

RHETORIC

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It is undeniable that pejorative connotations have over the centuries come to be attached to the term 'rhetoric': it has been equated, more often than not, with the use of language that is in some way specious, spurious, superficial and/or dishonest, the main effect of which is (deliberately or not) to mislead and even deceive. In arguments, debates, quarrels and conflicts of various kinds, the charge of 'mere rhetoric' is an accusation often flung at one's opponents, the counterpart of which is the assumption that one's own point of view is, by contrast, uncontaminated thereby, not lacking in substance, enlightened and, ultimately, truthful. However, the term 'rhetoric' as it is used today also has another, much more neutral meaning, referring broadly speaking to both the *practice* and the *theory* of human communication in all its various guises. In other words, it refers to both what humans *do* when they communicate with each another (human discourse in action) and the study of the underlying *principles* which inform such practices (the academic discipline called 'rhetoric' devoted to the study of human discourse). The term 'rhetor' is normally reserved for the purveyor of discourse, while the term 'rhetorician' is reserved for someone who studies it.

Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg offer, in the "General Introduction" to their seminal anthology The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present, a brief but very useful overview of the variety of definitions of rhetoric which have been offered over the centuries:

Rhetoric has a number of overlapping meanings: the practice of oratory; the study of the strategies of effective oratory; the use of language, written or spoken, to inform or persuade; the study of the persuasive effects of language; the study of the relation between language and knowledge; the classification and use of tropes and figures; and, of course, the use of empty promises and half-truths as a form of propaganda. Nor does this list exhaust the definitions that might be given. Rhetoric is a complex discipline with a long history: it is less helpful to try to define it once and for all than to look at the many definitions it has accumulated over the years and to attempt to understand how each arose and how each still inhabits and shapes the field.

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Rhetoric has, in short, been variously equated with the theory and the practice of oratory, of the use of argument, of communication more generally, of the persuasive function of language, of the figurative dimensions of language-use, of so-called 'epistemic rhetoric,' that is, the epistemological function of language-use and, last but not least, of the use and abuse of language, often for nefarious ends (what Wayne Booth calls 'rhetrickery' in The Rhetoric of Rhetoric).

Etymologically, as Eric Partridge notes, the English term 'rhetoric' is derived from the Classical Greek terms *rhetorike technē* (the art or technique of oratory) and *rhetor* (teacher of oratory), which are in turn related to *rhema* (the spoken word, literally 'that which is spoken'), *rhexis* (speech), and *eirein* (to say and, by extension, to put or join together in order to form a whole). Accordingly, the term 'rhetoric' referred, at least initially and in the Athenian context, simply to the skill of effective speaking within certain public situations (e.g. in a court of law or in the political arena), the goal of which was to persuade an identifiable audience (usually one's fellow citizens charged, for example, with

passing judgment on alleged wrong-doing or deliberating proposed governmental policies) to adopt a particular point of view and/or perform a specific action. It should be noted that, as both Walter Ong and Eric Havelock have argued, rhetoric was originally an *oral* phenomenon, in other words, a discipline that revolved around the use of the *spoken* word and, as such, very much a creature of its place and time, to be precise, the pre-literate Homeric culture of ancient Greece.¹ However, as Greece made the transition from a predominately oral to an increasingly literate culture, the term expanded to include scribal and, with the passing of time, a variety of other media: for example, in recent times, rhetoric has embraced the study of visual and other forms of expression.²

Rhetoric is mostly studied today, for historically specifiable reasons, in the USA where, when found in departments of communication (themselves most often located in Faculties of Social Science), it tends to be conceptualised along more scientific lines (rhetoric qua *science* of communication), whereas it tends to be more artistically and literarily oriented when located in Faculties of Arts and/or Humanities (rhetoric qua *art*). Some, such as Steven Mailloux, have argued that there is or, at least, ought to be a close alliance between rhetoric and 'hermeneutics,' the field of study devoted to the study of the interpretation of discourse. This would result in what Mailloux terms 'rhetorical hermeneutics,' a discipline concerned with the study of both the production and the reception of discourse, broadly conceived, the exploration of how utterances are made and how they are interpreted.³

THE QUARREL BETWEEN RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY

I think it is fair to say, in the light of all the foregoing, that rhetoric has often functioned in the history of Western ideas as something of an alter-ego to philosophy. It is no dramatic revelation to point out that rhetoric has long had, perhaps from the time of its first tiff with philosophy in 5th century BCE Athens, something of a 'bad rap' in academia. The philosophical mode of thinking has been largely embraced by the intellectual mainstream at most academic institutions while the rhetorical has been located, at least in recent times, for the most part on their margins. This is arguably because many, perhaps most intellectuals take themselves and their work quite 'seriously,' in Richard Lanham's sense of the word 'serious,' assuming that their role in the production of knowledge is in the service of the truth. The premises of such intellectuals, as I shall argue below, are philosophical through and through even though many might have little acquaintance with philosophy per se. They are accordingly reluctant, I would think, to view themselves as engaged in 'merely' rhetorical exercises of some sort. This is because rhetoric is most often painted as something negative, a fault of which your opponents are guilty but which you yourself

¹See, in particular, Ong's "World as View and World as Event" and Havelock's Preface to Plato.

²So-called 'visual rhetoric' studies how visual images (e.g. a painting) communicate as opposed to other modes of communication and how, in a nutshell, the things we see persuade us to think and/or act in certain ways. For a foundational text in the discipline, see Roland Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image." For a useful overview, see Sonja K. Foss' "Theories of Visual Rhetoric."

³See Mailloux's, appropriately entitled, "Rhetorical Hermeneutics."

obviously transcend. Rhetoric is to be avoided because it is, in short, most often viewed as a duplicitous tool, one used (or abused) most often to deceive and ultimately for the sake of attaining goals of a dubious nature. As Locke put it, rhetoric is a "powerful instrument of error and deceit."

Rhetoric, viewed through such mainly neo-Platonic lenses and epitomised by the Sophists of ancient Greece, has come to stand for almost everything regrettable to which philosophy is opposed, above all the possibility that all our truth-claims are arbitrary, perspectival and, thus, ultimately unprovable precisely because shaped by the vantage-point peculiar to the claimant, the precise nature of the argument advanced, the use of figurative language as more than mere ornament, and an orientation designed to appeal to a particular audience of some kind. To be precise, rhetoric has long been accused by philosophers and their progeny of being too mired in the personal, too caught up in the biases of the rhetor, too eager to appeal in turn to the prejudices of a given audience, and too bedazzled by the lure of the figurative. Where the philosophical ideal has, since at least Plato, been identified with the transcendence of the personal and the contingent, that is, the necessity to rise above any focus on the utterer or his/her audience or their respective locations in space and time, rhetoric has, by contrast, sought to emphasise precisely those particularising and contingent aspects of discourse spurned by philosophy.

