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ARISTOTLE ON THE VIRTUES OF RHETORIC

AMÉLIE RORTY

WITHOUT THE SKILLS OF PERSUASION, a politician might be a dangerous bumbler, a loose cannon. Speaking well, speaking convincingly to the purpose at hand, is among the central political skills. As Aristotle characterizes it, rhetoric—the art of finding the most available means of persuasion—is essential to civil and civilized social and political life. "It appears," Aristotle says, that although "rhetoric is an offshoot of the study of dialectic, it also involves a practical understanding of ethics in connection with politics."[1] It requires the exercise of a range of intellectual abilities—understanding, cleverness, calculation, deliberation, good sense—in artfully directed reasoning. Generically described, these intellectual virtues can in principle be successfully exercised independently of the character virtues. So described, they are capable of being misdirected and misused: a rhetorician can give clever arguments for a bad cause; he can calculatively and deliberately act harmfully.

There is a norm for these intellectual abilities to be rightly as well as successfully exercised, particularly in the practical matters. As Aristotle puts it, virtue involves doing the right thing at the right time, in the right way and for the right reason. Speaking persuasively—rightly and reasonably saying the right things in the right way at the right time—is a central part of acting rightly. The *phronimos*—the man of practical wisdom—typically participates in public life. He engages in the deliberative activities of the Assembly; he serves on the Courts and his evaluative judgments are models of praise and blame. In being a model of virtue, the phronimos is a model of all the skills that virtue requires, including those of finding the right words and arguments in the process of deliberation. Since the techniques of public deliberation are the models of all forms of deliberation, the man

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[1] *Rhetoric*, trans. Roberts, in *Complete works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeteon: Princeton Uiversity Press, 1984), 1356a 25–30

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of practical wisdom must acquire the habits—the *hexeis*—that are engaged in rhetorical persuasion.[2] His use of rhetoric must fuse his intellectual abilities with his character virtues. His desires—the desires that prompt and direct his use of rhetoric—are (in)formed by true understanding; and his understanding of the issues at stake in persuasion is formed by appropriately formed desires.[3] Because doing things for the right reason involves thinking of them in the right way, under the right description, there is a sense in which speaking appropriately pervades all well-formed action. The phronimos knows how to distinguish indignant speech from hate speech and when to call a spade a spade. To be sure, the virtuous person, the person of practical wisdom, does not explicitly deliberate about whether what he says constitutes abusive insult or honest plain speaking. The techniques of rhetoric—getting words right, giving appropriate arguments, examples, analogies—should become second nature, implicit in the best, most successful thought and speech. They are among the skills of persuasive practical reasoning.

As Cicero, quoting Scaevola, summarizes the matter eloquently:

> This . . . art [rhetoric] has constantly flourished above all others in every free state, especially in those which have enjoyed peace and tranquility. . . . What is so striking, so astonishing, is that the tumults of the people, the religious feelings of judges, the gravity of the senate, should be swayed by speech . . . to raise the afflicted, to bestow security, to deliver from dangers, to maintain men in the rights of citizenship? . . . For it is by this one gift that we are most distinguished from brute animals, that we converse together, and can express our thoughts by speech. Who, therefore, would not justly make this an object of admiration, and think it worthy of his utmost exertions, to surpass mankind themselves in that single

[2] Aristotle thought that the skills of using the right words—the right categories, analogies, and metaphors—are also central to well-formed "inner deliberation." I believe that his discussion of the practical syllogism is an abbreviated idealized propositional reconstruction of practical reasoning. Unfortunately, we do not have a focused, full account of Aristotle's views about the relation between language and thought. Of course he thought about definitions (*Categories* 1a1–15), about ambiguous predication and assertion (*Categories* 17a25–37); he claimed that perceiving is like bare asserting (*kataphasis*) and that all thinking involves images (*De Anima* 431a15–17), but because these remarks remain undeveloped, I shall concentrate on the public use of the art of persuasion.

[3] *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Oswald (London: Macmillan, 1962), 6.2.1139b5–6.

