

РАЗДЕЛ VII МИРОВОЙ ОПЫТ ТЕОРИИ ПЕДАГОГИКИ

Part VII. WORLD EXPERIENCE OF THE THEORY OF PEDAGOGY

Философия образования. 2023. Т. 23, № 3
Philosophy of Education, 2023, vol. 23, no. 3

Научная статья

УДК 11+37.0+372.016:81

DOI: 10.15372/PNE20230311

EDN: WMUWYC

Риторические подходы Платона и Конфуция как основа обучения письменной речи

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Современное восприятие мира и его успешная интерпретация в письменной речи формирует у студента правильную самооценку и позитивное мнение о своих способностях. Во время изучения письменной речи и ее этических проблем обнаруживается феномен, способствующий развитию целеполагания, отсутствующий во многих других дисциплинах. Конфуцианские и платоновские диалоги могут стать ценными источниками для изучения «вторичной устности», то есть письменной речи, поскольку риторика – это сложная система идей, мировоззрения, целеполагания, языка и его техник, в которых логос, то есть подлинность, правдивость и достоверность являются основополагающими. *Методология.* В качестве методологической основы использован сравнительный анализ риторических подходов Платона и Конфуция, позволяющий расширить понимание письменной речи, включив в нее «искусство эффективного выражения». Взаимосвязь этики, риторики и целеполагания исследовали также восточные и западные философы. Их мировоззренческие взгляды стали методологическими основами обучения письменной речи. *Обсуждение.* В современных учебниках по обучению письменной речи уделяется много внимания стратегиям и упражнениям, помогающим студентам совершенствовать речевые техники, которые зачастую воспринимаются как отдельные сущности. Для успешного формирования целеполагания предлагается обучение письменной речи на основе риторических подходов Платона и Конфуция, способствующих практическому совершенствованию письменной речи как «вторичной устности» в условиях стремительного развития электронных коммуникационных технологий.

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Закключение. Письменная речь представляет собой сложную систему навыков, генерирования новых идей и целеполагания. Педагоги и студенты, получившие представление об этой системе, имеют более точное и правдивое представление об идеальной письменной речи.

Ключевые слова: риторический подход, обучение письменной речи, этическая форма дискурса

Для цитирования: Привалова Ю. В., Ли Шуцан, Дэвид Эрбен. Риторические подходы Платона и Конфуция как основа обучения письменной речи // Философия образования. 2023. Т. 23, № 3. С. 175–186. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15372/PNE20230311>

Благодарности. Работа выполнена в рамках программы «Поэтика перевода Эзры Паунда», Министерство образования, Китай (22YJA752017).

Scientific article

The rhetorical approaches of Plato and Confucius as the basis for teaching written speech

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Abstract. *Introduction.* Students' perception of the world and the successful interpretation of it in writing build self-esteem and a more positive opinion of their writing efforts. In the writing classroom ethical concerns may add a personal sense of purpose absent from many other disciplines. Confucian and Platonic dialogues may become valuable sources for rhetorical exploration with the emerging awareness of secondary orality as rhetoric is a complex system of ideas, values, psychology, language and technique of which truthfulness is fundamental. *Methodology.* A comparative analysis of the rhetorical approaches of Plato and Confucius in their writings on rhetoric, truth, and ethics is used as a methodological framework to broaden the understanding of the rhetoric of writing. *Discussion.* The purpose of the research was to explore how Confucius and Plato view rhetoric, and how these views inform and complicate our understanding of the ethical dimension of rhetoric and writing. Modern textbooks spend a great deal of time on strategies and exercises to help students improve various techniques that are often seen as separate entities. Issues of truth, ethics, and values are problematic for teachers of the culturally diverse student body of most colleges and universities. Introducing writing instruction based on the rhetorical approaches of Plato and Confucius has the potential to help students improve their critical skills as well as their writing skills. *Conclusion.* Comparing the rhetorical approaches of Plato and Confucius in their writings on rhetoric, truth and ethics offers educators valuable lessons and insights into the importance of maintaining the ethical dimension of written discourse when teaching writing. Writing should be presented as a complex system of skills, ideology, and

psychology, and students who gain insight into this system will have a more accurate and truthful understanding of what writing should be and is.