Underpinning the disagreement between philosophers and rhetoricians over the social, historical and psychological specificity of discourse are two opposed conceptions of the self battling with each other for supremacy. I think it is useful to bear in mind here the well-known distinction drawn by Werner Jaeger in *Paideia* between what he terms the 'rhetorical' and 'philosophical' ideals of life and the respective roles played thereby in Western culture. There are, he writes,

two contrasting types of life, two *bioi*. One of them is built upon the flattering quasi-arts – really not arts at all but copies of arts. We may call it, after one of its main species of flattery, the *rhetorical ideal of life*. Its purpose is to create pleasure and win approval. The other, its opponent, is the *philosophical life*. It is based on knowledge of human nature and of what is best for it: so it is a real *techné*, and it really cares for man, for the body as well as the soul. (2:144)

Richard Lanham avers in a similar vein that the "Western self has from the beginning been composed of a shifting and perpetually uneasy combination of *homo rhetoricus* and *homo seriosus*, of a social self and a central self" whose "business" it is, he stresses, "to contend for supremacy."⁴

Firstly, philosophical or 'serious man,' to use Lanham's jargon, believes that he "possesses a central self, an irreducible identity" which is, as such, located "outside time and change." These selves, Lanham argues, "combine into a single, homogeneously real society which constitutes a referent reality for the men living in it." This "referent society is in turn contained in a physical nature" which is "itself referential, standing 'out there,' independent of man." In this schema, the self is a relatively stable affair, a given which

⁴I am drawing here on the .html version of chapter one available on Professor Lanham's website (<http://www.rhetoricainc.com/motives1.html>) and for which no pagination is provided.

each of us possesses. Taken together, these selves comprise a community (society) located in a particular physical space (nature). The core of this self is, if not entirely independent, to some degree at least autonomous of the constraints of place and time. Placelessness and timelessness, the eternal recurrence of the same, is a notable feature of the ontological presuppositions which subtend this conception of identity: plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

By contrast, according to the rhetorical model, identity is not a given but a tenuous achievement, always subject to change. The self is (to some degree at least) a construct, something fashioned by the circumstances of place and time. This is, to use recent jargon, a subject always in process. The self is partly the product of forces beyond its control and partly of decisions made and steps taken by the individual in question. Lanham, once more, offers a useful overview of this perspective. He argues that for rhetorical man, identity is "centered in time and concrete local event," the "lowest common denominator of his life" being a "social situation." His is a theatrical sense of self: he equates identity with the playing of a variety of roles and accordingly conceives of himself as an "actor" and his "reality public, dramatic. His sense of identity, his self, depends on the reassurance of daily histrionic reenactment." To this end, he "assumes a natural agility in changing orientations." His motivations are "characteristically ludic, agonistic" in that he "thinks first of winning, of mastering the rules the current game enforces." From this somewhat Wittgensteinian perspective, life is something of a game in which the individual participates as s/he tries to manipulate the rules thereof, to adapt them to his/her will and objectives. If rhetorical man "relinquishes the luxury of a central self, a soul," Lanham argues, this is compensated for by the "tolerance, and usually the sense of humor, that comes from knowing he — and others — not only may *think* differently, but may *be* differently."

The rhetorician's view of the self gives rise to a "new definition of persuasion" which is the end of rhetoric. Normally, one

thinks of it as changing the opponent's mind. This is hard to do; this is the philosopher's way. Far easier — here sophist and Madison Avenue are one — to change his self. To redefine him so that he will do what you like spontaneously, hypnotically, by desire. Psychoanalysis does much the same thing, R. D. Laing's analysis of schizophrenia as bad domestic drama being perhaps the clearest case of this. Offer the patient another frame. Cast him in another play.

Lanham would seem to have in mind here something similar to Kenneth Burke's notion of the process of identification or 'consubstantiality' which is the goal of all rhetoric.

The corollary of these competing views of the self are opposed metaphysical and epistemological models. Philosophical man's "seriousness rests," Lanham argues, on a basically stable, straightforward metaphysics that might be summed up under the rubric 'naturalism,' that is, the view that there is an ultimately knowable natural reality (which encompasses human-made or social reality) that can be grasped best of all via the rigorous application of the methods of the natural sciences. Epistemologically speaking, notwithstanding significant differences separating groups such as the rationalists from others like the empiricists — Lanham avers that there is "little to choose between a positivist reality and a Platonic, between realism and idealism" — philosophical man assumes that this world is mentally graspable by means, essentially, of a correspondence

"theory of knowledge" (what Louis Althusser refers to as the 'mirror myth of knowledge'). For the philosophically-inclined, each proposition offers a truth-claim(s) of some kind about some aspect of the world predicated on what is basically a correspondence theory of language. Robert Scholes sums up what he calls this "naive epistemology" (133) in this way: a

complete self confronts a solid world, perceiving it directly and accurately, always capable of capturing it perfectly in a transparent language. Bring 'em back alive; just give us the facts ma'am; the way it was; tell it like it is; and that's the way it is. (132)

In this schema, in short, consciousness is thought to be capable of accurately reflecting the external world, notwithstanding the many pitfalls – not least Francis Bacon's 'idols' – that may stand in the way.

By contrast, rhetorical man rejects the stable metaphysics and epistemology that is the hallmark of the philosophical worldview. If rhetorical man conceives of himself as "fundamentally a role player," Lanham argues, he also "conceives reality as fundamentally dramatic," that is, as so many theatrical performances into which he is inserted and assigned roles. In the rhetorical scheme of things, there are no facts waiting to be discovered, only interpretations: rhetorical man is

trained not to discover reality but to *manipulate* it. *Reality is what is accepted as reality*, what is useful. So Protagoras's wonderful answer when asked if the gods exist: "I do not know whether they exist or not. It is a difficult question and life is too short." Nothing is aught till it is valued. *Rhetorical man does not ask, "What is real?" He asks, "What is accepted as reality here and now?"* (my emphases)

Hence, the world is one's oyster: man dwells

not in a single value-structure but in several. He is thus committed to no single construction of the world; much rather, to prevailing in the game at hand.

This is precisely why rhetorical man "makes an unlikely zealot." Rhetorical man is intensely aware of the multiplicity of discursive traditions according to which reality is interpreted. Accordingly, rhetorical man seeks neither "conceptual creativity" nor the "invention of a fresh paradigm." Rather, he "accepts the present paradigm and explores its resources." This is why he "cannot, to sum up, be *serious*. He is not pledged to a single set of values and the cosmic orchestration they adumbrate."

Fish sums up the foregoing in this way: there are "three basic oppositions" (474), first, between a truth that exists independently of all perspectives and points of view and the many truths that emerge and seem perspicuous when a particular perspective or point of view has been established and in force; second, an opposition between true knowledge which is knowledge as it exists apart from any and all systems of belief, and the knowledge, which because it flows from some or other system of belief, is incomplete and partial (in the sense of biased); and third, an opposition between a self or consciousness that is turned outward in an effort to apprehend and attach itself to truth and true knowledge and a self or consciousness that is turned inward in the direction of its own prejudices, which, far from being transcended, continue to inform its every word and action. (474)

Moreover, Fish points out, rhetoric "may be a danger that assaults us from without, but its

possible success is a function of an *inner weakness*" (476). Those who emphasise the dangers inherent in rhetoric assume that humans are "naturally susceptible to the rhetorician's appeal" (476). This view "posits an *incoherence* at the heart (literally) of the self that is both rhetoric's victim and its source. That self is always presented as divided, as the site of contesting forces" (476). Whatever the names, secular or religious, of these conflicting forces, a "core element of truth and knowledge . . . is continually threatened by a penumbra of irrationality" (476). For this reason, "policing the outer landscape will be of little effect if the inner landscape remains host to the enemy, to sin, to error, to show" (477).

