

The Trope of the Non-Writer

By Norah Vii

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Karl Jaspers is perhaps best known for introducing the idea of the Axial Age: a pivotal age in human history when the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid. However, Jaspers only mentions the time frame; he doesn't describe the pivot of this turning point in history. So, I will do this through an exposition of the meaning of the preference not to write among the five great non-writers of history: Moses, Buddha, Socrates, Aristotle, and Jesus. All exceptional men, born and even surrounded by writing or writers, yet all of them were allergic to writing, and none of them produced works of their own. This is a recognizable recurring trope; that is to say, a convention for a purpose.

Here we'll identify this trope and enumerate its characteristics and explain the rhetorical utility that comes from talking about a character who writes nothing. Exclusivity, access control, and power over the entire economic structure are among these. In the 2010 drama "The Social Network," the main selling point of the social media site "The Harvard Connection," which would later become "Facebook," was, at least initially, exclusivity.

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Facebook gave the user exclusive access to Harvard students; thus, those who joined the Harvard-connected Facebook, in turn, had access to an otherwise inaccessible pool of individuals. In the same way, the storyteller of the non-writer gains exclusive access to the story of the non-writer because the writings of the non-writer are not directly examinable by anybody. When we accept an ancient story without examining human nature, we discard much; we discard the existence of salespeople, the existence of liars, and so on.

Surely, it's strange, if not a red flag, that an individual who is so legendary should write nothing while all their friends are exceptionally literate. By telling the story about the non-writer, the storyteller closest to them has exclusive access to the content of what the non-writer said. This, in turn, entices their listeners into the act of writing, which, in turn, encourages that crowd to consume materials in the interest of clarifying what the non-writer said or intended to say.

Because the materials (pen and ink) consumed in the interest of clarifying or analyzing or discussing or arguing about what the non-writer said are physical objects, the center of economic power over the group is shifted towards the storyteller, who, through their speech, creates a school. The word 'school' comes from the Greek word 'scholē', which means "leisure." It might surprise us today to think of "hard intellectual work" as being thought of as leisure, but not if you think of it as an excuse to excuse yourself from labor through the eternally incomplete task of clarifying what Jesus really meant to say or where Aristotle was ultimately going with his thinking. If, on the other hand, the intention here was to entice the crowd into gathering the wood, ink, paper, and so on for the creation of the mediums for writing itself, the reason why the school is leisurely is self-evident.

Clearly, the task of inspiring and scribbling is a walk in the park compared to cutting down the trees. This blind spot is something Karl Marx also failed to notice; he never differentiated manual labor from paper labor, but that feature of Marxist dialectical materialism is not a topic to be expanded on here.

Not surprisingly, the ancients forbade slaves from accessing the tools of writing and even painting. Typically, we frame this as a sad form of class hatred: the slaves are stupid, therefore they can't paint. However, the real reason why a slave must not paint is that they might create an inspirational force which not only triggers human activity but consumes economic resources and therefore wields economic power over the slave masters. This means there is much to gain by depriving people of the ability to create the inspirational determinants of human activity.

The non-writer is a rhetorical device for social control: a statecraft aid. Storytellers who tell the story of these mythological figures had exclusive access to the content of their words, as they weren't written down and were not transcribable. Thus, they found themselves in a pesky situation of being the supreme authority. Short of cutting out their tongue, there would be no way for a counter-force to take the "original text" from their hands to use it for their purposes. The everyday people accustomed to living under the rule of storytellers would be blindsided by attacks of this rhetorical kind; the disciples would be armed with "tongues of fire" indeed. While the motivation for the story of Jesus Christ may have been as an act of revenge against the Romans for the destruction of the Second Temple, the actual groundwork for the tactics of psychological terrorism Jesus and his disciples would later employ would have already been laid over 400 to 500 years before the birth of Jesus, as the Buddhist hell realms, or "Naraka", were described as places of suffering and torment since the early days of the religion. With the utility of the post-death dimension understood, a person like Jesus might be trained to promise the "wailing and gnashing of teeth" to serve a controlling purpose.

