

**Rhetoric for philosophers:
An examination of the place of rhetoric in
philosophy**

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*Para os meus queridos pais,
Artur e Noémia*

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Abstract

The debate between rhetoricians and philosophers goes back to the origins of the understanding of what philosophy is, which we can trace to Plato and the immediate Platonic tradition. I suggest that this tradition was not a disinterested one. Its concern was to carve out and develop a particular kind of discourse (i.e., what it takes to be the philosophical enterprise) for its own purposes (i.e., to marginalise its competitors). It did this in a particularly successful way, to the extent that it is difficult for us even to consider what the alternatives might have been. However, there are residual problems in the way that it conceives of the philosophical project, and this question is related to the widespread tendency of contemporary thinkers to view rhetoric as pompous vacuousness or mere trickery. Despite the theoretical questions posed, this thesis focuses primarily on concrete works, especially those of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Renaissance thinkers, Hobbes, and Locke. I analyse the rhetorical discourse in some of rhetoric's staunchest opponents, and some of its most well-known advocates for a very specific purpose. First, I am trying to show that all these philosophers, whether pro or against the art of rhetoric, recognise the danger of 'sophistic tricks', and acknowledge (more or less reluctantly) that rhetoric potentially represents a dangerous threat to the moral basis of political life, but follow different paths. Next, and this is a fundamental part of my argument, that in the works of philosophers who are widely regarded as some of rhetoric's staunchest opponents, we can find clear evidence, not only of the use of rhetoric to fight rhetoric, but allusions to what they see as a 'true' or legitimate rhetoric. In other words, echoing Plato, two forms of persuasion are alluded to in their works: (i) a rhetoric that produces persuasion for belief in the absence of knowledge, and (ii) a genuine or 'true' art of rhetoric, the sort of that produces knowledge (*epistêmê*) in the privileged sense. So in the *Phaedrus*, Plato suggests that the philosopher is *the* true rhetorician; for Hobbes the only 'true' rhetorician is, of course, the sovereign; and for Locke, any truly free and rational individual can, at least in theory, be a good rhetorician. At a more general level, and this constitutes the underlying theme of the thesis, I hope to show that philosophy itself, like all discourses, does not exist in a linguistic vacuum. Philosophy, like rhetoric and history, is deeply implicated in the social and political order that produces it.

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Abbreviations used for journals and reference works

<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>APSR</i>	<i>American Political Science Review</i>
<i>BJHP</i>	<i>British Journal for the History of Philosophy</i>
<i>CCRH</i>	<i>Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism</i>
<i>CHRP</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Eighteen Century</i>
<i>ECS</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
<i>ELR</i>	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
<i>ESM</i>	<i>Early Science and Medicine</i>
<i>GR</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>The Historical Journal</i>
<i>HR/RH</i>	<i>Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques</i>
<i>HEI</i>	<i>History of European Ideas</i>
<i>HM</i>	<i>Historia Mathematica</i>
<i>HPQ</i>	<i>History of Philosophy Quarterly</i>
<i>HPT</i>	<i>History of Political Thought</i>
<i>H. Sci.</i>	<i>History of Science</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hobbes Studies</i>
<i>IHAN</i>	<i>International Hobbes Association Newsletter</i>
<i>IMU</i>	<i>Italia Medievale et Umanistica</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institute</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JHP</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Philosophy</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>J. Mo. H.</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>J. Phil.</i>	<i>Journal of Philosophy</i>

<i>JP</i>	<i>Journal of Politics</i>
<i>JPP</i>	<i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i>
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Political Thought</i>
<i>LN</i>	<i>Locke Newsletter</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>NRRSL</i>	<i>Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London</i>
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>OSAP</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>OSAPS</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Supplementary Volume</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>PF</i>	<i>The Philosophical Forum</i>
<i>PT</i>	<i>Political Theory</i>
<i>PAPA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association</i>
<i>PAS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</i>
<i>PASS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume</i>
<i>PCPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>The Philosophical Quarterly</i>
<i>PT</i>	<i>Philosophical Transactions</i>
<i>Phil. Lit.</i>	<i>Philosophy and Literature</i>
<i>PPA</i>	<i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Philosophical Review</i>
<i>Phil. Rh.</i>	<i>Philosophy and Rhetoric</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Political Studies</i>
<i>QJS</i>	<i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i>
<i>RM</i>	<i>Review of Metaphysics</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>Renaissance News</i>
<i>RP</i>	<i>The Review of Politics</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>
<i>RS</i>	<i>Renaissance Studies</i>
<i>RSQ</i>	<i>Rhetoric Society Quarterly</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>Speech Monographs</i>
<i>SSI</i>	<i>Social Science Information</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TCBS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society</i>
<i>TCAAS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences</i>
<i>VH</i>	<i>Vivens Homo. Rivista Teologica Fiorentina</i>
<i>WMQ</i>	<i>The William & Mary Quarterly</i>
<i>YCS</i>	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>

Introduction: The problem in question

'Human souls also possess reason, and with it they circle in discourse around the truth of things.'

Pseudo-Dionysius¹

The most basic concern of this thesis is with the single question of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. The examination of other questions is conducted, so to speak, through the prism provided by the discussion of rhetoric and philosophy in ancient as well as modern thought. 'Talking well' (*eu legein*) has always had two meanings. It is not merely a rhetorical ideal, the art of speaking, of saying whatsoever well. It also means saying the right thing, i.e., the truth. In the ancient world, the ideal was proclaimed just as much by teachers of philosophy as by those of rhetoric. Rhetoric was always in conflict with philosophy and, as against the idle speculation of the sophists, claimed to teach true wisdom.

Western subdivisions and criteria of formal language and thought, of educated thinking and discourse, have recurrently linked rhetorical discourse with deception and fiction. Associations that linger in today's critical lexica (e.g., rhetoric is an art of lying, most readily found in the politician; rhetoric encourages deceptiveness; a flawless eloquence is not to be trusted), were already old when Cicero wrote. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that the quarrel between rhetoricians and philosophers goes back to the origins of the understanding of what philosophy is, which we can trace to Plato (c. 427-347) and the immediate Platonic tradition.² Less appreciated is that this tradition

¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*; in *Complete Works*, tr. C. Luibheid (N.Y., 1987), VII, 2, p. 106.

² The modern idea that the origins of philosophy can be traced to Thales (as opposed to, e.g., Pythagoras, or Adam, or the Egyptians), is a mid-eighteenth century notion; see, C. Blackwell, 'Thales Philosophus', in *History and the Disciplines*, ed. D. R. Kelley (Rochester, 1997), pp. 61-82. Walter Burkert has shown that the etymology of *philosophos* given by Diogenes Laërtius

was not a disinterested one. Its concern was not to discover what had been meant by 'philosophy',³ but to carve out and develop a particular kind of discourse (i.e., what it takes to be the philosophical enterprise) for its own purposes (i.e., to marginalise its competitors). It did this in a particularly successful way, to the extent that it is difficult for us even to consider what the alternatives might have been. But as I attempt to show in this thesis, there are residual problems in the way that it conceives of the philosophical project, and this question is intimately related to the still widespread tendency of contemporary thinkers to link rhetorical discourse with pompous vacuousness or mere trickery.⁴

For centuries, both philosophical language and the history of philosophy have placed abstract reason at the top of a ladder of learning. Logic is the formal demonstration of truths; rhetoric is the deceptive purveying of falsehoods. Academic philosophers and serious-minded theorists in any field, therefore, are concerned only with logic, the analysis of theoretical arguments in terms of abstract concepts and the insistence on explanations in terms of universal laws (with formal, general, timeless, context-free, and value-neutral arguments). The study of factual narratives about particular, situation-dependent, and ethically loaded argumentation, on the other hand, is at its best a matter of rhetoric and left to literary students of elocution or style. Put differently, philosophers more often than not assume that rhetoric and logic are inescapably at odds. At best rhetoric is seen as an aid to 'alleviate' the 'severity' and 'dryness' of rational language, to make it 'easier' to absorb rational truth.

Having said that, until the mid-seventeenth century there was no widespread tendency to insist on the superiority of theoretical abstraction and logical deduction, at the expense of directly human modes of analysis. Before

(3rd c.) in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (I.12-13), cannot go back further than Plato and is rooted in Platonic thought ('Platon oder Pythagoras? Zum Ursprung des Wortes "Philosophie"', *Hermes*, 88 [1960], pp. 159-77). Also see, E.A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, (Oxford, 1963), pp. 281-84, 306-7 n 8; and P. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), ch. 2.

³ In fact, the Presocratics had classified what they were doing as *historia* (inquiry); see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, p. 16.

⁴ See, e.g., Peter Munz's review article, 'The Rhetoric of Rhetoric', *JHI*, 51:1 (1990), pp. 121-42, at p. 121.

Galileo, Descartes, and Hobbes, as Stephen Toulmin has shown, human adaptability and mathematical rigour were regarded as twin aspects of the human reason. However, from the mid-seventeenth century on, this balance was upset, as the prestige of mathematical proofs led philosophers to disown non-formal kinds of human argumentation. This is a profound 'story', worth quoting at length:

'The speculative pursuit of knowledge has played a central part in human culture for 2,500 years and more. From early on, the word "philosophy" referred to the systematic and methodical treatment of any subject. In this sense, it covered the whole range of inquiries that lent themselves to systematic investigation and debate, ... from geometry and astronomy at one pole to autobiography and historical narrative at the other. ... And, for more than two thousand years, all such activities were given equal consideration. No field of investigation or speculation was dismissed as intrinsically unphilosophical. ... From the mid-seventeenth century on, however, an imbalance began to develop. Certain methods of inquiry and subjects were seen as philosophically serious or 'rational' in a way that others were not. As a result, authority came to be attached particularly to scientific and technical inquiries that put those methods to use. ... Beside the rationality of astronomy and geometry, the *reasonableness* of narrative came to seem a soft-centred notion, lacking a solid basis in philosophical theory, let alone substantive scientific support. ... So, as time went on, academic philosophers came to see literary authors like Michel de Montaigne ... as not being philosophers at all, let alone scientists'.⁵

Prior to the seventeenth-century, therefore, no one questioned the right of rhetoric to stand alongside logic in the canon of philosophy; nor was rhetoric treated as a second-class (and necessarily inferior) field.⁶ During the Renaissance period, the realm of the theoretical and the practical were both regarded as legitimate.⁷ Theoretical inquiries were balanced against discussions of concrete practical issues, such as the specific conditions on which it is morally acceptable for a sovereign to launch a war, or for a subject to kill a tyrant.⁸ The context in which these discussions were held legitimated the place of rhetoric in human affairs. Since the end of the Renaissance, however, most philosophers have been committed to abstract, universal theory to the exclusion of practical issues. As Toulmin has put it, 'a shift occurred

⁵ S. Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp. 14-5.

⁶ Id., *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (N.Y., 1990), p. 30. As seen in chapter 2, Plato did not object to rhetoric *tout court*; rather, it was the rhetoric of probability as taught by the sophists that he thought was wrong and wanted to discredit.

⁷ See chapter 4, pp. 99-139.

⁸ Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, p. 24.

from a style of philosophy that keeps equally in view issues of local, timebound practice, and universal, timeless theory', to one that 'accepts matters of universal, timeless theory as being entitled to an exclusive place in the agenda of "philosophy".'⁹ The Cartesian *Cogito* and later the Kantian transcendental subject (the first-person, thinking subject without memory, gender, race, nationality, or class), captured the minds of many thinkers who sought a philosophy purged of contingency, human qualities, and so of history and rhetoric. The clear idea and the unambiguous statement are the ideal of the modern thinker and of modern education.¹⁰ The ancient conceptions of rhetoric as a part of logic and of metaphor as essential to thought, which Aristotle said was the greatest thing to master and a sign of genius,¹¹ have become largely lost to us as elements of what we count as basic to human knowledge. We are inspired not by the turn of phrase, the sudden perception of a similarity in dissimilars, or the strength of memory, but by clarity and certainty. The greatest thing to be is the master of method, not the master of metaphor. After all, method brings with it the possibility of certainty, or near certainty; metaphor, on the other hand, brings only ambiguity and possibilities of meaning that perhaps can never be fully known.

The change took place only gradually over three or four centuries, but, for Toulmin, the long-standing fascination of Western philosophers with the method and style of natural science has inflicted a wound on human reason, a wound responsible for the current imbalance between our ideas of 'rationality' and 'reasonableness', and from which we are only recently beginning to recover. In simple terms, the centuries-old dominance of rationality, a mathematical form of reasoning modelled on scientific method and the quest for absolute certainties, has diminished the value of reasonableness, a system of humane judgements based on personal experience and practice. One of the

⁹ Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, p. 24.

¹⁰ 'If only Italy had listened to Giambattista Vico, and if, as at the time of the Renaissance, it had served as a guide to Europe, would not our intellectual destiny have been different? Our eighteenth-century ancestors would not have believed that all that was clear was true; but on the contrary that "clarity is the vice of human reason rather than its virtue", because a clear idea is a finished idea. They would not have believed that reason was our first faculty, but on the contrary that imagination was' (Paul Hazard, *La pensée européenne au XVIIIe siècle* [Paris, 1963], p. 43).

¹¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. W. H. Fyfe (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), 1459a 5-9.

major consequences of this schism has been the separation of logic from rhetoric. In fact, for much of the last three hundred years, and most of the twentieth century, scholars treated these investigations not merely as distinct, but as separate. Analytical philosophers and scientific theorists need not (indeed, must not) be distracted by rhetorical or stylistic issues. But if there is anything solid in this distinction between 'genuine reasoning' and 'mere persuasion', how universally can it be applied? For example, to what extent can all the 'theories' individuals appeal to in one situation or another, be framed in ways which are indifferent to who is presenting them to whom, where and when they are invoked, how they are presented, and so on? Again, how far can the manifold kinds of facts we observe and report in one situation or another, be described in terms of context-free and timeless concepts? In fact, all kinds of speech and language are more or less *embedded* in their occasion of use.

Consider the case of 'proofs' in mathematics. Mathematicians, of course, have always set out to minimise the historical or cultural relativity of their assertions. But as Imre Lakatos has shown, the ideas of mathematical 'validity' and 'rigour' have had their own histories: there are changes of paradigm in mathematics as much as in the natural sciences. We can only understand questions about the validity of a proof by Diophantus in antiquity or by Gauss in the early 1800s, by referring to its given date.¹² A perfectly or self-evidently 'valid' theory of proof, therefore, remains no more than a dream. As Umberto Eco says in his novel *Foucault's Pendulum*,

'With numbers you can do anything you like. Suppose I have the sacred number 9 and I want to get a number 1314, date of the execution of Jacques de Molay – a date dear to anyone who, like me, professes devotion to the Templar tradition of knighthood. What do I do? I multiply nine by one hundred and forty-six, the fateful day of destruction of Carthage. How did I arrive at this? I divided thirteen hundred and fourteen by two, three, et cetera, until I found a satisfying date. I could also have divided thirteen hundred and fourteen by 6.28, the double of 3.14, and I would have got two hundred and nine. That is the year Attalus I, king of Pergamon, ascended the throne. You see?'¹³

¹² I. Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations: the logic of mathematical discovery* (Cambridge, 1976); cited in Toulmin, *Return to Reason*, pp. 26-7.

¹³ U. Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*, tr. W. Weaver (London, 1989).

Natural science is another notable example. Modern science, as John Gray points out, triumphed over its adversaries not through its superior rationality, but because its early-modern founders were more skilful than them in the use of rhetoric and the art of politics:

'Galileo did not win in his campaign for Copernican astronomy because he conformed to any precept of "scientific method." As Feyerabend argued, he prevailed because of his persuasive skill – and because he wrote in Italian. By writing in Italian rather than Latin, Galileo was able to identify resistance to Copernican astronomy with the bankrupt scholasticism of his time, and so gain support from people opposed to older traditions of learning'.¹⁴

Gray goes on to say that applying Karl Popper's account of scientific method (i.e., that a theory is scientific only in so far as it is falsifiable, and should be given up as soon as it has been falsified), would have killed the theories of Darwin and Einstein at birth. After all, when they were first advanced, each of them was at odds with some of the available evidence; only later did evidence become available that gave them crucial support.¹⁵

This brings to mind Thomas S. Kuhn's thesis of conceptual change. Kuhn memorably argued that when the current scientific paradigm is no longer able to provide a useful answer to questions that confront them, a scientific revolution occurs, and new paradigms compete to replace the old. The participants in the competing paradigms are so different that they are simply unable to communicate clearly with one another. But surely conceptual change is *evolutionary*, not *revolutionary*; scientists from competing paradigms are able to (and, in fact, do) argue about the merits of the competing ideas. The so-called 'Copernican Revolution', for example, took a century and a half to complete, and was argued out every step of the way. The world-view that emerged at the end of this debate had, of course, little in common with earlier pre-Copernican conceptions. But however radical the resulting change in physical and astronomical *ideas and theories*, it was the outcome of a continuing rational discussion.¹⁶

Should the reader need further persuasion in these matters, we can always seek reassurance in the words of Einstein on the origin of scientific knowledge:

¹⁴ J. Gray, *Straw Dogs* (London, 2002), pp. 3, 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁶ S. Toulmin, *Human Understanding* (Princeton, 1972), p. 105.

'Man tries to make for himself in the fashion that suits him best a simplified and intelligible picture of the world. He then tries to some extent to substitute this cosmos of his for the world of experience, and thus to overcome it. ... He makes this cosmos and its construction the pivot of his emotional life in order to find in this way the peace and serenity which we cannot find in the narrow whirlpool of personal experience. ... The supreme task ... is to arrive at those universal elementary laws from which the cosmos can be built up by pure deduction. There is no logical path to these laws; only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding of experience, can reach them ...'.¹⁷

Intuition? Sympathy? Strange words in this context. But, according to Einstein, the process of science does indeed rely upon intuition and the creative imagination.¹⁸ A recurrent theme of his was that the basic axioms of physics could not be derived from any experimental results but had to be 'freely invented'; he thus instructs the physicist 'to give free reign to his fancy, for there is no other way to the goal'.¹⁹ And as the physicist and biologist Leo Szilard has said: 'The creative scientist has much in common with the artist and the poet. Logical thinking and an analytical ability are necessary attributes to a scientist, but they are far from sufficient for creative work. Those insights in science that have led to a breakthrough were not logically derived from preexisting knowledge'.²⁰

But to root philosophy in the imagination would amount to abandoning the search for a simple, non-contradictory system of statements and concepts – and this, it seems, most professional philosophers refuse to do. Indeed, many continue to adhere to the scientific ideal of Enlightenment philosophy; and thus the method and style of natural science, is more often than not, taken to embody the only kind of rationality worth emulating, even in the ethical sphere. However, it is a mistake (or at least a carelessness), to take a method and style that have proven fruitful for the investigation of certain truths and apply them to a very different sphere of human life, a sphere that may have a different geography and demand a different sort of precision, a different norm

¹⁷ Cited in Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (London, 1999).

¹⁸ A. Einstein, 'Principles of Research', in *Ideas and Opinions* (N.Y., 1954), p. 226; id., 'On the Method of Theoretical Physics', in *ibid.*, p. 274. In the aftermath of Einstein's discoveries, the *New York Times* editor could proclaim that the scientist and the poet now complemented one another ('Science Needs the Poet', 21st Dec., 1930, Sec. 3, p. 1).

¹⁹ Einstein, 'The Problem of Space, Ether, and the Field in Physics', in *Ideas and Opinions*, p. 282.

²⁰ Cited in A. Damásio, *Descartes' Error. Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (N.Y., 1994), p. 189.

of rationality. We would do well to bear in mind Aristotle's remarks on the subject of precision,

'What is proper to an educated man is not to try to achieve in every kind of problem an exactness other than the one allowed by the nature of the matter. It would be equally unreasonable to accept from a mathematician merely probable conclusions, as to demand conclusive demonstrations from an orator'.²¹

The great error of the moderns consists, therefore, in believing that the terms 'rigour' and 'exactness' are synonymous, and that reasoning must be exact in order to be rigorous. As I repeatedly suggest in this thesis, this is nothing more than a venerable prejudice. Yet, the rejection of all passionate language as the expression of common sense is based on this. Many professional philosophers are still inclined to speculate about knowledge as though it were abstractable from the 'contamination' of time, place, and human motives.

Less acknowledged is that in science and philosophy alike, an exclusive preoccupation with logical systematicity has been destructive of both historical understanding and rational criticism. The science of logic, for example, has throughout its history tended to develop in a direction leading it away from practical questions (about the manner in which we have occasion to handle and criticise arguments in different fields), and towards a condition of complete autonomy, in which logic is as free from all immediate practical concerns as is some branch of pure mathematics. This is not to say that the intricate mathematical systems which constitute 'symbolic logic' must now be thrown away. Instead, I suggest that people with intellectual capital invested in them should keep no illusions about the extent of their relevance to practical arguments. After all, for an argument to be considered valid in formal logic, it must surely be good once and for all.²² But most argument fields cannot accommodate 'timeless' claims to knowledge. What is more, it is important to remember that the heart of moral experience does not lie in a mastery of general rules and theoretical principles, (however sound and well reasoned those principles may appear), but, as Jonsen and Toulmin put it, 'in the wisdom that comes from seeing how the ideas behind those rules work out

²¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. J. A. K. Thomson (London, 1953), I, 3, 1094b23 ff.

