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**The *Lotus Sutra* as Rhetorical Doctrine:  
Toward a Spiritual Paradigm Shift in Academia**

*By Erec Smith*

In his article, “One University Under God,” Stanley Fish wrote, “When Jacques Derrida died I was called by a reporter who wanted to know what would succeed high theory and the triumvirate of race, gender, and class as the center of intellectual energy in the academy. I answered like a shot: religion.” Fish’s focus on the theological was created by his observations of academe and his conclusion that the line between religion and intellectuality, the border between an embrace of faith and a search for truth, was becoming more and more blurry. Fish writes:

Announce a course with “religion” in the title, and you will have an overflow population. Announce a lecture or panel on “religion in our time” and you will have to hire a larger hall. . . . And those who come will not only be seeking knowledge; they will be seeking guidance and inspiration, and many of them will believe that religion—one religion, many religions, religion in general—will provide them.

Fish’s words, keenly observational if not prophetic, seem, in the context of the article, to be conveyed in an ominous tone that implies a need for scholars to enter academia with a bit of trepidation. Such an attitude implies that the religious guidance of which Fish speaks cannot coexist with secular practicality. However, it can and it does. It is hard to deny a religious doctrine simply based on secular bias if that doctrine provides the practical knowledge so valued in Western secularity. That practical knowledge is rhetoric, and I present rhetoric as one effective bridge between religious doctrine and the secular liberalism that drives higher education.

Before we begin to explore a new approach to the relationship of religion to academia we should recognize where we’ve already been. Melding the subjects of rhetoric with religion is nothing new. St. Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine* applies Ciceronian tactics to teaching, praising and motivating based on scripture. He writes that, since common people cannot be nearly as eloquent as scripture, they

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have to use tactics derived from secular sources (Augustine 389). Christ, himself, utilized many rhetorical tactics in his time. His stories about the good Samaritan and the prodigal son are easily recognized narratives in both religious and secular society. The marriage of Buddhism with academia and rhetorical theory, in particular, is nothing new, either. It has been applied to rhetorical strategies as well as pedagogy.<sup>[1]</sup> However, these texts seem to miss the fact that the Buddha explicitly addresses the use and importance of rhetoric for any sage. Mark Lawrence McPhail's excellent work, *Zen in the Art of Rhetoric*, gives a Buddhist analysis of rhetoric, but from a specific Buddhist sect (Zen) and its general ideologies; he does not recognize rhetoric as a specific and explicit subject in the Buddha's teachings.

The acknowledgement of a specific religious text as a treatise on rhetoric may be a new beginning for the presence of spirituality as a systemic part of the humanities. It may be a new beginning for student and scholarly interests in both rhetoric and religion. It may be a new beginning for those seeking spiritual fulfillment but lacking a graspable and practical conduit. When it comes to spiritual renewal, those inside and outside of academia may benefit from a study of rhetoric, and a Buddhist text may provide the most salient opportunity.

In this essay, by initially acknowledging the inherent problems of communication that motivated the Buddha's respect for rhetoric, I will show where the Buddha expresses the importance of rhetoric, how he exposes his own use of rhetoric, and what this implies about rhetoric, religion and academia: rhetoric is spirituality's chaperon into the world; perhaps the study of rhetoric is the new focal point where religion and academia meet. Perhaps without rhetoric, we would not have religions, and religious figures would not be able to be religious figures. By examining a specific Buddhist text, *The Lotus Sutra*, I will show how rhetoric manifests in Buddhism and how Buddhism manifests in the rhetorical canon. The symbiosis of Buddhism and rhetoric is the bridge that can effectively connect religion and secular liberalism.