Serious man's philosophy of mind and epistemology is buttressed, Lanham stresses, by a correspondence / instrumentalist model of language. In this schema, words can function as mirrors of both our ideas (which can, in turn, serve as reflections of our experience of outer reality) and our feelings (which are reflections of our inner experiences). Language functions in turn as a tool to communicate these ideas and feelings to others:

Man has invented language to communicate with his fellow man. He communicates facts and concepts about both nature and society. He can also communicate a third category of response, emotions. When he is communicating facts or concepts, the success with which they are communicated is measured by something we call *clarity*. When he is communicating feelings, success is measured by something we call *sincerity*, faithfulness to the self who is doing the feeling.

Communication is accordingly judged on the basis of whether or not it is clear – anything which impedes the effective communication of ideas and emotions is deemed regrettable. It is little wonder that 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' have, at least since Matthew Arnold, become key touchstones of Anglo-American Modernism and New Criticism.

For the rhetor/ician, however, language does not function simply as a tool for communicating pre-existent ideas or feelings. Rather, he is "taught to look at language in a certain way" that is very different from that of the philosopher. In Lanham's view rhetorical man, unlike serious man, is not "alienated from his own language." Rather, he feels an "overpowering self-consciousness about language." Because the rhetorical view of life "begins with the centrality of language," it "stands fundamentally opposed to the West's bad conscience about language," revelling in fact in "what Roland Barthes (in "Science vs. Literature") has called 'the Eros of Language.'" In the eyes of its critics, rhetoric may be synonymous with an obsession with verbal ornament, the surface, the manifest face, the external form or outer appearance of discourse beneath which is masked, concealed, disguised, obfuscated or distorted the real or latent meaning. In a nutshell, whatever is substantial or of real value in discourse may be found hidden beneath rhetoric's obscuring veil, its distracting charades. For the rhetor/ician, however, our use of language, that is, our choice of particular figures of speech or the precise ways in which we construct an argument, is deeply imbricated in all our truth-claims about the world. There is no way around language. There is no question of a linguistically unmediated access to reality. Where the philosopher aspires to realism, the rhetor/ician is accordingly a "nominalist to the end of [his/her] days." For this reason, "[a]ttention would fall, first and last if not always, on the verbal surface, on words not ideas." All one can do is play with, regurgitate, reject, alter, accommodate the inherited commonplaces or topoi of description. This is why there is no question of "verbal spontaneity": "[l]anguage, spoken or written" is "naturally premeditated.

Fish sums up the linguistic differences separating the two camps as a distinction between two kinds of language: language that faithfully reflects and reports on matters of fact uncolored by any personal or partisan agenda or desire; and on the other hand language that is infected by partisan agendas and desires, and therefore colours and distorts the facts which it purports to reflect. It is use of the second kind of language that makes one a rhetorician, while adherence to the first kind makes one a seeker after truth and an objective observer of the way things are. (474)

This distinction "underwrites the claim of science to be a privileged form of discourse because its recourse to a 'neutral observation language,' a language uninflected by any mediating presuppositions or preconceptions" (474-475). This "understanding of linguistic possibilities and dangers" (475) generates a "succession of efforts to construct a language from which all perspectival bias . . . has been eliminated" (475). Sometimes this ideal language has been modelled on the "notations of mathematics, at other times the operations of logic" (475), or the "building (à la Chomsky) of a 'competence' model of language abstracted from any particular performance" (475). Notwithstanding the variations, the "impulse behind the effort is always the same" (475), that is, to "establish a form of communication that escapes partiality and aids us in determining and then affirming what is absolutely and objectively true, a form of communication that in its structure and operations is the very antithesis of rhetoric, of passionate, partisan discourse" (475). Anti-rhetoricians believe that "linguistic reform" (477), that is, the "institution of conditions of communication that at once protect discourse from the irrelevancies and contingencies that would compromise its universality and insulate the discoursing mind from those contingencies and irrelevancies it itself harbours" (477), is indispensable. Such a language, "purged of ambiguity, redundancy, and indirection" (477), will serve as an "appropriate instrument for the registering of an independent reality" (477). If men will "only submit themselves to that language and remain within the structure of its stipulated definitions and exclusions, they will be incapable of formulating and expressing wayward, subjective thoughts and will cease to be a danger either to themselves or to those who hearken to them" (477).

For Fish, the quarrel between philosophy and rhetoric "survives each sea change in the history of Western thought" (478), forcing us to choose between the "plain unvarnished truth straightforwardly presented and the powerful but insidious appeal of 'fine language,' language that has transgressed the limits of representation and substituted its own forms for the forms of reality" (478). This quarrel is reducible to a "difference in worldviews . . . a disagreement about the basic constituents of human activity and about the nature of human nature itself" (482). What philosophical man fears, Fish argues, the invasion of the fortress of essence by the contingent, the protean, and the unpredictable – is what rhetorical man celebrates and incarnates. In the philosopher's vision of the world rhetoric (and representation in general) is merely the (disposable) form by which a prior and substantial content is conveyed; but in the world of *homo rhetoricus* rhetoric is *both* form and content, the manner of presentation and what is presented. . . (483)

The "history of Western thought" (484) is tantamount, Fish insists, to the "history of this quarrel" (484).

Lanham believes that rhetorical man in the final analysis pays a price for all this self-conscious irony – that of "religious *sublimity*, and its reassuring, if breathtaking, unities"

(my emphasis). Where the "serious premises have thrived because they flatter us," Lanham contends, the rhetorical view has not – or at least has been frowned upon – precisely because it is "satirical, radically reductive of human motive and human striving." Its "real crime" has been its "candid acknowledgment of the rhetorical aspects of 'serious' life." That is the reason why rhetoric has been punished, banished to the margins of social life.

THE HISTORY OF RHETORIC

Rhetoric has, like any discipline with ancient roots, been variously construed over the years. I would argue that underpinning all these different definitions are two competing models of or tendencies in the conceptualisation of rhetoric. Time and again a suspicion of and a concomitant keenness to tame its putative excesses (its so-called 'sophistry') coexist and compete with a contrasting embrace of and even delight in the 'seductive wiles' of rhetoric. Where one side sees rhetoric as a useful tool in facilitating the communication of one's point of view that can, however, be abused, leading to the elevation of style over substance, the other contends that form is inseparable from content, that the medium is the message, that 'truth-claims' are relative to the means of expression employed. Where for one side, rhetoric is merely at best embellishment of the truth (if I may mix metaphors, in this schema rhetoric is viewed as so much 'icing on the cake,' useful to a point in making it easier to 'swallow a bitter pill' but ultimately harmful, if taken to excess, to one's epistemological 'health'), for the other rhetoric is entirely constitutive of reality, there are no facts apart from our discursive construction of them. One side accordingly strives to systematise the study of rhetoric, to turn it into something akin to a science ultimately with a view to circumventing or at least controlling what it sees as its dangerous potential for disruption. Opposed to this, however, is another, arguably Sophistic propensity to view rhetoric as less a science than an art, to ally it with literature and to harness its extraordinary fecundity. In the following sections, I term the former model of rhetoric the 'philosophical' (during the Classical period, Plato's hostility to rhetoric and Aristotle's attempt to study it systematically fall under this rubric) and the latter the 'Sophistical' (epitomised by the views of Gorgias and Protagoras).