²² S. Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 185, 184.

in the course of people's lives: in particular, seeing more exactly what is involved in insisting on (or waiving) this or that rule in one or another set of circumstances'.²³

Put differently, we need to balance the hope for certainty and clarity in theory with the impossibility of avoiding uncertainty and ambiguity in practice. This process, already well underway in science and beginning in philosophy, does not involve discarding all of the progress that was made during the modern period. Instead, it involves reconciling these advances (which produce a mastery of the world), with a wisdom of their actions in the human world that was classically known as prudence (*phronesis*). In other words, a methodological conception of human knowledge must be balanced with a humanist conception of moral philosophy. A balance must be struck in education and thought between the empirical and scientific specialist methods of knowledge in the sciences, and the arts of poetry, rhetoric, and jurisprudence. In short, from now on, we must set aside permanent validity as illusory, and our idea of rationality related to specific functions of the human reason. After all, the substance of everyday experience refers always to a 'where and when' (a 'here and now' or a 'there and then'); general theoretical abstractions, by contrast, claim to apply always and *everywhere*, and so, as Thomas Nagel points out, hold good *nowhere-in-particular*.²⁴ In fact, as Quentin Skinner eloquently concludes, 'it may be right to view with a certain irony those moral and political philosophers of our own day who present us with overarching visions of justice, freedom and other cherished values in the manner of dispassionate analysts standing above the battle. What the historical record strongly suggests is that no one is above the battle, because the battle is all there is'.²⁵

Such scepticism towards the claim that rationality has a permanent validity is commonplace among students of rhetoric and history, and must now be embraced by philosophers. In this new scenario, philosophers would no longer see rhetoric and logic as inescapably at odds, as rivals offering

²³ A. Jonsen and S. Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley, Ca., 1988), p. 314.

²⁴ Cited in Toulmin, *Return to Reason*, pp. 15-6.

²⁵ Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 7.

competing recipes for judging the merits or defects in our reasoning. Instead, they acknowledge that the considerations that logic and rhetoric focus upon are complementary. Rhetoric puts the logical analysis of arguments into the larger framework of argumentation. When presenting one's train of reasoning forcibly and vividly, one tries to give them a fuller and easier grasp of substantive claims. By and large, the act of arguing still has the dual role of seizing the audience's attention and using this to convince them of a well-founded claim. Those who would condemn the orator for arousing the emotions of his audience, should bear in mind that the essence of human beings is determined both by logical and emotional elements; it follows that speech can persuade the human being only if it appeals to both these aspects. In Ernesto Grassi's words, '[a]s a passionate, and not exclusively rational, being, man is in need of the emotive word'.²⁶

In short, knowledge alone, as a rational process, can neither move the human being nor carry him away to certain actions. But it is important to note that the non-rational character of the principles are by no means identical with irrationality. In fact, as Martha Nussbaum has shown, emotions are not merely animal impulses, with no connection with our thoughts, imaginings and appraisals, but are instead essential elements of human intelligence.²⁷ They are 'geological upheavals of thought' (the metaphor is Proust's), that 'shape the landscape of our mental and social lives'.²⁸ A great deal is at stake in choosing to view emotions in this way:

'Instead of viewing morality as a system of principles to be grasped by the detached intellect, and emotions as motivations that either support or subvert our choice to act according to principle, we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning'.²⁹

²⁶ E. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy* (University Park, Penn., 1980), p. 26.

²⁷ Note that the view that emotions are just blind impulses that neither contain a perception of their object nor rest upon beliefs has never been strongly supported by major philosophers. Adam Smith, in particular, devoted a major part of his career to developing a theory of emotional rationality, since he believed that the guidance of certain emotions was an essential ingredient in public rationality (see *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie [Indianapolis, 1984], esp. pp. 9-10, 82-85, 97-9, 269-70). Martha Nussbaum argues that Adam Smith's conception of the judicious or impartial spectator provides a reliable filtering device to help us discriminate the trustworthy from the untrustworthy emotions (*Poetic Justice* [Boston, 1995], esp. pp. 72-78).

²⁸ M. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 1.

²⁹ Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 3.

Put differently, if emotions are charged with intelligence and discernment they cannot be sidelined in accounts of ethical judgement, as they so often have been in the history of philosophy. This view is relevant to the political theorist because without emotional development, a part of our reasoning capacity as political creatures will be missing. The outlook of emotions as animal impulses, as totally non-cognitive, which continues to have a hold on much informal thinking and talking about emotions is, of course, intimately related to the rejection of rhetoric as a scientific mode of expression. Throughout the history of ideas, philosophy, as rational knowledge (*epistêmê*), was to supply the true, factual content, whereas rhetoric generally was assigned a formal or external function. But this distinction ignores the fact that the essence of human beings is determined both by logical and emotional elements. As Aristotle says in *Posterior Analytics*,

‘The principles – all or some – must necessarily be lent more belief than what is deduced. He who arrives at a certain knowledge through proof must necessarily ... *know and believe the principles to a higher degree than what is deduced from them*’.³⁰

Nevertheless, over the centuries, philosophers have regularly denounced rhetoric and drawn a line between their pursuit of truth and the arts of mere persuasion. In practice, as I hope to suggest in this thesis, what philosophy has offered is a controlled rhetoric that often begins with the old rhetorical turn of denying eloquence, before going on to establish its own forms of persuasion within its logical structures. In fact, as Grassi has shown, even logical language must resort to metaphors, involving a transposition from the empirical realm of senses, in which ‘seeing’ and the ‘pictorial’ move to the foreground: to ‘clarify’, to ‘gain insight’, to ‘found’, to ‘conclude’, to ‘de-duce’.³¹ The corresponding speech is neither purely rational nor purely pathetic. In Grassi’s interpretation philosophy itself becomes possible only on the basis of metaphors, on the basis of the ingenuity which supplies the foundation of every rational, derivative process: ‘we cannot therefore speak of rhetoric *and* philosophy but every original philosophy is rhetoric and every true and not exterior rhetoric is philosophy’. Philosophy, therefore, is not a posterior

³⁰ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, tr. J. Barnes, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1994), 72a 37; my emphasis.

³¹ Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, p. 33.

synthesis of pathos and logos, 'but the original unity of the two under the power of the original *archai*'.³² The ubiquity of rhetoric is, indeed, unlimited. In fact, all representations of science that would wish to be of practical usefulness at all are dependent on it. Even Descartes, that great and passionate advocate of method and certainty, uses in all his writings the means of rhetoric in a magnificent fashion.³³ The fundamental function of rhetoric within social life, therefore, cannot be denied.

At this point, it may be worth emphasising that I argue for a substantially broad conception of rhetoric; I suggest that what we call 'rhetoric' has to be understood as including dialectic, topics, and all those elements of the discussion regarding argumentation that are not analytic. In my view rhetoric does not merely refer to the beauty of the words that a writer or speaker may use (although these are of considerable importance). It refers instead to the ability to speak about the whole of the subject: following Cicero, I hold that 'eloquence is wisdom put into language'.³⁴ If the object of wisdom is the whole of a subject, then the object of eloquence is to speak in a manner that will present the nature of this whole in words. Understood in this manner, therefore, rhetoric is an honest and productive exercise. Instead of imposing my will on another, I seek to get her agreement and active support, and thus I argue in order to persuade her accordingly. While doing so I am obliged to re-examine my premises and arguments. Put differently, the discourse I am addressing to another person is also simultaneously being addressed to myself in order to clarify what I want. So it follows, in an extreme case, that a rhetorical discourse designed to convince others of something could bring me to reject what I had intended to say. Unlike what happens in degenerate forms of rhetoric, the speaker is governed by a substantive intention: she speaks in order to move her listeners to something that she would be in a position to argue for but which, in front of many people, she cannot simply exhibit as it is.

³² Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, pp. 34, 32.

³³ For more information see the following excellent studies: Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1995); and Henri Gouhier, *La résistance au vrai*, ed. E. Castelli (Rome, 1955).

³⁴ Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, ed. and tr. H. Rackham, 2 vols. (London, 1942), 23.79.

Why? Because the many cannot be forced into a process aimed at a shared substantive understanding.

This is the class of questions with which this thesis is concerned. Intellectually and institutionally alike, however, we can only understand the current transition in our theoretical and practical lives by taking a longer-term historical perspective. Focusing on particular works relevant to the discussion of rhetoric and philosophy, in ancient as well as modern thought, this thesis hopes to make a small contribution towards the revival of an idea of civil wisdom I find has been missing since Descartes. I arrive at a conception of philosophy as a form of knowledge that requires both rhetoric and poetry to accomplish wisdom. But this thesis is also historical in another important way. It operates on the assumption that the discourse of rhetoric is not detached from other human concerns, merely a set of rules for public oratory or an array of techniques for managing interpersonal communication. On the contrary, it assumes that rhetoric is deeply implicated in the social and political order that produces it.³⁵ In fact, the discourse of rhetoric can be seen as both a product and a producer of the social order. To borrow Pocock's terminology, rhetoric texts (like all texts), are events;³⁶ i.e., they simultaneously participate in the discourse or language of rhetoric in their period, and contribute their own terms, concepts and strategies – which in turn help construct and, indeed, transform the discourse to which they belong.

The discourse of rhetoric is also 'impure' in another sense: it is interpenetrated by other discourses. In the Renaissance, for example, discussion of *elocutio* or style, frequently employs *ornatus*, a word which means, among other things, adornment or dress, thus summoning the realm of social behaviour and etiquette of the period. In fact, the perpetual emphasis on decorum (i.e., on saying and doing what is fitting or proper), has much the

³⁵ A number of commentators have put forward this assumption; see, e.g., Nancy Struener, *The Language of History in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1970); Marc Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980); Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* (London, 1987); Wayne Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men's Minds* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995).

³⁶ J.G.A. Pocock, 'Texts as Events: Reflections on the History of Political Thought', in *The Politics of Discourse*, ed. K. Sharpe and S. Zwicker, (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 21-34. Also see, id., *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago, 1960).

same result.³⁷ In short, as with all discourses, this one does not exist in a linguistic vacuum.³⁸

Despite the theoretical questions posed, this thesis focuses primarily on the ancient and modern philosophers who best exemplify the significance of the relations between reason and rhetoric, and also their inner tensions: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Renaissance thinkers, Hobbes, and Locke. Put differently, I analyse the rhetorical discourse in the works of some of rhetoric's staunchest opponents, and some of its most well-known advocates. Again, it is important to note that when I question philosophy and the philosophical project as such, it is not in the name of sophistic of rhetoric as just a playful technique. Instead, I am interested in the rhetoric hidden in philosophy itself because within, for example, the typical Platonic discourse there is a rhetoric – a rhetoric against rhetoric, against the Sophists.³⁹ What is more, I hope to suggest that these philosophers, whether pro or against rhetoric, are all aware of the danger of 'sophistic tricks'; they all (more or less reluctantly) acknowledge that rhetoric potentially represents a dangerous threat to the moral basis of political life, but take different directions. I argue, in addition, that in the works of philosophers who are widely regarded as some of rhetoric's staunchest opponents, we can find not only clear evidence of the use of rhetoric to fight rhetoric, but also, most importantly, allusions to what they see as a 'true' or legitimate rhetoric. I hope to suggest, therefore, that for Plato the philosopher is *the* true rhetorician; while for Hobbes the only 'true' rhetorician is the absolute sovereign; and for Locke, any truly free and rational individual can (at least in theory), be a good or true rhetorician.

Chapter 2 clarifies the relations between rhetoric and philosophy with reference to Plato and Aristotle. The first treatise on rhetoric was, of course, written by Aristotle, and we now possess only fragments of it. But it is clear

³⁷ See, e.g., Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* [1528], tr. T. Hoby, ed. V. Cox (London, 1994).

³⁸ To employ Mikhail Bakhtin's notion, although through a process of abstraction and a careful monitoring of borders and boundaries one can produce a monologic model of rhetoric as a unified, self-contained discourse, its true nature is dialogic, for it is always and everywhere engaged in dialogue with other discourses that are present within it. See M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, tr. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin, TX, 1981).

³⁹ It is important to note that I am not saying that all concepts are essentially metaphors and, therefore, that everything is rhetoric. I try to analyse, instead, what has happened since Plato and in a recurrent way until now in this opposition between philosophy and rhetoric.

that his theory was developed to carry out a programme originally projected by Plato; who, trying to undermine what he saw as the shallow claims put forward by the sophists, established a genuine foundation for rhetoric, which only the philosopher, the dialectician, could accomplish. We shall see that the task is to master the faculty of speaking in such an effectively persuasive way that the arguments brought forward are always appropriate to the specific receptivity of the souls to which they are directed. Two Platonic assumptions are implicit in this statement of the task of rhetoric: (i) that only he who has a grasp of the truth (i.e., the ideas) can unerringly devise the probable *pseudos* of a rhetorical argument; (ii) that one must have a profound knowledge of the souls of those one wishes to persuade. Aristotelian rhetoric is pre-eminently an expansion of the latter theme.

In chapter 3, I analyse the ideal orator in Cicero's works, and argue against the traditional interpretation of Cicero as someone who prizes success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth. This is not to say that in his rhetoric is not inscribed a particular political model, a republican one in which orators, all theoretically equals, engage in a free competition in the public arena, aiming for victory over their fellow orators. Less appreciated is that rhetoric, in the way Cicero most often conceives it, does not only refer to the elegant or ornate forms of statement that a writer or speaker may use (even though these are of considerable importance). In fact, for Cicero, the ideal orator can employ the voice of a tragedian, the gestures of the greatest actors, but he also requires the acumen of the dialectician and the ethical knowledge of philosophers. Moreover, the orator works for the good of the state and cannot rest in the flowery excursus of the pedant who performs before his students or a select group of admirers. In his practice, therefore, Cicero might use the arts and crafts of rhetoric to make the worse cause appear the better, and might boast of having thrown dust in the eyes of the jury, but in his theory oratory was purely a power for good.

In chapter 4 I turn to the Renaissance, where I suggest that in this period rhetoric constitutes a recognisable, definable discourse, constituted collectively in the vast number of discussions of the subject. Throughout it rhetoric is most often identified as the art of persuasion: language

(accompanied by supporting looks and gestures), as it is used to move people into action. What is more, they conceive rhetoric as a political instrument, but not one whose main purpose is to enable free political debate and discussion. Moreover, even though rhetoric in the Renaissance constitutes a recognisable discourse, it is simultaneously marked by profound ambiguities, contradictions, and divisions. In fact, the discourse of rhetoric in the period is anything but monolithic in its attitudes and values, rather it is very complex, replete with interpretative puzzles. One thing seems certain, in the 'Machiavellian' world of the Renaissance, the art of rhetoric had become indispensable. After all, traditional allegiances had been effaced, propaganda was becoming an essential tool of the church, and monarchs recognised that their success as rulers depended in good measure on their ability to display power and magnificence in elaborate spectacles. Still, much of the disorder of the contemporary world was also due to rhetoric. Its defenders tried to re-establish order by using more rhetoric – this time good rhetoric, to replace or drive out the bad.

In Chapter 5 I analyse the ways in which two of the most important seventeenth-century philosophers, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, represented rhetoric to themselves, how they wrote about it and how they imagined its powers and its limits. We shall see that both thinkers use the resources of late-medieval and early modern culture to unearth and transform civil science and rhetoric. I hope to suggest that it is against this background that Hobbes's concern to establish a science of virtue and Locke's desire to examine knowledge in the light of physical science need to be understood. However, they develop and transform these assumptions in a manner characteristic of the influence exerted by the Reformation and by the modern scientific view of the world.

As hinted at earlier, the question which gives special pertinence to the grouping of topics covered in this thesis is whether rhetoric and philosophy are related in ways that may be mutually convenient or add to the efficient operation of one or both of them, or whether they are in some manner conjoined so essentially that without a genuine mutuality of relationship both of them would be significantly, if not fundamentally, incomplete. The

hypothesis of this thesis is that neither rhetoric nor philosophy can exist independently of the other; that each depends for the achievement of its own function upon the unique or special contributions of the other. In short, I do not understand philosophical thought as something independent of rhetoric. This view, of course, stands in opposition to abstract theories that deduce the meaning of language in rationalistic terms from an *a priori* doctrine of being.

In fact, another way of expressing my underlying commitment in the thesis would be to say that I wish to highlight the divisions between three rival views about the character of moral and political argument. (i) First there is the view that our aim should be to argue deductively in such a way that any rational person who accepts our premises will feel compelled to endorse the conclusions we derive from them (Kant, Habermas, Rawls); (ii) Next there is the view that, even if it is possible to argue deductively about moral and political principles, our arguments will never be persuasive unless we enforce them with the art of rhetoric (Bernard Williams, Martha Nussbaum); (iii) Finally, there is the view that the character of effective moral and political argument is such that it is simply impossible to separate form and content. *Res* and *verbum*, thing and word, are joined in a symbiotic relation in the act of philosophical speech (Ernesto Grassi, Stephen Toulmin). This rhetorical conception of human knowledge is tied to how we make sense together as language-using animals. It takes issue with our rationalistic scientific ideal of knowledge which excludes every form of figurative, poetic, and rhetorical language from the theoretical sphere. Be that as it may, view *a* is where matters stand at the beginning of the twentieth-first century.

Whether or not the readers of this thesis may agree that the case is made by what follows, I hope at least that the question will prove inviting for continuing examination and consideration. In fact, this work is presented not as a finished narrative or a dogmatic statement, but in the spirit of dialogue.

*Rhetoric is more than it seems:
Plato's 'true rhetoric' and its institutionalisation by Aristotle*

I

Plato (c. 427-347) and Aristotle (c. 384-322) saw philosophy as being in desperate need of radical reform, and each of them saw this reform as being carried out by a wholly new kind of person: a philosopher entirely unlike the sophists who wrote and taught philosophy. These new kinds of philosopher were not simply people who carried out investigations in a different way from their predecessors: they had (and needed to have), a wholly different *persona*.⁴⁰ Plato and Aristotle used this (in different ways, but with the same broad aims) to transform our understanding of what qualities (including personal qualities), one needs to be a philosopher. In other words, they enhanced the authority of their enterprise by denigrating the teachings of their rivals. For all their eloquence, wit and popularity, they argued, the sophists do not produce true knowledge. Plato and the immediate Platonic tradition, therefore, were concerned to carve out and develop a particular kind of discourse (i.e., what it takes to be the philosophical enterprise) for its own purposes (i.e., to marginalise its competitors). It did this in a particularly successful way, to the extent that it is difficult for us even to consider what the alternatives might have been. I hope to suggest that it is here that the theoretical depreciation of the rhetoric begins, and basically continues until today, for the interest we are prepared to devote to rhetoric in philosophy is very limited. In fact, there is still a widespread tendency amongst contemporary political theorists to view rhetoric as pompous vacuousness or mere trickery.⁴¹ For centuries, both philosophical language and the history of philosophy have placed abstract reason at the top of a ladder of learning, and

⁴⁰ For more on the question of the *persona* of the philosopher see the contributions in C. Condren (ed.), *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁴¹ See, e.g., Peter Munz's review article, 'The Rhetoric of Rhetoric', *JHI*, 51:1 (1990), pp. 121-42, at p. 121.

even though Plato's metaphysical teachings have not gone unchallenged, his enmity to rhetoric has persisted, as has his identification of it with sophistry.

In this chapter I wish to clarify the relations between rhetoric and philosophy with reference to Plato and Aristotle. Plato is reacting against what he perceived to be the moral dissolution in his society and to the concurrent sophistic rhetorical techniques that in his view confounded any real moral reasoning. He was embittered against contemporary rhetoric by his own frustrated attempts to participate in politics and by the trial and execution of his master, Socrates, at the hands of the Athenian democracy in 399 B.C.⁴² In his *Seventh Letter* Plato himself relates what it meant to him that this man, whom he so deeply revered and sought to emulate, was condemned to death for corrupting the youth with the then fashionable arts of sophistry.⁴³ His writings are dedicated in their entirety to showing that the Socrates who had to drink the cup of hemlock was not a sophist. Plato nevertheless acknowledges that Socrates, because of his singular art of dialectic, would of necessity look like a sophist to the Attic court. It is for this reason that he turns to mathematics: he saw there a kind of reasoning that was invulnerable to sophistic 'tricks'.⁴⁴

Plato's enmity to rhetoric is well-known and has clearly persisted, but often ignored is the fact that his animus is directed at the forensic temper which prizes success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth, *not* against persuasion as a concomitant of instruction. I argue that already in the *Gorgias*, the first dialogue to be analysed below, two forms of persuasion are alluded to: a rhetoric that produces persuasion for belief in the absence of knowledge, and a genuine art of rhetoric (the kind of persuasion that produces *epistêmê*).⁴⁵ However, it is in the *Phaedrus* that Plato contrasts rhetoric in its contemporary expression, with what he calls 'the truly rhetorical and

⁴² See the autobiographical account in Plato's *Seventh Epistle*, 324-26; I cite throughout the translations in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Cambridge, 1997). Also see, S. Monson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements* (Princeton, N.J., 2000); and P. J. Steinberger, 'Was Socrates Guilty as charged? *Apology* 24c-28a', *AP*, 17 (1997), pp. 13-29.

