

In Praise of Sophistry and Rhetoric
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1 August 2005
revised 23 January 2018

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1 Introduction

My title might seem perverse, for we live in times where liars rule through spin-doctors. In 2005, I had as examples immediately to hand the current Williamson play, *Influence*, which blasts in his usual fashion another worthy target, in this case the radio "shock jocks" of whom John Laws and Alan Jones were the primary Australian examples, which I had seen the previous night, and a plaintive column in the day's Melbourne Age in which Susha Das bemoaned the difficulties for reporters in obtaining genuine opportunities to question politicians who these days are surrounded by spin-doctors. The US military management of the 'news' about their activities, the UK and Australian governments' attacks on their respective state broadcasters and the despicable reports commissioned to justify them, the bias and venality of most of the media anyway - CNN, Murdoch - etc etc - we seem to be drowning in a tsunami of sophistry and rhetoric. In 2018 we live in the Age of Trump – *verbum sapienti satis est!*

But are these things really what we should be calling sophistry and rhetoric ? 'Sophistry' and 'rhetoric' are currently two dirty words in modern English.

A quick search on Google brought up these examples :

[1] U.S. President George W. Bush and his neoconservative mentors insist that anti-American terrorism has been spawned by "Islamic extremism," which Muslim terrorists learn in madrasas and from Islamist ideologues imbued with it.

But there are those in Britain challenging this sophistry, while supporting tough anti-terror measures.

[from *The Star*, Lebanese newspaper,]

[2]

Does Rhetoric Enhance Political Debate?

There has been much discussion about the reliability of the press lately.

Some see it as too liberal or conservative or with hidden agendas. This little exercise tries to see how the perception comes about.

I have chosen two overtly partisan editorials as examples. One from the leftist "The Nation" and one from the rightist "National Review". Both writers are analyzing some factual events while adding their own political spin to the story. As these are editorials or opinion pieces this is entirely appropriate, but it interesting to see how much of this type of perjorative labeling spills over into other areas.

To help make a decision I have marked words in red which seem to me a deliberate attempt to spin the

story line. Perhaps this type of rhetoric has become the norm and this is one of the reasons that both sides talk past each other instead of trying to define and resolve the serious problems facing our world today.

Since I don't know how to make my formatting appear properly on redstate I've posted the detailed analysis [Here](#)

Try this exercise on a selection of your choice and see how "impartial" it is.

[from a website, redState.org, “ a Republican community weblog”, today]

Yet careful scrutiny of the dictionaries shows that their obloquy is not complete : among such denigratory definitions as *subtly deceptive reasoning or argumentation* for sophistry, and *insincere or grandiloquent language* for rhetoric, we can also find neutral terms like *the art of speaking or writing effectively*.

However, such neutral or even positive phrases are really remnants of former positive meanings for these words, though the generally taken for granted attitude is that sophistry and rhetoric are bad things. 'Rhetoric' is nowadays synonymous with 'mere rhetoric', 'sophistry' with 'xxxxing sophistry'. This is the triumph of one side in an old argument which Plato started, between philosophy on one side, and sophistry and rhetoric on the other. But there is really more merit in the other side, and in the long view the recent denigration of sophistry and rhetoric may prove a brief interruption to the secular attitudes. I will try to explain the nature and status of the disputes, and to show why current attitudes are wrong.

2 Outline

In order to do that, I will proceed as follows.

First, I'll explain Sophistry as the practice of a group of Classical Greek thinkers, the Sophists.

Then I'll give a sketch of Classical Rhetoric as the core of their practice, the art of speaking well, which became the central feature of education in the Graeco-Roman world, and for long after.

Next I will suggest how the kinds of attack which Plato made on the Sophists led to the continuing intellectual suspicion of sophistry, from his time to ours.

Then I turn to explaining how the rise of modern science involved the systematic re-description and denigration of Rhetoric, and to its effective end as a major intellectual force about 1800AD.

Finally, I'll draw from this sad tale a positive moral : that we would do well to combat the prevalent misunderstanding of the terms Sophistry and Rhetoric, and recover the realities they really mean.

3 The Sophists

First, then, what Sophistry originally and truly was and is. It was the practice of a remarkable group of men, the Sophists, in Ancient Greece, particularly in the second half of the 5th century BC. There were many Sophists and we know much less about them individually and as a group than we would like to. They wrote a great deal, some of

them a very great deal, but almost all of it is lost to us. Indeed, one of the problems of understanding them and their role in our intellectual heritage is that our best knowledge of them comes via Plato, who was simultaneously admiring of, suspicious of and hostile towards them.