As is the case with any field of study, centrifugal tendencies coexist with centripetal ones. The philosophers and the sophists are but two sides of the same coin: what both sides have in common is a strong desire to grasp its underlying principles coupled with an acknowledgement of rhetoric's discursive power, that is, a recognition of the undeniable role played by rhetoric in the conduct of human affairs, and an accompanying effort to harness its powers to constructive ends. Moreover, notwithstanding the varying perspectives distinguishing individual rhetoricians from each other, all arguably subscribe, broadly speaking, to a broadly communicative model of rhetoric, that is, the view that all discourses are tantamount to messages communicated from one person(s) to another (or others) and that each act of communication takes place within a specifiable socio-historical context (*kairos*). To put this another way, each utterance is grounded in an intention of some kind originating in the mind of the utterer and designed to organise his/her experiences in such a way as to make a particular claim about some aspect of the world. This message is always targeted at a particular audience by whom it is in turn decoded and on whose mind (individual or collective) it necessarily has a persuasive effect of some kind, the nature of the reception accorded each utterance ranging, understandably, from meek acceptance to outright rejection.

Rhetoric is, few would dispute, an ancient discipline, one arguably older than

philosophy itself (see, for example, Eric Havelock's Preface to Plato). It might be useful at this point to attempt a very brief, cursory survey of the history of rhetoric in order to get a quick sense of the divergent emphases which have informed the study of rhetoric over the centuries. Historically, one of the earliest groups of thinkers to be classified as rhetors/rhetoricians (albeit by their arch-rival Plato) and to take great delight in the seductive wiles of language was the Sophists. In the famous "Encomium of Helen," Gorgias (c.483-c.376 BCE) acknowledges the powerful effects of discourse in this way: the effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear; others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion. (53)

Another Sophist, Protagoras (c.481-c.411 BCE), is notorious for his epistemological relativism, to wit, his claims that "of all things the measure is man" (18) and that the truth is at best murky: "Concerning the gods I cannot know either that they exist or that they do not exist, or what form they might have, for there is much to prevent one's knowing: the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of man's life" (20). Indeed, Protagoras is also famous for emphasising that there are two opposing arguments (*dissoi logoi*) concerning everything.

On the other hand, Plato (c.427-347 BCE), as is well known, was wary of poetry, leading him to pronounce a ban on poets in his ideal republic. For him, the rhetoric of the Sophists was disturbing precisely because it was predicated on a dangerous elevation of the literary and, thus, the irrational dimensions of discourse over the philosophical and rational, the result being the installation of a disturbing relativism in their views. Equating rhetoric, in Phaedrus, with a "certain leading of the soul through speeches" (261), he accordingly extolled, as Havelock and others has argued, the rigour of philosophy as the cure for rhetoric's excesses. Where Plato dismisses rhetoric out of hand (his obsession thereby, ironically, registering his great fear of its potency), Aristotle (c.384-322 BCE) sought to turn it to good use by systematising the study thereof and thereby producing possibly the earliest systematic treatise on the subject: his famous Rhetoric. Aristotle's shadow in the field of rhetorical studies is, as is the case with philosophy and the natural sciences, a long one. Defining rhetoric influentially as the "faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (2155), he distinguishes rhetoric from the 'demonstration' used in the pursuit of more scientific forms of knowledge and argues that it is an important counterpart of the 'dialectical' form of reasoning used in the civic arena especially.

In subsequent eras, this 'trialectic,' this *pas de trois* pitting the Sophistic cultivation of rhetoric against the Platonic rejection of it as so many sweet but misleading words as well as the Aristotelean attempt to tame it and turn it into a useful tool is replicated time and again. For example, in ancient Rome, equating rhetoric with *ars bene dicendi* (the art of speaking well) and defining it as speech designed to persuade, the powers of which should be harnessed to useful ends in the civic arena, Cicero (106-43 BCE) and later Quintilian (35-95 CE) divide, in an Aristotelian vein, the production and study of rhetoric into five areas of concern in a way that would prove very influential upon subsequent generations: 'invention' (Latin, *inventio*; Greek, *heurisis*), meaning the exploration of the various argumentative proofs, topics and commonplaces which could be used in support of a

particular claim; 'arrangement' (Latin, *dispositio*; Greek, *taxis*), that is, of the various parts comprising the utterance in question and including the exordium, the narration, the division, the proof, the refutation and the peroration; 'style' (Latin, *elocutio*; Greek, *lexis*), that is, the choice of figures of speech, schemas and what not; 'memory' (Latin, *memoria*; Greek, *mneme*), that is, the memorising of the utterance in question; and 'delivery' (Latin, *actio*; Greek, *hypocrisis*), itself divided into the use of voice and gesture. Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria is remembered today not only for its comprehensive overview of all the parts of rhetoric but especially for its detailed treatment of the use of tropes, figures and schemas and its vision of the ideal way in which the orator should be educated.

The pervasive influence of the rhetorical views of Cicero and Quintilian would continue to be felt for hundreds of years up to and even after the Renaissance in, for example, the work of Medieval rhetoricians such as St. Augustine (354-430 CE) – see his On Christian Doctrine – and Renaissance ones like Erasmus (1466-1536) and Thomas Wilson (1525-1581). They also provoked, however, the successful efforts of Petrus Ramus (1515-1572), in opposition to the work of Quintilian especially, to delimit rhetoric to the study of style or eloquence (i.e., the 'flowers of speech,' the use of various tropes, figures and schemas) and delivery, and to turn over to philosophy, within whose ambit demonstration or analytic reasoning already fell, invention (the deployment of mainly dialectical modes of arguing), arrangement and memoria. This one act in many ways was the death-knell of rhetoric, arguably to this point the dominant way of making sense of reality and thus the major component in the education of the elite, and signalled the corresponding rise to ascendancy of philosophy in the modern era. This was a blow from which rhetoric still has not completely recovered. The so-called 'trivium' – the division of education into the teaching of grammar [the study of language], logic [the study of reasoning] and rhetoric [the use of figurative language especially to persuade] – was also the result of Ramus' efforts, this time to place the organisation of the education of the young on a more solid footing than had hitherto been the case. The effect of this was to align rhetoric with literature itself already relegated, being merely a relaxing pastime, to the periphery of serious intellectual activity.

In the early modern period, the period synonymous with the beginnings of modern philosophy as we know it today, Platonic fears about the contamination by rhetoric of the proper patterns of knowledge production is regurgitated by the French rationalist René Descartes (1596-1650) whose well-known objections to the literary and rhetorical components of his early education is symptomatic of his open rejection of any reliance on traditional authorities as well as his corresponding reliance on the use of his reason to find for himself that unshakable foundation of certitude on which all intellectual endeavour could henceforth be predicated. The Platonic fear of rhetoric is also glimpsed in the scarcely concealed anxieties of the English Empiricist John Locke (1632-1734) that "all the Art of Rhetorick, . . . all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats" (Book III, Chapter 10, §34). We see a similar fear in Bishop Sprat's conclusion to his History of the Royal Society of London (1667) that

eloquence ought to be banish'd out of all *civil societies*, as a thing fatal to Peace and good manners. . . . They [the ornaments of speaking] are in open defiance against *Reason*, professing not to hold much correspondence with that; but with its slaves, the *Passions*: they give the mind a motion too

changeable, and bewitching, to consist with *right practice*. Who can behold, without indignation, how many mists and uncertainties, these specious *Tropes* and *Figures* have brought on our Knowledge? How many rewards, which are due to more profitable, and difficult arts, have been snatch'd away by the easie vanity of *fine speaking*? (qtd. in Fish, 475-476)

And we glimpse the philosophical aversion to rhetoric as well in Bishop Wilkins's effort, in his An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language (1688), to fashion an "elaborate linguistic machine" (qtd. in Fish, 475) designed to

admit neither *Superfluities* – plural signifiers of a single signified, more than one word for a particular thing – nor *Equivocals* – signifiers doing multiple duty, single words that refer to several things – nor *Metaphor* – a form of speech that interposes itself between the observer and the referent and therefore contributes 'to the disguising of it with false appearances.' . . . (477)

During the nineteenth century, this fear of rhetoric is openly perpetuated by the views of those epigones spawned in the image of the early modern philosophers, such as the positivism of Auguste Comte (1798-1856).

