

# An Old Academic on Rhetoric: The Example of Xenocrates

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## INTRODUCTION

Xenocrates (396–314 BC), second-in-line of succession to the leadership of the Platonic Academy, is commonly described by the tradition as a faithful heir to Plato's theory and authority (Cic. *Acad.* 4.17 = fr. 73 Isnardi Parente).<sup>1</sup> A native of Chalcedon on the Hellespont, he studied with Plato from an early age and even accompanied him on his journey to Sicily. Notably, he left Athens after Plato's death and only returned a few years later in 339 BC to succeed Speusippus who "sent him a message entreating him to come and take over the charge of the school" (*D.L.* 4. 6–11 = fr. 2 IP).<sup>2</sup>

Although only a few lines of his work survive, he is often credited with having established Platonism as a formalized and fixed body of doctrines with a wide-spread influence both inside and outside the Academy. According to Diogenes Laertius' bibliography (*D.L.* 4.11–4 = fr. 2 IP) and the surviving testimonia and fragments, Xenocrates developed an interest in subjects such as metaphysics, ethics, logic and physics. In fact, Sextus Empiricus in the treatise *Against the Logicians* (*M*7.16 = fr. 82 IP) informs us that Xenocrates established the division of philosophy into physics, ethics and logic which is implicitly only found in Plato's work.<sup>3</sup>

Although his views on issues such as on First Principles, on Soul etc. have attracted significant scholarly attention in recent decades, his views on rhetoric and dialectic have not—despite a re-emergence of interest in the attitude

1. The available collections of fragments are R. Heinze, *Xenokrates: Darstellung der Lehre und Sammlung der Fragmente* (Leipzig, 1892); M. Isnardi Parente, *Senocrate—Ermodoro: Frammenti* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1982) [henceforth 'Isnardi Parente' or 'IP']. On Xenocrates and especially the so called systematization of Platonism, see J. Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2003), 89–145; D. Thiel, *Die Philosophie des Xenokrates im Kontext der Alten Akademie* (Munich and Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2006).

2. On the occasion of his election as head of the Academy, see *Academicorum Index Herculensis* (cols. VI–VII), ed. S. Mekler (Berolini, 1902), 38–39 = fr. 1 IP.

3. Sextus precedes the comment of the tripartite division of philosophy by saying that Plato himself had already made this division of *dunamei*, because he discussed various problems in all these fields of knowledge.

of the Academy towards rhetoric in the centuries following Plato's death until its physical cease (1<sup>st</sup> century BC).<sup>4</sup> This paper focuses on Xenocrates' views on rhetoric as they are found in Sextus Empiricus' treatise *Against the Rhetoricians* (*M* 2). To be more specific, in *Against the Rhetoricians* Sextus investigates the nature of rhetoric "by comparing the most prominent views of the philosophers on it." Amongst these philosophers, he lists Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Xenocrates. In particular, Xenocrates defines rhetoric as "the ἐπιστήμη of how to speak well," taking the word ἐπιστήμη "in the old fashioned sense," as a synonym for a τέχνη (*M* 2.6). Further, he identifies the end of rhetoric as persuasion (*M* 2.61). Some of the questions to tackle are as follows: What is the nature of rhetoric as endorsed by the Academic? And what is its place in his philosophical system as well as in the intellectual tradition of Platonism? What is the significance of the terms ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη in the definition given?

Sextus' choice to include Xenocrates' definition in the list of prominent views on rhetoric (especially amongst those of Plato and Aristotle) is surprising—mainly, I believe, because not much is known about the attitude of the Academic on rhetoric. Then again, the choice is not surprising given the place of Xenocrates in the history of Platonism, perceived as he was by the tradition as the member of the Academy who divided the philosophical discourse and systematised the Platonic dogma.

One of the difficulties we encounter in illuminating Xenocrates' views on rhetoric is the fact that the only direct information we have about them comes from Sextus' polemic treatise against rhetoric, *Against the Rhetoricians*. It is noteworthy that in Diogenes Laertius' biography, Xenocrates is not credited with a book on rhetoric, though he wrote on art (*D.L.* 4. 12) and also on dialectic (*D.L.* 4.13)—neither work survives. I assume that the views reported by Sextus were part of these treatises. For example, it is possible that Xenocrates provided a definition of rhetoric and highlighted its difference from dialectic at the beginning of his treatise on the latter.