*The Issue: The Sage's Charge*

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I think there are very few things more indicative of an intellectually, culturally and experientially diverse society than the eclecticism of opinion and the variety of defenses to those opinions. The last third of Gorgias' famous statement about knowledge, "If something can be known, it cannot be communicated," is the main culprit, and the validity of this statement is blatant in the ubiquity of persuasive appeals. Everywhere I go, I hear an argument. The coffee house at the end of my street, my classroom, each of the 24 hour news channels, my kitchen, *cartoons*. It seems as if to be human is to argue for the validity of one's specific point of view. Are we doomed to a fate of what Deborah Tannen calls "argument culture?" I see a solution not in our need to assuage such an argument culture, but to notice its stifling effects: is it at all possible to truly convince people to see things in exactly the way we see them? Can works sway someone into our *exact* viewpoint, our *exact* memories and bodily experiences? Is not *approximate* understanding the best we could ever do?

I often find myself trying to explain things to people who are not incapable of getting complex ideas, but are not used to the discourse I am using. My way of speaking may be commonplace in the discourse communities I frequent, but completely foreign to the intelligent person to whom I speak at a different time and place. This is normal; it is the manifestation of rhetoric's importance to any speaker. In order to be a clear and persuasive speaker, one must have, as Aristotle put it, "the ability, in each [particular] case, to see the various means of persuasion" (36). The more sparse or less available those means, the more miraculous (abstract) a speaker must be. This is common knowledge among many. However, for speakers whose insights have made them see something never before seen, for orators who must explain something never before considered, desires to be straightforward may be thwarted by a lack of a straightforward discourse to sufficiently convey insights and considerations. Although they have the potential to be innovators and trailblazers, they have few, if any, verbal tools to express such views. A popular saying that reveres the knowledgeable man among the ignorant must be revised: In the land of the blind, the one eyed man is *not* king; he is that crazy guy who keeps saying he can "see" things.

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A speaker's desire to have a straightforward and subdued tone in his speeches may be upset when confronted with those people who know neither the speaker's motivations nor the directions of his intentions. Such a speaker, even though he knows the truth and the potentially grand benefits of the truth, may be seen and heard as a fool to those not familiar with the topic or the means of explaining the topic. I am reminded of Foucault's snippet in "The Order of Discourse" about the shunning of Mendel by the botanical community of the nineteenth century.

People have often wondered how the botanists or biologists of the nineteenth century managed not to see that what Mendel was saying was true. But it was because Mendel was speaking of objects, applying methods, and placing himself on a theoretical horizon which were alien to the biology of his time ... Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not "within the true" of the biological discourse of his time: it was not according to such rules that biological objects and concepts were formed. (Foucault 1467)

Mendel, who we know was very much onto something in his assessment of plant life and is now revered as a "Father" of biology, was seen as "alien" while the revered Scheiden was incorrect but speaking in a manner indicative of the current discourse in the field was accepted (1467). It would seem that *sounding* correct is more important than *being* correct.

Of course, Mendel's situation is neither old nor new. We are warned of it in Aristotle, but can see it today in the acquisition of lofty positions by those who lack the merit but have the wherewithal to know their audiences. What some would call "sound bite" rhetoric resonates with those who feel "talked over" by politicians who try to explain larger, complicated issues with the meticulous explanations that apparently suit upper-class, highly educated audiences. Perhaps the issue is that we try to explain too meticulously, try too hard to get our listeners to understand exactly what it is we understand. Gerald Graff says that this attempt actually gets in the way of persuasion and insists that there is something to be said of the "sound bite" concept. He writes that "ideas cannot circulate in a complex society unless they can be reduced to concise formulations that encapsulate a concept or argument, often in speech genres of the vernacular. Simplify Whenever You Complexify is the general rule" (140). At worst, this is a sign of the Lowest Common Denominator rhetoric that John Boghosian Arden calls a "meltdown" in

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American society (Arden 1). At best, however, this seems like a pitch for an Aristotelian enthymeme: a conclusion that presupposes major premises.