Keywords: rhetorical approach, teaching writing skills, ethical form of the discourse

For citation: Privalova Yu. V., Li Shucang, David Erben. The rhetorical approaches of Plato and Confucius as the basis for teaching written speech. *Philosophy of Education*, 2023, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 175–186. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15372/PHE20230311>

Acknowledgements. Completed within by the program “The Poetics of Translation by Ezra Pound”, Ministry of Education, China (22YJA752017).

Introduction. Educators at all levels are confronting serious issues which address the current state of public and private discourse, particularly in electronic communication (forums, email, social networks, etc.), in the post-truth, secondary orality era and are struggling to educate students in the value of speaking and writing ethically in both local and global, public and private, contexts. With these issues in mind, comparing the rhetorical approaches of Plato and Confucius in their writings on rhetoric, truth and ethics offers us valuable lessons and insights. In this case we are following in our definition of “rhetoric”: “As a contested term, “rhetoric” has been defined differently relative to its various contexts – historical, social, cultural, and technological, as well as personal... [We] associate rhetoric with people using language in competing contexts to communicate, to discover, to build relationships, and to enhance communal values” [1, p. 401]. In this paper, we will explore how Confucius and Plato view rhetoric, and how these views inform and complicate our understanding of the ethical dimension of rhetoric and writing.

According to Yuri Loskutov, throughout the world’s classical thought, the criteria for defining truth and goodness in a certain sense coincide. What corresponds to the deep, fundamental interests of the individual and society is both truth and good, while what opposes these interests is both delusion and evil [2, p. 96–97]. The problem of organizing education for human ascent can only be posed for an education that aspires to the truth of its being and has in itself the solid composition of that truth [3, p. 57], as modern, personal-value paradigm of education aims at the development of individual freedom in education [4, p. 94].

So, the importance of the “spoken language in real-life communication of a mentor and a student is viewed as the essential instrument of developing a person’s soul, its education and familiarization with wisdom [5, p. 19]”. The learning process becomes authentic when the student follows the instructor and acts together with him/her or independently in the search for vital personal truth. Nevertheless, according to modern research, the development of lower-order cognitive skills (acquiring knowledge, operating knowledge, demon-

strating knowledge) still prevails in foreign language classes in higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, according to current research, foreign language classes in higher education are still dominated by the development of lower-order cognitive skills (acquiring knowledge, operating knowledge, demonstrating knowledge) [6, p. 149] rather than critical thinking, which is a pervasive and self-improving human phenomenon and is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in an individual's personal and social life [7, p. 183].

Methodology. Our brief study will be framed by the field of comparative rhetoric, defined by George Kennedy as, "the cross-cultural study of rhetorical traditions as they exist or have existed in different societies around the world" [8, p. 170]. This will allow us to expand our understanding of the rhetoric of writing to encompass the "art of effective expression" [8]. The relationship between ethics and rhetoric is a topic that both Eastern and Western philosophers have explored. Xiaoye You, in "Ethics and Translingual Writing," has observed: "For instance, Daoists emphasized the danger of language in causing social disturbance... While Confucius had more faith in language's ability to resolve social issues, when annotating the Book of Change, he also suggested using language with caution lest social turmoil would ensue. Looking to the West, we see similar tensions in how ancient thinkers perceived the role of rhetoric in public life" [9, p. 102].

It is important to keep in mind, however, that while rhetoric has existed as a discipline for a long time in the West, it did not achieve the status of a distinct discipline in China until the early 20th century. Therefore, Confucius' rhetorical theory must be interpreted inferred from his indirect statements. Nevertheless, Confucius is important for our study because he was particularly concerned with truthfulness and the impact of truth and the moral character of the speaker on ethical behavior and social order [10] and in *Analects* we can see Confucius rhetoric in practice.