This Platonist distrust of rhetoric is counterbalanced, however, as the so-called Enlightenment draws to a close by the Aristotelian pragmatism of a rhetorician like George Campbell (1719-1796) who, in his The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776), contends that in speaking there is always some end proposed, or some effect which the speaker intends to produce on the hearer. The word *eloquence* in its greatest latitude denotes, 'that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end.' (902)

In Campbell's view, the study of rhetoric is a necessity because not only is it a heuristic device for discovering the truth of things but it is also the most important means by which this truth can be "rhetorically dressed so that it will gain acceptance" (Fish 479). The Victorian rhetorician Richard Whately (1787-1863) continues much along the same lines as Campbell, arguing in his Elements of Rhetoric (1828) that rhetoric is less concerned with discovery (via observation and experimentation) or reasoning (via demonstration) per se than with the communication to others of facts previously established in this way by means of discovery and reasoning and the precise processes of persuasion by which convictions are fostered in the minds of the audience.

Moreover, rhetoric is openly embraced by a few proto-Romantic thinkers of the time such as Giambattista Vico (1688-1744) in Italy who, in opposition to Descartes especially, deploys what has come to be called the 'verum-factum' principle. His argument is that the clear and distinct ideas, not least concerning his own self, extolled by Descartes as the very foundation on which an intellectual edifice of certitude can consequently be erected, are an impossibility for certainty is possible only in relation to humanly-made things (society, works of art, and so on), rather than natural. Moreover, in contrast to the Cartesian stress on the importance of abandoning tradition and striving to see things with fresh eyes, Vico emphasises in his seminal The New Science (1725-1744) that human perception and conception is necessarily historically-specific in that the history of human civilisation is tantamount to a succession of historical epochs centred, in each case, around a particular mode of *poetic* cognition (dominated, successively, by metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony). In Germany, rhetoric, albeit in the form of a number of synonyms, becomes a crucial topic of conversation. There, one of the most important forbears of

Romanticism, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), paves the way for the subsequent rise to prominence of historicist-hermeneutical-philological modes of thought and epitomised by thinkers ranging from philologists like Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) to hermeneuticists like Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and philosophical idealists like G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) (whose thinking in many ways represents an attempt to synthesise the philosophical and the rhetorical). It is, however, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), a professional philologist, who was arguably the greatest rhetorician and anti-philosopher of the nineteenth century. In a lecture-course on the subject which was published only posthumously, Nietzsche identifies rhetoric with the

artistic means which are already found in language. There is obviously no unrhetorical 'naturalness' of language to which one could appeal; language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts. The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power which Aristotle calls rhetoric, is, at the same time, the essence of language; the latter is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things. (Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 21)

"What then is truth?" (84), Nietzsche asks. It is, he proclaims famously in "On Truths and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," nothing more than a

movable host of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins. (84)

It is ironic that Nietzsche the rhetorician par excellence should be embraced or at least intensively studied today in modern philosophy departments where he has become a key, albeit controversial figure in the philosophical canon.

The Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries:

This triadic pattern, this 'trialectic,' as I put it earlier, pitting a philosophical wariness of the dangers of rhetoric against a equally philosophical embrace of its usefulness against a sophisticated engagement with its fecundity, may also be glimpsed during the first half of the twentieth century. The first two perspectives (an awareness of both rhetoric's dangers and the possibility of taming it) are combined, for example, in the proposal by the Modernist/New Critic I. A. Richards, in his not insignificantly entitled The *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (my italics) of 1936, that rhetoric is the "study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3). Misunderstanding, Richards contends, is caused by the confusion of several different types of meaning (e.g. the cognitive with the affective dimension of words). For Richards, writing very much in the vein of philosophers like Plato, Descartes and Locke, though the *practice* of rhetoric remains very much a source of misunderstanding, a *philosophy* of rhetoric serves as an important tool for controlling the excesses of language, thereby averting the possibility of being misled. Though Richards may profess to address rhetoric *per se*, what he in fact offers is something that seems closer in spirit to what philosophers, especially those in the Analytic camp, would call 'philosophy of language.'

Richards' contemporary Kenneth Burke offered a very different take on language. In essays like "Semantic and Poetic Meaning" (1938) and, later, "Terministic Screens" (1966),

he critiqued the correspondence theory of meaning, arguing that signs do not simply reflect reality but, rather construct a selective understanding of the world. In this schema, misunderstanding is not an issue simply because what is at stake is not the correspondence of word to world but, arguably, the other way around, if anything: the correspondence of world to word. Alluding to Vico, Burke emphasises, in A Grammar of Motives (1945), the overlapping roles played by what he termed the 'four master tropes' in the conceptual organisation or categorisation of experience: 'metaphor' (which he equates with "perspective" [503], that is a propensity for "seeing something *in terms of* something else" [503]); 'metonymy' (which he defines as "reduction of some higher or more complex realm of being to the terms of a lower or less complex realm of being" [506]); 'synecdoche' (which he equates with a "representation of convertibility . . . between the two terms" [508] and which takes the form of "part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing signified, material for the thing made . . . , cause for effect, effect for cause, genus for species, species for genus, etc." [507-508]); and 'irony' (which he distinguishes from "relativism" [512] per se – the isolation of "one agent in a drama, or any one advocate in a dialogue" [512] resulting in a tendency to "see the whole in terms of his position alone" [512] – and equates with "dialectic" [511] – the study of the "interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a *development* which uses all the terms" [512] and from the "standpoint of the total form [this 'perspective of perspectives'], none of the participating sub-perspectives can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong " [512]: they are, rather, "all voices, or personalities, or positions, integrally affecting one another" [512]).

Drawing a parallel between discursive acts and what transpires on the stage, Burke coined the term 'dramatism' to describe his theory of discourse, advancing what he called the 'pentad' as a useful technique for situating and thereby grasping the 'motives' driving all symbolic action. 'Symbolic action' is a key concept in the Burkean lexicon. He distinguishes between mere 'motion' (e.g. that of a branch in the wind or the reflex of the knee when struck by the doctor's hammer) and 'action,' that is, the various *intentional* activities expressly undertaken by humans and accordingly invested with symbolic significance. The latter includes such disparate activities as literature, art, philosophising, and even fashion, a particular style of walking, and so on (Burke's influence on the development in recent times of so-called 'cultural studies' has consistently been underestimated, I would say). In short, 'motion' is the consequence of purely physical factors, while 'action' indicates *motivated* motion, as it were. Burke offers, in A Grammar of Motives, the 'pentad' as a template (or 'grammar') of sorts which may be applied to any symbolic action with a view to teasing out the underlying motive(s). He specifies that any discourse must be grasped in relation to five concepts. These are: the 'Act' (the particular symbolic action which has occurred); the 'Scene' (the context or situation in which the symbolic action in question occurred); the 'Agent' (the person[s] responsible for this symbolic action); the 'Agency' (the symbolic means by which the agent[s] act); and the 'Purpose' (the reason for or goal of the symbolic action in question). The weighting of these elements relative to one another provides a clue as to the worldview implicit in the discourse in question, for example, a materialist privileges the 'scene' over the other elements or a psychoanalyst the 'agent.'