Fair enough, but what of the really important issues? What about those speakers who don't want to simply convey relatively mundane and "known" things, but want to express the unknown? What if that guy on the side of the road wearing the sandwich board riddled with nonsense knows something we don't but simply doesn't have the words to articulate it in a way we deem sane? How do sages let us know they are sages? It would seem that something as reductive as a sound bite just would not cut it.

### *Rhetoric in Buddhism*

The Buddha actually gives an explanation in one of his last "sermons." Part of this talk presents itself as a kind of treatise on rhetoric and its benefits. This sermon, given the context of the sage's specific religion, is actually known as a sutra, *The Lotus Sutra*. In *The Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha's second-to-last teaching, the sage laments the fact that he has never been able to convey his knowledge outright, for, in that method of delivery, it could only be understood by other Buddhas (Watson 24). The Buddha, then, is in the world to guide those to enter a path toward Buddhahood, but not to express it outright, for to express it outright would be to speak in a way foreign and incomprehensible to mortals (31). Perhaps all that we can do is guide our listeners and readers toward the thing we realize. Perhaps, through rhetorical practices, all the aforementioned one-eyed man can do is push the blind toward what he sees; it is up to them, once there, to grasp it.

Actual words from the *Lotus Sutra* may explain this more, and the second and third chapters, as well as significant sections throughout the book, are all about this. While speaking directly to one of his best disciples, Shariputra, the Buddha tells of the necessary rhetorical strategies, what he calls "expedient means," he expounds to relay his teachings. Since the Buddha must preach to people who cannot understand Buddhahood, he must gauge his audience and act accordingly (something Mendel, for

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example, didn't seem to do). The Buddha says of himself and other apparent Buddhas of the distant past,

Shariputra, the Buddhas teach the law with accordance with what is appropriate, but the meaning is difficult to understand. Why is this? Because we employ countless expedient means, discussing causes and conditions using words of simile and parable to expound the teachings. The Law is not something that can be understood through pondering and analysis. Only those who are Buddhas can understand it. (31)

“Pondering and analysis” are not enough to understand the Buddha way of being. So, if the application of our deepest cognitive abilities isn't enough, why does the Buddha even spend time explaining it, even through his aforementioned rhetorical strategies? The same page provides the answer: “Why is this? Because the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone. . . . They wish to induce human beings to enter the path of Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world” (31). So, it would seem that the Buddha, a being more enlightened than anyone on Earth at the time of this speech, cannot succeed at fully explaining himself—what it is to acquire enlightenment to the point of Buddhahood. All he can do is guide us along the path so that we can, on our own, become enlightened. What's more, the only way to do this is not through “direct” language, but through “expedient means”: rhetorical practices appropriate to a specific audience, “in each [particular] case, to see the various means of persuasion” (Aristotle 36).

This rhetoric of darkness (taking metaphorical “blindness” into consideration when speaking) is key to the acquisition of oratorical prowess because it reminds us to think of all the things that may have never been present in the worlds of our audiences. When it comes to the wisdom of a “supreme enlightened being,” there are no “available means of persuasion.” If people say they've been persuaded, it is merely because of their own intellectual resonations synthesizing with something said or shown. Francis Bacon went as far as to say that the rhetorical canon of invention is actually one of remembrance, and that “the use of this invention is no other but out of the knowledge whereof our mind is already possessed, to draw forth or call before us that which may be pertinent to the purpose which

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we take into our consideration. So as, to speak truly, it is no Invention, but a Remembrance and Suggestion, with an application” (740). In other words, people are already convinced, they just haven’t acquired the awareness or language to recognize and articulate it: a speaker’s rhetoric is the mirror needed for people to see themselves. When this happens, they each say, “I have been persuaded.”