Accordingly, the motive behind this paper is to shed light on the Academic's attitude towards rhetoric using the views found in Sextus Empiricus' treatise as a starting point. My thesis is that rhetoric is accepted as the competency that results from the knowledge of certain rules. Therefore, I suggest that Xenocrates is an example of an Academic whose attitude towards rhetoric is influenced by the Platonic past, and especially by the *Phaedrus*. Though I

4. On the attitude of the members of the Academy towards rhetoric (especially the 2nd and 1st century BC), see especially C. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa: The Last of the Academic Sceptics* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2001), 296–343; T. Reinhardt, "Rhetoric in the Fourth Academy," *Classical Quarterly* 50 (2000): 531–47.

examine the views attributed to Xenocrates as an example of the views of “an Academic on rhetoric,” I acknowledge that my observations do not exhaust the views and attitudes held by the early Academics on this subject.<sup>5</sup>

So to begin, I briefly consider the source of the views attributed to Xenocrates: Sextus Empiricus’ treatise *Against the Rhetoricians* (*M* 2). Next, I explore the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric, and the place and role of the latter in his philosophical system. Finally, I suggest that in order to fully understand the Academic’s approach to rhetoric, it is necessary to clarify the nature of the rhetoric involved as well as its place in the intellectual tradition of Platonism.

#### SEXTUS EMPIRICUS’ *AGAINST THE RHETORICIANS*

Rhetoricians, grammarians, philosophers and other professionals throughout antiquity argue constantly about what τέχνη is, and specifically about how it differs from other forms of cognition.<sup>6</sup> Part of this debate is Sextus’ treatise *Against the Professors* (*M*), divided into six books. The Sceptic philosopher criticizes “the pretensions of individual sciences or branches of putative knowledge” as Barnes explains: grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology and music (*M* 1–6).<sup>7</sup>

5. The views of the Old Academics on rhetoric are often connected with the well documented battle between the Academy and the School of Isocrates. An example is Speusippus’ *Letter to Philip of Macedon*, now accepted as genuine, for which see E. Bickermann and J. Sykutris, Speusippus Brief an König Philipp, “Berichte über die Verhandlungen der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,” *Philologisch-historische Klasse* 80.3 (Leipzig, 1928); A.F. Natoli, *The Letter of Speusippus to Philip II. Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004). It is well celebrated that Aristotle during his years in the Academy wrote a rhetorical work called *Gryllus*. Famously, in this early work he denied that rhetoric was an art. According to Quintilian: “Aristotle, it is true, in his *Gryllus* produces some tentative arguments to the contrary [i.e., to the effect that rhetoric is not an art], which are marked by characteristic ingenuity. On the other hand, he also wrote three books on the art of rhetoric, in the first of which he not merely admits that rhetoric is an art, but treats it as a department of politics and also of logic” (*Inst. Orat.* 2.17.14–15). Quintilian further comments that in fact Aristotle took part in the dispute between the Academy and the school of Isocrates, and in fact he was the tour de force as the teacher of rhetoric in the Academy: “The pupils of Isocrates were eminent in every branch of study, and when [Isocrates] was already advanced in years (and he lived to the age of ninety-eight), Aristotle began to teach the art of rhetoric in his afternoon lectures, in which he frequently quotes the well-known line from the Philoctetes in the form “It would be shameful for me to be silent and suffer Isocrates to speak” (*Inst. Orat.* 3.1.14).

6. The principal attributes of an art—at least by the time of Plato—are its ability to be taught (communicability), the existence of a specific set of rules, and the existence of a clearly defined subject matter.

7. See J. Barnes, “Scepticism and the Arts,” *Apeiron* 21.2 (1988): 53–78, at 53. Sextus’ general critique of τέχναι appears at *M* 1.9–40 and focuses on the nature of the arts and those who claim to have the expertise to teach them. For all liberal arts there is no such thing as a subject taught, a teacher, a learner, or a method of learning; therefore none of the arts exist, and

In a manner consistent with Pyrrhonian enquiry, Sextus states in the preliminaries of the treatise *Against the Rhetoricians* (*M 2*):

Since there may be a conception of a thing equally if it is existent or non-existent, and it is not possible to gain knowledge of either of these alternatives unless we have previously grasped the nature of the thing being enquired into, let us first investigate what rhetoric is by comparing the most prominent views of the philosophers on it (*M 2.1*).<sup>8</sup>