For Burke, the 'purpose' of any symbolic action is persuasion, hence his famous assertion in A Rhetoric of Motives (1950) that the "basic function of rhetoric [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (41).

Rhetoric, he also contends, is "rooted in an essential function of language itself, . . . the use of language as symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (43). This is mainly accomplished by means of what Burke terms "consubstantiality" (55): he argues that "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (55). An initial striving to merely reduce the differences which separate speaker from audience leads ultimately to the conflation of the speaker's identity with that of his/her audience and the turning thereby of the latter into a mirror-image of the former. Many consider Burke to be perhaps *the* key architect of the emergence in the years since the Second World War of what some have taken to calling the 'New Rhetoric,' with a view to distinguishing it, presumably, from an 'Old Rhetoric' synonymous, I suppose, with that proffered by the Ciceros, the Quintilians, the Campbells, the Whatelys, and so on of yesteryear. Whatever the validity of the distinction posited between the so-called 'old' and 'new' rhetorics, it might be useful at this point to consider a few scattered definitions offered by recent rhetoricians in order to get a more precise sense of the outlook on rhetoric which has crystallised in recent times. For example, John Bender and David Wellbery equate rhetoric, in the introduction to their anthology The Ends of Rhetoric (1990), somewhat vaguely with what they describe as "that sea of communicative transactions . . . the impersonal drama of what occurs among us, unnoticed and without deliberation or grandeur" (34). Paolo Valesio's definition in Novantiqua (1980), though also quite general in thrust, strives to pin it down a little more carefully by equating rhetoric with discourse, that is, language as it is used (Saussure's *parole* rather than *langue*):

I specify now that rhetoric is the functional organization of discourse, within its social and cultural context, in all its aspects, exception made for its realization as a strictly formal metalanguage – in formal logic, mathematics, and in the sciences whose metalanguages share the same features. (7)

In other words, he stresses, "rhetoric is *all* of language, in its realization as discourse" (7).

The emphasis of Douglas Ehninger, in the introduction to his collection Contemporary Rhetoric (1972), is on the *theory* of rhetoric – rhetoric is "that discipline which *studies* all of the ways in which men may influence each other's thinking and behavior through the strategic use of symbols" (my emphasis; 3). By contrast, the stress of Michael Hyde and Craig Smith, in "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric: a Seen but Unobserved Relationship" (1979), is on its *practice*, that is, the production and communication of discourse. The communicative function of rhetoric, however, originates in and is thus necessarily predicated on an epistemological/hermeneutical undertaking of some kind, to be precise, the interpretation of some aspect of reality and, thus, the making of a truth-claim about the world: the

primordial function of rhetoric is to 'make-known' meaning both to oneself and to others. Meaning is derived by a human being in and through the interpretive understanding of reality. Rhetoric is the process of making known that meaning. (347)

Richard Cherwitz and James Hikins, in Communication and Knowledge: an Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology (1985), underscore the epistemological foundation of all rhetorical acts by defining rhetoric as the "art of describing reality through language" (62). From this point of view, the

study of rhetoric becomes an effort to understand how humans, in various capacities and in a variety of situations, describe reality through language.

To act rhetorically is to use language in asserting or seeming to assert claims about reality. At the heart of this definition is the assumption that what renders discourse potentially persuasive is that a rhetor (e.g. a speaker or writer) implicitly or explicitly sets forth claims that either differ from or cohere with views of reality held by audiences (e.g. a specific scholarly community, a reader of fiction, or an assembly of persons attending a political rally). (62)

C. H. Knoblauch's definition of rhetoric, in "Modern Rhetorical Theory and its Future Directions" (1985), comprehensively captures the theoretical, practical, epistemological and productive dimensions of the term, as the

process of using language to organize experience and communicate it to others. It is also the study of how people use language to organize and communicate experience. The word denotes . . . both a distinctive human activity and the 'science' concerned with understanding that activity. All human beings are 'rhetors' because they naturally conceive as well as share their knowledge of the world by means of discourse. Certain individuals are also 'rhetoricians' because they study the nature, operations, and purposes of discourse. I suggest further that rhetoric, as a generic discipline, encompasses all forms of written as well as oral expression and includes the efforts of undeveloped speakers and writers as well as the achievements of literary artists. (29)

However, Steven Mailloux's emphasis, in *Rhetorical Power* (1989), is almost entirely on the hermeneutical pole of communication, that is, the reception and interpretation of particular discourses, a process which he interprets as necessarily rhetorical in nature. Defining rhetoric as the "political effectivity of trope and argument in culture" (xii), he proposes what he terms a 'rhetorical hermeneutics' which

views shared interpretive strategies not as the creative origin of texts but rather as historical sets of topics, arguments, tropes, ideologies, and so forth which determine how texts are established as meaningful through rhetorical exchanges. . . . Concepts such as 'interpretive strategies' and 'argument fields' are . . . simply descriptive tools for referring to the unformalisable context of interpretive work, work that always involves rhetorical action, attempts to convince others of the truth of explications and explanations. (15)

The notion of a 'rhetorical hermeneutics' is, clearly, Mailloux's attempt to emphasise the inseparability of the productive and receptive poles of discourse.

In addition to the broadly meta-rhetorical undertakings of thinkers such as those outlined above, many contemporary rhetoricians have sought to grapple with some of the key but hitherto under-theorised concepts informing the study of rhetoric. Lloyd Bitzer in his by now classic essay "The Rhetorical Situation" (1968) argues that any "discourse comes into existence because of some specific condition or situation which invites utterance" (219). In other words, any rhetorical act is precipitated by and thus responds to a particular situation of some kind. Bitzer defines 'situation' as a "complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (220). If each rhetorical intervention is provoked by a situation of some sort, rhetoric in turn necessarily affects that situation. From this point of view, he argues famously, a

work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce change or action in the world; it performs some task. In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action. The rhetor alters reality by bringing into existence a discourse of such character that the audience, in thought and action, is so engaged that it becomes mediator of change. In this rhetoric is always persuasive. (219)

Some of the numerous responses which Bitzer's essay subsequently spawned include Richard Vatz's well-known attempt in "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation" (1973) to underscore the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of pinpointing a socio-historical context independent of rhetoric without deploying specific rhetorical resources in order to do so, as well as Barbara Biesecker's "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of Difference" (1989).