Knowing this, the Buddha used his rhetorical skills to benefit humankind (31). Shariputra, his beloved disciple and audience in this sutra, admits his inability to understand the Buddha as well as the Buddha’s need to use “expedient means” to help the figuratively blind understand what he could clearly see (48). However, when he asks for further explanation, the Buddha reminds him of the inevitability of using rhetorical strategies to teach:

Did I not tell you earlier that the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, cite various causes and conditions and use similes, parables and other expressions, employing expedient means to preach the Law, it is all for the sake of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment)? . . . Moreover, Shariputra, I too will now make use of similes and parables to further clarify this doctrine. For through similes and parables those who are wise may obtain understanding. (56)

What the Buddha says next is the very definition of rhetoric, particularly rhetoric of an enlightened being trying to explain his enlightenment to the mentally and spiritually blind. This rhetoric of darkness is meant to enlighten, as controversial as it may seem. The strong implication that such rhetorical strategies are, by association, divine should not be lost on the reader. When dealing with the imperfect words of the mundane, one can only use such rhetorical tools to communicate with and move one’s listener. With this in mind, the Buddha gives the first of many parables in the *Lotus Sutra*. This parable, however, explicitly explains the very need for parables and rhetorical strategies, in general. Below is a paraphrased version of the parable.

There was once a rich man with many possessions and many servants who lived in a house that was in bad shape, decaying and significantly giving way to gravity. The house also had one gate.

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One night, the house burst into flames. The rich man could have easily escaped through the one gate, but his many sons were still in a room in the middle of the house, playing with their toys, unaware—and therefore content—that the house was burning down on all sides. He thought of carrying them out himself, but realized this would be too difficult given their numbers and the house's already doomed condition. The father tried to be straight with the sons and clearly called out impeccable directions to get to the gate and to safety, but his sons were too engrossed in their toys and games to pay sufficient attention to him.

At this point in the story, the Buddha gives an aside: “At that time the rich man had his thought: The house is already in flames from this huge fire. If I and my sons do not get out at once, we are certain to be burned. I must now invent some expedient means that will make it possible for the children to escape harm” (57).

At this point, the father used his specific knowledge of each son and called out to each that he would get a favorite toy—an oxcart, goat-cart, etc—if he left the house immediately. This worked. Each child went running through the gate and, when the father got to them, immediately began to ask for the toys promised them. The father proceeded to give them each a large carriage adorned with precious jewels and pulled by white oxen. The sons were quite pleased at having gotten something greater than they expected or ever imagined.

At this point in the story, the Buddha asks Shariputra, “Shariputra, what do you think of this? When this rich man impartially handed out to his sons these big carriages adorned with rare jewels, was he guilty of falsehood or not?” Shariputra responds expectedly, telling the Buddha that the rich man was not being deceptive but pragmatic (he goes as far as to say the rich man preserved each son's life, which is a *kind* of play thing). The Buddha affirms Shariputra's answer and then explains that the parable of the rich man and the burning house, itself, is an expedient means to express his need to constantly use expedient means to help humans attain enlightenment (58-59).

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The point of referencing the Buddha's justification of rhetorical strategy is to say that, regarding language, we are all Bodhisattvas: those followers of the Buddha who "aspire to achieve supreme enlightenment themselves, [but] at the same time they are determined that all other human beings, too, should reach the same understanding (Ikeda 121). That is, we can never fully get our audiences to "see" where we are coming from (especially the "blind" ones); we are each individuals with our own unique perceptions of the world. The best we can do is use language that we know will guide our audiences into the general vicinity of our thoughts and ideologies. We must also believe that, once they get there, the benefit will be more than they imagined.

*Buddhism in Rhetoric*

Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, an early essay that exposes tradition and societal "truth" as arbitrary and often impractical, also exposes rhetoric as a means to justify this condition and hide the utter arbitrariness and eclecticism of interpretation that seems to be the human condition. Rhetoric is an inevitable and inherent aspect of life because of the existence of so many potential interpretations of a word, a full text, an incident, etc.