The opening question of the treatise, ‘what is rhetoric?’ is the same question that Plato asks in the dialogue *Gorgias*. Appropriately, the first definition found is that of Plato: “rhetoric is a creator of persuasion by means of speech” (*M 2. 2*).<sup>9</sup> As for Aristotle, Sextus reports: “Aristotle in the first book of his treatise on *The Art of Rhetoric* gives a more straightforward definition of rhetoric as the art of speech. And when the argument—that medicine (to give one example) is the art of medical speech—is raised against him, some coming to his defence respond saying that the art of medicine directs its speech towards an end distinct from itself—in other words ‘health’—whilst rhetoric is the art of speech per se” (*M 2. 8–9*).<sup>10</sup>

cannot be a subject of learning. Sextus clarifies that he will not refute all claims made on behalf of each art; rather he will refute only foundational claims upon which all other claims depend. The opposition to dogmatic claims unfolds via a series of arguments, which range from general to more specific. The use of dogmatic arguments can lead to the accusation that Sextus at this stage turns into a dogmatic sceptic, invoking one set of truths to tear down another. On the type of τέχναι that Sextus attacks, see J. Barnes, “Scepticism and the Arts,” 53–78; E. Spinelli, “Pyrrhonism and the Specialized Sciences,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. R. Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2010), 249–64; D.L. Blank, *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Grammarians* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1998).

8. In *Against the Rhetoricians* the source of information appears to be a blend of Epicurean, Academic, Stoic and Peripatetic views. The failure to offer a direct sceptical account of rhetoric is not incidental, and it would be wrong to assume the existence of an implicit account awaiting our discovery. The issue of why Sextus chooses to examine the opinions of the philosophers and not the rhetoricians is a matter of considerable debate, see D. Karadimas, *Sextus Empiricus against Aelius Aristides: the Conflict between Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Second Century AD* (Lund: Lund U Press, 1996).

9. The definition as it appears in *M 2.2* does not occur in the *Gorgias*. It is a combined definition found in the passages 450b–c, 451a and 455a. One of Sextus’ priorities is to point out that persuasion by speech is not necessarily always rhetoric. The requirement that he sets out is that in order for a speech to be an instance of rhetoric it must be a τέχνη the efficacy of which is dependent mostly on words, and the aim of which is not to instruct, as geometry, for example, does, but to induce belief. This is contrary to the claim that rhetoric is a useful art, because it persuades judges to judge appropriately. The example of Phrynē and other instances of non-verbal persuasion are cited in order to disassociate persuasion and speech (*M 2.4*).

10. In the translation of the various passages, I follow Hicks’ translation of Diogenes Laertius with revisions (Loeb edition). For Cicero’s work, I follow the translations in the Loeb edition (with revisions), with the exception of the *Academica*, where I follow Brittain’s *Cicero: On Academic Scepticism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006). I follow Sudhaus’ edition of

The views of Xenocrates and the Stoics are given in a combined definition (*M* 2. 6 = fr. 90 IP):

[1] On the other hand, Xenocrates, the follower and disciple of Plato, and the Stoic philosophers were accustomed to declare that rhetoric is 'the knowledge of how to speak well' (ἐπιστήμην τοῦ εὖ λέγειν); however, Xenocrates took the word science/knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) in one sense, namely the old fashioned sense (ἀρχαίως νόμος), as a synonym for art (τέχνη), while the Stoics took it differently, namely as the possession of firm apprehensions, which is something innate only to the sage.<sup>11</sup> Still, both believe that speech is different to dialectic; because speech which is concise and consists in giving and receiving an account is the role of dialectic, but to talk on a subject at length and with extended exposition is peculiar to rhetoric. Therefore, Zeno of Citium, when asked what differentiates dialectic from rhetoric, clenched his fist and opened it again and said "This"—presenting in this way a parallel between the compactness and brevity of dialectic and the clenching, and demonstrating the breadth proper to rhetoric through the opening and extension of his fingers.<sup>12</sup>

Further, on the question "what is the ἔργον of rhetoric?" (*M* 2.61 = fr. 91 IP):

[2] For Plato, with an eye to this (that the ultimate task of rhetoric is persuasion), has said that it [rhetoric] is the ability to persuade by means of speech (τό δὲ λόγων πείθειν), and Xenocrates that it is the creator of persuasion (πειθοῦς δημιουργός).<sup>13</sup>