The *Phaedrus* dialogue between Plato's protagonist, Socrates, and Phaedrus, who appears in several dialogues as an interlocutor, expresses Plato's conception of rhetoric within his philosophic system (Plato became interested in rhetoric because the Sophists used it to develop the qualities of virtue and leadership in their disciples; he was concerned about the development of virtuous leaders and several of his early dialogues probe the nature and teachability of virtue [11, p. 72]). Although Plato, in his works, identifies natural ability as a prerequisite for an effective orator, his philosophy emphasized more than simple talent to be an effective language user. Through its speeches and discussion and examination of rhetoric, the *Phaedrus* dialogue argues effectively for the importance of ethical and appropriate development, "truthfulness." Plato rejects the sophistic tendency to use discourse without regard to truth or ethical concerns. We are following the thesis of Edwin Black, who argues that Plato

avored rhetoric when it was properly used [12]. Studies of Chinese rhetoric, on the other hand, have dealt primarily with practices of argumentation, cultural thought patterns, ethics, and the use of language. Confucius's rhetoric has been described as focusing on the appropriate moralized use of "language and name rectification" [13, p. 143].

In *Phaedrus*, *Phaedrus*' rhetorical instruction depends upon a significant revision of the reasoning upon which *Lysias*' discourse is founded. *Lysias* was an influential logographer (speech writer) who popularized the Attic, or plain style. *Phaedrus* repeats what *Lysias* has said in a speech, beginning with, "You understand then, my situation: I've told you how good it would be for us in my opinion, if this worked out." In this speech, *Lysias*' provides a general topic and context, acting as a catalyst for the response speeches by *Socrates* and the discussion between *Phaedrus* and *Socrates* which follow. *Socrates*' first speech then improves upon *Lysias*' in several ways while developing the same topic as *Lysias*. And concluding, *Socrates* rejects the values defined in *Lysias*' speech overall and, in his next speech, argues for a better representation of "truth" by altering the topic. Plato's strategy here in his revisions of *Lysias*, suggests that speaker's ethical choice of topics, the speaker's decision to create a discourse that engages and communicates truth, is necessary rhetorically.

Moreover, Plato argues that good rhetoric should be based on philosophy and on the method of dialectic. *Socrates* strategy in revising *Lysias* is to broaden the sphere of rhetoric in order to dispute the conclusion he associates with *Zeno*, that rhetoric can be indifferent to truth in the sense that the rhetor needs to have no desire to have the truth prevail. In Plato's view, knowledge of truth is also knowledge of how things resemble and differ from one another; the way to truth is a method of dialectic [14, p. 9].

Phaedrus is impressed by *Lysias*' speech, which argues for the granting of favors to non-lovers rather than lovers, but *Lysias* speech troubles *Socrates*. *Socrates* expresses his dissatisfaction sarcastically: "O noble *Lysias*! I wish he would write that they should be granted to the poor rather than the rich, to the old rather than to the young and so of all the other qualities that I and most of us have; for truly his discourse would be witty and of general utility" Here, early in the discourse, readers are alerted to the concern for a careful choice of topic to enhance a discourse's sense of purpose and are given clues to *Socrates*' dissatisfaction with *Lysias*' topic or possibly his reputation as a sophist. *Socrates* is not convinced by *Lysias*' "cleverness," indicating that in antiquity as today, cleverness is not by itself a rhetorical virtue.

However, it is worth remembering, that discussions of rhetorical and ethical concerns in the *Phaedrus* may be called into question by considering the playfulness with which the dialogue is written. Readers may even interpret the dialogue as more seductive than instructive, and this reading may even be supported by comedic incidents in the dialogue, such as *Socrates*' hiding his head

during his first speech and several places during which Socrates could be imagined to be speaking with a “winking eye.” But the playfulness should not undermine the work’s significance as a rhetorical treatise. For example, Socrates’ above-cited initial criticism of Lysias’ topic choice is valid and important. Obviously, the speech would have been more amusing if Lysias had argued that we should grant favor in love to the old and certainly would have been of greater utility if he had embraced issues of societal impact, such as the difficult position the poor face in society.

Yet Socrates delivers his second speech using Lysias’ own topic. He demonstrates to Phaedrus many of the ways which Lysias’ speech could be improved rhetorically, offering his own work as example. Afterwards he explains how both speeches, his and Lysias’, were wrong from the start: “They sinned against Love; but their foolishness was really very funny besides, for while they were saying nothing sound or true, they put on airs as though they amounted to something, if they could cheat mere manikins and gain honor among them.” Plato argues that even a skilled orator cannot improve a piece if its very foundation is flawed. He demonstrates that the subject of rhetoric and the wisdom of the rhetor behind the rhetorical act are fundamental.