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> excellence by which they claim their superiority over brutes? But, that we may notice the most important point of all, what other power could either have assembled mankind, when dispersed, into one place, or have brought them from wild and savage life to the present humane and civilized state of society; or, when cities were established, have described for them laws, judicial institutions, and rights? Upon the judgment and wisdom of the perfect orator, not only his own honor, but that of many other individuals, and the welfare of the whole state, are principally upheld. Go on, therefore, as you are doing, young men, and apply earnestly to the study in which you are engaged, that you may be an honor to yourselves, an advantage to your friends, and a benefit to the republic.[4]

Nevertheless, while the skills and techniques of rhetoric are integral to practical wisdom, they cannot ensure it. Like all forms of practice-oriented intelligence, rhetorical skills are in an ambiguous domain: they can be used well or badly, for worthy or for harmful ends. In speaking of an astute or successful politician or rhetorician, for example, we might be praising his cleverness in passing legislation rather than his moral insight and character. Indeed, sometimes the skills of rhetoric can be even more dangerous than inarticulate silence. Some of the most brilliant rhetoricians—Thucydides's Cleon or Hyperbolus—are thoroughly untrustworthy. Moreover, the virtuous are unfortunately no more successfully persuasive when their skills are exercised for moral rather than immoral ends; indeed sometimes it is a politician's moral fervor that spoils his presentation. That is, however, true of almost all the virtues: without practical wisdom to gauge the right measure as well as the right direction of each activity, even courage might be suspect. Without all the rest of the virtues, including those of rhetoric, even practical wisdom can be tragically helpless.

It was of course Plato who introduced the apparent oppositions between rhetoric and truth-oriented inquiry. Of course Plato typically ironically undermined his own dichotomy, demonstrating philosophic inquiry in a set of artful dialogues that are, among other things, intended to illustrate and convey the techniques and limitations of the art of persuasion. Yet it was Aristotle who formulated and analyzed the skills of rhetoric, both in its generic exercise in successful

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[4] See Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, Bk. 1, trans. James May and Jakob Wisse (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

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persuasion and in its ethically appropriate form, as the phronimos would truthfully use it.[5] We shall see that Aristotle resolves Plato's ambivalence towards rhetoricians and poets by integrating rhetoric into a robust but measured account of the practical and political virtues.

I

The Methods and Strategies of the Rhetoric. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* provides an account of one of the key virtues of practical reasoning. Although he thinks that all men are engaged in rhetorical persuasion in their practical affairs, he follows his usual method of analyzing a practice by studying the skills of its best, most successful practitioners. He treats rhetoric as a rational technique with a method, rules of thumb that can be taught and enhanced.[6] Like the *Poetics*, the *Rhetoric* is a guide, a technical handbook.[7] In both works, Aristotle gives detailed counsel on the use of literary and logical techniques to appeal to the motivational psychology of his audience. While he can specify the characteristic subject matter of tragedy, he argues that rhetorical skills are available for every kind of discourse, including those that a tragedian might embed in the speeches of a protagonist, an historian in his reconstruction of political debates, or a philosopher trying to persuade an opponent. As he gives tragedians practical advice on how to construct a drama that will bring their audience to a catharsis of pity and fear, so too he offers advice to politicians about how to conduct policy deliberations, to orators on how to construct eulogies, and to litigants on how to argue before courts.[8] Aristotle based his counsel to tragedians on the plays of Sophocles, but he drew

[5] *Rhetoric* 1355b1.2; *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7.1108a1023.

[6] *Rhetoric* 1354a3, 1354b20.

[7] See Michel Meyer, *Principia Rhetorica* (Paris: PUF, 2008) and his *Rhetoric, Language and Reason* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State Press, 1994); Eugene Garver, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a Work of Philosophy," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 19 (1986) and A. O. Rorty, "Introduction" to *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amelie Rorty (Berkley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996) and to *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992)

[8] *Rhetoric* 1358d21–1359a6.

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his advice to rhetoricians from many different sources: the exemplary speeches of Demosthenes and Isocrates as well as those reconstructed by the historian Thucydides. The account of argumentation in the *Rhetoric* borrows its techniques from his more rigorous logical works, but the counsel on constructing persuasive arguments in the *Rhetoric* is practical. Aristotle concentrates on giving an account of condensed and implicit enthymematic arguments—considerations, examples, and reminders—rather than on the more formally constructed arguments developed in the *Prior Analytics* and the *Topics.*[9] Similarly, the discussions of the emotions in the *Rhetoric* constitute summaries of what the rhetorician needs to know about the emotional reactions of his audience—their typical causes and objects—rather than Aristotle's own philosophic understanding of the motions.[10] Consider the carefully contextualized account of feeling and sources of anger in the *Rhetoric* as ". . . a desire accompanied by pain for a conspicuous revenge for [what is perceived as] a conspicuous slight. . . . It must always be felt towards some particular individual . . . and be attended by a certain pleasure."[11] By contrast, the philosophical treatment of the passions in *De Anima* develops the view that "the passions are all affections of the complex body and soul. . . . Anger, for instance, should be defined as a certain movement of . . . a part of the body by this or that cause and for this or that end. . . . The study of the soul