But we know something about the life and activities of at least the most prominent, among whom are usually counted Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, Prodicus, Antiphon, Thrasymachus, Callicles, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. To this list some, including myself, would add the name of Socrates. That will be the focus of discussion later.

To be brutally brief, the Sophists were a group of itinerant paid teachers whose central curriculum was claimed to make men "virtuous". They came from all over the Greek world but they tended to converge on Athens which had become the leading city-state, or polis, of the time. The word virtuous is highly misleading, being a derivation from the latin term used to translate the greek word arete, which really means excellence. The kind of excellence rich young men paid the Sophists to teach them was what it took to get on in the contemporary Greek world - in which democracy, vexatious litigation and an agonistic culture all put a premium on being able to speak well. Hence what the Sophists primarily taught was the art of speaking well, which they called Rhetoric.

However, this is rather unjust, for the Sophists taught a wide range of knowledge besides Rhetoric, much of which they were among the first to create. They were pioneers in thinking about the nature of language and in the development of techniques of discussion and disputation : they, not Aristotle, are the originators of logic. They participated in a broad-ranging discussion of the distinction between *nomos* and *physis*, roughly what we think of as the nature/nurture debate. They fostered naturalism through their searching investigations of every topic, such as the nature of living things, of law and justice, of the nature and description of the earth, and so on, in a rationalistic manner. Their comparative sociology, as we might call it now, undermined local tradition, traditional authority, and traditional religion. They were, or some of them, among the earliest atheists and critics of religion. And they did indeed develop the discipline of Rhetoric. Some of them boasted that they could teach you to speak well about anything because they could teach you what you needed to know about anything. (They **all** boasted that they could teach you to speak well about anything.)

The 'first Sophistic' centred on Athens in the period 450-400BC, but sophism flourished through out the ancient world right up to the closing of the Pagan schools by Justinian in 529AD. There was a particularly florid period in the second century AD, known as the second Sophistic.

The negative meaning of sophistry with which we are familiar arose because the Sophists' study of how to speak well enabled them to "make the worse argument appear the better", as it was famously put. This charge was made against Socrates, though many Sophists had boasted of it. Their techniques for doing so were indeed not all entirely acceptable, as we shall see. But it is a gross exaggeration to make out that all their art of rhetoric was meretricious trickery. Let's consider what it really was.

4 Rhetoric

Aristotle, Plato's great pupil, wrote a treatise on Rhetoric, though that more severe, more harassing master was dead by then. In it, he defines Rhetoric as 'the study of the available means of persuasion, in any given case'. It's easy to see why this might lead to suspicion, for many means of persuasion are objectionable - torture, for example, although we are currently re-examining that idea. Actually in the ancient world torture was regarded as a routine means to obtain evidence, but it was not part of the discipline of Rhetoric, which is also often defined as the art of eloquence - it is persuasion through words that is its topic.

Originally there were thought to be three kinds of persuasive speech, for political assemblies, law-courts, and occasions like festivals and funerals. Later, other kinds were added. The point is that the form and content of the speech should be determined by its purpose and audience.

A speech has parts ; what parts, and in what order, depends on various factors. But you always need an introduction and a conclusion, while the body will need sections both of positive argument as well as refutation. There's a good deal of detail gone into here in the classical sources ; a good modern example is the mandatory structure of the scientific article or the graduate thesis.

The tasks of the art of rhetoric are generally reckoned as five "offices" or duties: *heuresis*, *taxis*, *lexis*, *mneme* and *hypokrisis*; or in latin, *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio*. That is, finding things to say, ordering what you say, how to put it, how to remember it and how to say it. The last two - how to remember it and how to say it - relate originally to spoken texts and were gradually neglected as writing became more salient in western culture. They are ripe for revival in the electronic age, however I pass over them for now. Now for a few words about each of the other three parts of the art.

heuresis {inventio}: finding things to say

Classical rhetoric included standard lines of argument, known as topics, or places, including commonplaces and special places, which can be used to generate arguments for any given subject-matter. For example, the first on Aristotle's list is the topic of the opposite. Should you want to prove that temperance is beneficial, then you can consider the effects of its opposite, licence, and suggest that temperance is beneficial because licence is bad. And so on for a great number of standard ways to dream up arguments. The English term 'commonplace' has now lost almost all connection with this important technique, except in the phrase 'commonplace book'.