A defining passage in the essay reads,

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike people as firmly established, canonical, and binding; truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer coins. (146)

Compare this to a defining passage in the *Immeasurable Means Sutra*, the preface to the more substantial *Lotus Sutra*, which sets the stage for the world's need of expedient means. This passage expounds the duty of an enlightened being once he or she has gained an enlightened "perceptions." It

reads,

Once [Bodhisattvas] have gained this perception, then they must turn to the capacities, natures, and desires of living beings. Because such natures and desires are immeasurable in variety, the ways of preaching the Law are immeasurable; and because the ways of preaching the Law are immeasurable, its meanings are likewise immeasurable. These immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law, and this Law is without aspect. . . . When [bodhisattvas] rest and abide in this understanding of the true aspect of all phenomena, then the pity and compassion that they put forth will be based on clear understanding and not groundless, and they will be truly capable of rescuing living beings from the sufferings that they undergo. (13)

This passage, an iteration of Nietzsche's lamentable description of the world, is what causes the compassion and empathy necessary to be a Bodhisattva. The rhetorical condition *is* the condition that necessitates Buddhism and the existence of a savior-figure like the Buddha. What is referred to as "the Law," "the true aspect of all phenomena," is actually without aspect. Since we can only detect things—be they corporeal, abstract, existent or non-existent—through their manifest aspects, we are stuck in Nietzsche's "mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphism" and must rely on the imperfection of language and symbolism. This is a pitiful and pathetic situation from which we must be saved. Rhetoric, inevitable rhetoric, is the primary symptom of this world's sickness. Only by taking this into account can bodhisattvas be of benefit.

Although the above juxtaposition presents Buddhism as metonymical with neo-sophistic rhetoric and post-structural thought, I believe nothing could solidify Buddhism's place in the rhetorical tradition like showing salient parallels to a canonized rhetorical text. Of course, Buddhism's role in rhetorical theory, as I propose it, is meant to give a new perspective to rhetorical savvy as the utmost *arête*—a divine virtue that is an inevitable tool of any upright citizen, leader or sage-like figure who needs to be heard and heeded. Yet, this new perspective may be easier to glean if one were to see the parallels between a text like the *Lotus Sutra* and Plato's *Phaedrus*. Both have strong similarities in both their implicit and

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explicit treatments of rhetoric and both end with the thought that it takes self-knowledge and wisdom to be exceptional, but it takes rhetoric to prove such exception to others, especially when one's purpose is to benefit and improve those others.

What's more, a comparison with the *Lotus Sutra* can bring *Phaedrus* out of its designation as a dialogue that lacks unity and purpose. When looked at through the eyes of the *Lotus Sutra* and through the lens of rhetoric-as-expedient means—meant to lead the less capable into full capability—any perception of *Phaedrus* as a haphazardly written text melts away, re-presenting the text as necessarily disparate in its topics, for such disparity was necessary in the place, time and situation of the dialogue. Both texts display the necessary malleability of the canons of classical rhetoric. That is, a comparison of these two texts will show that, to be a sage, a guiding intellectual, is to utilize the appropriate (not proper) invention, arrangement, style, delivery and memory for a given purpose. By speaking about rhetoric, the *Lotus Sutra* exemplifies the use and necessity of rhetoric. The *Phaedrus* does the same.

First of all, each text is driven by a palinode (the *Phaedrus* has that which is retracted within its content; the *Lotus Sutra* only refers to the retracted material). Both the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Phaedrus* involve their main characters retracting something they'd said earlier and with strong conviction. This retraction takes place, in both cases, because both protagonists believe the listener is now ready to hear the truth. Thus, the prior works (whether sutras, dialogues, or speeches within the *Phaedrus*) were merely expedient means to get the pupil a bit closer to the truth. Prior stories are inferior, but were necessary at the time. The prior explanations were inferior, but necessary for each particular audience.