[9] See S. Raphael, "Rhetoric, Dialectic and Syllogistic Argument," *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 153–67; E. H. Madden, "The Enthymeme, Crossroads of Logic, Rhetoric and Metaphysics," *Philosophic Review* 61 (1952): 368–76; Myles Burnyeat, "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric" and Jacques Brunschwig, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a Counterpart to Dialectic," in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric.*

[10] Contra William Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion* (London: Duckworth, 2002) and George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) who take the discussion of the emotions in the *Rhetoric* to present Aristotle's own theory of the *pathe*, rather than a rough summary of the kind of folk psychology that the Persuader must take into account. For a nuanced and balanced analysis, see John Cooper, "Rhetoric, Dialectic and the Passions," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1993): 175–198; Steven Leighton, "Aristotle and the Emotions," *Phronesis* 27 (1982): 144–174; Friedrich Solmsen, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle* (New York: Modern Library, 1954) and E. M. Cope, *Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric* (London: Macmillan, 1867).

[11] *Rhetoric* 1378a 31.

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must fall within the science of nature."[12] Understanding the emotions requires the cooperation of the physicist and the dialectician, one assigning the material conditions, the other the formal.[13] Emphasizing the practical rather than the philosophic force of his analysis, Aristotle concentrates on what the rhetorician needs to know about popular psychology in order to arouse particular emotions, summarizing his discussion by remarking that he has now shown how emotions can be "produced or dissipated" by persuasive arguments.[14] Following the same strategy of starting with common beliefs, Aristotle's account of the rhetorical use of the imagination in constructing emotionally persuasive metaphors and analogies derives from his study of poetry, oratory, and ordinary speech rather than from the complex philosophical account of the relation between perceiving, imaging (*phantasia*), and emotion developed in *De Anima*. Contrast the carefully contextualized account of the feeling and sources of fear as " . . . a pain or disturbance due to imagining some destructive or painful evil in the future"[15] with the philosophical characterization of the relation between phantasia and desire: "To the thinking soul images serve as if they were the contents of perception; and when it asserts or denies them to be good or bad, it avoids or pursues them."[16] Aristotle characterizes the subject matter forcefully: "The whole business of rhetoric [is] concerned with appearances."[17]

Like dialectic, rhetoric has no distinctive subject matter; its arguments must be adapted to the context and audience. Like dialectic, it involves reasoning about contingent matters; and like dialectic, it requires being able to argue both sides of issues, both for and against the truth of a proposition or the appropriateness of an action, both in praise and condemnation, both for the justice and injustice of a cause. Like ethics, rhetoric typically involves forming emotions and attitudes that enter into deliberation about "subjects that present us with alternative possibilities [of judgment and action in]

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[12] *De Anima*, trans. J. C. Ackrill, in *The Complete Works of Arisotle*, ed Jonathan Barnes, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 403a2–5 and 26–32

[13] Ibid.

[14] *Rhetoric* 1378a20–30; 1388b28–30.

[15] *Rhetoric* 1382a21–25.

[16] *De Anima* 431a1–3.

[17] *Rhetoric* 1404a2.

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contingent [situations]."[18] Like ethics, rhetoric involves understanding human potentialities and weaknesses, their typical desires (*orexeis*), emotions (*pathe*), and commonplace beliefs (*endoxai*).[19]

The skilled Persuader must know how to present his own character in a way that will appeal to his audience, to convey authority and a sense of trust. (Because our usage of "orator" and "rhetorician" is typically archaic or pejorative, I shall speak of the Persuader rather than of the rhetorician.) Moreover he must, as Aristotle puts it, be able to construct both the valid and the contextually effective arguments for his case, that is, both the argument that constitutes its logically sound proof and the argument that—considering the beliefs of his audience—successfully persuades them.[20] To be sure, "generally speaking, that which is true and better is naturally always easier to prove and more likely to persuade."[21] Both what is true and what is beneficial can nevertheless be misused, and even harmful.[22]

And there is the rub, the challenge to the Persuader: although under ideal circumstances, truth is the best persuader, it is not always the most available persuasion. Moreover, the Persuader is not, qua rhetorician, a virtuous phronimos. He himself does not, by virtue of his craft, know what is true or what is best. He may be a gifted Persuader, a master craftsman of his art, without knowing what is best for his audience, or even what is best for them to believe. In this, Aristotle seems to agree with Plato: although ideally, following truth is always the best course, there is—as things go—a serious distinction between rhetoric and philosophy, between persuasion and truth. The art of rhetoric is, therefore, an independent subject matter, not automatically subsumed under an understanding of how to live well (*euprattein*). The irony is, however, that for Aristotle as for Plato, it seems that the phronimos must have the abilities and skills of the best of Persuaders. He must be able to suit his discourse to the occasion, even sometimes astutely choosing not to give the most rigorous, the

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[18] *Rhetoric* 1357a4–6.