Philodemus, *Philodemi volumina rhetorica*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1892–96) using also Hubbell's work, "The Rhetorica of Philodemus," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 23 (1920): 243–382. Regarding Sextus Empiricus, I follow Bett's translation of *Against the Logicians* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2005) and D. Blank's of *Against the Grammarians* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1998), and J. Annas' and J. Barnes' of *Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1994), and I offer my own for *Against the Rhetoricians*, following the standard edition of Sextus in Teubner ed. of Mau & Mutschmann (Leipzig, 1958).

11. I use J. Barnes translation's of the phrase τοῦ βεβήαιας ἔχειν καταλήψεις, J. Barnes, "Is Rhetoric an Art?" *Darg Newsletter* (1986): 2–22, at 6.

12. Summarizing the definitions discussed up to this point—Plato, Aristotle, Xenocrates, Stoics—(*M* 2. 9), Sextus states that those who have depicted the discipline have asserted it either to be a τέχνη, or to be the ἐπιστήμη of how to speak well, which produces persuasion. In what follows (*M* 2.10\*87), it is suggested that rhetoric is not art (*M* 2. 10–47) and a two-hypotheses type of argument is proposed. Firstly, rhetoric has no subject matter (*M* 2.48–59)—namely, it has no set of rules, the first requirement of an art. Secondly, rhetoric has no end (τέλος)—another requirement of being an art (*M* 2. 60–87). More specifically, it is argued that persuasion cannot be the end of rhetoric for two reasons: a) rhetorical speech completely fails to obtain its aim—to persuade; b) even if we suppose that every artist has the ability to speak well about his art, the capacity of how to speak well does not make him a self-justifying rhetorician (*M* 2. 74–87). The last section of the treatise is a further attack on the three parts of rhetoric: deliberative, forensic and epideictic (*M* 2.88–103). For the structure of the treatise and Sextus' drawing on or even copying arguments from earlier Pyrrhonian sources, see J. Barnes, "Is Rhetoric an Art?", 4–5.

13. Sextus reports the views of most prominent men—Platonists, Xenocrates, Aristotle, Ariston, Hermagoras, Athenaus and Isocrates—who argued that the aim of rhetoric is to effect

To start with, in the treatise *Against the Logicians* (henceforth *M7*), Sextus declares that philosophers who suggest philosophy is divided into two parts have handled the question incompletely (*M7.16–17*):<sup>14</sup>

[3] By comparison, the approach of those who say that one part of philosophy is physics, another ethics, and another logic seems to have been more complete. Of this group Plato is in effect the founder, since he engaged in discussion on many matters in physics, many in ethics, and not few in logic. But the most explicit adherents of this division are Xenocrates, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics.

This view on the tripartite division of philosophy is shared by Diogenes Laertius and numerous others (*D.L. 7.39*). Diogenes, however, attributes it to the Stoics, largely ignoring the Academic influence.<sup>15</sup> Further, he points out (*D.L. 7.41*):

[4] Some [Stoics] divide the logical part [of philosophy] (τὸ λογικὸν μέρος) into two sciences (ἐπιστήμαι): rhetoric and dialectic.<sup>16</sup>

So, according to the information found in the four passages above:

Xenocrates and the Stoics divide philosophy into physics, ethics and logic—with Plato being the founder [3];

Stoics further divide logic into two ἐπιστήμαι: dialectic and rhetoric [4];

Xenocrates and the Stoics define rhetoric as ἐπιστήμην τοῦ εὖ λέγειν, although they don't strictly agree on the meaning of ἐπιστήμη [1];

persuasion. Quintilian attributes this definition to Isocrates, without any reference to Xenocrates (*Inst. Orat. 2.15.4*). Even if it is true, it does not exclude that Xenocrates also gave or accepted the same definition of rhetoric.

14. Sextus does not limit his inquiry into what during his day was perceived as the area of logic. The Stoic conception of logic involves all aspects of language and not only the components of the arguments. One of the main components of Stoic logic is the inquiry of the criterion of truth and the way of expressing the things that exist, see A.A. Long, "Sextus Empiricus on the Criterion of Truth," *Bulletin of the University of London Institute of Classical Studies* 25 (1978): 35–49; G. Striker, "Kritérion tēs alētheias," in *Essays on Hellenistic Philosophy and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1996), 22–76.