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So, what are the common character tropes of the non-writer? Typically, a non-writer is depicted as the most reasonable figure around but is oftentimes the most tragic. Moses never makes it to the promised land. Buddha can't cope with the world's suffering very well. Socrates is almost too reasonable for his own good and is later killed by the state. Aristotle's student Alexander the Great falls short of greatness. Jesus commits suicide by state. They're all extremely influential, yet strangely unable to leave original writings behind. Moses would have been educated by the Egyptian elite, yet he didn't write. Buddha was a Hindu prince, yet he didn't write. Socrates only wrote a poem (which we don't have) once but otherwise wrote nothing. Aristotle left behind no original works, despite Cicero's observation that if Plato's prose was silver, Aristotle's was a flowing river of gold.

On this, the cybernetic American mathematician Norbert Wiener writes, "May I remark that all we possess of Aristotle is what amounts to the school notebooks of his disciples, written in one of the most crabbed technical jargons in the history of the world, and totally unintelligible to any contemporary Greek who had not been through the discipline of the Lyceum? That this jargon has been sanctified by history, so that it has become itself an object of classical education, is not relevant; for this happened after Aristotle, not contemporaneously with him."

And Jesus, at last, wrote nothing even though several of his disciples did and hence I cannot concur with the idea that these men were influential in their own right; rather, what is influential here is the

power of the void.

Even more insidiously, by telling a story where the ideal person doesn't write, you implant non-writing as an ideal to strive for, thereby stripping people of the typical means to power. Thus, the non-writer sometimes asks their audience to do things that make them socially weaker, like Jesus's creed to "pray alone," which deprives people of the power of advertising their needs. According to Game Theory, it's always better to advertise; a company that decides not to advertise while operating under the assumption their competition will do the same will lose the game because the smallest bit of advertising from their opponent will give them a significant advantage. Consequently, an audience striving to imitate Christ is, in effect, a weaker and more docile batch of people, because they're conditioned to send prayers to a trash bin in the sky.

However, despite their moral or spiritual or intellectual authority, these non-writers typically don't express themselves in written form, presumably because whatever is said by them is so God-given it would degrade themselves. It's as though the moderns earnestly believed the ancients were incapable of trolling. Or, for that matter, that trolling itself might be the basis of mankind's spiritual foundations. Is this why Pythagoras was murdered? What, indeed, is the end of mathematics if we can repeat this process (of counting) forever? Plato was influenced by the playwright Aristophanes, yet philosopher historians instruct us to read Plato as if he wrote transcripts rather than the darkest of comedies. It's useless to fight with these philosophers; I predict as Artificial Intelligence becomes more robust, cold hard data will help calculate the likelihood Plato wrote disguised self-talk, not accounts as we're trained to believe, so whether my interpretation is correct is not relevant. This will become a fertile area of research and tests of this kind are imminent. At any rate, this makes chronological sense; following Leo Strauss' advice to "read between the lines" of what philosophers say, Plato's "Apology" is ironic in the highest degree. Plato doesn't really think Socrates does anything wrong. At the start, Socrates dies by proxy so Plato can continue to use Socrates as his mouthpiece as he continually butts heads with the sophists and other thinkers as he searches for the ideal "trainer" or "improver" (or educator), which, per this interpretation of education, would be impossible. Thus, this forms the structure of this ancient tragic comedy. All subsequent dialogues by Plato are written as mere flashbacks to what preceded the death of Socrates, like when a movie begins with the end and we want to keep going to know what happened. But the plot thickens more from here. Just as there's a "chronological link" between Plato and Aristophanes academic philosophers ignore, there are signs hiding in plain sight that the tragedy of Jesus's life was modeled after Socrates.

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According to Strauss, the possibility of persecution serves as the motivation to write exoteric writings which allow one set of readers, the majority, to receive one message while allowing a second set of readers, the philosophical elite, to take away another message. Thus my methods are Straussian in a way, because I do not perform an analysis of the text alone, but the interpersonal relationships and chronological links and human effects too. Hence, I do the dirty work that Strauss is afraid to do. All Strauss did was submit the general recommendation that the ancients be read in an "exoteric" way, he didn't venture further towards an exoterical exposure of what the worst, most elite interpretations, would be. Hence I cannot consider myself a Straussian, as I view Strauss as overly cautious, secretive, and intellectually lazy.