[19] *Rhetoric* 1356a23–24. See Stephen Halliwell, "Popular Morality in Philosophical Ethics and the *Rhetoric*," in *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, ed. David Furley and Alexander Nehamas (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 211–30.

[20] *Rhetoric* 1355b14.

[21] *Rhetoric* 1354b12.

[22] *Rhetoric* 1355b13.

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most truthful argument. In rhetoric, there is a distinction between the success and the perspicuity—the truthful insight—of an argument. A brilliant Persuader can offer a sophistical argument, one that makes the worst seem the best course. Less culpably, he can also judge that it is sometimes best to offer attractive but shoddy and questionable considerations for a good cause.

II

Practical Wisdom and Rhetoric. In Book Six of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle characterizes the distinctive constituents of practical wisdom as they affect the kind of deliberation that is essential to the good life and to living well. His discussions are finely grained. Instead of simply gesturing to the phronimos's astute practical reasoning and his moral virtues, he provides a detailed analysis of their constituents and complex interrelations. He begins by distinguishing the intellectual virtues that—like scientific knowledge (*episteme*) and wisdom (*sophia*)—issue in universal truths from the practical virtues that are concerned with contingent matters about which deliberation is possible: "the phronimos is good at deliberating about the best things that are achievable by action."[23] Although they differ in scope, practical and political, they both involve the ability to deliberate well about particular contingent matters, that is, to determine how best to act appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and for the right reason.[24] Phronesis fuses distinguishable but closely related practice-oriented intellectual and character virtues (*dianoetike* and *ethike*).[25] While the intellectual virtues are constitutionally based, they are developed by teaching and experience. By contrast, moral virtue (*arete*) is acquired by imitation and practice.[26] It is—in the nature of the case—always admirable, even when its consequences are tragic. But while many

[23] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1141a16–21, 1141b12–14.

[24] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1141b23–25 and 1142b22–35.

[25] See Aryeh Kosman, "On the Virtues of Thought," unpublished paper.

[26] Our usage of "moral" is ambiguous between two conceptions distinguished by Aristotle: *arete* designates what we would call "virtue" or "character excellence"; *ethe* refers to stable character traits; it derives from *ethos*, custom, habit, and *ethein*, to have in a stable or customary manner. Neither fully captures our elevated, normative post-Kantian usage of "moral."

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intellectual skills—precision or quickness of reasoning, for example—can be excellently exercised independently of the character virtues, the moral virtues require the practice-oriented intellectual virtues and are in part constituted by them. The phronimos integrates his intellectual insight and skills with his character virtues in reasoning about contingent matters of choice that typically issue in well-formed action. In him, deliberate choice is "intelligent desire or desiderative intelligence."[27]

Phronesis itself involves the subsidiary intellectual abilities of understanding (*sunesis)*, good sense (*gnome*), cleverness (*deinotes*) and acute perception or sensibility (*aesthesis*) as these are exercised in contingent matters. While phronesis determines what it is right to do, these purely intellectual virtues only issue in sound judgment.[28] They support but do not determine the conclusions of practical reasoning and deliberation about contingent facts, choices and actions. While they are in a sense native or inborn, they can be refined and enhanced by educated practice. And (as I shall argue) they are all exercised in rhetoric.

Aristotle also argues that although the skills exercised in the arts and crafts issue in a product rather than in action or activity, they too are a species of intelligence.[29] The work, the process of producing the ends specific to the various arts—the art of medicine, for example, or those of architecture, poetry, music, rhetoric—is guided by rules. He puts it strongly: "There is no art that is not a rational habit of rationally producing a work. . . . [A]rt is a reliable and well-formed, rationally guided (*meta logou*) ability to make something (*poetike*)."[30] Because they are directed to achieving ends—as it may be health, constructing a road or temple, writing a tragedy, or delivering a eulogy— successful technai engage the exercise of the varieties of skilled intelligence. They can be performed elegantly or clumsily, successfully or unsuccessfully; they can be taught and acquired.