15. Further, in the biography of Plato, Diogenes Laertius reports that in the "early times philosophy dealt only with physics." Socrates added the second subject, Ethics, and the third, Dialectics (*D.L. 3.56*). Cicero (*De Fin 4.4*) claims that Zeno adopted the tripartition of discourse from *veteres Academici*. Chrysippus (Plut. *Stoc. rep.* 1035a) claims that the tripartition originates with *archaioi*, a view found in numerous other sources.

16. The Stoics argue that rhetoric is the science of how to speak well with respect to continuous speeches; while dialectic is the science of correct discussion with regard to discourses conducted by question and answer. Consequently, they regard the latter as the science of what is true and false and neither (*D.L. 7.42–43*), cf. Quint. *Inst. Orat.* 3.1.15; Cic. *De Fin.* 5.7.

Xenocrates and the Stoics make a clear distinction between dialectic and rhetoric [1]; and

Plato and Xenocrates argue for rhetoric as the creator of persuasion [2].

Consequently, Xenocrates and the Stoics agree on the division of philosophy into three parts and on the definition of rhetoric as ἐπιστήμη. Further they distinguish rhetoric from dialectic in the same way, namely as extended versus concise speech. The place of rhetoric in the Stoic philosophical system is clear: it is a subset of logic, occupying a different domain from rhetoric [4]. The matter of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic according to Xenocrates and the place of the latter in his philosophical system would be much clearer if we had more information regarding his treatment of dialectical speech. As we saw earlier, his interest is illustrated in the catalogue of works attributed to him by Diogenes Laertius and specifically in a work titled *The Study of Dialectic* (*D.L.* 4.13 = fr. 2 IP).<sup>17</sup> In the passage under discussion (*M* 2.6), there is a clear distinction between rhetoric and dialectic in terms of their domains and features like length. Dialectic is defined as speech “which is concise and consists of giving and receiving an account” whilst how to talk on a subject at length and with extended exposition is particular to the science of how to speak well—namely rhetoric.

In Cicero’s *Academica*, Varro—the spokesman for the Old Academy of Antiochus of Ascalon—records the views of the Old Academics and Peripatetics on ethics, physics and logic. They include some interesting suggestions on the place and role of rhetoric in the philosophical system of the immediate followers of Plato:

Well, they [Old Academics and Peripatetics] started with a threefold of philosophy inherited from Plato: one part dealing with our way of life and ethical dispositions, another with nature and hidden subjects, and the third with argument, i.e., judging what is true and false, correct or incorrect in its expression, and consistent or inconsistent.

17. In spite of the lack of evidence on dialectic, we can make deductions by relying on Xenocrates’ treatment of speech in general. For instance, Porphyry reports that Aristoxenus reported that some people criticised Xenocrates for starting his treatment of dialectic from φωνή (Porphyry, *Commentary on Ptolemy’s Harmonics* 8. 22ff = fr. 88 IP). Michael Frede reads this as a suggestion that Xenocrates’ attitude towards φωνή was a novelty followed by the Stoics. As a result, there is no reason to believe that the Stoics did not follow Xenocrates through the division of logic into dialectic and rhetoric. Nor would they deny that Xenocrates did divide logic into two parts, by giving certain roles to each, as we find in passage *M* 2.6, see M. Frede, “Principles of Stoic Grammar,” in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis U Press, 1987), 301–37, at 319–20.

Let us follow Barnes' reading of the passage.<sup>18</sup> Regarding the third division, the first conjunction—judging what is true and false—must allude to the account of the criterion of truth. If so, then it essentially corresponds to epistemology. The third conjunction—judging what is consistent and inconsistent—refers to the logical relationship between implication and exclusion which together serve to indicate the content of logic. The second conjunction is the most puzzling, considering that there are no close or helpful parallels. Barnes points out, following the orthodox view, that the phrase is intended to characterize rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> I believe that this analysis is strengthened by a direct reference to the discipline of rhetoric in the outline of the old academic views on logic (*Acad.* 1.30–3). In particular, Varro refers to the counterpart of dialectic “as the ability to use rhetoric, i.e., the development of continuous speech adapted for persuasion.”