Having set rhetoric a different path, not just one governed by persuasiveness, Plato demonstrates the ethical form of the discourse. In this second speech, Socrates makes an imaginative move into the realm of the perfect forms and describes what Plato would have regarded as truth arrived at by dialectic in his philosophic system. Truth and ethical values in discourse have then taken their rightful places as the speech’s foundation, and it is validated primarily by its communication of the philosophic relationship of the human soul to love, taking advantage of the ambiguity inherent in the concepts of “human soul” and “love.” Burke’s analysis of the speeches on love in the *Phaedrus*, says Bennett, illustrates this advantage: because of “the ambiguity of ‘love,’” the transformation in speech by Socrates, from erotic love to divine love and finally to “the principles of loving speech,” can be made possible¹.

The ethical concern for truth in writing and speaking becomes the basis for other rhetorical guidelines in the *Phaedrus*. The discussion of rhetoric after the speeches begins with the example of the horse and ass. It illustrates the potential dangers, both to the person and to the state, of falsehood in discourse and of a lack of integrity in the orator. Once Phaedrus understands the value of integrity, he can next understand how rhetorical features (such as classification of terms) support ethics. The emphasis here is clearly focused more on the integrity of the conveyance of truth rather than pure persuasion. In *Phaedrus*, rhetoric is not to be separated from truth.

¹ *Bennett W. A Philosophy in Defense of Un-reason in Philosophers on Rhetoric: Traditional and Emerging Views.* Skokie: National Textbook, 1976. P. 248.

Mencius' cheng-yan reinforces a Confucian doctrine on rhetoric: that is, "to cultivate words for the purpose of building trust" or, as "rhetoric oriented towards sincerity." Trust, or sincerity, or truthfulness, is a moral principle in Confucianism: "the aim of the noble man is to be cheng" [15, p. 104]. Thus, cheng-yan can be viewed as "both the means to an end and the end itself of communication" [16, p. 175]. Concomitantly, cheng-yan, "truthfulness" is reminiscent of Burkean "identification," which is seen as a strategy as well as the goal of rhetoric [17]. Bo Wang has argued that the Analects, for example, "...can be read as a virtue-oriented rhetoric. Confucius's emphasis on the constitutive role of the art of communication in cultivating the moral self and forming reciprocal human relationships to achieve communal, social harmony can offer an alternative vision for imagining the relationship of ethics to rhetorical theory, practice, pedagogy in our time" [18, p. 69].

Discussion. In contemporary rhetoric, the Platonic concern for ethics is often absent. Process textbooks spend much of their time on strategies and activities to help students improve various techniques, which are often perceived as distinctly separate entities. Perhaps these exercises are helpful to students who are unfamiliar with rhetorical strategies, but they fail to acknowledge the larger issue, which is that rhetoric is a complex system of ideas, values, psychology, language and technique of which truthfulness is fundamental.

Students are motivated by their own hopes and successes with writing, and connections between the kinds of things they write about and their own values should aid efforts to increase student interest in writing. Any discussions of an objective truth such as Plato might have advocated are problematic in today's world, but we can assume that most students possess values and ideals before they enter the classroom. Whether or not real objectivity can be claimed, their perception of the world and the successful interpretation of it in writing should build self-esteem and a more positive opinion of their writing efforts. In the writing classroom ethical concerns may add a personal sense of purpose absent from many other disciplines.

But Plato's plan for rhetorical instruction is, for the most part, ignored by contemporary writing theorists. For example, Karen Burke LeFevre in *Invention as Social Act* attacks Plato's rhetoric on the grounds that it is based upon innate ability and knowledge. She practically ignores the *Phaedrus* dialogue and lumps what Plato actually says about rhetoric with everything the history of rhetorical instruction has had to say about Plato. Her attack is as hazardous to pedagogical thought as if she had, in Plato's terms, "called it an ass." Indeed, Plato believed "natural ability" was a primary condition of a good orator, but *Phaedrus* makes very clear that even a good orator is dangerous if he misrepresents the facts. Her criticism of Plato's philosophic system's basis on innate knowledge may serve the larger scope of her argument, but how many of us will readily leap to the conclusion that no part of the writing process arises from introspection? Even

in Plato's Academy, invention connected to the discovery of truth, via dialectic, was not performed alone. Criticism such as LeFevre's is a good example of the danger in such misrepresentation of facts. Instead of expanding Plato's numerous ideas about rhetoric, she reduces his rhetoric to a nearly unrecognizable form and ignores other, more significant comments on form, feature and ethics.