This is expressed frequently in the *Lotus Sutra* and, perhaps, is best explained in its seventh chapter: Parable of the Phantom City. It is here where the sutra's *palinodial* nature is justified. The Parable of the Phantom city involves a leader who is guiding a group of weary travelers over a treacherous and uninhabited stretch of road on their way to a veritable Shangri-la full of treasure. At one point, the travelers express their fatigue and fear; they obviously want to give up and turn back. The leader, a man

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with some supernatural ability and an appreciation of expedient means, conjures up a phantom city in the near distance and tells the followers that they can rest there, where it is safe, clean and comfortable. Overjoyed, the travelers make it to the city. When they are fully rested, the leader wipes out the illusory city and tells the people that they must continue on the bad and dangerous road to the true city of treasure. Since they are rested and relaxed, the followers can handle a bit more of the trip and proceed to follow him (174-175).

After telling this story, the Buddha states that he is in a similar situation to the leader in the parable, equating the bad and treacherous road to birth, life and the distraction of earthly desires. He then states that if people knew how far they'd have to go to get to pure enlightenment, they'd give up and remain where they are. Thus, expedient means are used. That is, the Buddha had to preach "lesser doctrine" to keep his pupils moving in the right direction, knowing they were not ready to understand him, outright. The Buddha states, speaking of himself in the third person:

The Buddha knows that the minds of living beings are timid, weak, and lowly, and so, using the power of expedient means, he preaches two nirvanas in order to provide a resting place along the road. If living beings choose to remain in these two stages, then the thus come one [enlightened sage, Buddha] will say to them, "You have not yet understood what is to be done. This stage where you have chosen to remain is close to the Buddha wisdom. But you should observe and ponder further. This nirvana that you have attained is not the true one. It is simply that the thus come one, using the power of expedient means, has taken the one Buddha vehicle and, making distinctions, has preached [several].

The Buddha is like that leader who, in order to provide a place to rest, conjured up a great city and then, when he knew that the travelers were already rested, said to them, "The place where the treasure is is nearby. This city is not real. It is merely something I conjured up. (175).

Like the Buddha, Socrates claims to have conjured up ideas in the *Phaedrus* to keep Phaedrus present

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and interested. In fact, Phaedrus is even more of a flight risk than any of the disciples the Buddha addresses in the *Lotus Sutra*; Socrates seems to be stringing Phaedrus along until he is ready to listen to Socrates' strongest point: the nature and construction of "true" rhetoric.

Socrates' first speech can be seen as his first "expedient," something to hook Phaedrus into what he thinks is a deferred contest between Socrates and Lysias, whose speech Socrates claims he can improve upon. The next speech, Socrates' main and apparently honest speech, is told not merely as a palinode to his prior improvement upon Lysias, and not merely as a speech to keep Phaedrus present. It also serves as a catalyst for Socrates' final points about true rhetoric, for the palinode serves as an example of what can happen when true rhetoric is utilized. The palinode which, like the previous speeches, starts as a small treatise on lovers and non-lovers, turns into a speech about the soul—for one must understand the soul before he can understand the benefits of love. It happens that Socrates believes that the soul is also the major and fundamental consideration for any true rhetorician (as opposed to what he would call a sophist). In fact, he defines rhetoric in a way that smacks of religious indoctrination, the kind the Buddha also takes on. Socrates writes "Well, then, isn't the rhetorical art, taken as a whole, a way of directing the soul by means of speech, not only in the lawcourts and on other public occasions but also in private?" (261A)

Without having much knowledge of Phaedrus outside of his presence in Platonic dialogues, I think it might be fair to say that he may not have responded eagerly to a lecture on rhetoric from the very beginning of his correspondence with Socrates. Phaedrus had to be lured into such a speech through his already apparent interest in lovers, non-lovers and good speech-making. Socrates met Phaedrus, analyzed his audience, and acted accordingly. Thus, Plato's *Phaedrus* is just as unified in itself as the corpus of Buddhist doctrines is unified with the *Lotus Sutra*. Both texts not only utilize rhetoric as a means to retain and persuade others; they also express exactly how the use of communicative lure is imperative to do so.[\[ii\]](#) I attempt to show the interaction of rhetoric and Buddhism to show that there is potential for secular academic pursuits and spirituality to enjoy a kind of symbiotic relationship. The