⁴³ H.-G. Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic* (New Haven, 1980), p. 3.

⁴⁴ See Andrew Gregory, *Plato's philosophy of science* (London, 2000).

⁴⁵ See *Gorg.*, 454e.

persuasive art'.⁴⁶ I hope to suggest that in this dialogue Plato reveals a genuine foundation for rhetoric that only the philosopher or dialectician, can carry out: to master the faculty of speaking in such an effectively persuasive way that the arguments brought forward are always appropriate to the specific receptivity of the souls to which they are directed. The corresponding speech is neither purely rational nor purely pathetic.

Aristotle may have been every bit as anti-sophist as Plato, and recognises the danger of sophistic 'tricks', but he nevertheless had a lot of time for rhetoric and thus follows a path different from Plato's. Despite his alien resident status Aristotle's thinking is prompted, first and foremost, by wonderment, not political alienation. His 'descriptive caution' leads him to separate the world of nature from the human practical world – to distinguish between the methods and objects of inquiry appropriate to each realm. Consequently, he faults Plato precisely for not having made these distinctions (e.g., for having imported the ontological idea of the good into practical considerations where it has no application). Like Plato, Aristotle is reacting against the plurality of rhetorical and philosophical vocabularies already in circulation and use. But unlike Plato he was only too aware that philosophy was neither in a position to destroy rhetoric nor to absorb it. So Aristotle tries, instead, to organise the existing descriptions and rules for the use of persuasive speech, to delimit its legitimate uses,⁴⁷ and to establish the connection between the sphere of validity of rhetoric and that of philosophy. His response to Plato (though without naming him) on the subject of rhetoric is analogous to his responses on the subject of the value of poetry, the nature of politics, ethics, and other subjects – less idealistic and more pragmatic, but based on philosophical method.

But any attempt to understand what Plato and Aristotle are saying, of course, must first confront the problem of the disparate nature of the extant texts, i.e., the fact that we have fictional dialogues from Plato and a mixture of treatises and lecture notes from Aristotle. What is more, there is the distinction between Plato's mythical, metaphorical way of writing and

⁴⁶ *Phaedr.*, 269d.

⁴⁷ A separate discipline – ethics – will take care of abuses.

Aristotle's 'cautious' conceptualisations (a style that seems to most readers spare and unemotive in the extreme). Failure to observe this distinction could mislead the reader into taking what Plato says in the dialogues as statements and then comparing these to supposedly equivalent statements made by Aristotle. In fact, as Gadamer has argued, we should not assume that Plato and Aristotle were consistent, with themselves and with each other, in 'getting at' the same thing (albeit in quite different modes of discourse). Rather, the primary reason for the apparent differences in their thinking is the fact that they are answering questions posed somewhat differently.⁴⁸

II

Before Plato's time there was no distinction between 'philosophical' and 'literary' discussion of practical problems.⁴⁹ The idea of distinguishing between texts that pursue a search for truth and another group of texts that exist primarily for practical purposes, would be foreign in this culture.⁵⁰ (Similarly, no field of investigation or speculation was dismissed as intrinsically unphilosophical.) Plato's own portrayal of the tradition against which he is working acknowledges the influence (as sources of ethical teaching), of at least six different kinds of texts: epic, lyric, tragic, and comic poetry; the prose scientific or historical treatise; and oratory. In fact, in the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C., epic and tragic poets were widely assumed to be the most important ethical thinkers and teachers of Greece. No one thought of their work as less serious, less aimed at truth, than the speculative prose treatises of

⁴⁸ See H.-G. Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, tr. and intr. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, 1986). This sets off Gadamer's approach from that of Werner Jaeger's *Aristotle* (Oxford, 1948).

⁴⁹ In antiquity, in fact, the boundaries between rhetorical and artistic literature were also drawn in a different way, and they were not clear-cut. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, tr. V. W. McGee (Austin, TX, 1986), p. 150, has argued that this was partly because 'there was no deep individual personality in the modern sense. It (individual personality) originated in the eve of the Middle Ages ("to me myself" of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Augustine, *soliloquia*, and so forth). The boundaries between one's own and the other's word became sharper here.

⁵⁰ One important distinction did exist: between prose writers and poets. There were other distinctions of genre within each of these large divisions; but as Martha Nussbaum has said, 'none of these distinctions by any means corresponds to a distinction between writers who regarded themselves and were regarded as serious ethical thinkers and those who did not and were not' (*The Fragility of Goodness* [Cambridge, 1986], p. 123).

historians and those primarily known as philosophers were also poets: Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles are the most prominent examples. It is also important to remember that figures who today are usually classified as poets were unhesitatingly judged by their contemporaries to be philosophers (if by this one means seekers for wisdom concerning important human matters).⁵¹

There are at least two sets of incongruities at work in Plato and the Platonist tradition. The first is that between philosophical discourse and earlier forms of thought (which make no claim to the title of ‘philosophy’); and the second is that between rival notions of what philosophy entails. With respect to the latter point, Plato’s concern is to mark out what he takes to be the philosophical enterprise (i.e., the kind of teaching practised by Socrates) from the activities of the sophists. ‘Sophist’ was Plato’s term for his conceptual rivals, whose teachings he deplored and before his time the word bore no strongly negative connotations.⁵² In fact, in its earliest uses, *sophistês* was a general term for wise (*sophos*) figures such as poets and orators. ‘The men of former times applied the name “sophist,” not only to orators whose surpassing eloquence won them a brilliant reputation’, wrote Philostratus (c. 170-245), ‘but also to philosophers who expounded their theories with ease and fluency’.⁵³ Under Plato’s influence, however, the word came to have its narrower scope and its special association with rhetoric and relativism. This is misleading, for among the subjects taught by sophists were oratory, ethics, political theory, law, history, mnemonics, literature, mathematics, and

⁵¹ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 124.

⁵² It is important to note that Socrates himself was called a ‘sophist’. Indeed, what the sophists were accused of doing (i.e., ‘to make the weaker seem the better cause’ – cf. esp. Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, tr. W. Arrowsmith [Ann Arbor, MI, 1962], 889-1104), was also a charge made against Socrates in his trial (cf. Plato, *Apology*, 18b). The popular reaction against the sophists is illustrated in Aristophanes’ satirical play, *The Clouds*, by a character enrolling in a sophistic school in order to learn the ‘unjust argument’ (this, he has heard, can win a jury’s favour for the worst of offenders). Popular animosity against the school leads to it being burnt down (with at least one student inside) – a grim sign of the strong feelings that would later contribute to the death of the man whose name Aristophanes uses for the leader of his imaginary school – Socrates. Although false on most details, Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates must be true enough to have amused an audience who knew Socrates’ reputation. It is hardly surprising, then, that Plato felt the pressing need to distinguish Socrates from the sophists with whom he was associated in the popular imagination.

⁵³ Flavius Philostratus, *The Lives of the Sophists*, tr. W.C. Wright (Cambridge, Mass., 1921), p. 13. Also see, Graham Anderson, *Philostratus* (London, 1986).

astronomy.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, unlike many philosophers, the sophists pursued philosophy without the sceptical attitude of Socrates and with greater attention to the power and social uses of language. Protagoras was also, Philostratus noted, the first to charge a fee for his lectures. In Plato's dialogues the sophist is memorably portrayed as someone who is willing to teach anyone who is prepared to pay how to devise arguments to win a case, including making weak arguments appear better than strong ones:

'And Tisias and Gorgias? How can we leave them out when it is they who realized that what is likely [*eikos*] must be held in higher honor than what is true; they who, by the power of their language, make small things appear great and great things small; they who express modern ideas in ancient garb and ancient ones in modern dress; they who have discovered how to argue both concisely and at infinite length about any subject?'⁵⁵

Plato condemns the sophists because, in his view, they give the appearance (*phainesthai*) of knowledge without its substance, and use probabilities (*eikos*) and semblances (*eidolai*) to persuade an audience. Their alleged teaching on probability is parodied in the *Phaedrus*:

'Sometimes, in fact, whether you are prosecuting or defending a case, you must not even say what actually happened, if it was not likely to have happened – you must say something that is likely instead. Whatever you say, you should pursue what is likely and leave the truth aside: the whole art consists in cleaving to that throughout your speech'.⁵⁶

If the sophists' material is apparent and not true knowledge, and if he is trained to prefer probability to truth if it will be more persuasive, he becomes no more than an 'insincere/dissembling imitator' of truth.⁵⁷ Their conception of rhetoric, therefore, is to justice (the political virtue *par excellence*) what sophistry is to legislation,⁵⁸ i.e., the art of illusion and deception: 'It takes no thought at all of whatever is best; with the lure of what's most pleasant at the

⁵⁴ See Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, pp. 162-63 nn. 27, 28, 306 n.8; and C. J. Rowe, 'Plato on the Sophists as Teachers of Virtue', *HPT*, 4:3 (1983), pp. 409-27.

⁵⁵ *Phaedrus*, 267a-b; cf. *Gorg.*, 449a-458c. Also see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.24.11, where these probabilistic proofs are attributed to Protagoras; and Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, tr. R. D. Hicks, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), where he says that Protagoras 'was the first to maintain that there are two sides to every question ..., and he even argued in this fashion, being the first to do so' (II, 463).

⁵⁶ *Phaedr.*, 272d; cf. also *Gorg.*, 464d-465a.

⁵⁷ *Soph.*, 268a.

⁵⁸ See *Gorg.*, 465b-c: 'Sophistic is to legislation what beautification is to gymnastics, and rhetoric to justice what cookery is to medicine'. Cf. *ibid.*, 449a-458c.

moment, it sniffs out folly and hoodwinks it, so that it gives the impression of being most deserving'.⁵⁹ So the failing of the sophist is ultimately not an intellectual, but a *moral* failing. Plato's stylistic choices must be assessed against the background of what he perceived to be the sophists' dazzling and specious use of argument, their use of the resources of language to bewitch and work on the hearer in the service of 'untruth'. For Plato the prevailing conception of rhetoric (i.e., the art of persuasion as practised and taught by the sophist) is dangerous because (a) it puts formidable power in the hands of anyone who masters it perfectly; (b) it lays aside all concern for 'speaking the truth'; and (c) it leaves human life unexamined and unchanged (because it accommodates itself to the prevailing *êthos*).⁶⁰

However, Plato does not condemn rhetoric *tout court*. As hinted at earlier his animus is not directed against persuasion as a concomitant of instruction, but against the forensic temper which prizes success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth. Even in the *Gorgias*, the first dialogue I analyse, two forms of persuasion are implied: a 'bad' rhetoric that creates persuasion in the absence of knowledge; and a 'true' or genuine art of rhetoric that produces *epistêmê*, knowledge in the privileged sense.⁶¹ Plato does not enlarge upon the nature of the second kind of persuasion, which even Athens' best orators and statesmen had failed to attain and the secret of which, presumably, Socrates alone held.⁶² We must turn to the *Phaedrus* for his supplementary treatment. There Plato memorably contrasts rhetoric, in its contemporary expression,

⁵⁹ *Gorg.*, 464d; cf. *ibid.*, 463b; *Rep.*, 493b-c; *Soph.*, 223a.

⁶⁰ The traditional assessment of the sophists as both philosophically inadequate and morally blameable teachers was first challenged in Chapter 67 of George Grote's *A History of Greece*, 12 vols. (London, 1846–56), and subsequently in his *Plato and the other Companions of Sokrates*, 3 vols. (London, 1865). However low their standing in the history of philosophy, the attitudes of the sophists have been of major significance for historians of ideas down to the time of Cousin (whose position indeed was denounced as 'rhetorical' in the most pejorative sense) – see D.R. Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas*, (Ashgate, 2002), p. 44. Most recent commentators have attempted to separate the 'new learning' from the negative image it used to carry; see, e.g., S. Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists* (Carbondale, Ill., 1991); J. Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* (Columbia, 1995); E. Schiappa, *Protagoras and Logos* (Columbia, S.C., 1991); J. Margolis, *The Truth about Relativism* (Oxford, 1991); O. Balaban, *Plato and Protagoras* (Lanham, Md., 1999); and B. McComiskey, *Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric* (Carbondale Ill., 2002). A notable exception is M. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 220–9.

⁶¹ See *Gorg.*, 454e.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 517a.

with what he calls ‘the truly rhetorical and persuasive art’.⁶³ I argue that the *Phaedrus* questions and modifies Plato’s earlier conception of value (and, consequently, of rhetoric): it gives a prominent place in the good life to passionate relationships between individuals (both as instrumental means and as intrinsically valuable components). I assess both Plato’s self-critical arguments and this new account of human goodness. Finally, I suggest that for him the worth of rhetoric is in its practitioners, just as the worth of moral philosophy is reflected (or perhaps one should say *embodied*) in its practitioners.

But before we look at the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*, it is important to note that at least two major problems confront anyone pursuing an inquiry into Plato’s dialogues. First, Plato is a courageously self-critical philosopher: he not only revises old positions, he even subjects them to criticism within his own dialogues. It can be dangerous, therefore, to make a synthesis of positions from different works. And yet often, clearly, it can also be fruitful, even necessary. A second problem is the dialogue form. Plato uses the dialogue to motivate a view, to make the reader feel the force of a problem, to explain the practical roots and implications of a solution. A typical strategy towards these ends is to show us alternative responses to the same problem and to let them ‘examine’ one another as the dialogue progresses. The Platonic dialogues, in short, contain more than a single voice, and we do not always so clearly see what choice ‘Plato’ wants us to make. What is more, Plato used the dialogue form to represent the philosophical discourse process employed by Socrates.⁶⁴ However, Socrates did not write, because he thought (if we are to believe Plato’s account) that the real value of philosophising lay in the responsive interaction of teacher and pupil, of interrogator and respondent – as they jointly engage in sifting the evidence and following, step by step, the unfolding import of the argument. Put differently, real philosophy is each person’s

⁶³ *Phaedr.*, 269d.

⁶⁴ For the biographical tradition concerning Plato see, Debra Nails, *The people of Plato* (Indianapolis, IN, 2002); A. Riginos, *Platonica* (Leiden, 1976); P. Friedländer, *Plato* (N.Y., 1964); A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, 7th edn. (N.Y., 1960).

committed search for wisdom, where what counts is not merely the acceptance of certain conclusions, but also entails following a certain path to them.⁶⁵

In the *Phaedrus* there is a notorious passage in which Socrates disparages writing and written artefacts precisely because they cannot perform this activity:

'You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse rolls about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support'.⁶⁶

Written words do not impact on self-understanding because they are not 'alive'. At best, they can remind us of what philosophising is like. At worst, they can 'introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it',⁶⁷ both of the content and of the manner of real philosophising, teaching them to be passively reliant on the written word. Worse still, in some readers written texts can induce the false conceit of wisdom. Since they may mistake information about many things for true understanding, 'they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing'.⁶⁸ Once written down, furthermore, every discourse lacks the responsiveness of true philosophical teaching. It 'rolls about everywhere', unable to select its audience or adapt what it 'says' to the nature of the audience addressed, and with no regard for the way that the philosophical discourse will vary in response to a particular interlocutor. It is particularly significant that a written text cannot explain itself or reply to objections made by the reader. 'When it is

⁶⁵ For descriptions of Socrates' effect on the interlocutor see, *Meno* 84a-c and *Soph.* 229e-230e. On *elenchos* see, H. Benson, *Socratic wisdom* (Oxford, 2000); N. Ranesinghe, *The soul of Socrates* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000); T. Brickhouse and N. Smith, *Plato's Socrates* (N.Y., 1994); M. Nussbaum, 'Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom', *YCS*, 26 (1980), pp. 43-97; R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1953); H. Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 1-21; and Cushman, *Therapeia*.

⁶⁶ *Phaedr.*, 275d-e.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 275a.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 275a-b.

faulted and attacked unfairly', Socrates remarks, 'it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support'.⁶⁹ It is an orphan – defenceless against attack because its 'father' or author is absent. We can now understand why Socrates concludes that 'No discourse worth serious attention has ever been written in verse or prose'.⁷⁰

Plato, however, did write philosophical texts. What is more, he placed these criticisms of writing inside a written work of his own.⁷¹ Why? Plato's dialogues tell us repeatedly that he lived surrounded by people who, in his view, cheapened philosophical activity by turning it into sophistry or eristic.⁷² In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that, especially after the death of Socrates, he felt the need to produce written paradigms of good philosophical teaching. After all, a reminder of real philosophical searching – even if it is no more than that – can still be valuable. So Plato's own practice of writing clearly reveals an acute self-consciousness about the relationship between choice of a style and the content of a philosophical conception. Yet, by placing the Socratic criticisms of writing inside his own written dialogues, Plato invites us to ask to what extent his own literary innovations have managed to circumnavigate the criticisms. Here we cannot hope to raise all of the most interesting questions about Plato's use of the dialogue form.⁷³ Still, it will be

⁶⁹ *Phaedr.*, 275e.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 277e.

⁷¹ On the criticism of writing see, Nussbaum, *Fragility*, pp. 200-33; D. Hyland, 'Why Plato wrote dialogues', *Phil. Rh.*, 1 (1968), pp. 38-50; J. Derrida, 'La pharmacie de Platon', in *La Dissémination* (Paris, 1972), pp. 69-197; and J. Fisher, 'Plato on Writing and Doing Philosophy', *JHI*, 27:2 (1966), pp. 163-72. In fact, fifth-century Athens attitudes towards writing, including those articulated by Plato, suggest some of the reasons why Greece provided so propitious a setting for the emergence of rhetoric. Greek epic and rhetoric embody the primacy Greeks had long given to the spoken word, verbal cunning and craft, the poet's song, and the suasive powers of the rhetorician.

⁷² As pointed out earlier, Plato is among the first to call inquirers such as himself *philosophoi*, a term he uses to distinguish his practices from those of the sophists. Plato's penchant for coining technical jargon and for giving new uses to old terms is well-documented. He coined a wide assortment of words ending with *-ikê* ('the art of') and *-ikos* (which, depending on context, denotes a person with a particular skill). Pierre Chantraine, 'Le suffixe grec-ΙΚΟΣ', *Études sur le vocabulaire grec* [Paris, 1956], pp. 97-171, has shown that of the more than 350 *-ikos* words in Plato, more than 250 are not found earlier. Thomas Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore, 1991), has argued that there is 'no trace' of *rhêtorikê* before Plato's *Gorgias*, and the word itself 'bears every indication of being a Platonic invention' (p. 2.). E. Schiappa, 'Did Plato coin *rhêtorikê*?', *AJP*, 11 (1990), pp. 460-73, has postulated that Plato may have coined the word 'rhetoric' to portray and define the teaching of his rival Isocrates.

⁷³ For more information see, H. Slaatte, *Plato's Dialogues and Ethics* (Lanham, Md., 2000); R. Hart and V. Tejera (eds.), *Plato's dialogues* (Lewiston, 1997); C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge, 1996); A. Nightingale, *Genres in dialogue* (Cambridge, 1995); M. Frede,

useful to provide a sketch of some ways in which his writing defines itself against the enormous influence of the sophists and rhetoricians:⁷⁴ in particular, what distinguishes the 'true philosophy' dramatised in Platonic dialogues, from the sophistic abuses which he memorably depicts as a threat to proper philosophising.

In using the dialogue form, Plato interposes a fictional character between himself (as absent author) and the audience. This character serves as a 'father' to the words within the dramatic context of the dialogue. The fictional interlocutor is made to raise some of the virtual audience's objections, hence giving Socrates an opportunity to defend himself against them. Yet, the rhetorical advantage of the dialogue over the treatise in this regard is not immediately evident. After all, one of the traditional parts of rhetorical composition is the *refutatio* – the anticipation of the audience's objections to the thesis advanced by the orator – which also may be included in a treatise. Unlike the dialogue, however, the treatise (the characteristic vehicle of the 'epic impulse' in philosophical composition),⁷⁵ implies a completed formulation of the truth. It assumes that truth can be communicated in propositions formulated without reference to any particular existential situation or to what needs to be said to a particular audience. The form of the treatise implies, moreover, that if the reader raises objections not answered in the written text, these objections will invalidate the argument.

'Plato's Arguments and the Dialogue Form', *OSAPS*, ed. J. Klagge and N. Smith (Oxford, 1992); J.A. Arieti, *Interpreting Plato* (Savage, Md., 1991); H.-G. Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, tr. and intr. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, 1991), esp. pp. 51-83, pp. 201-19; Seth Benardete, *The being of the beautiful* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 86-87; A. A. Krentz, 'Dramatic form and philosophical content in Plato's dialogues', *Phil. Lit.*, 7 (1983), pp. 32-47; and Derrida, 'La pharmacie de Platon', pp. 69-197.

