has exerted quite a considerable influence on philosophy and rhetoric, from their beginnings in Greece until today” (Ijsseling, 1976: p. 5). Rhetoric has always been seen as an inferior art and sometimes not even considered to be an art at all. However, at the same time philosophy has been put on a pedestal and considered to be superior to rhetoric. One of the most well-known arguments that philosophy has against rhetoric is that it merely persuades, and does not have any theoretical character to it. Rhetoric is also labelled as being unilateral and manipulative. Can there be no bilateral rhetoric?¹ In comparison with rhetoric, philosophy claims to have a theoretical mode of thought and speech. Yet, it can be argued that philosophy too has a rhetorical character and be expressed in a rhetorical form. Thus, this paper will discuss the similarities and the differences between both fields by using classical Greek discourse on Rhetoric and Philosophy. The classics that will be discussed and analyzed in this paper are Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian (Quintilianus) and Isocrates to determine the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy and to postulate the differences between both fields.

Keywords: Greek, classics, superior, similarities, differences