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common conception that spirituality and secularity are categorically inimitable is questioned a shaken when we present the *Lotus Sutra* as a text exemplifying the highly secular concern of rhetoric. The fact that there is a text in Buddhism that focuses intently on rhetoric may open the eyes of the religious and the secular in ways that could produce innovative and fecund pursuits powered by the double-engines of spirituality and intellectuality. At the very least, perhaps this can serve as a spark that ignites a paradigm shift in academia.

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[i] My essay, "Writing Under the Bodhi Tree," in *Academic Exchange Quarterly, Summer 2005*, chronicles ways in which authors have written about Buddhism's connections to the teaching of writing. Its main thesis involves the application of Buddhist principles to writing center theory and practice, specifically.

[ii] I want to compare the *Lotus Sutra* and *Phaedrus* around a focus on perichoresis. Perichoresis, the Christian term for the interaction and intermingling of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, has an analog of sorts in each text. The Holy Trinity, however, is replaced by the concepts of rhetoric, dialectic and fable.

These three persuasive tactics are identified by Graeme Nicholson in *Plato's Phaedrus: The Philosophy of Love*. Nicholson exposes the intertwined tactics of rhetoric, dialectic and myth as modes of persuasion. Of course, one could say that rhetoric, being, according to Aristotle, "the ability, in each [particular] case, to see the various means of persuasion"(36), is the umbrella term under which dialectic and myth reside (the dialectic and myth are the "available means), but at least dialectic is known as something distinct from rhetoric. Aristotle, himself, wrote, "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic," meaning that both faculties, of monologic and dialogic nature, respectively, are necessary for teaching and persuading. Both the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Phaedrus* involve main characters that create a dance between rhetoric and dialectic, and both utilize myth, in some respect, to do so.

Rhetoric can be seen in the various long, uninterrupted speeches found in each text. These speeches, wherein invention, arrangement and the modes of persuasion are used, are done as a result of dialectic—the dialogue each protagonist uses to set up the speeches. There is a dance of cause and effect among rhetoric and dialectic within both texts.

Fable is used by both protagonists as a prompt or rhetorical device to analogize a point, induce emotion in the listener(s) (pathos) or cultural credibility for the speaker (ethos). Aristotle's conclusion on the practicality of fable is clearly stated in his *On Rhetoric*: "Fables are suitable in deliberative oratory and have this advantage, that while it is

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difficult to find similar historical incidents that have actually happened, it is rather easy with fables. They should be made in the same way as comparisons, provided one can see the likenesses, which is rather easy from philosophical studies” (1394a). Both Buddha and Socrates use fable in this way. Socrates’ Great Speech in *Phaedrus* depends on fable and the Buddha must use fable to create an effective analogy for his listeners. As is the charge of the sage, speaking of things not common to one’s audience may necessitate a provision of examples not common to human experience. Fable can make the unknown a bit more palatable. What does this say? Ultimate guidance depends on dialogue, audience consideration and relatable stories.

The Presence of rhetoric in Buddhism (*Lotus Sutra*) and the presence of Buddhism in rhetoric (canonical texts in the Western rhetorical traditions) strongly imply that there is a place for spirituality and religions in non-theological academic circles. Rhetoric’s role in this can ensure that this happens in a neutral way; no ideological commitment need happen. Of course, Buddhism does not have to be *the* religion of secular academia, but its use can help drive home the fact that academic discourse and communication based on “elaborate” codes, audience consideration and the attempt to explain uncommon, a priori subject matter may smack of a kind of spirituality: the attempt to persuade a person necessitates that attention be paid to those aspects of humanity that influence and drive us the most. As long as such influences are nebulous and hard to describe, there may be a secular place for spirituality and religion in academia.

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