⁷⁴ It is important as well to assess Plato's stylistic choices against the enormous influence of the tragic poets and their ethical teachings; he both acknowledges a debt to tragic poetry and distances itself from it. For more information see, Jill Gordon, *Turning toward philosophy* (University Park, Penn., 1999); Krentz, 'Dramatic form and philosophical content', pp. 32-47; Nussbaum, *Fragility*, Pt. II; C. Griswold, 'The Ideas and the criticism of poetry in Plato's *Republic*, Book 10,' *JHP*, 19 (1981), pp. 135-50; and H. Kuhn, 'The true tragedy', *HSCP*, 52 (1941), pp. 1-40 and 53 (1942), pp. 37-88.

⁷⁵ Citing Wittgenstein's statement in the *Tractatus* that 'Philosophy is not a theory but an activity', Albert W. Levi, 'Philosophy as Literature', *Phil. Rh.*, 9 (1975), pp. 1-20, persuasively argues that whereas the 'epic impulse' in systematic philosophy seeks to 'tell a story,' the 'dramatic impulse' seeks to 'show the activity'. The characteristic vehicle of the former is thus the treatise, that of the latter is the dialogue' (p. 15).

The dialogue, on the other hand, is an *open* form. It does not claim to present a universal, *apodictic* proof that must coerce belief in all rational individuals. It claims only to represent a particular argument, and to answer only the particular objections made by a particular individual. (In other words, it implies that the objections raised are not *all* the objections that might be raised, but only those that occur to a specific individual, the fictional character who serves as Socrates' interlocutor in the particular case.) In fact, the discussion it represents could, in principle, be continued provided that the participants fail to reach complete agreement. Several of Plato's dialogues, therefore, end with an adjournment rather than a final conclusion (as in the *Protagoras*, the *Cratylus*, or the *Euthyphro*). At times the dialogue is broken off by an interruption of some sort (as when in the *Lysis* the boys' tutors come to take their charges home), or it continues until everyone (except Socrates) has fallen asleep, as in the *Symposium*. Even when agreement is reached, the implication of the form is that the argument could be reopened at any point by raising a new objection.

What Plato offers in his dialogues, therefore, is not an exposition of his philosophical theories, but a dramatic representation of the philosophic endeavour as he understood it.⁷⁶ We see an active, ongoing discussion, rather than a list of conclusions or a proclamation of received truths. Furthermore, in its open-endedness, the dialogue form establishes a similarly dialectical relation with the reader, who is invited to enter critically into the give-and-take, to see who is really praiseworthy and why.⁷⁷ In short, Plato uses argument to show genuine communication taking place *and* to establish such communication with the reader. Yes, there are conclusions here, and some of Plato's opinions.⁷⁸ However, we are asked not merely to memorise them, but to

⁷⁶ As Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato*, has put it, not Plato but 'only his characters speak, and they speak to each other within the strict confines of a dramatic context' (p. 4). This, of course, raises a challenge: *strictu sensu*, we cannot attribute to Plato himself any of the statements made by his characters. This problem is explored in G.A. Press, *Who speaks for Plato?* (Lanham, Md., 2000); and D. Clay, *Platonic Questions* (University Park, Pa., 2000).

⁷⁷ This marks a great difference from many important works of earlier Greek philosophy, where it is usual for the speaker/author to claim to be an initiate (Parmenides), a recipient of wisdom from the gods (Homer, Hesiod), or even, himself, a god on earth (Empedocles)' (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 126).

⁷⁸ It is clear, for example, that the character Socrates is the real model for our activity as readers and interpreters, even of the speech of Protagoras. For what Protagoras did was, like a

find them inside ourselves. So unlike all the written texts criticised by Socrates the dialogue form might fairly claim that it awakens the soul, arousing it to rational activity rather than lulling it into drugged passivity. It seems to be both less 'silent' and more responsive to individual differences than the written discourses criticised by Socrates. Through its depiction of the dialectical process, furthermore, the dialogue can show the reader moral development and change taking place. Seeing examples of learning is surely an important part of *our* learning from a written text.

In all these ways Plato learned from tragic drama,⁷⁹ substituting its complexity and its exploratory character for the didactic flatness of much of the earlier philosophising in his tradition. In fact, the dialogue also shares a central structural feature with works of tragic theatre – the *elenchos*, or cross-examination. A number of Socratic dialogues begin with the confident assertion of a general position, made by a character over-optimistic about his grasp of practical problems. This general assertion, like so many candidate definitions in the dialogues, turns out not to cover all of the character's more concrete beliefs about choice and value. The dramatic action consists in the 'separation' of the character from his false beliefs through painful learning, the working-through of his ill-sorted beliefs. In the end he arrives at the truth of what he most deeply believes, or at least he acknowledges his own deep perplexity. (The reader, of course, should be engaged in a similar sorting process.) Even when the interlocutor does not progress beyond perplexity to truth, the *elenchos* separates him, as the *Sophist* puts it, from the tumorous growth of arrogant false belief, preparing the way for healthy growth.⁸⁰

practical epideictic speaker, to give a long speech; what he could not do, or could not do well, was to enter into a responsive exchange of views about its content. He lacked both dedication and humility; and these features of his character were displayed as defects that left him ill-prepared for the activity of self-scrutiny.

⁷⁹ One should bear in mind, however, Nussbaum's judgement: 'What we find in the middle-period dialogues, then, is theater; but theater purged and purified of theater's characteristic appeal to powerful emotion, a pure crystalline theater of the intellect. ... In Plato's anti-tragic theater, we see the origin of a distinctive philosophical style, a style that opposes itself to the merely literary and expresses the philosopher's commitment to intellect as a source of truth. By writing philosophy as drama, Plato calls on every reader to engage actively in the search for truth. By writing it as anti-tragic drama, he warns the reader that only certain elements of him are appropriate to this search. ...' (*Fragility*, p. 134).

⁸⁰ *Soph.*, 230b-d.

But is Socrates' refusal of his interlocutors' yearning for conclusions not teasing? Is it not similar to the sophist's or *ieron's* affected omniscience? As hinted at earlier, Plato's Socrates does not teach conclusions. He feigns ignorance, not knowledge.⁸¹ This, of course, is a trait that immediately distinguishes him from the sophists. Even when, by his dexterity and virtuosity, the accomplished orator wins conviction, he typically leaves those who 'believe' hesitant to admit that his contentions are their own. With the *elenchos* the case is different: the interrogator and the respondent are jointly engaged in sifting the evidence and following, step by step, the unfolding import of the argument. They 'plant seeds' in one another, and are 'parents' of truth and understanding in one another.⁸² It is for this reason that the *elenchos* more closely resembles the true art of persuasion.

III

Plato's critique of the prevailing conception of rhetoric is found in a number of dialogues but especially in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. It is for this reason that I now propose to clarify the relation between rhetoric and philosophy with reference to these two dialogues. Did Plato ever feel the need (and, if so, in which manner) to establish a union between rational knowledge and emotion? Or did he remain convinced (as in the *Republic* and *Phaedo*) that only the intellect can reliably guide a human being towards the good and valuable? If not, to what extent, in his view, is the essence of philosophy not exhausted in the typical rational process (*epistêmê*)? And, finally, could it be that we will find here a deeper meaning of rhetoric?

The subject of the *Gorgias* is rhetoric, in particular the 'true persuasive art', as opposed to the bad or false rhetoric practised (if we believe Plato's portrayal) by Gorgias and his followers. Socrates begins by seeking clarification from the elderly, respected Gorgias about the power of his 'craft'. Gorgias tells him that rhetoric rightly 'encompasses and subordinates to itself

⁸¹ See *Gorg.*, 506: 'For the things I say I certainly don't say with any knowledge at all; no, I'm searching together with you ...'.

⁸² *Phaedr.*, 276e-277a.

just about everything that can be accomplished'.⁸³ How shall we interpret this 'everything'? Gorgias' answer is to attain the greatest and most important of all things human (i.e., health, richness, beauty). All are subsumed within the overarching aim of rhetoric. But is rhetoric really capable of attaining such gifts? The doctor, for example, will deny that a person can be cured merely through speech, without special knowledge. Socrates, therefore, tries to find out 'what ... this persuasion produced by oratory is, and what it's about'.⁸⁴ He distinguishes between true and false belief or conviction (*doxa*), and proves that there can be no true or false knowledge (*epistêmê*), only true or false belief.⁸⁵ Why? Because *epistêmê* is rooted in grounds, in reasons, and is thus never false. It follows that rational knowledge and rational speech are superior, because it admits no form of opinion besides itself, no form that is not covered by grounded knowledge. And since rhetoric does not persuade by means of such *epistêmê*, it always remains in the realm of pseudo-knowledge.

But is this radically negative judgement Plato's definitive attitude towards rhetoric? I suggest that it is not. After all, knowledge alone, as a rational process, can neither move the human being nor motivate him to certain actions. Consider, for example, the manner in which Gorgias answers Socrates with the following objection:

'Many a time I've gone with my brother or with other doctors to call on some sick person who refuses to take his medicine or allow the doctor to perform surgery or cauterization on him. And when the doctor failed to persuade him, I succeeded, by means of no other craft than oratory. And I maintain too that if an orator and a doctor came to any city anywhere you like and had to compete in speaking in the assembly or some other gathering over which of them should be appointed doctor, the doctor wouldn't make any showing at all, but the one who had the ability to speak would be appointed ...'.⁸⁶

Both the doctor and the philosopher, therefore, need Gorgias' services, because bitter pills can be swallowed more easily with a sweet coating. So one does need rhetoric.

The dilemma we raised earlier, then, seems insurmountable: on one side an ineffectual (in the sense of non-motivating) rational knowledge, on the

⁸³ *Gorg.*, 456b.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 453c.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 454d-e.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 456b-c.

other speech as pure 'seduction'. However, as the discussion that follows attempts to clarify, the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric is more complex than this kind of complementarity suggests. The distinction between surface and depth in human affairs is not such that it can be reduced to the sweet coating and bitter contents of a drug, or, for that matter, to the pompous clothes and naked bodies of souls facing judgement. But before we enter into that discussion, we must take a closer look at the type of rhetoric so memorably condemned in Plato's dialogues.

Generically considered, Plato defined the prevailing conception of rhetoric, according to function, as a producer of persuasion.⁸⁷ It was mostly employed in law courts and in the public assembly with the purpose of winning conviction on any subject dear to the orator's heart or prescribed by party interests. It is important to emphasise, however, that for Plato the stigma attached to rhetoric had little to do with its character as persuasion. Socrates himself had well understood the power of words:

[T]he soul ... my dear friend, is cured by means of certain charms, and these charms consist of beautiful words. It is the result of such words that temperance arises in the soul, and when the soul acquires and possesses temperance, it is easy to provide health both for the head and the body'.⁸⁸

So words are 'charms' by which the soul can be cured of its ignorance and nurtured in virtue. In the *Gorgias*, as in the *Crito*, Plato makes Socrates assert that whoever teaches anything must, necessarily, in the course of teaching, also persuade.⁸⁹ Instruction ought to carry conviction in either the cobbler's art or in mathematics, because both kinds of knowledge distinguish truth from falsehood and are persuasive in regard to the truths of their respective subjects. Plato's *animus*, therefore, is not directed against persuasion as a concomitant of instruction. (After all, if it is true that there is no teaching or learning in the absence of persuasion then his own *paideusis* must somehow include the art of persuasion.) But he does repudiate the craft which has no distinctive subject-matter (except the 'knack' of persuasion itself⁹⁰), and which makes inculcation of partisan belief its exclusive concern. In fact, Plato

⁸⁷ *Gorg.*, 453a; *Phaedr.*, 260c; *Soph.* 222c-d.

⁸⁸ *Charmides*, 157a.

⁸⁹ *Gorg.*, 453d; *Crito*, 51b-c.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Gorg.*, 453a.

concludes that it is neither a science nor a true art (*technê*), but a 'knack' devoid of art.⁹¹

The most damaging blight upon rhetoric (as the sophists had taught it), is that it is polemical and contentious in both spirit and intent.⁹² It promoted the forensic temper which prizes success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth. Whether it is, as in the *Phaedrus*, the speech of Lysias, or that of a Solon or Pericles, the orator begins with a presumed truth or an unexamined thesis.⁹³ He proceeds to support and enforce it, never appraising its validity. His whole intent is in contriving by every persuasive trick at his command to get others to share the opinions he promotes for some ulterior reason. How, except by some incredible good fortune, can one expect truth to emerge concerning affairs either small or great? When understood in this manner rhetoric is clearly a form of 'flattery', and that is precisely how Plato regularly describes it.⁹⁴ In the effort to win his case, we are told in the *Gorgias*, the orator invariably appeals to the predilections of his audience and dangles before it what was most pleasant to hear.⁹⁵ In other words, rhetoric's method of producing persuasion is by accommodating argument to the ingrained prejudices and unexamined opinions of minds largely controlled by clamorous desires⁹⁶ rather than by a love of truth. And because it accommodates itself to the prevailing *êthos* it leaves human life unexamined and unchanged. What is more, the orator may succeed in inculcating beliefs, but in so doing he merely accomplishes a transfer of one person's opinions to another person's mind. So rhetoric, as practised, also stands condemned when measured by its results.

However, in the *Gorgias* there is passing reference to a different kind of persuasion: 'the persuasion that comes from teaching, concerning what's just and unjust'.⁹⁷ It is this kind of rhetoric that produces knowledge in the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 465a; *Phaedr.*, 260e. Aristotle will provide a valid answer to Socrates' demand that rhetoric have some subject matter particular to itself in the opening chapters of the *Rhetoric*. Rhetoric, he insists, is (like dialectic) a verbal, intellectual tool (*Rh.*, 1.1.1). Although it has artistic techniques and a method special to itself, it borrows the ideas and premises it uses from popular forms of other disciplines, especially politics and ethics

⁹² *Euthyd.*, 272c; *Soph.*, 225c.

⁹³ *Phaedr.*, 257e ff.

⁹⁴ *Gorg.*, 463b; *Soph.*, 223a; *Rep.*, 493b-c.

⁹⁵ *Gorg.*, 464d.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Rep.*, 431a-c; 442a; *Laws*, 689a-b.

⁹⁷ *Gorg.*, 454e-455a.

privileged sense (*epistêmê*). Plato does not enlarge upon the nature of the second kind of persuasion, but at 517a he alludes to a 'true rhetoric', which even the best of Athens' orators and statesmen failed to attain and of which, presumably, Socrates alone holds the secret. (I propose to show that it is this that Plato subsequently identified with dialectic.) We must turn to the *Phaedrus* for his supplementary treatment,⁹⁸ where Plato definitively contrasts rhetoric, in its contemporary expression, with what he calls 'the art of the true rhetorician, the really persuasive speaker'.⁹⁹

The problem of madness or *mania* and the *pathos* (and with it, of rhetoric) in its relationship to epistemic discourse, forms the central theme of the *Phaedrus*. Its first part, as is well known, concerns erotic love (*eros*).¹⁰⁰ Socrates covers his head in shame and delivers a discourse (modelled on the speech written for Phaedrus by his suitor, Lysias) which attacks erotic passion as a form of degrading madness and characterises the passions as mere urges for bodily replenishment, with no role to play in our understanding of the good. Then, uncovering his head, he recants, offering (to a Phaedrus newly shaken by the power of feeling) a defence of the benefits of madness. The two initial speeches, then, had operated with a simple dichotomy between *mania* and *sophrosune* (the state of soul in which intellect rules securely over the other elements), treating the former as entirely a bad thing, the latter as entirely good. But in fact neither of these claims is correct. Certain states of madness are not, as has been said, 'bad, pure and simple'. Indeed, madness can be a source of the highest goods, of 'the best things we have'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ The following are of general interest: G. Nicholson, *Plato's Phaedrus: the philosophy of love* (West Lafayette, 1999); and G. Ferrari, *Listening to the cicadas: a study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁹⁹ *Phaedr.*, 269d.

¹⁰⁰ See C. Osborne, *Eros unveiled: Plato and the God of love* (Oxford, 1994).

¹⁰¹ *Phaedr.*, 244a. This dialogue, furthermore, is a dialogue whose characters go mad. Socrates, for the only time in his life, leaves his accustomed urban haunts. Following beautiful Phaedrus, he walks to a green place outside the city walls and lies down on the grass by the banks of a flowing stream. He describes himself as 'possessed' by the influence of Phaedrus and the place. Phaedrus, too, yields to the influence of beauty and is moved by wonder (*Phaedr.*, 257c). From having been the critical and rationalistic 'speaker' of Socrates' first speech (*ibid.*, 244a), he becomes the loving and yielding boy to whom the manic second speech is spoken (*Phaedr.*, 243e). The place has been precisely located see, R. E. Wycherley, 'The scene of Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Phoenix*, 17 (1963), pp. 88-98; and D. Clay, 'Socrates' prayer to Pan', in *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M. W. Knox*, ed. G.W. Bowersock, W. Burkert, M.C. Putnam (Berlin, 1979), pp. 345-53.

There is clearly something new here. The *Phaedrus* displays a new view of the role of feeling, emotion, and particular love in the good life, and this change of view is explored inside the dialogue itself. In fact, there are striking similarities between the doctrine of Socrates' first speech (together with the speech of Lysias that inspires it) and certain views seriously defended by Socrates in the middle-period dialogues. Plato seems to embody important features of his own earlier view in the first two speeches, and then both 'recants' and criticises those speeches. And the conclusion about the passions will prove to have implications for Plato's understanding of the role of rhetoric and of the connections between rhetoric and philosophy. Persuasion inspired by 'madness' is defended as a gift of the gods and a valuable educational resource. And the style of Socratic philosophising now fuses argument with poetry. The pre-*Phaedrus* dialogues¹⁰² consistently attack *mania* as a 'simple evil', a state of soul that cannot lead to genuine insight and one that, more often than not, produces bad actions.¹⁰³ Plato had consistently used '*mania*' and related words to designate the state of the soul in which the non-intellectual elements (appetites and emotions) are in control and lead or guide the intellectual part.¹⁰⁴

The denial of any cognitive value to the non-intellectual elements of the soul is not surprising, given Plato's general view of appetite and emotion in middle-period works. In the *Republic*, for example, the appetites are merely brute forces reaching out, insatiably and without any selectivity, each for a

¹⁰² There is now general agreement that the *Phaedrus* is later than both *Republic* and *Symposium* in date of composition and close to the *Theaetetus*, which can be dated to not long after 369 (since it commemorates Theaetetus's death in the battle at Corinth in that year). The *Gorgias* is generally considered to be an earlier work – most scholars would put it in a period of transition between early 'Socratic' dialogues and 'middle' dialogues. It is one of the important achievements of T.H. Irwin's *Plato's Moral Theory* (Oxford, 1977), to have convincingly established the close relationship between *Gorgias* and the *Republic* concerning the structure of the soul and the nature of desire. The most likely story seems to be that the *Gorgias* opens up questions and sketches arguments which the *Republic* frequently develops at much more considerable length. For more information see, L. Brandwood, *The chronology of Plato's dialogues* (Cambridge, 1990); K. Dorter, 'Questions of Chronology', in *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues* (Berkeley, Ca., 1994), pp. 1-9; and R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* (Indianapolis, 1952), pp. 3-7.

¹⁰³ *Mania* is called a species of viciousness at *Republic* 400b2 (cf. *Meno*, 91c, *Rep.*, 382c). In a number of passages it is linked with excessive appetite-gratification, or wantonness (*Rep.* 400b, 403; *Crat.* 404a). It is linked with delusion, folly, and the 'death' of true opinion at *Republic* 539c, 573a-b and with the condition of slavery at *Rep.* 329c, *Symp.* 215c-e.

¹⁰⁴ It is linked particularly with the dominance of erotic appetite. On madness in Plato and its antecedents, see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), esp. chs. 2 and 7.

characteristic object.¹⁰⁵ How could such unteachable forces be indices of the good? And emotions, although somewhat more responsive to education, require continual control by the intellect (and are always potentially dangerous). In the *Phaedo*, too, both the appetites and emotions were held to be unsuitable guides for human action.¹⁰⁶ Only the intellect can reliably guide a human being towards the good and valuable. ‘The life of the philosopher’, as Nussbaum puts it, ‘achieves order, stability, and insight at the price of denying the sight of the body and the value of individual love’.¹⁰⁷ The picture of moral and cognitive development in the middle dialogues, therefore, is one of a progressive detachment from the other parts of the personality. The more a person can allow the intellect to go off by itself, unmixed, unaffected, the more fully will true philosophical understanding be achieved.

However, in the *Phaedrus* philosophy itself is said to be a form of madness, of not purely intellectual activity, in which intellect is guided to insight by eros itself and by a complex passion-engendered ferment of the entire personality. ‘The best things we have’, Socrates tells us, ‘come from madness, when it is given as a gift of the god’.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the inspired kind of prophecy, *mantic*, is ‘more perfect and more admirable’ than ‘sign-based prediction’, i.e., the prediction of reasonable men.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, ‘madness (*mania*) from a god is finer than self-control of human origin’.¹¹⁰ Socrates applies these observations to the case of *eros*: the ‘disturbed’ friend or lover (*philos*) should be preferred to the one who is ‘in control of himself’.¹¹¹ The implication here is that the thoroughly self-possessed person, who subdues emotion and feeling to *techne*, will neither aid his city much through prophecy,

¹⁰⁵ See D. Roochnik, *Beautiful city* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003); C. Baracchi, *Of myth, life, and war in Plato's Republic* (Bloomington, Ind., 2002); C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast* (Oxford, 2002); H. Lawson-Tancred, *Plato's Republic and the Greek Enlightenment* (Bristol, 1998); and R. Kraut, *Plato's Republic* (Oxford, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ For more information see, G. J. Beets, *From time to eternity: a companion to Plato's Phaedo* (Baarn, 2003); P.J. Ahrensdoerf, *The death of Socrates and the life of philosophy* (Albany, N.Y., 1995); and K. Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo* (Toronto, 1982).