As engaged in political activity, the person of practical wisdom need not have any of the crafts: he need not be a physician or architect, a poet or merchant. But he needs to know enough about

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[27] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b5–7.
[28] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1143a10–11.
[29] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a1–23.
[30] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a 7–11.

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them to evaluate their work, and he must be able to deliberate about their relative places in a well-ordered city, about when and how to provide public funds for them. The skills of persuasion are, moreover, more germane to the phronimos engaged in public life than are those exercised in most of the other arts. Unless he knows when and how to speak well and appropriately, his intelligence is sterile, his best desires are frustrated.

III

Heuristics: Putting Understanding into Words. As practical reasoning and wisdom are central to civic life, the heuristics of inventive, imaginative reasoning are central to practical reasoning; and rhetoric, largely and properly conceived, is central to the strategies of practical deliberation.[31] The successful Persuader must know how to craft his speech, his style (*lexis*) and arguments, presenting enthymemes and examples (*paradeigmata*) to move the emotions and judgments of his audience. "For it is not enough to know what we ought to say; we must say it as we ought; much help [in persuasion] is afforded towards producing the right impression in speech."[32] After discussing the manner, rhythm, tone, and style of delivery in oratory, Aristotle turns to the use of language itself, to metaphor and simile. "Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else . . . a transfer made on grounds of an analogy."[33] In its broadest sense, it involves carrying the associations of one word or

[31] *Rhetoric* 1.2.1356a1. See Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," in *The Sovereignty of the Good* (London: Routledge, 1970), 1–45; Sabina Lovibond, *Reason and Imagination in Ethics* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1983); Sharon Bailin, *Achieving Extraordinary Ends (*Boston: Kluwer, 1988); Paul Harris, *The World of the Imagination* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000); Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds: Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Maurice Merleau Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002). For an exhaustive account of the history and varieties of imaginative thinking, see Eva Brann, *The World of the Imagination* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991.)

[32] *Rhetoric* 1403b15–18.

[33] *Poetics* 1457b6–9.

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thought to another.[34] (The etymology and its use in contemporary demotic Greek are illuminating. A *metaphore* is a scooter or motorcycle with an attached carrier. The word derives from the classical verb, *metapherein*, to carry or bring something from one place to another.) We can think of arguments as extended metaphors, articulating a train of thought that carries the claims of the premises to a distinctive judgment or conclusion.[35]

Aristotle includes *sunesis*—usually translated as "understanding"—as one of the components of practical wisdom.[36] *Sunesis* comes from *suniemi/sunien*, to put things together, to get the point. It is closely related to *sunthesis*, synthesizing, putting things together, or as we might colloquially say, "doing an uptake, putting two and two together." Both notions suggest putting ideas in a larger context, seeing their underlying interconnections. In trying to help someone to understand something, we often invite them to locate it in a nexus of relations, asking them to imagine, reframe, or reconstrue the matter in a specific light, to discover its place in a categorial or taxonomic scheme. Although the scope of such understanding is broad, its outcome is limited.[37] As Aristotle puts it:

> We often speak of understanding as learning (*manthanein*). . . . Practical wisdom issues in commands (*epitaktike/epitaxeis*); its end is to tell us what we ought to do. Understanding, on the other hand, only forms judgments (*kritike*).[38]

This process of discovery is, I think, what Aristotle means in speaking of the role of heuristics (derived from *heurein*, to discover or find) in

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[34] See Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," 29–46, and Wayne Booth, "Metaphor as Rhetoric," 47–70, in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Richard Moran, "Metaphor, Artifice and Persuasion in Rhetoric," 324–84, and Paul Ricoeur, "Between Rhetoric and Poetics," 385–98, both in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*.

[35] See Paul de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," in *On Metaphor*, 11–28.

[36] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a1–10.

[37] While Aristotle thinks that all "all understanding is the same as good understanding (*eusunesia*)," (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1143a11–12), he does not mean to imply that every successful uptake involves understanding what is good. A vicious general can, for example, form a successful judgment about a military strategy. It is for this reason that Aristotle distinguishes understanding from *phronesis*.

[38] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1143a10, 1143a17–19.

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rhetoric. The Persuader must find the metaphors, examples and arguments that will enlarge or change his audience's judgments. For us, the inventive process of finding the right *logoi* and *lexeis* is an imaginative one. Since Aristotle's conception of the faculty of imagination (*phantasia*) is closer to our notion of imaging, as linked with sensing or perceiving (*aesthesis)*, than it is to inventing or crafting, it was natural for him to think of the *heuristics*—or, as Cicero put it *inventio*—of constructing rhetorical arguments and speeches.[39] The activity of discovering or seeing the best appropriate means of persuasion is an exercise in getting the audience to understand or see things in a certain light.

