The Origins Of Rhetoric In Ancient Greece

Thomas Cole

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Christian Myer (2006:1) says, "The scholarly myth of origin has it that rhetoric developed in Ancient Greece. Why Meyer does not challenge what he acknowledges as myth is unclear, but this implication of the Greek provenance of rhetoric is demonstrably false. This is not to deny the Greek's particular cultivation of rhetoric into a formal disputatious art suited to their emerging democracies, but there can be little doubt that the ancient Egyptians have a better claim to being the originators of rhetoric or what they called good speech. The first mention of rhetoric as an art was in Homer's Iliad. Cicero is widely considered the finest rhetorician of the Roman Republic, based on his collected speeches and treatises. His On Invention was one of the most widely used texts on the art of rhetoric in the Middle Ages. Treatises on ancient rhetoric were being written before Cicero's time, however. The first treatise is recognized as that of Empedocles, in around 444 BC. He influenced the first actual texts dedicated to the subject that were compiled by Corax and Tisias. While a number of
This book argues that it is not fair to judge early Greek rhetoric by the standards of Plato and Aristotle; it should be seen, rather, as a series of largely unsystematic efforts to explore, more by example rather than by precept, all aspects of discourse. As artistic prose came to be disseminated in written texts and so available in a form that could be analyzed, evaluated and imitated, the forms of the early texts evolve into treatises such as Aristotle’s Rhetoric. (more). Quick Links.
Rhetoric was slow to develop in ancient Rome, but it started to flourish when that empire conquered Greece and began to be influenced by its traditions. While ancient Romans incorporated many of the rhetorical elements established by the Greeks, they diverged from the Grecian tradition in many ways. For example, orators and writers in ancient Rome depended more on stylistic flourishes, riveting stories, and compelling metaphors and less on logical reasoning than their ancient Greek counterparts. Similar books and articles:


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Rhetoric (/ˈrɛtərɪk/) is the art of persuasion. Along with grammar and logic (or dialectic â€” see Martianus Capella), it is one of the three ancient arts of discourse. Rhetoric aims to study the capacities of writers or speakers needed to inform, persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situations. Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" and since mastery of the art was necessary for victory in a case at law; or for The Origins of Rhetoric i has been added to your Cart. Add to Cart. Turn on 1-Click ordering for this browser. Cole's re-seeing of the evidence is compelling and provocative. Certainly it will be of great interest to serious students of rhetoric, Greek prose, indeed, of ancient literature." (Classical World). "One of the most intelligent and illuminating books on early prose literature."