¹⁰⁷ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 201.

¹⁰⁸ *Phaedr.*, 244a.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 244d. On this view of prophecy and its religious background see, Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, ch. 2, and W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1962-1981), IV, p. 417, who argues that the *Phaedrus* marks an important change in Plato's view.

¹¹⁰ *Phaedr.*, 244d.

¹¹¹ *Phaedr.*, 245b.

nor achieve honour and fame as a poetic teacher, nor be the best sort of lover. Socrates is claiming, in short, that certain sorts of essential and high insights come to us only through the guidance of the passions, which, thereafter, are in need of interpretation. What follows will be, he says, a 'proof' of the truth of these claims.¹¹²

Socrates' story of the growth of the soul's wings shows us what lies behind this claim. The non-intellectual elements have a keen natural responsiveness to beauty, especially when beauty is presented through the sense of sight. Beauty is, among the valuable things in the world, 'the most clearly visible and the most loved'.¹¹³ We 'grasp it sparkling through the clearest of our senses',¹¹⁴ this stirs our emotions and appetites, motivating us to undertake its pursuit. Earthly examples of justice and practical wisdom, since they 'do not shine out through their images',¹¹⁵ are harder to discern – and so do not engage the guiding appetites and emotions. Occasionally, the sight of beauty arouses only a brutish appetite for intercourse, unconnected with deeper feelings.¹¹⁶ However, in a person of good nature and training, the sensual response is linked with (and arouses) complicated emotions of fear, awe, and respect, that themselves develop and educate the personality as a whole, making it both more discriminating and more receptive.¹¹⁷ As Nussbaum points out, the role of emotion and appetite as guides is motivational: they move the whole person towards the good. But it is also cognitive: they give the whole person information as to where goodness and beauty are, searching out and selecting, themselves, the beautiful objects.¹¹⁸ One advances towards understanding, therefore, by pursuing one's complex emotional responses to the beautiful – and this would not have been accessible to intellect alone. In order to be moved towards beauty a soul must, first of all, be open and receptive. The stream of beauty that pours into him through his eyes and waters the growth

¹¹² Ibid., 245c.

¹¹³ Ibid., 250e.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 250d.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 250b.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 250e-251a.

¹¹⁷ See Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good* (London, 1970), pp. 59-60, 84-6, where these points receive illuminating discussion with reference to the *Phaedrus*.

¹¹⁸ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 216.

of his wings, must be admitted by every part of the soul.¹¹⁹ The whole soul seethes and throbs in this condition:

‘Like a child whose teeth are just starting to grow in, and its gums are all aching and itching – that is exactly how the soul feels when it begins to grow wings. It swells up and aches and tingles as it grows them’.¹²⁰

Receiving the other person’s soul, allowing it to melt the hard or impassive parts of him, he feels the sudden release of pent-up liquid within him, which makes of him another flowing, liquid light. Thus transformed, he has access to insights that are unavailable to the non-lover.¹²¹

Here, therefore, intellectual activity emerges as something different in structure from the pure and stable contemplation of the *Republic*. As the philosopher reaches out towards truth, his mental aspiration has an internal structure closely akin to that of the lover’s sexual yearnings. The story of the growth of the wings uses unmistakably sexual metaphors to characterise the receptivity and growth of the entire soul. Intellect, no longer separated from the other parts, searches for truth in a way that would not meet the demands of the middle dialogues for purity and stability. As for Truth, intellect still attains to that. However, not all of its most valuable truths will be universal accounts or definitions of the sort required by the middle dialogues. Yet Socrates insists that it is insight nonetheless, insight crucial to moral and intellectual development.

It is also important to note that the action of this dialogue illustrates its view of learning¹²² of true persuasion. It begins when an older man pauses, struck by a younger one. He notes a kinship between the young man’s character and his own.¹²³ Their shared aspirations (i.e., love of learning), like ‘branches of fruit’ held before hungry animals,¹²⁴ lead him to venture, in Phaedrus’ company, outside the city walls. Together they pursue their deep

¹¹⁹ *Phaedr.*, 251b-c.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 251c.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 255d.; 239c. See Anne Lebeck, ‘The Central Myth of Plato’s *Phaedrus*’, *GRBS*, 13 (1972), pp. 267-90.

¹²² See Lebeck, ‘Central Myth’, pp. 280-3.

¹²³ *Phaedr.*, 228a.

¹²⁴ *Phaedr.*, 230d.

concerns, receiving the influence of this wild and sensuous place.¹²⁵ Although in some sense Socrates is the teacher, the process of education that we see (like the one we hear described) involves, on both sides, madness and receptivity. For example, Socrates, going outside his usual haunts, is transported through Phaedrus' influence,¹²⁶ and Phaedrus leaves aside the sheltering structure of his previous assumptions. On both sides we find emotions of wonder and awe, a careful concern for the other's separate needs and aspirations. Each discovers more about his own aims as he sees them reflected in another soul; each, responding with awe to the other's soul, elicits from his own a deeper beauty. (For wasn't it the thought of Phaedrus accepting the proposals of Lysias that made Socrates long to express a more complicated ideal of rationality?)

In a similar manner, friends or lovers, once they have found one another, treat with respect the other's separate choices, fostering continuing development towards the flourishing of their deepest aspirations.¹²⁷ And showing 'no envy, no mean-spirited lack of generosity', towards the other, but genuinely benefiting him for his own sake. It is of fundamental importance, then, that the lover be one who is 'not pretending [passion]', but 'is truly in the throes of love'.¹²⁸ The best human life, therefore, involves ongoing devotion to another person. It involves shared intellectual activity, but it also involves shared appetite and emotional feeling. However, it is important to note that the life of the lover's madness is not defended as the best life for a god. Rather, it is defended as the best life for a human being, a being with human cognitive limits and prospects. Here what is most striking is that Plato shows himself (as elsewhere in the later dialogues) ready to judge questions about the best life from the point of view of the interests, needs, and limits of the being in question. The best life for a human being is found not by abstracting from the

¹²⁵ For partnership in search of truth see, *Gorg.*, 487b, c, e; *Protag.*, 336b; and *Meno*, 84c. Of course, in the instance of Callicles, Socrates is ironical. The opposite is the case – Callicles is neither conscientious nor well-disposed toward the discussion. Nevertheless, Socrates describes what is indispensable to fruitful communication and inquiry.

¹²⁶ *Phaedr.*, 234d, 238d, 231e.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 252d-e.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 253b; 255a.

peculiarities of our complex nature, but by exploring that nature and the way of life that it constitutes.¹²⁹

This brings us to the question of the nature and limitations of rhetoric, and the conditions under which philosophical dialogue (the only ‘true persuasive art’) is possible. Indeed, Plato’s effort to differentiate the inferior kind of eros from the divine sort is relevant to the pointed critique of rhetoric that pervades the dialogue.¹³⁰ Pre-eminently, the true rhetorician (i.e., the dialectician) is a participant in higher madness and, therefore, eagerly pursues knowledge of ideal realities. Unlike the common pleader before court or assembly, he does not marshal his argument in the service of private and factional concerns, for he has become liberated from ungenerous love.¹³¹ The dialogue’s distinction between two kinds of love¹³² is essential for enforcing what Plato had already initiated elsewhere, namely, that rhetoric is but an instrument of self-advantage. In the *Protagoras*, for example, rhetoric is portrayed as no more than a way of gaining affluence, prerogative, and dominion in politics.¹³³ All discussion, private or public, which is motivated by jealous self-interest is not an instrument of truth, but, as suggested (but not fully explored) in the *Republic*, merely a tool for the acquisition of power or the successful merchandising of singular causes.¹³⁴ So the incentives prompting discourse ought not to be, as with Euthydemus, pride of victory in oral combat, or, as deprecated in the *Phaedrus*, anxious quest for honours and fame for eloquence and wisdom.¹³⁵ The motivation for any discussion or debate is endeavour after truth, and on the assumption that it yet remains to be found.

It should be clear by now that for Plato the philosopher is *the* true rhetorician. Of him it may be said that, by persuasion and education, he guides his fellow seekers along the avenue of truth. He exhibits no jealousy or

¹²⁹ See M. Nussbaum, ‘“This story isn’t true”: poetry, goodness, and understanding in Plato’s *Phaedrus*’, in *Plato on Beauty, Wisdom and the Arts*, ed. J. Moravcsik and P. Temko (Totowa, N.J., 1982), pp. 79-124. Also see, J. Cropsey, *Plato’s World* (Chicago, 1995).

¹³⁰ See *Phaedr.*, 266a.

¹³¹ Cushman, *Therapeia*, p. 225.

¹³² *Phaedr.* 266a.

¹³³ *Prota.*, 318e.

¹³⁴ *Rep.*, 365d.

¹³⁵ *Phaedr.*, 258a-e.

pettiness toward his companions, but strives earnestly to conduct them in the direction of a reality they mutually seek.¹³⁶ The true persuasive art is comprised of 'fair and free discussions' whose single purpose is the discovery of truth. Plato believes that one important reason for the resolute ignorance of perverse humanity was its almost total unfamiliarity with unprejudiced discussion:

'Nor have they listened sufficiently to fine and free arguments that search out the truth in every way for the sake of knowledge but that keep away from the sophistications and eristic quibbles that, both in public trials and in private gatherings, aim at nothing except reputation and disputation'.¹³⁷

In *Letter VII* Plato asserts that what is required in pedagogy is enquiry after truths, 'pupil and teacher asking and answering questions in good will and without envy'.¹³⁸ The purpose of discussion, the *Philebus* insists, is not victory in debate but single-hearted devotion to truth: 'we are not contending here out of love of victory for my suggestion to win or for yours. We ought to act together as allies in support of the truest one'.¹³⁹ Philosophical dialogue, therefore, is not possible *with just anyone* and *under any circumstances*. It is possible only if each participant is dedicated to the discovery of truth in a free and fair discussion, and if each assumes that the other is motivated not by a desire to 'win' but by love of learning.¹⁴⁰

This fundamental condition of 'true philosophy' implies another condition: *sincerity*. Each participant must assent wholeheartedly when he assents, or dissent in good faith and defend his dissent with arguments. Thus, in the *Gorgias*, when Callicles says he will assent just so Socrates can proceed with his argument, Socrates reproaches him: 'You're wrecking your earlier statements, Callicles, and you'd no longer be adequately inquiring into the truth of the matter with me if you speak contrary to what you think'.¹⁴¹ Finally,

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 253a.

¹³⁷ *Rep.*, 499a.

¹³⁸ *L.VII*, 344b.

¹³⁹ *Phil.*, 14b.

¹⁴⁰ See C. Perelman, and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric* (London, 1969), p. 37: 'Dialogue, as we consider it, is not supposed to be a debate, in which the partisans of opposed settled convictions defend their respective views, but rather a discussion, in which the interlocutors search honestly and without bias for the best solution to a controversial problem'.

¹⁴¹ *Gorg.*, 495a. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that dialogue with Callicles is impossible, or at least fruitless. He refuses to conform to the general conditions of philosophical inquiry, laid down earlier in the dialogue, when Socrates analyses the nature of conflict between defenders of rival positions and suggests that they often descend into

Socratic dialogue is based on the conviction that, as Socrates tells us in the *Phaedo*, 'when men are interrogated in the right manner, they always give the right answer'.¹⁴² And the method by which truth is to be sought in dialogue is dialectic.¹⁴³

But just what is dialectic in Plato?¹⁴⁴ It is generally recognised today that it began with those dialogues which direct and guide the interlocutor – the sort of dialogue for which Socrates is famous and which made his life such a signal event in European history.¹⁴⁵ It is in Plato's critique of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* that we find the plainest presentation of dialectic. It is no accident that the theory of dialectic should be presented in the context of the critique of rhetoric. Indeed, Plato gradually came to acknowledge a measure of similarity between the persuasiveness of rhetoric and the work of the dialectician. After all, neither could claim to secure incontrovertible truth. 'However different dialectic and rhetoric might be in other fundamental respects', as Robert Cushman puts it, 'both deal with kinds of truth not logically enforceable – the one with matters of *doxa*, the other with those of *noêsis*'.¹⁴⁶ Although the art of

vituperation and invective because they imagine that every criticism made of their positions proceeds from ill-will rather than from the desire to learn the truth (ibid., 457).

¹⁴² *Phd.*, 73a-b.

¹⁴³ Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Platonic dialogues is Plato's constant insistence that the dialectical method (which is anchored within the matrix of conversational inquiry) is itself only properly portrayed through the dialogue form. According to Levi, 'Philosophy as Literature', p. 17, here is where the theory of Plato and that of Wittgenstein join, for they both reveal that philosophising is intrinsically dramatic, that the forms of philosophising which are concerned with proof are by nature the most ponderous and static, and that those which aim to clarify, or discover, or make things 'shine forth' are the most brilliant, absorbing, and exciting.

¹⁴⁴ In the *Meno*, with its superb illustration of the method of *elenchos*, Plato makes it clear that the crux of the process is joint-inquiry: 'he will discover by searching with me' (84c; cf. ibid., 81d, 86c; *Protag.*, 352e; *Gorg.*, 472b, 487e; *Soph.*, 218b). For more information see, Gadamer *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*; id., *Dialogue and Dialectic*; G. Pendrick, 'Platon and Dialectic', *Rheinisches Museum* (1998), pp. 10-24; and Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato*, pp. 1-21.

¹⁴⁵ However, as Gadamer notes, 'what we have now generally come to call dialectic can only partially be accounted for in terms of its origin in dialogue. The reason we call Hegel's procedure dialectic is not that it can be said to originate in dialogue but that it is based in thinking in contradictions. The source here is Eleatic dialectic: the skill of developing the consequences of opposed assumptions even while one is still ignorant of the "what" of what one is talking about. That is the skill which we find first displayed in Zeno and in Plato's Parmenides and which since Aristotle has been called dialectic' (Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, p. 94).

¹⁴⁶ R. Cushman, *Therapeia: Plato's Conception of Philosophy* (Westport, Conn., 1958), p. 221.

rhetoric strives for persuasion rather than for true shared understanding, it reflects the structure of dialectic.¹⁴⁷

The reader may well object that, unlike the rhetorician, the dialectician sets out upon a way of inquiry that is not fully charted – its end results are determined only by the course of the discussion. The bad rhetorician, in contrast, pre-determines its goal and then justifies it. ‘He doesn’t even start from the beginning, but from the end, making his speech swim upstream on its back’.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, when delivering a speech, the rhetorician addresses himself not to an individual – with whom he might seek to arrive at a substantive shared understanding – but to a crowd, with which a substantive shared understanding is impossible.¹⁴⁹ But Plato nevertheless shows that the skilful mastery of rhetoric itself requires dialectical understanding. Like the dialectician, he (being unable to assure himself – through questioning – that his listeners are with him) must exhibit the facts of the matter as he wants them to be understood. The rhetorician, of course, cannot present the facts of the matter as they actually stand. In presenting the argument he must, at all times, consider who his audience is and what is their opinion. Still, insofar as his aim is to bring about understanding of the subject-matter in the manner that he himself regards it, the process of its unveiling (an unveiling that actually depends on tricks) must be guided by an insight into the matter’s true being and its true grounds. In order to be able to deceive, in short, one must know what the facts of the matter really are. One must know in what ways falsehoods most closely resemble those facts with a view to leading the audience, step by step, to the intended deception.¹⁵⁰ As Gadamer puts it, ‘deception is successful only when one gives out in place of the facts of the matter something that *looks like them*’.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Gadamer, *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, p. 84, calls it a ‘semblance’ of dialectic.

¹⁴⁸ *Phaedr.*, 264a.

¹⁴⁹ If for no other reason than because the crowd cannot answer.

¹⁵⁰ *Phaedr.*, 262a-b.

¹⁵¹ Gadamer, *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics.*, pp. 84-5. Still, for Plato (as he makes clear in the *Republic*) there is a difference between ‘lies’ that are unharmed and get at the truth (as in his *pseudos*/myth of the metals), and those deceptions that are not only untrue but also harmful. Here, in *Phaedrus*, he is arguing that false rhetoric harms and actually even intends to do this.

The first requirement for true dialogue, therefore, is agreement on the definition of the theme of the dialogue. Only in this way, Socrates asserts, will the dialogue achieve concord:

'If you wish to reach a good decision on any topic, my boy, there is only one way to begin: You must know what the decision is about, or else you are bound to miss your target altogether. Ordinary people cannot see that they do not know the true nature of a particular subject, so they proceed as if they did; and because they do not work out an agreement at the start of the enquiry, they wind up as you would expect – in conflict with themselves and each other'.¹⁵²

So a person who wants to impart good, beneficial advice must first secure a uniform understanding of what the discussion is about, which everything subsequent must be understood in relation to.¹⁵³ If one omits this step the discussion is bound to be fruitless.¹⁵⁴ One cannot be certain of remaining in harmony either with oneself or with one's listeners. 'Just so', Socrates tells Phaedrus, 'with our discussion of love: Whether its definition was or was not correct, at least it allowed the speech to proceed clearly and consistently with itself'.¹⁵⁵ Only in this way, will we be able to make declarations about 'love' which are not determined by accidental experiences (and so refutable by the same), but instead necessarily apply to it in accordance with its own essence. Thus, bringing out and appropriating this unifying point of view is a condition of the possibility of true rhetoric.

However, as Socrates' two speeches demonstrate (in particular the substantive contrast between them), a general agreement about the unitary essence of love does not necessarily adequately fulfil the requirement of unity. 'Madness' does not yet sufficiently grasp the specific being of love. There are other kinds of madness that are not love. So this characterisation has to be divided into kinds, in order to grasp the specific essence of love. The dialectician, furthermore, must 'be able to cut up each kind according to its

¹⁵² *Phaedr.*, 237c.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 263e.

¹⁵⁴ See *Gorg.*, 457c; *Phaedr.*, 237c, 265d; *Soph.*, 218c. Furthermore, the power of disputation is so great that, 'many fall into it against their wills'. 'They think they are having not a quarrel but a conversation, because they are unable to examine what has been said by dividing it up according to forms. Hence, they pursue mere verbal contradictions of what has been said and have a quarrel rather than a conversation' (*Rep.*, 454a).

¹⁵⁵ *Phaedr.*, 265d.

species along its natural joints, and to try not to splinter any part, as a bad butcher might do'.¹⁵⁶ In other words, the proposed *eidos* cannot be divided blindly or arbitrarily but at the parts that are inherent in it (its 'joints').¹⁵⁷ Only by such division (of a unity into unities) do we arrive at the *oikeios logos* or the adequate characterisation ('fitting account') of its being. 'A *logos* that characterises', as Gadamer concludes, '[the *eidos*] in such a way that it prevents one person from conceiving what is being addressed in one way and another person in another way'.¹⁵⁸ Now, Socrates' first speech makes an error in this process of division. The speech pretends that every kind of madness is opposed to prudence, because it is bad. It ignores the fact that madness is not absolutely bad. In fact, by passing over god-sent madness, the speech succeeds in its aim of disparaging love. The conscious use of such a speech would, then, be important for a speaker who (in the example that is discussed) intends to win a boy for his erotic enjoyment without presenting himself as being in love (and who must therefore persuade the boy that love is something bad). The implication here is that dialectic is a pre-requisite for the artful mastery of speech. It is, in Gadamer's words, 'the ability to draw together the manifold of what is experienced into a selfsame single thing and to make the specific *eidos* of the intended thing available with the aid of this universal unity of the *horos* (limit, definition)'.¹⁵⁹ Only on the basis of such knowledge is rhetoric able to substitute for the true *logos*, one which, while false, resembles the true one. For 'it is only from the undisguised thing itself that one can learn what looks so similar to it, without being it, that one can pass it off as the thing itself'.¹⁶⁰

But dialectic also has a special function *within* the specific activity of true rhetoric.¹⁶¹ One of the main objectives of the *Phaedrus* is to show that a real (as distinguished from a pseudo), art of speech does exist, but it needs definition. And this is impossible without the help of dialectic, because it is involved in the very structure of *techne* itself. Every *techne* requires an insight

¹⁵⁶ *Phaedr.*, 265e.

¹⁵⁷ Thus, within irrational appetite, Socrates' first speech distinguished between gluttony, drunkenness, and, in the third place, love; and likewise, in the second speech, between the four kinds of divine madness.