Similarly, contending (like Walter Ong does) that we should replace the tendency to conceive of discourses as "objects" (332) with a more human-oriented model of communication as a form of dialogue between persons, Edwin Black offers an influential reappraisal of the role played the audience in rhetoric. He argues, in "The Second Persona" (1970), that discourses "contain tokens of their authors" (332) for which reason they are "directly or in transmuted form, the external sign of internal states" (332). Gesturing specifically to Booth's notion of the 'implied author' advanced in The Rhetoric of Fiction, Black emphasises our growing awareness that the "author implied by the discourses is an artificial creation: a persona, but not necessarily a person" (333). Black draws an analogous distinction between the "real audiences" (333) of particular discourses (the actual persons who listen, read or in some way receive the discourses in question) and what he terms the "implied auditor" (333), which he defines as the "second persona" (333) in any discourse. Regardless of the real audience which ingests a particular discourse, Black emphasises, each discourse implies and thus is intended for a particular audience. So, for example, while parliamentarians may ostensibly address their speeches to the Speaker of the House in the Westminster system of democracy, their target audience is most often the larger public outside the precincts of parliament or, at least, some significant segment thereof.

THE RHETORIC OF INQUIRY

Since at least the early modern period rhetoric has historically been marginalised within the institutions of academia and its main proponents heavily criticised and, in some cases, relegated to something close to pariah status, their writings dismissed as either irrelevant to the serious pursuits in which academicians ought to be involved or even as the ravings of so many lunatics. Recent years have witnessed, however, the emergence of a more respectful attitude towards rhetoric (often subsumed under the rubric of the 'new rhetoric') that has striven not only to dismiss these negative stereotypes but also to argue, basically, that rhetoric is an unavoidable component of the production of all truth-claims, whether we would like to admit it or not. What has come to be called the 'rhetoric of inquiry,' to be precise, the study of the rhetorical underpinnings of all forms of intellectual investigation and the academic disciplines comprised thereof, has become quite widespread and has begun to penetrate many disciplines.

Rhetoric as Epistemic:

Emphasising the cognitive function of rhetoric, Robert L. Scott argues, in his seminal "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic" (1967), that all discourses make truth-claims of some kind about some aspect of reality. Hence, Scott's influential claim that rhetoric is "epistemic" (138), that is, a "way of knowing" (138). He underscores the long-standing assumption in Western thought that "men can possess the truth" (132) and that, as a result, the absolute truth or at least something quite close thereto can be known with certainty. He argues that the logical consequence of the "notion that the truth exists, may be known, and communicated" (132) is the view that there are "two modes of discourse" (132) which are epistemically unequal: on the one hand, a "neutral presenting of data among equals" (132) and, on the other, a "persuasive leading of inferiors by the capable" (132). In other words, the truths *demonstrated* by the use of logic and the application of the scientific method (the province of philosophy and the sciences) have historically been elevated over the mere use of rhetoric designed to *persuade* others to accept a particular claim (by lawyers, politicians, those in the arts and humanities, and so on). However, Scott argue that there is no possibility at least in "matters relevant to human interaction" (135) of "determining truth in any *a priori* way" (135) and thus questions the applicability of the tools of logic and science in this sphere. (He leaves open the possibility that this may also be true of our encounter with the natural world.) He contends that at least when it comes to human and social affairs, "truth is not prior and immutable but is contingent" (135) upon many factors such as the precise nature of the discursive means utilised, the identities of both the rhetor and the audience in question, the place and time in which the utterance is produced and received, and so on. For Scott,

truth can arise only from cooperative critical inquiry. Men may have recourse to some universal ideas in which they are willing to affirm their faith, but these must enter into the contingencies of time and place and will not give rise to products that are certain. (135)

"In human affairs" (136), Scott stresses, "ours is a world of conflicting claims" (136) or "*dissoi logoi*" (136). Accordingly, humans "must consider truth not as something fixed and final but as something to be created moment by moment in the circumstances in which he finds himself and with which he must cope" (138). Scott does acknowledge, however, that the "uncertainty of this way may seem too threatening to many" (138), especially those weaned in departments of philosophy and in the natural and social sciences on the view that certitude is possible and that some combination of logic and the scientific method is the principal or even the sole means of access thereto.

Argumentation Theory:

Scott's views on this score were explicitly influenced by Stephen Toulmin's perhaps even more influential The Uses of Argument (1958). Toulmin's distinguishes between the largely abstract study of formal logic which predominates in Anglophone departments of philosophy and the need to acknowledge the fact that arguments are most often advanced in response to concretely specifiable social and historical situations. Treading a fine line between what he saw as the excesses of both Platonic absolutism and Sophistic relativism, Toulmin advances the notion of 'argument fields,' arguing that some aspects of argument are 'field-dependent' in that they vary from field to field while others are 'field-invariant' in that they are common to all forms of argument. Distinguishing between theoretical and practical forms of reasoning, formal logic and real-world argumentation, Toulmin equates

the former with the inferring of truth-claims from prior premises held to be true, but defines the latter as the attempt, by contrast, to find arguments by means of which to justify prior claims. To this end, he proposes that each argument consists of a 'claim' of some kind, 'evidence' or 'data' alluded to in support of the claim in question, and a 'warrant' or statement linking the claim to the evidence cited in support of the claim. These three elements are common to all arguments and may be supplemented by the presence of what he terms 'backing' (the inclusion of credentials designed to buttress the claim when the warrant per se is insufficient), the 'rebuttal' (the acknowledgment of restrictions that may possibly be applied to the claim made) and 'qualifiers' (words or entire phrases expressive of the arguer's certitude or, as the case may be, lack of certitude).

Another key work of so-called 'argumentation theory' is the aptly named The New Rhetoric: a Treatise on Argumentation (also first published in 1958) by Chaim Perelman (with the assistance of Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca). In Perelman's more condensed The Realm of Rhetoric, he offers a useful overview of the argument advanced in the former much longer and dense work. Like Toulmin, Perelman distinguishes between formal logic (or theoretical reasoning), on the one hand, and informal argumentation (or practical reasoning), on the other. This is similar to Aristotle's distinction between what he called 'analytical reasoning' (studied in his Prior Analytics and Posterior Analytics) and 'dialectical reasoning' (explored in the Topics, the Rhetoric and the Sophistical Refutations). However, Perelman points out that where Aristotle distinguished dialectic from rhetoric, the one being the 'counterpart' of the other, the "new rhetoric is concerned with discourse addressed to *any sort of audience* – a crowd in a public square or a gathering of specialists" (5), and so on. The "theory of argumentation, conceived as a *new* rhetoric or dialectic, covers the whole range of discourse that aims at persuasion and conviction, whatever the audience addressed and whatever the subject matter" (my emphasis; 5).

In formal logic, Perelman argues, much attention is trained on the use of the syllogism whereby necessary conclusions are inferred from prior hypotheses, that is, inferences of the type

If A is B and if B is C, then the result is that A is C. The inference is valid whether the premises are true or false, but the conclusion is true only if the premises are true. The inference is characterised by the fact that it is purely formal, that is, valid whatever be the contents of the terms A, B, and C (the only condition being that each letter be replaced by the same value each time it is used), and at the same time by the fact that it established a connection between the truth of the premises and that of the conclusion. Since truth is a property of the proposition and is independent of personal opinion, analytical reasoning is demonstrative and impersonal. (1-2)

Accordingly, theoretical reasoning / formal logic conceives of itself as dealing the demonstration of "indisputable truths" (6). To this end, its propositions are predicated on a

solid and unquestionable basis – a self-evident intuition that could guarantee the truth of what is perceived as self-evident. The self-evidence so conceived is not a subjective condition, varying from one moment to the next, or from individual to individual; its role is rather to build a bridge between what is perceived as self-evident by the knowing subject and the truth of the self-evident proposition, which must impose itself in the same way on every rational being. (6)

"Whoever states a self-evident proposition" (6), not least in the theoretical sciences, is

"sure that it will compel everyone with the same 'evidence'" (6). Persons who accept the "existence of an intuition which would compel a unique vision of reality excluding all others" (7), accordingly exhibit nothing but "disdain" (7) for rhetoric which, if it has any purpose at all, at best merely "serves to propagate the truths guaranteed to speakers through intuition or self-evidence" (7). In other words, in the traditional scheme of things, rhetoric can be useful (when properly utilised) in the propagation of truths established by formal logic.