Earlier at the *Academica*, Cicero declared that the Old Academics regarded dialectic and rhetoric as virtues (Cic. *Acad.* 1.5). To be more precise, Varro claims that the Epicureans Amafinius and Rufinus have no recourse to definition, division, or formal argument; and that they consider the systematic study of speech worthless. Meanwhile, the followers of the Old Academy—and Varro himself among them—remained faithful to the precepts of the dialecticians and the orators because their school (the Academy) considered dialectic and rhetoric to be virtues.<sup>20</sup>

What should we deduce from this? I have argued that rhetoric is part of the Xenocratean philosophical system. But thus far I have failed to adequately demonstrate the nature of rhetoric and especially the comment that ἐπιστήμη is understood as a synonym for τέχνη in the old fashioned sense.

18. J. Barnes “Logic in *Academica* I and Lucullus,” in *Assent and Argument: Studies in Cicero's Academic Books*, ed. B. Inwood and J. Mansfeld (Utrecht: Brill, 1997), 141–60, at 141–44. Dialectic and rhetoric are explicitly connected in subordination under logic, according to different domains of human action in *De Finibus* (2.17) and *Orator* (113–14).

19. It would be possible to identify this with ὀρθοέπεια, the study of correctness of diction, but even this could be summoned under rhetoric; see for example Plat. *Phdr.* 267c; Phil. *Rhet.* 1.191; Quint. *Inst. Orat.* 1.6.20. On the other hand, according to Alcinous' *Handbook of Platonism* (6.11): “Dialectic has the job of using the names rightly,” see J. Dillon, *Alcinous, The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1993), 84–86.

20. That is of course a very Stoicizing view of Antiochus of Ascalon. Antiochus thought that any doctrinal difference between Platonism, Stoicism, Aristotelianism was mainly a matter of superficial or terminological difference (S.E. *PH* 1.235; Cic. *Acad.* 1.43). I don't think that we need to make any specific commitment about whether Antiochus' views on the nature of dialectic and rhetoric were Stoic or not. The relevant point for the present purpose is that Antiochus includes in the content of the Old Academy both rhetoric and dialectic with the qualification of virtues.



## THE NATURE OF RHETORIC

In what follows, I argue that Xenocrates uses ἐπιστήμη as a synonym for τέχνη in the sense that rhetoric, the domain of which is good speech, requires knowledge so an account may be given as well as knowledge of its practical rules. By contrast, the Stoics appear to use the word in an epistemologically stricter sense—namely “the possession of firm apprehensions.”<sup>21</sup>

Initially, it is worth exploring in a little more detail what the Stoics meant by their definition. Rhetoric is the part of this system that is based on the notion of κατάληψις and underlines the role of the Sage. Even though κατάληψις is admittedly rather problematic, in the current study we face two more tricky terms: ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη.<sup>22</sup> By ἐπιστήμη Zeno means “either an unerring apprehension or state which in the reception of presentations cannot be shaken by argument’ (ὕπό λόγου)” (*D.L.* 7.47).<sup>23</sup> Sextus Empiricus points out that καταληπτική φαντασία is between δόξα, which is “weak and false assent” and ἐπιστήμη, “cognition which is secure and firm and unchangeable by reason.” Whilst cognition is common both to the sage who has knowledge and to the inferior man who has only opinion, the inferior man may try to use cognition to pass from opinion to scientific knowledge, although the result is not guaranteed (*S.E. M* 7.151 7). Καταληπτική φαντασία is the criterion of truth upon which a subject attains knowledge (*D.L.* 7.54). Therefore, the stoic definition of a τέχνη as “a system of cognitions co-exercised towards some goal useful for life” is interpreted by Sextus to mean that all cognitive impressions should be present if one is to have a τέχνη.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence,

21. Sextus uses ἐπιστήμη twice in connection with the discussion of the definition of Xenocrates and the Stoics and once more in the formulation of his refutation of the arguments of the dogmatics (*M* 2.9). In the rest of the treatise, he puts it aside and proceeds by examining and refuting the status of rhetoric as τέχνη. In *M* 2.71 ἐπιστήμη is equivalent to “satisfactory and good knowledge of something.” I argue that semantically there is no differentiation between the two terms in Sextus’ text: they imply the set of rules that the discipline of rhetoric follows.