¹⁵⁸ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Phaedr.*, 266c ff.

into the nature of what it deals with. So besides the knowledge of the various techniques of speech, the true art of rhetoric requires an insight into the nature of what this persuasive speech is supposed to be applied to – namely, the human psyche. As Socrates explains,

‘Clearly, Thrasymachus and anyone else who teaches the art of rhetoric seriously will, first, describe the soul with absolute precision and enable us to understand what it is: whether it is one and homogeneous by nature or takes many forms, like the shape of bodies, since, ... that’s what takes to demonstrate the nature of something. ... Second, he will explain how, in virtue of its nature, it acts and is acted upon by certain things. ... Third, he will classify the kinds of speech and of soul there are, as well as the various ways in which they are affected, and explain what causes each. He will then coordinate each kind of soul with the kind appropriate to it. And he will give instructions concerning the reasons why one kind of soul is necessarily convinced by one kind of speech while another necessarily remains unconvinced’.¹⁶²

Only from a mastery of these elements through dialectic is a true art of rhetoric possible. Socrates begins with propositions to which the interlocutor assents, and leads him to a conclusion which he must accept if he is not to declare himself illogical. His goal is to produce *coherence* in a person’s beliefs. This coherence is necessary both for personal integrity and for spiritual health, for, as Socrates tells Callicles,

‘if you leave this unrefuted, then by the Dog, the god of the Egyptians, Callicles will not agree with you, Callicles, but will be dissonant with you all your life long. And yet for my part, my good man, I think it’s better to have my lyre or a chorus that I might lead out of tune and dissonant, and have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I’m only one person’.¹⁶³

The aim of dialectic, therefore, is to bring a person’s beliefs and conduct into harmony with those truths which he ‘knows’ but does not recognise as incompatible with the beliefs he has come to accept because of his enslavement to appearances. This harmony or coherence is, as we know from Hippocrates, the condition of health,¹⁶⁴ and in Plato the dialectician is often described as the doctor of the soul.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ibid., 271a-b.

¹⁶³ *Gorg.*, 482b.

¹⁶⁴ Hippocrates, *On the Nature of Man*; cited in M. Clagett, *Greek Science in Antiquity* (N.Y., 1955), p. 40.

¹⁶⁵ *Gorg.*, 475d. The medical metaphor suggests a conception of the Socratic dialogue as *therapeutic*. The doctor’s art is directed to curing individuals, and the therapy applied must be

So dialectic (and, with it, true persuasion) proceeds from certain premises and in an order determined by the background and convictions of the interlocutor. It depends as well, as I have suggested, on the individual character of the interlocutor. In fact, only if he is the right kind of person can he be brought to 'say the right things'. If this and the other conditions of dialogue are met, then we can hope to cause the interlocutor to *persuade himself* by leading him from one proposition which he accepts to others logically implied by it. This self-persuasion is the goal of 'true rhetoric'.¹⁶⁶ Unlike the inadequate kind of rhetoric (which Plato has described as pre-determining its goal and then justifying it), dialectic sets out upon a way of inquiry that is by no means fully charted. Its end results are to be determined only by the course of the discussion. It is for this reason that, 'proceeding by any other method would be like walking with the blind'.¹⁶⁷ Dialectic is a real art, not a 'knack'; it does not engraft other men's opinions, instead, it produces conviction in the soul.¹⁶⁸ (And that conviction is the foundational truth of the way things necessarily are and the discussion, all discussion ends.) Furthermore, there is Plato's repeated insistence that the true persuasive art is a joint-inquiry:

'Only when all of these things – names, definitions, and visual and other perceptions – have been rubbed against one another and tested, pupil and teacher asking and answering questions in good will and without envy – only then, when reason and knowledge are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate the nature of any object'.¹⁶⁹

adapted to the particular case being treated. Now, this situationality of the philosopher-doctor's activity suggests a connection between philosophical therapy and rhetoric, and indicates the relationship between the 'dramatic impulse' in philosophy and a rhetorical perspective.

¹⁶⁶ It is for this reason that the Socratic pursuit of knowledge is always individual and personal. (And it is also the reason that the dialogue is for Plato the only valid form by which to represent this pursuit.) The argument must always begin from a premise accepted by the interlocutor – and what is acceptable depends upon the individual involved.

¹⁶⁷ *Phaedr.*, 270e; cf. *ibid.*, 269b-c: 'The reason they cannot define rhetoric is that they are ignorant of dialect. It is their ignorance that makes them think they have discovered what rhetoric is when they have understood only what it is necessary to learn as preliminaries'.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 271a; 276e-277a.

¹⁶⁹ *L.VII*, 344b. Also see *ibid.*, 344c: 'For this reason anyone who is seriously studying high matters will be the last to write about them and thus expose his thought to the envy and criticism of men. What I have said comes, in short, to this: whenever we see a book, whether the laws of a legislator or a composition on any other subject, we can be sure that if the author is really serious, this book does not contain his best thoughts; they are stored away with the fairest of his possessions. And if he has committed these serious thoughts to writing, it is because men, not the gods, "have taken his wits away".'

Plato's notion of co-operative investigation reveals a distinctive feature of dialectic as *elenchos* or cross-examination, as well as the way in which it is truly an irenic art. As shown earlier in this section, a number of Socratic dialogues begin with the confident assertion of a general position, made by a character over-optimistic about his grasp of certain practical problems. When an accounting is demanded, it transpires that this general assertion does not cover all of the character's more concrete beliefs regarding choice and value. The dramatic action consists in the 'separation' of the character from his false beliefs through painful learning. In the end, even if he does not arrive at the truth of what he most deeply believes, at least he acknowledges his own deep perplexity.¹⁷⁰ Put differently, the *elenchos* separates him from the tumorous growth of arrogant false belief, preparing the way for healthy growth:

'The people who are being examined ... get angry at themselves, and become calmer toward others. They lose their inflated and rigid beliefs about themselves that way, and no loss is pleasanter to hear or has more lasting effect on them. ... The people who cleanse the soul ... think the soul ... won't get any advantage from any learning that's offered to it until someone shames it by refuting it, removes the opinions that interfere with learning, and exhibits it cleansed, believing that it knows only those things that it does know, and nothing more'.¹⁷¹

The Socratic discovery is that a person's average self-understanding contents itself with the mere appearance of knowledge and cannot give an accounting of itself.¹⁷²

As *refutation*, Socrates' questioning takes the form of irony. As is well known, Socrates approaches the other person not in the manner of one who knows and who wants (through his superior knowledge) to refute the other person's claim, but rather in apparent inferiority, as someone who does not himself know. The irony appears, first, in the fact that he takes the other person's claim to knowledge as one that is fulfilled. A typical form of this irony

¹⁷⁰ The reader, it is important to remember, should be engaged in a similar sorting process.

¹⁷¹ *Soph.*, 230b-d.

¹⁷² Even when the initial topic of the conversation is not knowledge about a one's own being but a claim to knowledge in a specific area, the Socratic testing of this claim leads back to oneself: 'You don't appear to me to know that whoever comes into close contact with Socrates and associates with him in conversation must necessarily, even if he began by conversing about something quite different in the first place, keep on being led about by the man's arguments until he submits to answering questions about himself concerning both his present manner of life and the life he has lived hitherto' (*Laches* 187e).

is when Socrates declares himself to be satisfied with the other person's answer 'except for a minor detail'.¹⁷³ Socrates starts his refutation, therefore, not as a refutation but as a request for further information. In other words, he takes the answer as an explanation that is in fact derived from an understanding of the subject. It is an explanation that implicitly addresses what he still does not understand, and only needs to have spelled out in more detail. If this supplementary explanation does not materialise in a satisfactory form, the thesis itself is refuted. After all, part of the meaning of genuine substantive explanation is that it can continually justify and clarify itself by drawing on the understanding of the facts of the matter from which it is derived.¹⁷⁴

Socratic refutation, therefore, has an eristic character. It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that this process of entangling the opponent in contradictions with logical traps is aimed at exposing him in his inability to detect logical errors. In fact, as Gadamer argues, 'the goal of refutation is absolutely the sole motive in the process: the goal, that is, of bringing the opponent to grant the validity of a thesis the consequences of which prove to be incompatible with his own thesis'.¹⁷⁵ So the fact that Socrates tries to defeat his opponent not only by means of genuine logical consistency but also by means of his own sophistical weapons does not cast doubt on the substantiveness of his intentions. It is precisely because what is important to him is not refutation *per se*, but liberating his opponent, that he can dispute with him in such a manner. With remarkable psychological insight, Plato (or perhaps Socrates) discerned that all argument is trifling and all demonstration is superficial which does not really involve the person of the investigator, his essential mind and genuine convictions, whether true or false. The accomplished rhetorician, even if he wins conviction, typically leaves those who 'believe' hesitant to admit that his contentions are their own. With the *elenchos*, in contrast, the participants are jointly engaged in sifting the

¹⁷³ See, e.g., *Prot.*, 329b.

¹⁷⁴ A sophistic discourse fails to meet this requirement because the speaker did not acquire the thesis with a view to the facts of the matter but rather with a view to its effectiveness in impressing the people around him. This is clear, for example, in the fact that the sophist tries to make things appear to follow from his thesis that do not follow from it at all.

¹⁷⁵ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 57.

evidence; they 'plant seeds' in one another, and are 'parents' of truth and understanding in one another:

'The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it a discourse accompanied by knowledge – discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be'.¹⁷⁶

Elenchos, then, approximates more closely the true art of persuasion – where it secures real commitment of the mind of the participants. The results of discussion, insofar as they are negative, will not be refutations of opponents, but self-refutations of colleagues. As Socrates says to Alcibiades, 'you are impeached of this by your own words out of your own mouth'.¹⁷⁷

But one problem seems yet unsolved – namely, that the *Phaedrus* is also a dialogue about the making of beautiful speeches. After all, Socrates' criticism of Lysias' speech is addressed to its style as well as its content, and shows us how thoroughly interwoven these are. The education of Phaedrus through the great second speech is a development of his stylistic tastes as well as his moral imagination. And, as we might expect, Plato's new thought about madness and the passions affects his own stylistic choices.¹⁷⁸ Before we move on to the next section, it is important to recognise the implications of this work for the question of philosophy's style and for the status of Plato's ongoing argument with rhetoric.

In a number of dialogues Plato pointedly contrasts the orator and the poet on one hand and the philosopher on the other, rejecting the claim of both of the former to genuine understanding.¹⁷⁹ There is, he remarks, 'an ancient

¹⁷⁶ *Phaedr.*, 276e-277a.

¹⁷⁷ *Alcib.*, I, 118b; cf. *Gorg.*, 472c; *Meno*, 85d; *Theaet.*, 150d. If Plato's Socrates increasingly gives up the attitude of the questioner and tester, and if the discussion leader in the later dialogues himself becomes the person who claims knowledge, still it is not without reason that the dialogue continues to be the form in which this knowledge is effected. After all, even in those dialogues it is the leader himself who continually subjects what he says to this testing and proves the claim to knowledge which his speech contains by coming to an understanding with the others. The dialogue form allows him continually to make sure that the other person is with him in the process of opening up the facts of the matter and thus protects his own speech from falling into an empty speech that loses the seen object from view.

¹⁷⁸ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 223.

¹⁷⁹ See the articles in the collections *Plato on poetry*, ed. P. Murray (Cambridge, 1996); and *Plato on Beauty*. Also see, Z. Planinc, *Plato through Homer* (Columbia, 2003); G. Ledbetter,

quarrel between it [poetry] and philosophy.¹⁸⁰ The poet is characterised consistently, in *the Apology*, *Ion*, *Meno*, and in Book X of the *Republic*, as a person who works in a state of irrational inspiration, and whose creations are expressive of this state. The rhetorician is, of course, not treated any better than the poet. He is accused of teaching that ‘what is likely must be held in higher honor than what is true’, and of making ‘by the power of their language ... small things appear great and great things small’.¹⁸¹ Both the sophists and the poets are contrasted in a negative manner with the philosophers. Unlike them, philosophers ‘are not the servants but the masters of our discussions. Our arguments are our own, like slaves; each one must wait about for us, to be finished whenever we think fit. We have no jury, and no audience (as the dramatic poets have), sitting in control over us, ready to criticise and give orders’.¹⁸²

The *Phaedrus*, as seen earlier, tells us that all writing is merely a ‘reminder’: the real activity of teaching and learning goes on not on the page but in the souls of people in dialogue and discussion.¹⁸³ However, our view of how a soul learns (and with which parts), will surely affect our view about how a written text should perform its own (limited) function. Now, from the very beginning of the *Phaedrus*, one suspects that some reassessment is taking place. Phaedrus asks Socrates whether he believes in the truth of the myth of Boreas.¹⁸⁴ Socrates, in reply, talks harshly of some ‘intellectuals’ who doubt the truth of myths and, using some sort of crude science devise rationalising explanations for their origin.¹⁸⁵ Here it is important to note that while Plato has used myths of his own devising to reinforce his philosophical arguments, he

Poetics before Plato (Princeton, N.J., 2003); and J. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (N.Y., 2000).

¹⁸⁰ *Rep.* X.607b.

¹⁸¹ *Phaedr.*, 267a; cf. *Euthyd.*, 272c; *Soph.*, 225c; *Gorg.*, 453a, 457d.

¹⁸² *Theat.*, 173c.

¹⁸³ The *Phaedrus*' relation to its own remarks on writing is discussed by many writers, including C. Griswold, ‘Style and philosophy: the case of Plato’s dialogues’, *Monist*, 63 (1980), pp. 530-56; R. Burger, *Plato’s Phaedrus* (Birmingham, 1980); Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, pp. 22-118; and Derrida, ‘La pharmacie de platon’, pp. 69-197.

¹⁸⁴ *Phaedr.*, 229c. According to legend, a virginal girl (Orithuia, daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus), who was playing with Nymphs along near the banks of the Ilissus river (the very place where Socrates and Phaedrus had their conversation), was abducted by the passionate wind-god Boreas, who had fallen in love with her.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 229d-e.

has been at the forefront of the attack upon legends of the dubious exploits of the gods.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the *Republic* would have instantly rejected the truth claim of this story of a god's *eros*. And it would have denounced it further for its appeal to the lower parts of the soul. Yet, here Socrates defends the passionate myth as a source of insight (in keeping with the new view of insight that he is about to develop).

Our next surprise comes in Socrates' criticism of Lysias' prose – where the orator is praised for speaking in 'a clear and concise manner, with a precise turn of phrase', but censured, among other things, for his lack of *interest* in his subject.¹⁸⁷ Again, we remember that the orators (like the poets) had been criticised precisely because they wrote in a state of passionate arousal. Now Plato appears to be reopening the question regarding the proper relation between a view and its author. More significant still, is the role poetry plays in Socrates' second speech. It is said to be the speech 'of' a poet, Stesichorus;¹⁸⁸ and in so saying Socrates assumes a disguise, and lies – this could not have happened in the heroic literature of Ideal City. The mad (thus inspired) poet is ranked above the self-possessed craftsmanly poet, and honoured as a person whose works instruct and benefit prosperity.¹⁸⁹ What is more, Socrates presents his teaching about the soul in the form of a 'likeness', teaching the truth through sensuous images.¹⁹⁰ And he regards this ability to produce a likeness as sufficient to give him the right to call himself a philosopher (only a god, he implies, could do better).

So it is hardly surprising to find that, when Socrates later ranks lives in order of their excellence, the first place is occupied by a strange hybrid: a person who will be 'a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or some follower of the

¹⁸⁶ For more information see, K. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge, 2000); Luc Brisson, *Plato the myth maker* (Chicago, Ill., 1998); and R. Zaslavsky, *Platonic Myth and Platonic Writing* (Washington, D.C., 1981).

¹⁸⁷ *Phaedr.*, 234e-235a.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 244a.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 245a: 'If anyone comes to the gates of poetry and expects to become an adequate poet by acquiring expert knowledge of the subject without the Muses' madness, he will fail, and his self-controlled verses will be eclipsed by the poetry of men who have been driven out of their minds'.

¹⁹⁰ See *Phaedr.*, 246a-b: 'Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture'.

Muses and a lover'.¹⁹¹ In the *Republic*, on the other hand, when lives are ranked, the philosopher is alone at the top.¹⁹² Now philosopher, image-maker and Muse-follower, lover – all are seen as possessed types, and madness comes at the top.¹⁹³ It is important to note that it is unlikely that these changes would lead to a rehabilitation of those sophists and poets whose work Plato knew. Philosophical activity is still necessary for the highest sort of understanding. It is also necessary, as we have seen, for the highest sort of love. Hence, the change implies no softening towards the sophist or the non-philosophical poet. Yet, philosophy is now permitted to be an inspired magic, Muse-loving activity. In this conception it is more intimately related to poetry than Plato had hitherto led us to think. For example, it can make use of literary devices such as mythic narrative and metaphor in the centre of its teaching; and it can, like rhetoric and poetry, contain material expressive of (and arousing) a passionate excitation. The remainder of the dialogue confirms this close relationship.

The myth of the cicadas¹⁹⁴ which follows Socrates' second speech reminds us that philosophy, along with dance and erotic love, is one of the arts that made its appearance in the world with the advent of the Muses. The philosophical life is said to be a life dedicated to Calliope and Urania, that is, to the Muses 'who preside over the heavens and all discourse, human and divine, and sing with the sweetest voice'.¹⁹⁵ So here philosophy is placed under the sign of the Muses. The implication is that Plato now acknowledges that rational speech itself starts out from premises that are not rational, because they are

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 248d.

¹⁹² In fact, his own kind of *eros* is sharply distinguished from theirs: it is 'correct' just because it has nothing to do with 'mania or sexual desire' (*Rep.*, 403a).

¹⁹³ Compare *Rep.* IX, 581e ff., and *Phd.* 64c ff. In the middle dialogues it is never suggested that poetry is anything but a very early stage in the future philosopher's education, to be given up for dialectic and its pure, non-sensuous deductions (cf. the criticism of the mathematicians for their use of sensible likeness). The *Phaedo*, like *Rep.* X, expresses uneasiness about this dismissal of the poet. Socrates worries that he should after all practice the *mousike* that he has deposed. ('*Mousike*' is the generic term Plato uses for the poetic-musical education received by young citizens, cf. *Rep.* ii-iii *passim*; 521b; 522a-b – it corresponds, as training for the soul, to *gymnastike* as training for the body.) The proper connection between philosopher and the Muses is explicitly developed and stressed in the *Phaedrus*, where it emerges that the genuine *mousikos* would not be just any well-brought-up person, but only someone whose life is devoted to the new form of philosophical art, which serves Calliope and Urania together.

¹⁹⁴ *Phaedr.*, 259b-d.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 259d.

based on first affirmations.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, as shown earlier, the dialogue breaks with the *Gorgias*' very general condemnation of rhetoric, describing a 'true' rhetorical art in which a central place is given to the knowledge of the souls of individuals. And, at the end of the dialogue, Socrates' message to Lysias, Homer, and Solon (and anyone else who composes speeches, poetry or laws) tells them that Socrates and Phaedrus have heard the words they relay from the 'spring which is sacred to the Nymphs'.¹⁹⁷ What the nymphs told them, apparently, is that

'[i]f you can defend your writing when you are challenged, and if you can yourself make the argument that your writing is of little worth, then you must be called by a name not derived from these writings but rather from those things that you are seriously pursuing'.¹⁹⁸

The philosopher, therefore, is the only true rhetorician and/or poet. In other words, rhetoric is philosophy if it is combined in the right way with answers and accounts, i.e., if pursued using the method of dialectic. What we see emerging, therefore, is not so much a rehabilitation of the old rhetoric, as a new understanding of philosophy, an understanding that reinterprets the distinction between philosophy and rhetoric. Not so much an acceptance of Lysias' *logoi*, as an announcement that philosophy (like Socrates), may have a more complex soul than has been imagined. In fact, we do not need to rely on meta-philosophical remarks to know this. After all, it is apparent that Plato's praise of the inspired poet deeply affects the shape of his own discourse. This is clearly the dialogue of an inspired philosopher-poet. It uses metaphor, personification, colourful, rhythmic, and elaborate language. It makes its appeal to the imagination and the feelings as much as to the intellect. Finally, we must acknowledge that the whole of what we read here is a play, a dramatic representation. It is not a representation of ideally good or perfect people (both characters are self-critical, and both are in the process of growth and change). But it is this sort of representation that is now taken to be what the developing soul requires.¹⁹⁹ This dialogue may be our first example of the philosophical rhetoric that Plato has in mind. Nobody else has ever served the

¹⁹⁶ E. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy* (University Park, Penn., 1980), p. 30-1.

¹⁹⁷ *Phaedr.*, 278b-c.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 278b-d.

¹⁹⁹ See Lebeck, 'The central myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*', pp. 267-90.

Muses adequately together, combining the rigour of speculative argument with sensitive responses to the particulars of human experience.

These observations have been crudely general; they have accounted for only some features of Plato's practice as a writer.²⁰⁰ But I hope to have opened an inquiry into the relationship between Platonic dialogue form and the content of Platonic ethics, an ethical conception in which much of our ordinary humanity is a source of confusion rather than of insight, and our lives stand in need of transcendence through the dialectical activity of the intellect.