LeFevre's rejection of Plato is consistent with a society that ignores ethical or value-based considerations. If we consider the textbooks generated for writing instruction as evidence of the goals of the community, we see that modern instruction behaves as if ethical and value-system considerations are not issues. Some contemporary theorists have, in their rejection of classical rhetoric, rejected the very purpose of communication.

But even those who would favor Plato's ideas must admit that matters of truth, ethics and values are problematic for teachers of the culturally diverse student bodies found at most colleges and universities. However, proponents of multi-racial, multi-cultural writing programs may be headed in the right direction. They do not claim descendancy from classical schools of thought but their emphasis on diversity validates a variety of belief systems which in turn should direct concerns of the students toward questions of value. In addition, providing students with topic choices with which they can identify allow them to match their interests to the strength of their hearts and minds.

If we follow the suggestions put forth in Phaedrus, fears that such programs will defer student attention from writing as a subject will be unwarranted. According to Plato, good rhetoric should be based upon truth, and not just persuasion, and as we strive to properly represent ourselves and our ideas, the stylistic techniques of rhetoric will serve truth.

Such a writing program might follow the pattern of Phaedrus, examining model discourses for rhetorical strategies and scoring out relative truths and falsehoods from the mire of political and cultural rhetoric. Their discussions about their own writing should follow a similar path. Students who engage in such a program should improve their critical as well as their writing skills. Also, writing would be better represented as a complex system of skills, ideology and psychology, and students who gain an appreciation of the system will have a more accurate and more truthful understanding of what writing should be and is.

Confucian rhetoric also emphasizes truthfulness and likewise "focuses more on the appeal of language than on the very person who speaks or writes it" [19, p. 26]. It confirms the presence of a philosophical awareness of the structuring power of language in shaping human behavior [20], [21]: hence Confucius' promotion of "rectification of names." Confucius, as well as his followers such as Mencius recognized that "language, as a social practice, mediates one's conduct" [19, p. 26]. This explains why "sincere speech," rather than "sincere

personality,” is emphasized in the Confucian ethos of truthfulness (cheng-yan or “ethos of sincerity”) [22, p. 3].

Confucius repeatedly stresses that clever words are not associated with truthfulness. His disdain for clever rhetoric is discussed in many of his writings. He also notes the vital role language plays in governing. To govern well, according to Confucius, one should accurately represent reality through the use of language. He recommends that one should speak to the right person with appropriate topics and manners and writing [13, p. 148]. Confucius is very concerned with ways to influence people’s behavior and motivating them to action through exemplary conduct, cultivating virtue and truthfulness [13, p. 150].

Conclusion. Confucian and Platonic dialogues have become valuable sources for rhetorical exploration with the emerging awareness of secondary orality. The recent rapid development of electronic communication technologies has much revived academic interest in classical oral rhetoric. The electronic revolution is greatly changing the face of today’s communication. This relatively fragile territory of communication may be further cultivated for a better understanding of the rhetorical arts originating from ancient rhetoricians like Confucius and Plato. The essential elements that have animated their dialogical practice are their combination of orality and literacy. Confucius and Plato demonstrated dialogical rhetoric many centuries ago. Being dialogue, it takes into view the dynamic relations between participants/discussants and between human agents and divergent topics. Being rhetoric, it not only resorts to rhetorical conventions like credibility or sincerity, emotional appeals, but also values a scientific attitude of seeking truth. Both of these ancient philosophers remain responsive to our time and to our questions and discussions.

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Вклад авторов: все авторы сделали эквивалентный вклад в подготовку статьи к публикации.

Authors' contribution: All authors have made an equivalent contribution to the preparation of the article for publication.

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Поступила: 13.07.2023

Received: July 13, 2023

Одобрена после рецензирования: 01.08.2023

Approved after review: August 01, 2023

Принята к публикации: 03.08.2023

Accepted for publication: August 03, 2023