IV

Inventio, Imagination, and Rhetoric. How does imaginative invention actually work? What, exactly, does it involve? The skills and techniques of the imagination in the service of rhetorical persuasion are those of practical and theoretical reasoning. Properly understood as *heuristic* or *inventio*, imagination is not an independent creative or productive faculty, whose sources and operations are psychologically distinct from other cognitive activities like believing, desiring, or being affected. There is nothing magical or mysterious about the activities of imaginative thinking, nor is it an

[39] See *De Anima* 3.3.427b–428b10 for an extended discussion between sensing, imaging and imagining and Cicero, *De Oratorio* 1 for his development of Aristotle's *heuristics* as *inventio.* See also Gary Watson, "*Phantasia* in Aristotle's *De Anima* III. 3," *Classical Quarterly* 32 (1982), 100–13; Malcolm Schofield, "Aristotle on the Imagination," in *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses*, ed. G. E. R. Loyd and G. E. L. Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 103–32; Michael Wedin, *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) and Deborah Modrak, "*Phantasia* Reconsidered," *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 66, 47–69. For contemporary usage of "imagery" see Michael Tye, *The Imagery Debate* (Cambridge: MIT, 1991); Ned Block, "Mental Pictures and Cognitive Science," *Philosophical Review* 93 (1983): 499–542; Kim Sterelny, "The Imagery Debate," *Philosophy of Science* 53 (1986): 560–83, and Stephen Kosslyn and James Pomerantz, "Imagery, Propositions and the Form of Internal Representations," in *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology* vol. 2, ed. Ned Block, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 150–69.

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ornament designed to enrich or embellish practical reasoning. The habitual exercise of its various abilities, skills and strategies are among the constituents of robust, successful and imaginatively inventive practical reasoning. Like other cognitive skills, imaginative thinking may engage a wide range of heterogeneous and independent native abilities. Like them, its exercise can be improved by education; like them, it can be enhanced by practice and strengthened by strategic techniques.[40] Like them, its effective and successful exercise depends on becoming deeply engrained as a habitual mode of thought. And like other cognitive skills, imaginative thinking can be substantively enlarged and enriched by being collectively and dialectically exercised.

Aristotle's heuristic Persuader needs to acquire Cicero's canonic five rhetorical skills: imaginative invention (*inventio*, *heuristics*); organization (*dispositio*, *taxis*); style (*elocutio*, *lexis*); memory (*memoria*, *mneme*) delivery (*actio*, *hypocrisis*). He must:

- have a fairly clear idea of his own aims, the message he wants to convey;
- have an empathic understanding of the mentality of his audience, their aims and assumptions, expectations and prejudgments, their hopes and fears, friendships and hostilities; when his audience is divided or conflicted, he must understand what they have in common as well as their distinctive sensibilities, their contentious "flash points";
- know how to present himself as a trustworthy, well-informed, authority with the interests of the audience at heart;
- have a good memory and be able to organize his presentation in a manner that is both cogent and easy to follow;
- be able to reason well and substantively, using the logic—the standard inferential patterns of his audience, as well as the maxims and proverbs, the examples and anecdotes—that direct and structure their attitudes, motives, and judgments (for

[40] See Howard Gardner and Ellen Winner, "The Development of Metaphoric Competence," in *On Metaphor*, 121–40; and A. O. Rorty, "Educating the Practical Imagination," in *The Oxford Handbook on the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Harvey Siegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 195–210.

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example: he should be skilled at generating or enlarging alternative hypotheses or options,[41] tracing the consequences of competing policies, varying the variables that define the situation of choice, reframing the terms of a question or decision,[42] asking rhetorical questions, revising criteria for relevance or success,[43] introducing distinctions and thought experiments to bypass the force of polarized options,[44] constructing idealized models of explanation[45]);

- know how to craft his message in the terms—the words and images, the maxims and proverbs, the memories, examples and anecdotes, the historical and literary analogies—that speak to his audience in ways that will direct and structure their attitudes, motives and judgments (for example: he should be

[41] See Thucydides on Themistocles' and Pericles' ingenious rhetorical speeches. For a contemporary discussion of the heuristics of "affordances," see J. J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

[42] See, for instance, Gary Wills's discussion of the way that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address reframed the intent and scope of the Constitution in *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992) and Kennedy's "Do not ask what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

[43] See Avishai Margalit, "Ideals and Second Bests," in Seymore Fox, ed. *Philosophy for Education* (Jerusalem: van Leer Institute, 1983).

