



# The Liberal Arts Tradition

with Dr. Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain

## Lesson 9: Rhetoric

### Outline:

*“Paul came artfully not employing rhetoric because he wanted to give them a picture of a person who was plain spoken and humble and yet demonstrated the Spirit with power. That became a very powerful rhetorical argument for his message.”*

Dr. Kevin Clark

### Rhetoric

- The nature of a liberal art is a way of knowing.
- Rhetoric is a way of knowing.
  - We are used to thinking about Rhetoric as a technique of persuasive speech.
  - Rhetoric as a way of knowing is traditional. **Rhetoric is the art, power, and ability of seeing all the gives ways of persuasion in a given instance (Aristotle).**
  - Rhetoric is a power of seeing (not to persuade people), but to see things and to understand.
  - What is here before me if I need to speak to these people and I have the responsibility of leading their souls (Plato) or creating worlds (C.S. Lewis).
- The art of rhetoric perfects the human ability to speak. We use our words to move people in one direction or another. That is the power of dwelling in the word, the great birthright of being human.
- Rhetoric perfects the art of seeing the possibilities, the available means of persuasion.

### Rhetoric as a way of knowing

- From Aristotle, rhetoric is the moment when the speaker who has knowledge and understanding of the particular contingences of the situation speaks into the moment in a way that harnesses their understanding and unites it to the audience and creates a brand new understanding.
- As teachers, in the moment of delivery to our students, we come to a new understanding ourselves. In this application to the particular instance that the truth we know generally becomes specific and palpable to understand.
- The opportunity to exercise the art of rhetoric is not just to communicate effectively, but to share an understanding of the truth together with an audience in the midst of your presentation.

What was Plato concerned about with Rhetoric?

- Plato was concerned with the power of words. “Loose lips sink ships.”
- The possibility of manipulating people with words was a concern.
- Only use truth (rather than eloquent words) and let its persuasive ability rule the day (Socrates and Paul).
- There is ambivalence in the tradition between philosophy (persuade with knowledge of truth) and Sophism (persuade people with words).
- Plato is failing to take into account a full anthropology.
- *When a whole person is speaking to whole persons they have to speak to them as whole persons. When I speak to you, I am going to instruct you, but I am not going to think I can instruct you without moving you and delighting you.*
- It is not enough to just be eloquent (Cicero and Quintilian). You want to people who are wise and good and able to speak eloquently.
- Sometimes you set available means of persuasion aside.
- Aristotle sees connection between the liberal art of Rhetoric and cultivation of moral judgement.
- *Paul came artfully not employing rhetoric because he wanted to give them a picture of a person who was plain spoken and humble and yet demonstrated the Spirit with power. That became a very powerful rhetorical argument for his message.*