Practical reasoning / informal argumentation, by contrast, proceeds from premises that are accepted not as indisputable or self-evident but as reasonable: it "presupposes premises which are constituted by generally accepted opinions" (2). Perelman points out that the Greek term *eulogos* is perhaps better translated in this regard as 'reasonable' than 'probable. Moreover, "dialectical reasoning begins from theses that are generally accepted, with the purpose of gaining the acceptance of other theses which could be or are controversial. Thus it aims either to persuade or convince" (2). Arguments occur especially when "self-evidence is contested" (6) or when "people dispute a definition" (6) and are accordingly particularly "necessary in practical disciplines such as ethics and politics, where controversies are inevitable" (6). The goal of argumentation is the adjudication of "justifiable opinion" (3) with a view to inducing and/or increasing what Perelman terms the 'adherence' of the audience in question to the claims advanced. Moreover, arguments are always 'personal' in that they are advanced by someone and addressed to someone else: a "dialectical argument cannot be impersonal, for it derives its value from its action upon the mind of some person" (3) just as it originates in and emanates from someone's mind. Moreover, practical reasoning does not take the same 'pure' or idealised form as that of theoretical reasoning:

instances of dialectical reasoning are not made up of series of valid and compelling inferences; rather they advance *arguments* which are more or less strong, more or less convincing, and which are never purely formal. (2)

Precisely because the precise nature of these arguments will vary from topic to topic, discipline to discipline, "each field of thought requires a different type of discourse" (3).

Perelman contends that once one accepts that there are no self-evident intuitions which capture reality as it really is and that, in their place, there are only "metaphoric truths" (7) each of which accordingly "propose a restructuring of reality" (7), one has no choice but to resort to certain "argumentative techniques" (7) and "rhetorical techniques" (7) designed to make "one metaphor" (7) and, thus, one truth-claim "prevail over another" (7) in the mind of the audience. These include the use of procedures designed to "single out certain things for presentation in a speech" (35), thereby drawing the "attention of the audience to them" (35) and giving them a "*presence* that prevents them from being neglected" (35); the attempt to ensure that one's argument has the appearance of being 'quasi-logical (such arguments purport to be rational because they imitate the patterns of formal reasoning); the steering of one's argument in line with, rather than in violation of, widely accepted, commonsensical assumptions about the nature of reality (such as the truism that effects always succeed causes, rather than the other way around); the use of specific examples and models designed to illustrate the claims advanced; the use of analogies for purposes of comparison and contrast; the bracketing (or even elision) of those supplementary aspects of an argument which might appear objectionable or invalid or irrelevant or in some way undermine the thesis advanced; and, last but not least, the presentation of ideas according to a particular order designed to elicit the maximum effect.

Fields of Inquiry:

In recent times, the idea has been slowly spreading in academia, thanks to the pioneering efforts of groups and institutions (such as POROI -- the Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry - - at the University of Illinois) and individuals (some of whom are mentioned below) in various spheres of endeavour, that there is a rhetorical dimension to knowledge; that certitude may not be possible and that all we are left with are competing claims to truth; that all such claims are made by persons, situated in place and time and shaped by the various elements that comprise their identity (not least their class, gender and race); that truth-claims are in turn addressed to persons also endowed with a determinate identity that shapes their response to the appeals addressed to them; and that the veracity of truth-claims is not assured by the abstractions of formal logic or the preciseness of the scientific method but, rather, shaped

For example, in the arts and, more specifically, literature, theorists have sought, basically, to rethink literature as a form of communication between an author and a reader, both being situated in specifiable social and historical situations. Walter Ong, for example, has sought to replace traditional visually-oriented approaches to criticism (such as that advanced by the New Critics) that have emphasised the spatiality of literature and treated literary works as something akin to physical objects with a more human-oriented model that conceives all literary works as participating in a kind of 'I-thou' dialogue between authors and readers. Wayne Booth has sought, similarly, in The Rhetoric of Fiction to underscore the rhetoricity of the novel, its location in space and time and its articulation of a particular point of view (attributed to a so-called 'implied author'), in ways that go against the grain of traditional narratology, at least in the Anglo-American tradition. Louise Rosenblatt and, later, Stanley Fish have sought to emphasise the subjective, productive role played by the reader in assigning meaning to a text in contradistinction to the efforts of those like I. A. Richards who, in Practical Criticism for example, argued that criticism is ideally an objective affair for which reason the cause of misunderstandings must at all cost be sought and cured. Harold Bloom has attempted to rethink traditional conceptions of literary history in terms of the 'anxiety of influence' and the process of what he calls 'misreading': he argues that each emerging writer, haunted by the overwhelming influence of important precursors, struggles (in vain) to cast off these influences.

In History, the most important theorist in recent times has certainly been Hayden White. In a series of classic works, not least Metahistory, White has sought to emphasise the rhetorical and literary dimensions of all historical truth-claims, the fact that putative knowledge about the past is not merely coloured but to a large degree, if not entirely, *shaped* by the deployment of literary techniques such as figurative language (White draws on Kenneth Burke in particular to argue that the ways in which historians tend to conceptually organise experience are oriented principally towards one or other of the master tropes – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony – which accordingly shapes their interpretation of past events) and emplotment (White draws in particular on Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism to suggest that it is possible to categorise historical works according to the particular mode of emplotment – each corresponding to one of the four main literary genres, tragedy, comedy, romance and satire – which structures the work in question). The informing presence of a particular master trope and mode of emplotment in any historical work is supplemented, White argues, by specific modes of what he terms 'argumentation' and 'ideological implication.'

In the field of philosophy or, more specifically, 'metaphilosophy,' Richard Rorty is a notable example of a thinker who, implicitly siding with certain theoretical principles that are best described as 'rhetorical,' has sought to rethink philosophy along less scientific

and more literarily- and historically-oriented lines, his goal being to prise philosophy away from the hands of its Analytic abductors. Distinguishing between **p**hilosophy in general (the attempt to understand the assumptions informing all knowledge-production) and **P**hilosophy with a capital p (synonymous with the Analytic, science-oriented model of philosophy which currently predominates in most philosophy departments), Rorty advocates replacing epistemology, philosophy of mind and philosophy of language – the three endeavours at the very core of what has come to be called ‘philosophy’ since the work of Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century – with what he described, at least in his classic Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, as a more hermeneutically-oriented mode of philosophising (what, later, he termed more simply ‘theory’).

In the so-called social ‘sciences,’ some of the most significant recent developments have been pioneered by rhetorically- and hermeneutically-inclined thinkers such as Clifford Geertz and James Clifford in Anthropology; Deirdre McCloskey in Economics; James Boyd White in Law; Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, Alan Gross, and many others in the Natural Sciences (indeed, an entire vibrant field, the so-called ‘Rhetoric of Science,’ has sprung to the fore in recent years); John S. Nelson in Politics; Michael Billig in Psychology; and Richard Harvey Brown in Sociology.

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