Rhetoric recognises two main kinds of argument, following Aristotle, the syllogism and the example. The first was integral to logic ever since, but the latter was adopted into logic rather grudgingly as argument from analogy, allegedly a kind of induction.

taxis {dispositio}: ordering what you say

Rhetoric recognises that a text will have several levels of structure and that different parts of it will have different functions. For example, the introduction or *exordium* has the function of gaining the sympathetic attention of the audience. The other main parts usually distinguished are *narratio* or statement of the case, *confirmatio* or positive arguments for your case, *refutatio* containing negative

arguments against the opposition, and the *peroratio* or summing-up. One can make further more detailed considerations of order. For example, if we have several arguments of unequal merit, what sequence shall we put them in ?

lexis {elocutio}: how to put it

The third of the five offices of classical Rhetoric is *lexis* or *elocutio*, called style or expression in English. There are two main divisions here, first the study of grammar, diction and style in the narrow sense - there were thought to be three main styles, the low style, the grand style and the medium style, each appropriate for different circumstances. The second division of *lexis* concerns figures of speech: the study of tropes and schemes. Tropes are expressive choices which amend the plain or literal meaning of the words, as in metaphor or irony; schemes are expressive choices of balance, repetition and other structural features such as alliteration and isocolon.

5 Plato [and others] against the Sophists

Now if the Sophists and Rhetoric were as I have suggested, why do they have such bad reputations ? The answer begins, as does so much, with Plato. His considered opinion on them is that they are a very bad thing. Rhetoric he sees as a superficial imitation of real political instruction, a mere knack based on no real knowledge, useful only to convince (but not instruct) the ignorant to some belief, but not to produce knowledge. The Sophist he thinks to be an insincere flatterer who panders to the unworthy ambitions of the rich and gullible, promising to teach them how to become "good" but only providing the means to immorally get their way by tricky persuasion.

Plato presents his views in a number of his dialogs, through the person of his teacher Socrates. Not only are there whole dialogs named after *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, there is another called *The Sophist*, while the same issues, and the Sophists and their teaching are discussed in most of the rest of his works to a greater or lesser extent. For example, the late dialog *Theatetus* discusses at length Protagoras' doctrine, that 'man is the measure'. Reading these makes it quite obvious that Plato had considerable respect for some of the individual Sophists and regarded them as serious rivals to his own enterprise. He clearly took them to be philosophers, albeit misguided ones. Yet the idea of the Sophist which descends from him opposes them to philosophers, as fake philosophers or simply not philosophers at all.

Why is Plato opposed to the Sophists? There are several inter-related reasons. He believes that their activities are pernicious, because young men who learn oratory from them and practice it in a democratic context will be able, though ignorant themselves, to persuade the ignorant multitude to follow their advice rather than that of less eloquent experts who really know what should be done. He believes that they are generally ignorant, and hence their students ignorant, of what is good and just, because their methods of investigation and discussion, and the doctrines they teach, do not provide an access to truth. Fundamentally this is because they are to some degree subjectivists and relativists: they regard laws and religions as man-made, the uses of language as under possible control, the way things seem to people to be they way they are - though both can be changed.

A good example of their alleged trickery is the 'learning is impossible' argument in the *Euthydemus*. Socrates takes a young friend, Cleinias, to a discussion involving the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Cleinias, who is keen to study with Sophists, is asked if it is the wise or the ignorant that learn. One brother refutes the answer the boy gives, while the other says aside to Socrates that even if the opposite answer were given they could show him just as wrong.