[44] See Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1971); Roy Sorenson, *Thought Experiments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Martin Bunzl, "The Logic of Thought Experiments," *Synthese* 106 (1961)

[45] See Gerald Holton, *The Scientific Imagination: Case Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ulrich Neisser, "Perceiving, Anticipating, Imagining," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* (Minneapolis: University of Mennesota Press, 1978), 9:89–105; Nancy Nersessian, *Creating Scientific Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008) and "Model-based reasoning in distributed cognitive systems," *Philosophy of Science* 73, (2006): 699–709; "Interpreting scientific and engineering practices: Integrating the cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions," in *Scientific and Technological Thinking*, M. Gorman, R. Tweney, and D. Gooding, eds. (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005), 17–56; Christopher Hill, "Modality, Modal Epistemology and the Metaphysics of Consciousness" *The Architecture of the Imagination*, ed. Shaun Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 205–36; Tamara Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne, eds. *Conceivability and Possibility* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

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skilled at constructing leading metaphors,[46] specifying the sensory and phenomenological details of options,[47] changing the emotional and motivational connotations of phrases by substituting those with different etymological or literary associations,[48] revising descriptions of perceptions, events and situations, role playing, modeling, simulating[49]);

- have a good sense of timing and tempo, choosing an appropriate stylistic tone, mode and level (for example, he should be skilled at using dramatic silences, crafting ironic, high or low idioms, plain or ornate speech, formulaic or informal expressions, adopting a confidential, conciliatory or confrontational manner);
- know how to use the subtle effects of place and space—impressive architecture, a class-room lectern, a stadium—to influence the mood and temper of an audience;
- have the quick perception and presence of mind to adapt to shifts in the mood and temper of the audience.

Although he may not be aware of the ramifications and implications of his craft, the Persuader stands in a morally charged relation to his audience: other things being equal, he is engaged in trying to influence their attitudes, beliefs, and actions in ways that will affect their thriving. Of course his power is contextually limited—and sometimes enhanced—by a wide range of factors over which he has no

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[46] See G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier: *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

[47] See Merleau Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*; Ned Block, ed. *Imagery* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984); Edward Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); Sartre, *The Psychology of the Imagination* (NY: Washington Square Press, 1966).

[48] See Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection."

[49] See Colin McGinn, *Mindsight* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2004); Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich, *Mindreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make Believe* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1990); Alvin Goldman, *Simulating Minds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Ch. 11.

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control, but to the extent that these factors affect the success of his enterprise, he should take them into account.

V

Aristotle's Resolution to the Ironies of Platonic Rhetoric. We have, finally, come to Aristotle's subtle resolution of Plato's profoundly ambivalent attitudes towards poets and rhetoricians. Plato is much more ambivalent about poets than he is about rhetoricians. Although rhetoricians are engaged in speaking for hire, the contexts of their performances often allow for questions and rebuttals. However insightful and brilliant they may be, however persuasive, they leave space for dialogue. The untethered power of poets who express compelling representations of goodness and harm without actually engaging their audiences in critical discussion are much more dangerous. In a way, the more brilliant, the more elevating, the more beautiful a work of poetry is, the more potentially dangerous it becomes. Even though the audience may be enlightened as well as moved, they are passively inspired, rather than actively dialectically engaged. As Socrates sees it, the problem with poets is that they don't build the discussion period into their works. Because he nevertheless sees that he needs their skills for his own uses, he distinguishes visionary insight from its use in dialectically argumentative inquiry. Presumably this is one of the reasons Socrates did not write philosophic works and why Plato wrote them in the form of evasive dialogues.

In the *Republic*, Socrates' suspicion of the arts is represented as unqualified: they are to be censored if not actually banned from the *polis* unless they work under the guidance and direction of philosopher-kings. On the other hand, there is no more deft rhetorician, no more lyrical poet than the author of the Platonic dialogues. Socrates' arguments are laced with images and analogies: the idealized philosopher-kings of the *Republic* are to bind citizen "brothers" with an elaborate fictional tale of a common mother; the rulers are counseled to introduce marriage rituals based on a sham lottery; the afterlife is depicted in an elaborate myth.