IV

Aristotle, like Plato, developed his understanding of rhetoric as a part of his wider philosophical project, but unlike Plato had a high regard for rhetoric. Several features of his thought help explain this. For example, the general anthropocentrism of his ethics and his rejection of the Platonic external 'god's eye' standpoint, leads him to develop a unifying vision of moral virtue, suasive speech, and the deliberative activities of the *polis*. Unlike Plato, Aristotle did not believe that there was such a thing as abstract truth about human values.²⁰¹ But he also thought that progress could be made towards some consensus about the good life on the basis of probable argument through dialectic. For Aristotle, the outstanding obstacles to communal agreement are deficiencies in judgement and reflection. Put simply, if we are each led individually through the best procedures of practical choice, we will eventually agree on the most important matters (in ethics as in science). And when, through work on the alternatives and through dialogue, we have arrived – both individually and in community with one another – at a harmonious adjustment of our beliefs,²⁰² the outcome will be the ethical truth. (On the Aristotelian understanding of truth: a truth that is anthropocentric, but not relativistic.) In practice the

²⁰⁰ They have not, for instance, dealt with any of the complexities of comic and tragic speech in the *Symposium*, a dialogue in which the power of the elements beyond which Socrates urges us to ascend will make itself felt with a more than propaedeutic force. See, e.g., Robert Mitchell, *The hymn to Eros: a reading of Plato's Symposium* (Lanham, Md, 1993).

²⁰¹ G. A. Kennedy, *Aristotle On Rhetoric: a Theory of Civil Discourse* (Oxford, 1991), p. 300.

²⁰² Furthermore, when Aristotle speaks of ethical truth, 'he attaches it to a general argument that denies our beliefs are linked to objects that are altogether independent of and more stable than human thought and language' (Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, p. 28).

search is rarely complete or thorough enough – so the resulting view will just be the best current candidate for truth.²⁰³ Hence his interest in language – ‘the real medium of human being’²⁰⁴ – and rhetoric or rational persuasion.

It is important to remember that it is to Aristotle that we owe the classical definition of the nature of man – according to which man is the only animal who has *logos*, the gift of speech.²⁰⁵ Consider how Aristotle develops the difference between man and animal in the *Politics*:

‘And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), *the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust.* And it is characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state’.²⁰⁶

A profound thesis. The distinguishing feature of man, therefore, is that he can think and he can talk.²⁰⁷ He can make what is not present manifest through his speaking, so that another individual sees it before him. And with this his sense of the future emerges and the sense for right and wrong is given – and all

²⁰³ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, pp. 10-11.

²⁰⁴ I borrow the expression from Gadamer, and I believe that Aristotle would have substantially agreed with his judgement when he writes: ‘[L]anguage is the real medium of human being, if we ... see it in the realm that it alone fills out, the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding, of ever-replenished common agreement – a realm as indispensable to human life as the air we breathe’ (‘Man and language’, in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tr. and ed. by D. E. Linge [Berkeley, 1976], pp. 59-68, at p. 68).

²⁰⁵ *Pol.*, i, 1253a5-10. References to the *Politics* are from B. Jowett’s translation in *Aristotle*, ed. S. Everson (Cambridge, 1996). Note that until the recent past the Greek word *logos* was translated as reason or thought. And consequently Aristotle’s definition became canonical in a form which stated that man is the *animal rationale*, distinguished from all other animals by his capacity for thought. In truth, however, the primary meaning of this word is language (Gadamer, ‘Man and language’, p. 59).

²⁰⁶ *Pol.*, i, 1253a10-20; emphasis added.

²⁰⁷ We now tend to look at language not as ‘the ineffable essence of human uniqueness’ but as a distinct piece of the biological make-up of our brains, ‘a biological adaptation to communicate information’, that is far from unique in the animal kingdom. Cognitive scientists have described language as a psychological faculty, a mental organ, a neural system, a computational module, and, more famously, an ‘instinct’. It conveys the idea, in Steven Pinker’s words, that ‘people know how to talk in more or less the sense that spiders know how to spin webs. ... In nature’s talent show we are simply a species of primate with our own act, a knack for communicating information about who did what whom by modulating the sounds we make when we exhale’ (Pinker, *The Language Instinct* [London, 1994], pp. 18, 19). These recent developments, however, in no way diminish the wisdom of Aristotle’s original insights about language. Furthermore, to a greater extent than his predecessors, Aristotle believed that the speculative pursuit of knowledge is a collegial process (a reflective dialogue) in which assumptions are continually re-examined, and that there are numerous avenues that have not yet been opened up (see, e.g., *Rh.*, 3.1).

because man, as an individual, has the *logos*. Language, however, is by no means simply an instrument (that we lay aside when it has served its purpose)²⁰⁸ or a cultural artifact (that we learn in the way we learn to tell the time). ‘The illusion that things precede their manifestation in language’, in Gadamer’s words, ‘conceals the fundamentally linguistic character of our experience of the world’.²⁰⁹ Indeed, language is so tightly woven into human experience that it is scarcely possible to imagine life without it. And if, as Lily Tomlin said, man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain;²¹⁰ rhetoric was then invented to satisfy our deep need to influence the actions of other individuals.

‘[M]an’, as Aristotle argues, ‘is by nature a political²¹¹ animal. And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another’s help, desire to live together ...’.²¹² To be political, then, is a part of human nature. At its best rhetoric has made civilised life possible.²¹³ Since ‘the end of the state is the good life’,²¹⁴ the proper end of public deliberation is to frame laws and social policies that will make such a life possible for the members of the community.

²⁰⁸ ‘For it is in the nature of the tool’, as Gadamer has said, ‘that we master its use, which is to say we take it in hand and lay it aside when it has done its service. ... Such an analogy is false because we never find ourselves as consciousness over against the world and ... grasp after a tool of understanding in a wordless condition.’ (‘Man and language’, pp. 62-3).

²⁰⁹ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, pp. 69-81, at pp. 77-8.

²¹⁰ Cited in Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p. 31.

²¹¹ Even though *politikon* is translated as ‘political’, it is important to remember that it is both more concrete and more inclusive than the English word. More concrete, in that it refers above all to our aptness or suitability for life in a city or *polis* – not in other forms or levels of political organisations. More inclusive, because it takes in the entire life of the *polis*, including informal social relations, and is not limited to the sphere of law and institutions.

²¹² *Pol.*, iii, 1278b19-21. The *polis* is brought into being in order that people might satisfy their social needs, but the political community also has a moral function. For ‘if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good’ (ibid., i, 1252a3-6). Aristotle’s ethical works are meant to show that the best life is – in principle, under ideal circumstances, and in the long run – also the most pleasant, the most expedient, and the noblest (*NE*, 1140a25-28, 1142a1-11; *Rh.*, 1.3.6). As R. McKeon concludes, ‘in the perfect state the good citizen would coincide with the good man’ (‘Aristotle’s Conception of Moral and Political Philosophy’, *Ethics*, 51 [April, 1941], pp. 253-90, at p. 265).

²¹³ For more on the relation between politics and rhetoric see, C. Reeve, ‘Philosophy, Politics, and Rhetoric in Aristotle’, in *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, ed. A. O. Rorty (Berkeley, Ca., 1996), pp. 191-205; S. Halliwell, ‘Popular Morality, Philosophical Ethics and the *Rhetoric*’, in *Aristotle’s Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, ed. D. Furley and N. Nehamas (Princeton, 1994); F. Miller and D. Keyt (eds.), *A Companion to Aristotle’s Politics* (Oxford, 1991); and J. P. Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory* (Princeton, 1990).

²¹⁴ *Pol.*, iii, 1280b39-40. On this topic see, J. Vanier, *Made for happiness* (London, 2001); A. Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford, 1992); and N. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford, 1989).

And the instrument of that deliberation is rhetoric. However, rhetoric does more than articulate an individual (the rhetorician's) vision of moral truth. It is, in addition, a submission of those reasonings to the scrutiny of others. We do more than attempt to influence when we seek the assent of others for our conclusions; we seek (because of the uncertainty that inevitably attends our thinking) confirmation of our own opinions.

In the *Rhetoric*,²¹⁵ Aristotle's advice is directed at aspiring rhetoricians, whether or not they intend to speak truthfully on behalf of what is worthy. But since he agrees with Plato that the best rhetoric is truthful, he wants to give orators advice on how to construct sound as well as effectively form persuasive arguments. For Aristotle, in fact, the best orator does not seek to persuade the audience of what is 'debased'.²¹⁶ He does not manipulate beliefs in order to make the worse appear to be the better course. Rather, he presents the best case in a way that is comprehensive and moving to each type of character.²¹⁷

The *exemplary* rhetorician (as opposed to the merely *skilled* rhetorician) is, then, guided by a sound understanding of what is genuinely useful and right. In suiting his arguments to his audience, therefore, the orator need not resort to lying. And as long as his rhetoric is also constrained by what is true and what is best, he will not 'warp the ruler'. 'And if it is argued that great harm can be done by unjustly using such power of words', Aristotle concludes, 'this objection applies to all good things except for virtue, and most of all to the most useful things, like strength, health, wealth, and military strategy; for by using these justly one would do the greatest good and unjustly, the greatest harm'.²¹⁸

In fact, in his view, even the most debased forms of rhetoric presuppose some knowledge of logic and ethics.²¹⁹ The sophist, for instance, must know the structure of sound arguments in order to mimic them. He must not only convince his audience that his arguments are sound, but also that – like the

²¹⁵ For background see, P. D. Brandes, *A History of Aristotle: 'Rhetoric': With a Bibliography of Early Printings* (Metuchen, N.J., 1989).

²¹⁶ *Rh.*, 1.1.12. References to the *Rhetoric* are from G. A. Kennedy's translation in *Aristotle On Rhetoric: a Theory of Civil Discourse* (Oxford, 1991).

²¹⁷ *Rh.*, 1.3.6ff.; cf. *NE*, 1113a30ff.

²¹⁸ *Rh.*, 1.1.13.

²¹⁹ See T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford, 1988), p. 332.

physician – he has their real interests at heart.²²⁰ To be persuasive, then, the orator must know how to present himself as substantively intelligent and virtuous, rather than merely as cleverly skilled at rhetoric. Aristotle's point regarding the ethical directions of rhetoric is not the overly strong claim the exemplary orator must be a philosopher or *phronimos*. Instead, he needs to be able to take advice from a philosophically oriented *phronimos*, such as Aristotle himself.

But it is also not the relatively weak claim that rhetoric should (at all times) be directed to its most successful exercise.²²¹ To see how Aristotle charts a middle ground, we must now turn to the three types of rhetoric and their primary instruments of persuasion. In *Rhetoric* 1.3.3 Aristotle identifies three kinds of rhetoric – deliberative, judicial or forensic, and epideictic or ceremonial. They are distinguished by their audiences (whether the audience is a judge²²² or spectator), and a characteristic 'time' and 'end'²²³ assigned to each. (If the audience is asked to judge an action in the future, the speech is deliberative; if an action in the past, judicial. If the audience is not asked to make a judgement about a past or future action, the speech is epideictic.) These differences prescribe some specialised strategies of argumentation and some specialised knowledge.²²⁴ That said, many forms of argument (e.g., dialectic and the enthymeme) and some kinds of knowledge (e.g., psychology,

²²⁰ *Topics*, tr. with commentary by R. Smith (Oxford, 1997), 101b5ff.

²²¹ This is not the way in which Aristotle has always been understood. The *Rhetoric* has been accused of advocating a kind of rhetoric that is devoid of any link with the right and the good. See, e.g., Whitney J. Oates, *Aristotle and the Problem of Value* (Princeton, N.J., 1963), pp. 335, 341; Forbes Hill, 'The Amoralism of Aristotle's Rhetoric', *GRBS*, 22 (1981), pp. 133-47; J. Olian, 'The Intended Uses of Aristotle's Rhetoric', *SM*, 35 (1968), pp. 137-48; and B. Fuller, *History of Greek Thought: Aristotle* (N.Y., 1931), p. 294. For literature which sees a fundamental connection between ethics and rhetoric in Aristotle's thought, see Eugene Garver, *Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Chicago, 1994); J. Cooper, 'Ethical-Political Theory in Aristotle's Rhetoric', in *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Furley and Nehamas; Lois Self, 'Rhetoric and Phronesis: The Aristotelian Ideal', *Phil. Rh.*, 12 (1979), pp. 130-45; Theresa Crem, 'The Definition of Rhetoric According to Aristotle', in *Aristotle*, ed. K. Erickson (Metuchen, N.J., 1974), pp. 52-71; and R. McKeon, 'Aristotle's Conception of Language and the Arts of Language', *CP*, 41 (1946), pp. 193-206 and 42 (1947), pp. 21-50.

²²² By judge (*krites*) Aristotle means a member of the assembly or of a jury. In Athenian legal procedure there were no professional judges in the modern sense. The democratic juries of the Athenian courts ranged in size from 201 to 5,001, drawn by lot from the male citizen body (Kennedy, *Aristotle On Rhetoric*, p. 42 n. 58).

²²³ See, e.g., *Rh.*, 1.3.5.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.2.21, 1.3.7ff.

knowledge of how various political systems²²⁵ shape the beliefs and desires of their citizens) are common to them all.

In 1.1.10 Aristotle identifies deliberative rhetoric as the finest form. He thus discusses it first and demotes judicial rhetoric (with which the handbooks were most concerned²²⁶) to last. Deliberative rhetoric²²⁷ is political discourse, that is, directed to those who must decide upon a course of action (e.g., members of a council or assembly) about public matters that affect themselves. Put simply, it is a matter of convincing the audience of the necessity or risk entailed by doing or not doing a certain action concerning the economic and political future of the community.²²⁸ The deliberative orator has the immensely difficult task of aligning his audience's conceptions of their *eudaimonia* with his own judgement about how various policies are likely to affect their welfare, whatever their beliefs may be.²²⁹ Furthermore, since the counsel of the rhetorician implies predictions about the outcomes of various policies, his conclusions are in principle testable.

²²⁵ '[I]t is necessary to know how many forms of constitution there are and what is conducive to each and by what each is naturally prone to be corrupted By *characteristic forces of corruption* I mean that except for the best constitution, all the others are destroyed by loosening or tightening [their basic principles of governance]; for example, democracy not only becomes weaker when [its principle of equality is] relaxed so that finally it leads to oligarchy but also if the principle is too rigidly applied. ... [I]t is useful ... not only to know what constitution is advantageous on the basis of past history but also to know the constitutions in effect in other states, observing what constitutions are suitable to what sort of people' (ibid., 1.4.12-13). Later Aristotle adds, 'The ... most important of all things in an ability to persuade and give good advice is to grasp an understanding of all forms of constitution ... for all people are persuaded by what is advantageous, and preserving the constitution is advantageous' (1.8.1-3). There are four forms of constitution: democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy, monarchy, which Aristotle discusses in *Rh.* 1.8.3-6 and at greater length in Books III and IV of the *Politics* (bk. V analyses the forces leading to corruption of constitutions). Aristotle studied many constitutions but only his account of the *Constitution of Athens* survived. Ideally, 'a "state" that has a minority or rich and a minority of poor, but with a predominant majority of the middle sort of people, would best satisfy the "state's" aim to consist of those who are similar and equal. Aristotle calls this a middle constitution' (Coleman, *HPT*, pp. 218-9). Also see, S. Salkever, *Finding the Mean* (Princeton, 1990).

²²⁶ Aristotle chides the authors of earlier handbooks on rhetoric for concentrating on judicial situations to the neglect of the other kinds of rhetoric. They focused primarily on techniques for swaying the emotions of judges and legislators to the neglect of showing how to use logical argument. (*Rh.*, 1.1.3-4; cf. *Phaedr.*, 266d-67d).

²²⁷ See *Rh.*, 1.10-15.

²²⁸ Ibid., 1.4.7: 'The important subjects on which people deliberate and on which deliberative orators give advice in public', Aristotle writes, 'are mostly five in number, and these are finances, war and peace, national defence, imports and exports, and framing of laws'.

²²⁹ Arguments from vivid and well-known examples of similar events – events that are presumed to indicate what is likely to happen in the future – are the best sorts for deliberative rhetoric (cf. Ibid., 2.2off.).

So if the rhetorician wishes to retain his reputation (as trustworthy) he must pay attention to what is actually likely to happen. It is this feature of deliberative rhetoric (i.e., that it is bound more tightly by reasonable expectations about the future) that marks its vital character. It most clearly reveals the primary importance of *truth* as it functions within the craft of rhetoric itself, and it is for this reason that Aristotle makes it the focus of his analysis. He can make the best case for his complex position by concentrating on deliberative rhetoric as the kind of discourse intended to affect action-decisions whose merits are capable (at least in principle) of independent evaluation. This also explains why Aristotle treats epideictic rhetoric as exhortation, rather than as the brilliant showpieces they had become in the hands of sophists. Epideictic speeches²³⁰ are addressed to a general audience in praise or blame of someone or something, often on a ceremonial occasion such as a funeral. Their aim is to correct, modify, or strengthen an audience's belief about civic virtue or the reputation of an individual. As hinted at earlier, in this context the audience is not called upon to take a specific action, in the way an assemblyman or juryman is called upon to vote. Having said that, in certain circumstances epideictic discourse may be viewed as an oratorical contest,²³¹ and in this sense the spectators are also judges.²³²

To persuade an audience to celebrate what is noble and to condemn what is shameful, the orator must be familiar with what the audience takes as indications of those virtues which they find exceptionally useful (e.g., justice and courage).²³³ But for Aristotle epideictic rhetoric also has an important practical and educational function and that is why he brings some of its uses

²³⁰ See *Rh.*, 1.9. The definition of epideictic discourse has remained a problem in rhetorical theory, since it becomes the category for all forms of discourse that are not specifically deliberative or judicial. Later ancient rhetoricians regarded it as including poetry and prose literature, and since Renaissance times it has sometimes included other arts like painting, sculpture, and music as well. Aristotle, however, thinks of epideictic rhetoric only as a species of oratory as he knew its forms in Greece, including funeral orations like that by Pericles in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (2.35-46) and the *Encomia* of Helen by Gorgias and Isocrates (Kennedy, *Aristotle*, p. 48 n.77). Today we would include under the heading of epideictic discourse the advertising message, which effectively consists of a eulogy of a given product see, Umberto Eco, *La struttura assente* (Milan, 1968).

²³¹ See, e.g., Isocrates, *Panegyricus*, ed. and tr. by S. Usher (Warminster, 1990), I.

²³² See *Rh.*, 2.18.1.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 1.9.1-8.

under the aegis of deliberative rhetoric.²³⁴ After all, in practice, speakers usually praise past actions with the interest of celebrating timeless virtues and inculcating them as models for the future. In short, since praise and blame *motivate* as well as indicate virtue, they are also implicitly intended to affect future action. In fact, 'praise and deliberations are part of a common species [*eidōs*] in that what one might propose in deliberation becomes *encomia* when the form of expression is changed'.²³⁵ Thus, Aristotle asserts, 'when you want to praise, see what would be the underlying proposition; and when you want to set out proposals in deliberation, see what you would praise'.²³⁶

Finally, Aristotle tackles judicial or forensic rhetoric,²³⁷ where he introduces much of his own ethical theory to provide premises for the kind of judicial rhetoric that had become a highly formalised and specialised legal oratory. It consists of speeches of prosecution (*katēgoria*) or defence (*apologia*) in a court of law (and as such directed to judges) seeking to establish individuals as guilty or innocent of specific actions alleged to have taken place in the past. Here, to be persuasive, the orator's arguments must take into account the commonplace psychological opinions (*endoxa*) of typical judges, their beliefs about the motives of various types of characters and the occasions on which they might be tempted to break the law.²³⁸ In addition, to construct a plausible accusation or defence the rhetorician needs to represent the psychology of the wrongdoers and those wronged.²³⁹ Like his epideictic counterpart, the judicial orator relies on a theory of voluntary action, but to establish the guilt or innocence of the accused, he needs to characterise the individual's motives in some detail. 'People do everything they do', Aristotle asserts, 'for seven reasons': chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning,

²³⁴ See *Rh.*, 1.9.35-37, where Aristotle points out how epideictic premises can be converted into deliberative ones by applying them to advice for future action rather than praise of what has been done in the past.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.9.35.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.9.36.

²³⁷ See *ibid.*, 1.10-15.

²³⁸ Amélie O. Rorty, 'Structuring Rhetoric', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 1-33, at p. 12.

²³⁹ The judicial orator has to grasp three things: 'first, for what, and how many, purposes people do wrong; second, how these persons are [mentally] disposed; third, what kind of persons they wrong and what these persons are like' (*Rh.*, 1.10.2). Motives are discussed in 1.10-11, the mental disposition of wrongdoers and those wronged in 1.12.

anger, and longing.²⁴⁰ After swiftly dismissing chance, nature, and compulsion,²⁴¹ he turns to a long description of the many kinds of activities and situations whose pleasures might lure a person to injustice.²⁴² What matters in this context is the likelihood of whether the accused (an impulsive young man, in debt and disowned by his family), has voluntarily broken the law.