[extract]

"...His name is Cleinias, and he is the son of Axiochus, and grandson of the old Alcibiades, cousin of the Alcibiades that now is. He is quite young, and we are naturally afraid that some one may get the start of us, and turn his mind in a wrong direction, and he may be ruined. Your visit, therefore, is most happily timed; and I hope that you will make a trial of the young man, and converse with him in our presence, if you have no objection. "

These were pretty nearly the expressions which I used; and Euthydemus, in a manly and at the same time encouraging tone, replied: "There can be no objection, Socrates, if the young man is only willing to answer questions. "

"He is quite accustomed to do so", I replied; "for his friends often come and ask him questions and argue with him; and therefore he is quite at home in answering. "

What followed, Crito, how can I rightly narrate? For not slight is the task of rehearsing infinite wisdom, and therefore, like the poets, I ought to commence my relation with an invocation to Memory and the Muses. Now Euthydemus, if I remember rightly, began nearly as follows: "O Cleinias, are those who learn the wise or the ignorant? "

The youth, overpowered by the question blushed, and in his perplexity looked at me for help; and I, knowing that he was disconcerted, said: "Take courage, Cleinias, and answer like a man whichever you think; for my belief is that you will derive the greatest benefit from their questions. "

"Whichever he answers", said Dionysodorus, leaning forward so as to catch my ear, his face beaming with laughter, "I prophesy that he will be refuted, Socrates".

While he was speaking to me, Cleinias gave his answer: and therefore I had no time to warn him of the predicament in which he was placed, and he answered that those who learned were the wise.

Euthydemus proceeded: "There are some whom you would call teachers, are there not? "

The boy assented.

"And they are the teachers of those who learn-the grammar-master and the lyre master used to teach you and other boys; and you were the learners? "

"Yes. "

"And when you were learners you did not as yet know the things which you were learning? "

"No," he said.

"And were you wise then? "

"No, indeed", he said.

"But if you were not wise you were unlearned? "

"Certainly. "

“You then, learning what you did not know, were unlearned when you were learning?”

The youth nodded assent.

“Then the unlearned learn, and not the wise, Cleinias, as you imagine. “

This is the practice which was commonly described as being able to show the weaker argument the stronger, which is perhaps the same as their the doctrine that contrary arguments can be given on any claim. Contrary **good** arguments is the assumption, which is where many, starting from Socrates, but including current conventional logical wisdom, would demur.

The lack of real content in the Sophists' teaching is argued by Plato in for example the *Protagoras* where Socrates argues that it cannot be virtue that is taught by the Sophist, because virtue is really knowledge - which they do not in general claim to be necessary for the construction of effective speeches, since they claim to be able to teach you how to speak persuasively about any subject without the need to learn it.

The relativism of the Sophists may derive from their pioneering studies in the comparison of societies, languages and religions around them - their travels broadening their minds - but the emblematic statement of the moral drawn from these is the saying of Protagoras, that **man is the measure of all things**. There's been a huge discussion about exactly what this saying amounts to. Consider the standard examples : honey may taste sweet to you, bitter to me ; the wind may feel cold to you, hot to me. The idea rejected by Protagoras is that one of us must be wrong -there's a fact of the matter, honey just is sweet, say. The rejection of this is I think correct. However, if the replacement principle that 'how it seems to you, so it is' is adopted without qualification, we will have an epistemological disaster, disputes will become pointless, you may as well just think whatever comes into your head. To save the doctrine then one inserts the little phrases 'to you', 'for me' etc : the honey really is sweet - to or for you, and it really is bitter - to or for me. From this we obtain the phrases “true to me” etc which are the bane of the philosophy teacher's life !

Protagoras did not go all the way to such a relativism, holding also that some opinions were better to have than others and that the Sophist can help you to holding the better ones. It is clear that Plato accepted that this was his view, and that he was a wise and just person too. Despite his Sophistry, so to speak.

It was not only Plato who was suspicious of, or hostile to Sophists. They were paid, and paid very well in some cases, by rich young men eager to excel in public life. The fathers of these young men, particularly aristocratic ones, generally disapproved for several reasons : the Sophists not only charged for their teaching but they taught to anybody who'd pay. So they fostered the democratic tendencies of the age. Moreover, their rationalism and humanism tended to undermine the traditional ways of the polis - essentially along the simple line this may be how it's always been done here in Corinth, say, but over there in Elis they do it thus. Of course, Greeks all knew that ; what the Sophists showed was that no good reasons could be given for preferring our ways to theirs. So why

follow tradition ? This relativism sometimes went all the way to the gods - indeed some Sophists were admitted atheists, others nearly so. The accusation was levelled at more than one Sophist and was one of the charges on which Socrates was tried.