22. Again, according to Sextus (*PH* 2.4): “They [the Stoics] say that ‘apprehend’ in their argument meant assent to an apprehensive appearance (καταληπτική φαντασία); an apprehensive appearance comes from something real, is imprinted and stamped in accordance with the real object itself, and is such as would not come from anything unreal.” The view is attributed to Zeno, the founder of the Stoa, cf. *S.E. M* 7.248; *D.L.* 7.50.

23. What the Stoic philosopher illustrates here is the stable nature of ἐπιστήμη. The Sceptical Academy has a series of counter-arguments to this view, denying the stability of knowledge. In the current context it is useful to underline that in the Stoic definition of ἐπιστήμη the “end” (τέλος) of it never appears; cf. *S.E. M* 7.51. On Stoic epistemology see M. Frede, “Stoic Epistemology,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld and M. Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2005), 295–322.

24. *S.E. M* 2.10, 1.75, 7.373, 11. 182; *PH* 3.188, 241, 251, 261. Sextus largely ignores any difference between Stoic ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη.

it is appropriate to understand stoic rhetoric as a systematic body of scientific knowledge, of which only the Sage can have full possession and exercise.<sup>25</sup>

For Xenocrates, on the other hand, rhetoric is the science of how to speak well in one sense—the old fashioned sense (ἀρχαϊκός νόμος)—as a synonym for art [1]. The phrase “the old fashioned sense”<sup>26</sup> plays an important role in the understanding of Xenocrates’ definition. According to the “the old fashioned sense,” ἐπιστήμη as synonym to τέχνη could imply not the Stoic but the Platonic conception of the term, without the metaphysical connotations of ἐπιστήμη.<sup>27</sup> It interprets τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη to be a mix of expertise—the ability to know rhetoric’s practical rules and to provide an account of its nature. This definition of rhetoric as ἐπιστήμη τοῦ εὖ λέγειν is not unique in the context of Platonism. It also appears in Alcinous’ *Handbook of Platonism* as part of the discussion of the complete orator’s ability to choose the right arguments (*Did.* 6.8)—a view that has its origins in the *Phaedrus* and what Plato perceives as true rhetoric (269a–272b).<sup>28</sup> Significantly, in the *Phaedrus* τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη are put side by side in the discussion of the perfect orator (269d): “If you have a natural ability for rhetoric, you will become a famous rhetorician, provided you supplement your ability with knowledge and practice.”

This way of treating the terms interchangeably is also found in the Socratic dialogues where in various cases Plato appears to refuse a clear distinction between the two. For instance, in a well known passage in the *Charmides*, Socrates claims that the art of medicine is no more than knowledge of health (165c); further while discussing the art of measuring in the *Protagoras*, Socrates refers to it as both art and knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

25. While in the traditional definitions of rhetoric persuasion is the end of rhetoric, the Stoics do not appear to show any interest in this issue, see C. Atherton “Hand Over Fist: The Failure of Stoic Rhetoric,” *Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 392–427. G.A. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1972), 292, has observed the idealistic character of the theory: “Stoic rhetoric, like Stoic ethics, belonged in an ideal world.” On Stoic rhetoric and dialectic and the Sage see A.A. Long “Dialectic and Stoic Sage,” *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge, 1996): 85–106; F.E. Sparshott, “Zeno on Art: Anatomy of a Definition,” in *The Stoics*, ed. J.M. Rist (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1978), 273–90.

26. In Isnardi Parente’s edition of the fragments a comma (,) appears between ἀρχαϊκός and νόμος, which I suppose is a typographical mistake.

27. It is well known that rhetoric is a ‘knack’ (ἐμπειρία) and not a τέχνη, a methodological or even technical procedure. It lacks knowledge of its subject matter—justice in the case of the *Gorgias*; and lacks the proper method or rules to complete the task of speaking persuasively.

28. See Dillon’s comments, *The Handbook of Platonism*, 82. We encounter the same terminology, ἐπιστήμην τοῦ εὖ λέγειν, in the *Prolegomenon Sylloge*, see among others 44.5; 55.8; 112.18; 197.10; 397.16.