How then does the philosopher-king differ from the Poet and the rhetorical Persuader? It is not that the former deals in truth and the

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latter in falsehood. Poets and Persuaders often convey truths, even important philosophical truths, and they sometimes want to inspire or shock their audience into revising their beliefs. It is not that Persuaders want to change opinion and philosophers want to preserve it. Persuaders sometimes want to entrench rather than change opinion while philosophers are often interested in understanding the world for the sake of changing it. It is not that Persuaders speak in images and metaphors while the Philosophers offer unadorned logical arguments. Astute rhetoricians offer all sorts of impeccable arguments and logical considerations; and Plato's Socratic dialogues are full of analogies that carry the weight of argument. It is not that sophistical rhetoricians are interested in persuading their audiences while philosophers are wholly focused on arriving at the truth, without regard to whether it is articulated in such a way as to persuade. Plato presents Socrates as crafting his arguments to persuade his interlocutors in terms they can understand, even when there is good reason to suppose that he does not believe that those arguments are the most logically perspicuous grounds for his views. It is not that rhetoricians address the emotions of the audiences while philosophers address their minds, although that is often the case. After all, eulogists and litigants also try to convince their audience of the truth of what they say, and philosophers also try to realign and reform the desires and emotions of their interlocutors. The difference lies in their ultimate aims, as these affect their relation to their audiences. The Persuader is focused on particular contexts and situations: as a litigator, he is trying to win a case before a court; as a politician, he is trying to urge the adoption of a specific policy or law; as a eulogist, he is offering circumstantial homage and tribute. Other than gauging the persuasive plausibility of his arguments, he is not committed to examining their assumptions or consistency, let alone trying to lure his audience to think critically and independently. By contrast, Plato presents Socrates as a resolute inquirer into familiar beliefs and practices, pursuing the argument wherever it leads, exposing assumptions and inconsistencies.

Taken as models of philosophic inquiry, the Platonic dialogues do not develop systematically demonstrated conclusions; indeed, they tend to issue in further questions rather than outcomes. Rather than trying to persuade his interlocutors—and his audience—to accept a certain set of beliefs or policies, as if they were buying a text to put on

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their shelves while going about carrying on the rest of their lives as usual, Socrates uses the arts of persuasion to provide a model of critically reflective thinking, a thoughtfully inquiring mode of being in the world. He is trying to get them to become active in leading an examined life: to inquire into the basis of their beliefs and practices, to harmonize and integrate them with one another, and to live in accordance with their critically examined best beliefs.

Aristotle's position is much more sober and straightforward. Typically, he introduces a range of distinctions that enable him to resolve the tensions in Plato's double-faced project of discrediting poetry and sophistical rhetoric while nevertheless absorbing and using their techniques. Poetry (as it encompasses tragedies, comedies, epics, and lyrics) and rhetoric (as it encompasses sophistry, eulogies, and litigation) are all skilled verbal crafts, each with its specific aim and structure, distinguishable from the methods of logicians and the emotionally charged strategies of poets.

Aristotle's disagreement with Plato is not so much about the nature and pliability of rhetoric as it is about whether there are forms of genuine intelligence that issue in judgments but not in implicit commands about what should or should not be done. His strategy is simple: he first characterizes generic rhetoric as a set of technical skills that can be adapted to a wide range of purposes without consideration of the Persuader's ultimate guiding aims or intentions. It is just this that makes Plato's Socrates suspicious of rhetoric: indifferent to truth or falsity, it can be effectively and brilliantly used for harmful as well as for beneficial purposes. While agreeing with Plato's concerns about the skills of brilliant Persuaders, Aristotle proceeds to differentiate types of intellectual virtues or excellences, distinguishing those that are capable of successfully but uncritically achieving their aims from those whose exercise intrinsically incorporate good and admirable ends. He then analyzes the constituents of the virtues of practical wisdom, distinguishing those that—like wit, cleverness, and perspicuity—can be exercised independently of the moral virtues. A Persuader can successfully craft an astute and even insightful legal defense for an unjust cause, but he does not qualify as a person of practical wisdom unless his desires and ends are genuinely good. His audience can understand his argument and accept his judgment without being directed or committed to acting

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well. On the other hand, to qualify as a phronimos, a person of practical wisdom, a Persuader must not only be capable of shrewdly sizing up a jury or an Assembly, saying the right words at the right time and in the right way, he must also do so for the right reason, for the right aims, as an expression of the unity of his intellectual and character virtues. In short, a brilliant, successful Persuader need not be a phronimos, but a phronimos must—among other things—rightly as well as successfully exercise the skills of a talented Persuader.[50]

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