That brings us to another aspect of Plato's hostility. The trial and death of Socrates, one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of philosophy, disgusted and appalled Plato, already no friend of democracy. The charges, a bit vague given the capital punishment demanded, were atheism and physical speculation, and corrupting the young, which meant making the worse appear the better case, and teaching that to others. In other words, he was accused of being a Sophist, and indeed in later times writers mention in passing as if taking this for granted, the execution by the Athenians, of Socrates the Sophist.

Rightly or wrongly, Plato thought that Socrates was trying to do something completely different to Protagoras and the other Sophists, and it is fair to say that one among his aims in writing his dialogs was to present a portrait of Socrates which made this clear. It's even been suggested that Plato invented the word 'Philosopher' to oppose to Sophist as part of this work. Both come, of course, from the Greek word *sophos*, meaning, roughly, wisdom. Anyway, he shows Socrates not only disagreeing with them, but discussing many of their concerns - the nature of language and knowledge, whether virtue can be taught, what virtue is, and so on - and in several places explicitly contrasting the Sophist and the true Philosopher.

Finally it must be said that following Plato, the reputations of the Sophists were consistently attacked by not only his own followers but all sorts of people on similar grounds, if less judiciously. In particular christian propagandists took them to task for their humanism, irreligion and relativism, though not in those terms of course. In the last two centuries such attitudes have been reinforced in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, wherein a general reverence for Plato has mixed with a presumption of christianity to continue the denigration of the Sophists, despite less one-sided views gradually emerging from the time of Hegel onward. Only in the last few decades have some fair accounts been given.

6 Science against rhetoric

Sophistic always had rather contested status, but this is not equally true of Rhetoric. Despite the attacks of Plato and others, it actually became a respected social institution, indeed arguably the centre of classical education through the whole Hellenistic and Republican periods. For example, Augustine was teacher of Rhetoric before he became a christian priest. Even after the fall of the Roman empire in the west Rhetoric continued to thrive and develop - new genres of speech such as the sermon, or of texts not speech at all, such as the administrative letter, were theorised and taught. So how did Rhetoric come to be a dirty word ?

The answer lies in the rise of modern science. This was of course an enormously complex passage over several centuries ; I am just picking out some relevant aspects here. During the Renaissance there was a keen desire to recover the wisdom of the ancients and to match or emulate it. But this gradually passed into a desire to surpass the

ancients once it became apparent that in many respects ancient knowledge was sorely lacking. One aspect of this was the experimental tradition that gradually emerged, at first not differentiating what we now regard as early science from such nowadays reprobate activities as astrology and alchemy. Alongside this went discussion of the true nature of logic : although on the one hand Aristotle acquired supreme status as the founder of logic and the 'master of them that know', through the medieval period there was quite a lot of novel logical development by monks such as Abelard and Ockham. As we pass into the early modern period we find writers like Petrus Ramus arguing for a complete revision of logic away from the traditional form, a call echoed by Bacon's case for a logic suitable for invention and the development of new sciences. The critical period from my perspective surrounds Galileo's struggles with orthodoxy.

When Galileo advocated upgrading physics to the Copernican system, whose core is the Sun's being at the centre of things not the earth, so that the earth moves, not the sun, he met trouble. This view and others he propounded as a leader of early modern science were contradicted by both Aristotle's doctrines and in some cases christian doctrine. He was ordered to retract them. Indeed the Inquisition "showed him the instruments", and he did recant his heresies, supposedly muttering sotto voce '*Eppur si muove*' - all the same, it moves.

Now the relevance of this is that the argument made by the authorities against Galileo used the full resources of classical Rhetoric, including all three "appeals". Classically, the available means of persuasion are of three kinds, the appeals to ethos, logos and pathos. Let me explain this.

Having identified the three main elements in persuasive action as the author, the audience and the text, it is entirely natural to suggest, as Rhetoric classically does, that the persuasive good will be fostered by suitable attention to each of these; hence, there are three modes of persuasion. These are the appeals respectively to ethos, logos and pathos, the powers respectively of evincing a credible personal character by the author, of proving by means of arguments, and of stirring the emotions of the audience.

The Rhetor or persuasive speaker must present himself as authoritative, which in Aristotle comprises being prudent - that is capable of discerning the truth about the matter at hand; virtuous - that is, characteristically a teller of the truth; and well-intentioned toward the audience - so that the truth will be told on this occasion. The reason for this self-presentation is to motivate the audience to give the author credence. The means adopted by the author in order to do so are called generically the appeal to ethos, ethos meaning here the character of the Rhetor.