Nietzsche's early unpopular lecture *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* underlies and predates his later works; again supporting a critical view that education can never be humanitarian. Nietzsche argues: the claim to "spread learning among the greatest number of people" is "feigned" because man "perpetually renounces his claim to subordinate himself to the services of the state" and this, for Nietzsche, is proof these two "deleterious" forces are in conflict with the cause of learning in general, which thereafter is degraded to a "subterfuge" in the struggle for existence. Thus, we can tell Nietzsche is fundamentally critical of man as an animal, which according to him is just a creature who "invented knowing" who misleads himself into thinking he's in some way a master of nature. Because there can be no efficacy in educational access, man's interest in learning is fake. This is the starting point for Strauss-like "dark side" interpretations of ancient texts, or non-texts.

Derrida is a more recent thinker who writes about writing. He, through his distinction between speech and writing, suggests writing's primary function as a means of communication is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings. However, he fails to point out the obvious; again, it's the immateriality of speech (which passes away), which stands out as different by contrast to writing which (materially) hardens social barriers because it requires energy and time and resources to understand and create it. And this is all dialectical materialism aims to explain. It is an unequivocal fact that writing is "code" which simultaneously "encodes" making it fundamentally antisocial. I am therefore inclined to think ancient societies favored oral traditions because they knew this, while "advanced" societies like that in ancient China and Egypt allowed writing by mistake. Although these societies produced wonders of sophisticated technical achievement, the wonders were symptomatic of the social stratification that writing creates; unlike speech, the words on a page can only be read by a maximum of 3 or 4 people, making it exceedingly annoying to share. Comical as this portrait may be (if you can imagine it) it shows exactly why writing cuts off the majority. I aim to do more than with less, and end this philosophical scaremongering like that found in the writing of Nietzsche and Strauss and Derrida, who know the art of being slow and tedious for commercial value.

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Although Socrates died nearly 400 years before Christ, they're similar in many respects. First of all, they didn't write, even though their contemporaries did. The satirist Lucian of Samosata was born in 125 AD; in his satire "Passing of Peregrinus," he calls Peregrinus the "new Socrates" since he wishes to burn himself alive following the Olympic games. So early on, there's evidence these upper classes were conscious of the copycatism of the Christians, who kill themselves merely for attention. He mocks Jesus, by calling him a "crucified sophist and sage," which tells us Jesus had both philosophical (sophist) and rabbinical (sage) knowledge.

In Plato's dialogue "The Sophist," a sophist is described as a human-hunting dissembler. Using rhetorical conversation, Plato tells us a sophist and angler begin with the art of acquiring human beings. Such a person, or fisher, may use more direct means, such as barbing (with a spear), "the kind which strikes with a hook and draws the fish from below upwards, the nature of the operation is denoted angling or drawing up." Curiously, hundreds of years later, Jesus straightforwardly proposes to his disciples that I will make you "fishers of men." However, this chronological link is never admitted because, if it was, it would mean this was an evolution of the human-hunting art; Jesus's statement might not have been anything he said (if he existed), but a backwards reference to Plato's description

of the sophist as an "angler." Thus a Christian would draw an arch in the sand, and if the other was a fellow conspirator, he or she would complete the fish to symbolize their intention to hunt for human beings. Thus "rhetorical ability" is all "tongues of fire" really means.

Gorgias was a sophist who believed that rhetoric (the art of persuasion), was the king of all sciences since he saw it as a techné with which one could persuade an audience toward any course of action. All philosophy does to depart from this is to use Socrates as a character who demonstrates that this situational practice is bad; ingeniously re-branding itself "philosophy" as the "wise" recognizers and documenters of this evil, thereby allowing this practice (techné) of sophistry to turn against itself while still possessing all the same characteristics.

Let's see how Plato's trick works. First, sophistry is pejorified as a predatory talking activity in which the speaker artfully imitates the wise to earn money: an angler of men: a fisher of men. This insult applies to everyone involved in education and even includes politicians because the statesman is a professional storyteller of a future situation that can never arrive. Mesmerizing! In just a few breaths, a barb is launched by a speaker which knocks out every person in any position of authority. Because this (enlightened) non-writer (Socrates) is later murdered, everyone wants to know how the "wise man" died since he alone seemed capable of exposing the educators as charlatans, which typically Socrates only does by exhausting them. In classical philosophical education, we are told to believe the sophists were fundamentally wrong when, in reality, they were everyday educators and improvers turned into a pejorative by Plato's maneuvers. Plato is no different from a sophist because although Socrates accepted no payment for his demolition and exposition of the sophists, Plato did, and hence he too falls under the genus "sophist" as a human hunter, who tells a mere story about reality.