29. It has been widely suggested that that ἐπιστήμη of Plato also carries connotations of systematic or explanatory understanding that go beyond the connotations of ‘knowledge’ in

This particular use of ἐπιστήμη is strengthened by its use in Xenocrates' theory of knowledge. In the treatise *Against the Logicians* (*M* 7.147–49 = fr. 83 IP), we can trace its origins to the metaphysical and epistemological model proposed by Plato in the *Republic* (477a ff). Xenocrates suggests that there are three types of entities with different locations: the sensible, the intelligible and the composite and opinable (*M* 7.147–48). Accordingly, there are different criteria of truth. The criterion of truth for the intelligible realm is clearly ἐπιστήμη, whilst the criterion of truth for the sensible is indisputably sensation. The criterion for the mixed kind is opinion. In particular, the criterion given by cognitive reason is both firm and true, whilst that given by sensation is also true—but not in the same sense. The third kind has a share in both truth and falsehood. I believe that Sextus, conscious of the particular meaning of the term ἐπιστήμη in Xenocrates' thought, introduces the term in passage [1] not as part of the Academic's epistemology but as an equivalent to τέχνη.

In *M* 2.61 Xenocrates suggests (in a platonic fashion) that a τέχνη has a task—namely that which it typically accomplishes; rhetoric produces persuasion as its *task*. For instance, in one of the most significant occurrences of the term in the *Republic* (342e), Plato characterises ruling as a τέχνη, looking after the welfare of the city. In this case τέχνη attains epistemic character. Its practitioner is required to know the practical rules of the expertise and to be able to provide an account of its nature. Plato's rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* is also a creator of persuasion—again, under certain criteria. This leads Isnardi Parente to suggest in her commentary on Xenocrates' fragments that Xenocrates' consideration of rhetoric is a direct product of the influence that the *Phaedrus* had among the members of the Academy.<sup>30</sup>

At 269cff, Plato describes the requirements of a proper science—or art—of rhetoric. In order to become “a leader of the soul,” the orator must have natural ability, knowledge and practice—as well as an understanding of human psychology. Rather than necessarily speak the truth, he must make use of that which his audience is likely to find persuasive—though he should still hold a strong awareness of what is true. On the other hand, an examination

contemporary epistemological discussions, see J. Moravcsik, “Understanding and Knowledge in Plato's Philosophy,” *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* 15/16 (1979): 53–69; M. Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge,” in *Aristotle on Science: The “Posterior Analytics,”* ed. E. Berti (Padua: Editrice Antinore, 1981), 97–131, at 97–99. For example, the physician in Plato's *Charmides* knows how to make someone healthy (*Charm.* 174c) and is also able to know health by medical knowledge (*Charm.* 170c). So τέχνη indicates knowing how to do something as well as knowing it.

30. Isnardi Parente, *Senocrate* 320. For a positive consideration of πείθειν on Plato's part cf. *Leg.* 722aff.

of Xenocrates' extant fragments and testimonia does not give any clues as to the kind of persuasion which is the end of rhetoric.<sup>31</sup> The Xenocratean orator appears to fulfil some of the requirements of a 'good' orator. And unlike his stoic counterpart (only the stoic Sage has the requirements necessary to be a 'good' orator), the Xenocratean orator does not necessarily belong to a certain class: anyone who fulfils the requirements (a picture also drawn in the *Phaedrus*) can become "a creator of persuasion" in a true, artistic way.

#### CONCLUSION

What might we conclude from all of this? To begin with, Xenocrates is an Academic who clearly expresses a view on the status of rhetoric as an art and in a way his view summarizes and potentially "clarifies" the Platonic view on rhetoric within the Academic circles. Xenocratean ἐπιστήμη, as a synonym to τέχνη, of how to speak well could refer to the knowledge required in order to speak persuasively and the practical rules for its proper exercise as an art. Hence ἐπιστήμη is interpreted in the wider sense of understanding. I believe this assumption is reinforced by the distinction between dialectic and rhetoric which is applied both to the Stoics and Xenocrates. Speaking—being concise and consisting of giving and receiving an account—is the task of dialectic, whereas to speak on a given subject at length and with detailed exposition is the special characteristic of rhetoric. The inclusion of dialectic is not strictly demanded by the argument; although it does reinforce the claim that Xenocrates and the Stoics shared a similar division of logic. Thus, the incompatibility but co-presence of the two disciplines is established by the way each of them works.

31. As I mentioned earlier, in Diogenes Laertius' list of Xenocrates' work, we come across a work titled Περὶ Τέχνης. The work might look at the theoretical framework of art in general, giving a parallel examination of the different *technai* and their status.