Secondly, the text must be composed in such a way as to give the audience good reasons to accept the case being made. This is to some extent the province nowadays of logic as a sieve for arguments, but as we have seen Rhetoric is also concerned with standard ways to obtain arguments, as well as ways to organise them into a text and their means of expression. This is called the appeal to logos.

Thirdly, the author must present the case in such a way that the appropriate emotions are engaged in the audience, since emotions are

involved making some response to the case. Two thirds of Book II of Aristotle's Rhetoric (out of three books) is devoted to analysis of the various emotions and the circumstances under which they are felt. The Rhetor needs this knowledge in order to put the audience in the right frame of mind for a favourable decision. This we call the appeal to pathos.

It is taken for granted that all three of these appeals are made in the effective text. Now one form of the appeal to ethos which became very prevalent in the time in question is the appeal to authority – borrowing ethos from the shoulders of giants. For example, suggesting that I am credible because I can quote from Aristotle.

Now the appeal to authority was particularly obnoxious to scientists, for whom the Bellarmino argument was intellectual vandalism. (Cardinal Bellarmino put it to Galileo that he would not look through the telescope and see the new “planets” Galileo had discovered because he knew on the authority of Aristotle that they could not exist, so the telescope must be a source of illusions.) So began the invention of numerous new fallacies not known to ancient times, such as the so-called fallacy of appealing to authority, the appeal to tradition, the appeal to popular opinion etc. The upshot of these intellectual struggles was that logic was carved out of rhetoric as an independent discipline, and indeed opposed to it. Appeals to ethos and logos were redescribed as fallacies.

Moreover, as western intellectual tradition had become entirely dependent on writing over the millenia, the original Greek focus on speech gradually waned, so that the last two offices of rhetoric, memory and delivery, lost apparent importance, so while invention was captured by the experimental method, only arrangement and expression remained to rhetoric, which became mainly concerned with literary effect, so that it ended its trajectory for most purposes, about 1800, as a catalogue of figures of speech - really, figures of writing even so - a fantastical zoo of stylistic tropes and schemes with wonderful names such as zeugma [flood of tears and carriage] and litotes [it's no coincidence that...], syllepsis [we go a long way to please you] and hypallage [melissa shook her doubtful curls], catachresis [speak daggers] and metonymy [pen/sword] etc etc etc.

Thus since about two centuries ago, the meaning of 'rhetoric' has been compressed to flowery decoration to language on one hand and, maintaining the connection to the Sophists through the ever-expanding lists of so-called fallacies, to verbal trickery on the other.

7 Where to from here ?

Now, with all these background - presuming you can believe me – what ought we to think about Sophistry and Rhetoric ? Let's quickly review the charges against them.

Is Rhetoric, logic removed, nothing but fallacies and fripperies ? Not at all ; every writer of any discipline knows by experience that all the old problems remain which classical rhetoric addressed – finding things to say, arranging them, expressing them, recording and presenting them. Marking student essays drives this home every semester !

As for the fallacies, most of those newly “discovered” since Galileo are no such thing : there is no fallacy of arguing by authority, though this technique, like most things, can be misused. (There is a long story here : Aristotle listed 13 “sophistical refutations”, nowadays hundreds are discussed.)

And is the Sophist really a fake philosopher who trades in misleading arguments for wicked purposes ? The original Sophists were not, at least the best of them and their practice are nothing like it. There are plenty of “philosophers” who subscribe to something like the doctrines of Plato and use underhand means to try to get them generally accepted. How far this is conscious duplicity and how far self-delusion is hard to say – but then, that is true about all the others, and the Sophists to boot !

Rhetoric is an important, indispensable instrument which can be used for good or ill, and people can have good or bad intentions whether or not they be philosophers, and history has shown that there is no superior method to the Sophists for ferreting out wisdom about human affairs, contrary to the long spell cast by Plato. We owe a lot to the original Sophistic for opening up much of our intellectual tradition, for beginning the ongoing discipline of logic, for promoting a humanistic and rational approach to human life, and particularly for founding the larger discipline of Rhetoric to which many current intellectual enterprises, for example Media Studies, make novel and sometimes valuable contributions – though usually they don't realise that's what they are doing!

It would be good to reclaim the terms 'Sophistry' and 'Rhetoric' for the good things they originally and really denote. I commend them to you.