With the story of Jesus, the barb (the pejorification of sophistry) is consolidated by Jesus's use of the word "hypocrite," which means one who doesn't do what he says. But how can one do what they say? Let's say I give a command. From here it follows that an instructor or educator cannot do what they say, if they say a command, because doing that command is not included in the saying of the command itself, because that would be strange. I call this phenomena the rhetorical and actual divide. Jesus's request for his "flock" to "live by example" is covertly a request for people to "be silent and die." This is just a rhetorical strategy for disarmament. Similarly, when Plato, through Socrates, accuses his adversaries of "sophistry," which he morphs into a pejorative that classical philosophers would say later means "one who uses fallacious arguments for money" (e.g. every educator), he frees himself from his term turned insult because his character refused to be paid for the insults he gave. This is obvious, but historians have not tracked this. In both cases, these talk-hating legends died, and were used as human pivots on which to talk about their suicidal wisdom "professionally." What the word "hypocrite" really is, is a sharper version of this ancient rhetorical attack.

Furthermore, because the storyteller of this non-writer is merely repeating the story, they are able to pass by, because they're not saying the words directly. This technique is both effective and quite childish, like when children use puppets to talk to adults to say things indirectly. Those who hear Plato's story charitably experience a vicarious association with Socrates, the "reasonable man" unjustly killed by the state. This storytelling technique was likely identified as a rhetorical device for social control, and later served as a prototype for Jesus, who was also killed for corrupting the youth

for being too reasonable. Clearly the tragedy that reason isn't reasonable is so hard for humans to handle that, as Lucian documents by satire, that men are willing to sacrifice themselves because they see human life as worthless.

We shouldn't balk at this; I should note that the practice of Sallekhana (ritualistically starving oneself to death) was a feature of Jainism: one of the oldest religions in the world. The idea was the only real way for one to escape the cycle of rebirth was to renounce all desire, including the desire for food. Thus it's counterhelpful for historical analysts to discard coercive control and rhetorical maneuvering and brainwashing as tools in the rhetorician's arsenal; if humans can be taught that starvation is good, it makes sense that humans can be taught to enjoy killing themselves vicariously through Jesus, too. A further consideration must be paid to the grim reality that parents routinely sell their children for sex, up to the current year, and that few if any anti-Christian commentators have bothered to mention that it's far more likely a baby Jesus was groomed, for literally any illicit purpose, than for three genius wealthy men to start giving money and worship away to a baby as God.

There are also clues in Plato's allegory of the cave that he was well aware of paper's usefulness for human enslavement. Because ink is a black (shadowy) substance, it's cast (from a mind) onto the paper (wall) in front of your eyes. Thereafter, you are (chained) held prisoner, by habit, because doing so weakens you. How? Per my my interpretation the shadow-speculators are the only people in the dialogue to own property. That's to say a contractual right to property ownership expressed in writing. For Socrates asks: "Or would not he or she much rather wish for the condition that Homer speaks of, namely "to live on the land (above ground) as the paid menial of another destitute peasant?" Wouldn't he or she prefer to put up with absolutely anything else rather than associate with those opinions that hold in the cave and be that kind of human being?" This begs the question "Why can't an underground person enter the over-ground without becoming destitute?" I can think of no other explanation besides my personal interpretation that the cave wall being faced in the allegory, is the paper wall.

In Plato's age the rabbinical valuation of writing for the indication of contractual right to property ownership in courts of law was making it increasingly self-evident the writings' use would lead to a turn away from over-ground reality into the "underground" art of interfacing with the sign on paper. Heidegger points out that Platonism, as a project worth reversing (understanding the mechanism for it's deployment), is something Nietzsche wanted to explain in his own way. More straightforwardly: people are never elevated by signs, they're merely influenced by them. Most of Nietzsche's life is annoyance over the reality that no professional philosopher can agree with this interpretation, as it undermines their whole enterprise and makes them look hypocritical. Responding with hostility to this interpretation triggers the persecution narrative that Plato embedded in the allegory itself, causing the philosophical professorship to discharge the revealer of a hidden meaning that, if known, would destroy them by undermining their role as a mere "subterfuge" in the struggle for existence. Social inequality and class warfare would have less to do with ideology, then, and more to do with the mechanical or operational procedures human's adjust to doing (like how eyes adjust to the dark). On the one hand, this is unfortunate because operational inclusion isn't possible; on the other hand it's fortunate as it demonstrates we all have common ground.