We can now turn, as Aristotle himself does, to a brief discussion of the *pisteis*, or the means of persuasion that all orators share and the kinds of knowledge that they all require independently of their specific aims and audiences.²⁴³ Aristotle identifies three artistic modes of persuasion,²⁴⁴ deriving from the factors in any speech situation: (i) presentation of the trustworthy character (*ethos*) of the speaker; (ii) the emotional effect (*pathos*) created by the speech/text on the audience/reader; and (iii) the logical argument set out in the speech/text (*logos*).²⁴⁵ Each of these interdependent avenues of persuasion are of fundamental importance because,

[E]ven if we were to have the most exact knowledge, it would not be very easy for us in speaking to use it to persuade some audiences. Speech based on knowledge is teaching, but teaching is impossible [with some audiences]; rather, it is necessary for *pisteis* and speeches [as a whole] to be formed on the basis of common [beliefs], as we said in the *Topics* [1.1.2] about communication with a crowd'.²⁴⁶

For Aristotle, therefore, the accomplished rhetorician should, first, present himself as having a trustworthy *ethos*, 'for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others]' on all subjects.²⁴⁷ Next, he must address the interests of his audience persuasively – lead them to feel emotion (*pathos*) by the speech, because 'we do not give the same judgement

²⁴⁰ *Rh.*, 1.10.8.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.10.11; cf. 1.10.12-14.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.11.

²⁴³ For more information see, T. Conley, 'Pathos and Pisteis: Aristotle, *Rhet.* II 2-11', *Hermes*, 110 (1982), pp. 300-15; and J. Lienhard, 'A Note on the Meaning of *Pisteis* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', *AJP*, 87 (1966), pp. 446-54.

²⁴⁴ See *Rh.*, 1.2.2-3, where Aristotle distinguishes between *artistic* (arguments constructed from the evidence, situation, and character of those involved), and *non-artistic* (evidence the speaker uses but does not invent) *pisteis*.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.2.3-6.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.1.12.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.2.4; cf. 1.9.1 and 2.1.5-7. One should note that the extended discussion of types of character in *Rh.*, 1.12-7 relates to the somewhat different matter of the adaptation of the character of a speaker to the character of an audience.

when grieved and rejoicing or when friendly and hostile'.²⁴⁸ Finally, in order to be persuasive, the orator must provide some basic premises for his arguments. 'Persuasion occurs through the arguments [*logoi*]', Aristotle tells us, 'when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case'.²⁴⁹

According to Aristotle, therefore, this theory of argumentation constitutes the principal axis of rhetoric and at the same time provides the decisive link between rhetoric and demonstrative logic and therefore with philosophy. How so? As seen above, *pisteis* is the substance of rhetorical persuasion, and '*pistis* is a sort of demonstration [*apodeixis*] (for we most believe when we suppose something to have been demonstrated) and ... rhetorical *apodeixis* is enthymeme (and this is, generally speaking, the strongest of the *pisteis*) and the enthymeme is a sort of syllogism ...'.²⁵⁰ It was Aristotle, of course, who invented the probable argument in dialectic²⁵¹ called 'syllogism'. And since 'rhetorical syllogism' or enthymeme 'is the "body" of persuasion',²⁵² rhetoric as a whole must be centred on the persuasive power attached to this kind of proof.²⁵³ 'The result', Aristotle concludes, 'is that rhetoric is a certain kind of offshoot of dialectic and of ethical studies (which it is just to call politics)'.²⁵⁴ He also calls it an *antistrophos*²⁵⁵ or counterpart to the art of dialectic.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁸ *Rh.*, 1.2.5.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.6.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.1.11.

²⁵¹ Sovereign and synoptic science in Plato, dialectic is merely the general theory of probabilistic argumentation with Aristotle. Jacques Brunschwig, in his introduction to Aristotle's *Topics*, argues that it would be impossible to overemphasise the humbling, the 'loss of prestige', that dialectic suffers in passing from Plato's hands to those of Aristotle ('Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a "Counterpart" to Dialectic', in *Essays in Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 34-55). Also see, Erik Krabbe, 'Meeting in the House of Callias: Rhetoric and Dialectic', *Argumentation*, 14 (2000), pp. 205-217; Coleman, *HPT*, pp. 136-46; Robin Smith, 'Aristotle on the Uses of Dialectic', *Synthese*, 96 (1993), pp. 335-58; and Brad McAdon, 'Rhetoric is a Counterpart of Dialectic', *Phil. Rh.*, 34:2 (2001), pp. 113-49.

²⁵² *Rh.*, 1.1.3.

²⁵³ For a full discussion of the enthymeme see, Lloyd Bitzer, 'Aristotle's Enthymeme Revisited', in *Landmark Essays on Aristotelian Rhetoric*, ed. R. L. Enos and L. Agnew (Mahwah, N.J., 1998), pp. 179-92; and M.F. Burnyeat, 'Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 88-115.

²⁵⁴ *Rh.*, 1.2.7.

²⁵⁵ On the possible interpretations of *antistrophos* see, D. Green, 'Aristotelian Rhetoric, Dialectic, and the Traditions of *Antistrophos*', *Rhetorica* 8 (1990), pp. 5-27.

²⁵⁶ *Rh.*, 1.1.1. Aristotle divided intellectual activity into (i) theoretical sciences (mathematics, physics, theology); (ii) practical arts (politics, ethics); and (iii) productive arts (fine arts, the crafts, medicine). In addition, there are (4) methods or tools (*organa*), applicable to all study but with no distinct subject matter of their own. Logic and dialectic belong to that class. For

Rhetoric resembles and is linked to dialectic in a number of ways. Like dialectic, rhetoric does not have a distinctive, specific subject.²⁵⁷ It deals with 'popular truths' (i.e., the accepted opinions of the majority of the people), and it does not require any special training, since 'all people, in some way, share in both; for all, to some extent, try both to test and maintain an argument [as in dialectic] and to defend themselves and attack [others, as in rhetoric]'.²⁵⁸ The orator, furthermore, relies on the methods and the skills of dialectic. Like the dialectician (and the sophist), the successful orator must be able to construct contrary arguments: he must first represent and then refute the considerations that appear to weigh against his position.²⁵⁹

But this is not to say that there are no differences between rhetoric and dialectic. Although rhetoric absorbs the skills of logic, dialectic, and sophistical argument, it differs from them in some important respects.²⁶⁰ It differs from logic in that it addresses contingent particulars,²⁶¹ and from dialectic in having more specific aims. Dialectic encompasses both theoretical as well as practical inquiry: it can serve as 'a process of criticism that provides a path to a general principle'.²⁶² Rhetoric, on the other hand, is more narrowly practical: it comes into play in concrete situations (the deliberations of a political assembly, judicial judgement, public orations that praise or censure), and it attempts to bring an audience to a decisive judgement in such a way that they will not easily be swayed to a different course.²⁶³ This explains why rhetoric cannot become absorbed in a purely 'argumentative' or logical discipline – because it

Aristotle rhetoric is a *mixture* – it is partly a tool, like dialectic, but partly a practical art which derives its subject matter from ethics and politics (ibid., 1.2.7; cf. 1.2.1). He therefore avoids the fallacy of Plato's *Gorgias* where Socrates is obsessed with finding some kind of knowledge specific to rhetoric. In reading the *Rhetoric* one perceives a gradual shift of focus, moving from the use of rhetoric as a tool in 1.1 to its theoretical aspects in 1.2, its political and ethical content in the rest of bks. I and II, and its productive aspects in bk. III.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 1.1.1.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 1.1.1.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.1.14ff.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.4.4 ff..

²⁶¹ See, e.g., Coleman, *HPT*, pp. 128-32; and Robin Smith, 'Logic', in *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 27-65.

²⁶² *Topics*, 101b3-4.

²⁶³ See *ibid.*, 104b1-4; *Rh.*, 1.2.11-12, 1.4.7ff.

is directed to the 'the hearer'.²⁶⁴ A hearer, moreover, who in Aristotle's opinion one must assume is 'morally weak'²⁶⁵ and 'a simple person'.²⁶⁶ It is for this reason that the orator 'should condense enthymemes as much as possible'.²⁶⁷ The audience, in other words, is not capable of the complexities of thought that comprise demonstrative or dialectical deduction:

That the enthymeme is a sort of syllogism had been said earlier and how it ... differs from those of dialectic; for [in rhetoric] the conclusion should not be drawn from far back, nor is it necessary to include everything. The former is unclear because of the length [of the argument], the latter tiresome because of stating what is obvious. This is the reason why the uneducated are more persuasive than the educated before a crowd, just as poets say the uneducated are more "inspired by the Muses" in a crowd; for [the educated] reason with axioms [*koīna*] and universals, [the uneducated] on the basis of what [particulars] they know and instances near their experience'.²⁶⁸

A rhetorical argument, thus, needs to take into account both the *degree* to which the matter under discussion seems to be true and its *persuasive effectiveness* (which depends on the quality of the speaker and hearer). On the other hand, the rhetorician does not need to know whether the things that usually make people angry ought to do so, or whether their beliefs about what is fearful are in fact true – that is the business of Aristotle's ethical writings. However, he needs to know what really produces emotion, and the underlying assumption of the whole rhetorical enterprise is that belief and argument are at the heart of the matter.²⁶⁹

Aristotle, like Plato, believes that emotions are individuated not simply by the way we feel, but, more importantly, by the kinds of judgements or beliefs that are internal to each. A typical Aristotelian emotion is defined as a composite of a feeling of either pleasure or pain and a particular type of belief

²⁶⁴ 'Its [rhetoric's] function [*ergon*] is concerned with the sort of things we debate and for which we do not have [other] arts and among such listeners as are not able to see many things all together or to reason from a distant starting point' (*Rh.*, 1.2.12).

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.14.8.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.2.13.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.18.4.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.22.2.

²⁶⁹ M. C. Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 303-23, at p. 305. Cf. in the same collection, S.R. Leighton, 'Aristotle and the Emotions', pp. 206-37; J. M. Cooper, 'An Aristotelian Theory of the Emotions', pp. 238-57; and G. Striker, 'Emotion in Contexts', pp. 286-302. Also see, Sherman, *Fabric*; and W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle's Rhetoric on Emotion', in *Articles on Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, M. Schofield, and R. Sorabji (London, 1979), pp. 133-53.

about the world. For example, anger is a composite of painful feeling with the belief that one has been wronged.²⁷⁰ The feeling and the belief are not just incidentally linked: the belief is the ground of the feeling.²⁷¹ However, as seen in section III, the Plato of the middle dialogues devotes great energy to defence of the view that responses of sense and emotion have a powerfully negative and no redeeming positive role to play in the moral and intellectual life of the human being. And that good human development is best promoted by ‘separating’ the intellectual part of the soul from these responses. Conversely, for Aristotle emotions are not blind animal forces, but intelligent and discriminating parts of the personality. This is not to say that emotions are always correct, any more than beliefs or actions are always correct. They need to be educated, and brought into harmony with a correct view of the good human life (what is appropriate, of course, is set down by the general ethical theory).²⁷² But, well trained, they have in themselves a sense of value. The role of emotions and appetite as guides is cognitive as well as motivational: they not only move the person towards the good, but give him information as to where goodness and beauty actually are. It is precisely because emotions are intrinsic to the process of judgement²⁷³ that the accomplished rhetorician must learn about what produces emotions. It is important to remember, however, that Aristotle’s theory does not allow for the *manipulation* of the emotions in affecting judgement. The immediate aim of rhetoric, he remarks, ‘is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case ...’.²⁷⁴ Its aim, then, is to perceive in any given situation those elements that may be used to influence the process of *judging*. Put differently, rhetoric is a faculty of discovering those factors that will lead the hearer to give *reasoned* assent to a

²⁷⁰ *Rh.*, 2.1.9.

²⁷¹ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 383.

²⁷² ‘This ethical theory is critical of much that Aristotle’s society teaches. People often value too many of these external things, or value them too highly, or not enough. Thus, they have too much emotion in connection with money, possessions, and reputation, sometimes not enough in connection with the things that are truly worthwhile. An important role for philosophical criticism is to insist on the central role of virtuous action, which can usually be controlled by one’s own effort. But this control is not absolute. The emotions recognise worth outside oneself; in so doing, they frequently recognise the truth’ (Nussbaum, ‘Aristotle on Emotions’, pp. 316–7).

²⁷³ ‘The emotions are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgements ...’ (*Rh.*, 2.1.8).

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.1.14; cf. 1.2.11.

particular proposition. This is clearly not the way in which Aristotle has always been understood.²⁷⁵

Aristotle clearly wishes to establish a link between the exercise of moral virtue and excellence in persuading. This is apparent, for instance, when he characterises rhetoric in terms of its moral purpose. The art is useful, 'because the true and the just are by nature stronger than their opposites, so that if judgements are not made in the right way [the true and the just] are necessarily defeated [by their opposites]. And this is worthy of censure'.²⁷⁶ In Aristotle's view, therefore, rhetoric serves the cause of truth and justice because it enables us to discover and expose specious or unfair arguments. Furthermore, he points out,

'one should be able to argue persuasively on either side of a question, just as in the use of syllogisms, not that we may actually do both (for one should not persuade what is debased) but in order that it may not escape our notice what the real state of the case is and we ourselves may be able to refute if another person uses speech unjustly'.²⁷⁷

The activities of the rhetorician should be constrained by his commitment to use only the 'real' means of persuasion: i.e., arguments upon which intelligent decisions can be based. (It is this that distinguishes rhetoric from sophistry.) Aristotle's rhetorical theory is thus grounded in and guided by the principles developed in his ethical writings. Moreover, it could be argued that the activity of the practical intellect is essentially rhetorical in nature. Indeed, I tend to think that the person of practical wisdom is identical in some respects to the best orator. The person of practical wisdom has the capacity to deliberate well and, as seen earlier, invariably approaches a concrete situation prepared to respond to it emotionally in the appropriate ways. The orator, similarly, is engaged in a practical art and is concerned with such matters as we deliberate upon them. And since the best orator seeks to facilitate reasoned judgement,

²⁷⁵ As W. Grimaldi argues, 'to call [Aristotle's] *Rhetoric* a "rhetoric of persuasion" with the understanding of "persuasion at any cost" is wrong. He was aware of the fact that person speaks to the person, to the "other" in whom resides the tension between self-possession and its possible loss which may be incurred in any decision made toward further growth in understanding. In this matter of "persuasion" Aristotle's thesis is simply that good rhetoric effectively places before the other person all the means necessary for such decision making. At this point the person must exercise his own freedom' ('Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', *Hermes*, 25 [1972], pp. 1-151, at p. 5).

²⁷⁶ *Rh.*, 1.1.12.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.1.12.

one can argue that it aims at excellence in practical deliberation. Put differently, in seeking to lead his audience to intelligent decision-making, the orator implicitly fosters the capacity to deliberate well (for intelligent judgement rests upon this ability). Furthermore, it seems to me that practical deliberation involves a notable exercise of rhetorical skills. Excellence in deliberation is excellence in the discovery and assessment of the grounds of reasoned choice.²⁷⁸ It involves the capacity for finding and evaluating arguments for and against any possible line of conduct. Practical deliberation involves, in sum, the faculty for observing in any particular case the available means of persuasion. Hence, insofar as the activity of the practical intellect is the capacity to deliberate well about practical matters, it is rhetorical in character. When the person of practical wisdom deliberates about conduct with a view toward choosing among competing alternatives, he employs a kind of internal rhetoric.²⁷⁹

Ironically, Aristotle, despite being the author of the first complex, systematic rhetoric, is not (unlike Plato) visibly rhetorical himself. In section II I pointed out that Plato's own style of writing reveals an acute self-consciousness about the relationship between choice of a style and the content of a philosophical conception. Thus the adoption of a related ethical position caused Plato, in the *Phaedrus*, to modify his own philosophical style so as to include emotive and rhetorical elements associated with poetry. Aristotle clearly does not do this. Although he embraces rhetoric and poetry,²⁸⁰ Aristotle does not alter his own style. A style which, to the majority of readers, appears

²⁷⁸ In the *Ethica*, Aristotle describes deliberation as a kind of inquiry or search, involving calculation and reasoning: 'For the person who deliberates seems to investigate and analyse ... (1112b20-23)'; '...deliberation is the inquiry into a particular kind of thing' (1142a31-32); and '... excellence in deliberation ... is correctness of thinking about actions' viewed as means to desired ends' (1142b8-13).

²⁷⁹ As Isocrates persuasively maintained, 'the arguments by which we convince others when we speak to them are the same as those we use when we engage in reflection. We call those able to speak to the multitude orators, and we regard as persons of sagacity those who are able to talk things over within themselves with discernment' (*To Nicholes*, sec. 8); cited in C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, p. 41.

²⁸⁰ We know that his ethical views make him hospitable to tragic poetry and its style as sources of illumination. For more on Aristotle's views on tragic poetry, see the excellent analysis in Nussbaum, *Fragility*, part III. On the role of poetry in Aristotle's views about education see, Sherman, *Fabric*, who asserts that, in Aristotle's view, excellence of character comprises both the sentiments and practical reason. She focuses particularly on four aspects of practical reason as they relate to character: moral perception, choice-making, collaboration, and the development of those capacities in moral education.

spare and unemotive in the extreme. So does this mean (rather disturbingly), that Aristotle was superficial about style? That he thought there was a neutral philosophical style in which all claimants to ethical truth can be equally and impartially assessed?

The questions are hardly fair, because we know far too little about the status of Aristotle's works as written texts. His published works, including many dialogues, were famous in antiquity for their copious and flowing style.²⁸¹ But these works are forever out of reach, only meagre fragments survive. Moreover, the works we do have are probably lecture notes for delivery to an audience of specialised students. So even the internal content of the chapters themselves is likely to be, in many places, only a sketch of the delivered lecture – which would have been fleshed out, like any set of lecture notes, with examples, jokes, and dramatic material. Finally, it is important to remember that the arranging and editing of his work was done by a later hand.²⁸² Even about the style of these lecture notes there is a great disagreement. A number of scholars find it austere, forbidding, even drab. Kennedy asserts that Aristotle's style is 'compressed in the extreme',²⁸³ while Nussbaum finds in his style, 'a courageous straightforwardness and directness'.²⁸⁴ Yet, hardly ever has it been suggested that it is precisely the invisibility of Aristotle's rhetoric that makes his work in general and the *Rhetoric* in particular, deeply persuasive. C. Jan Swearingen believes that Aristotle should be deemed 'a rhetorician *per*

²⁸¹ Cicero speaks of a 'golden river', of a later writer of discourse 'overflowing with controlled eroticism' (*Academica*, tr. H. Rackman [Cambridge Mass., 1933], II.119).

²⁸² The geographer Strabo (*The Geography of Strabo*, tr. H. L. Jones [London, 1917-32], 13.1.54), a writer of the late first century BC, and Plutarch ('Sulla', in *Six Lives*, tr. R. Warner [Harmondsworth, 1972], 26.1-2), writing a hundred years later, are the major sources for the early history of the text of the works of Aristotle. The Aristotelian works were re-edited and extensively studied in later antiquity, beginning with Alexander of Aphrodisias around A.D. 200, but the *Rhetoric* was given little attention. The *Rhetoric* poses a particular challenge because Aristotle wrote different parts of the work at different times and his point of view changed as he taught different groups of students. There are also difficulties resulting from uncertainty about what Aristotle wrote, since we are dependent for the text on hand-written copies made in the Middle Ages, which do not always agree. See Carnes Lord, 'On the Early History of the Aristotelian Corpus', *AJP*, 107 (1986), pp. 137-61; and Kennedy, *Aristotle*, pp. 299-305.

²⁸³ Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric*, p. xi.

²⁸⁴ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 392.

exemplum'.²⁸⁵ Indeed, one of the most recurrent bits of advice in the *Rhetoric* is that the most successful rhetoric does not appear to be rhetorical:

'[A]uthors should compose without being noticed and should seem to speak not artificially but naturally. (The latter is persuasive, the former the opposite; for [if artifice is obvious] people become resentful, as at someone plotting against them, just as they are at those adulterating wines)'.²⁸⁶

Since the audience in a rhetorical situation already suspects that the speaker has a 'design' on them, the speaker must appear natural, spontaneous, and without craft. Thus rhetoric is most successful when not obviously rhetorical. In book III Aristotle defines the virtue or excellence (*arete*) of prose style and civic oratory as 'clarity', but with the requirement that a writer or speaker seek a mean between ordinary language and poetic language as appropriate for the subject.²⁸⁷ The emphasis on clarity is, of course, consistent with his stress on logical proof in the earlier books and his dislike of the style of the sophists.²⁸⁸

In Plato's *Phaedrus* and in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, there is an agreement that the pursuit of practical wisdom is fostered by works that contain poetic and rhetorical elements and address themselves to the emotional 'part' of the soul. In both there is also, implicitly, agreement that the pursuit of wisdom requires another more reflective and explanatory sort of style. But the resemblance ends here. Plato blends these two styles together into a subtly interwoven whole. His prose moves seamlessly from the spare and formally explanatory to the lyrical, and back again, breaking down traditional genre distinctions. Aristotle, in contrast, commends and venerates the works of actual poets, and confines his own writing to the reflective and explanatory function. So what is the meaning of this difference?²⁸⁹ To begin with, it is worth noting this may be

²⁸⁵ C. J. Swearingen, *Rhetoric and Irony* (Oxford, 1991), p. 120.

²⁸⁶ *Rh.*, 3.2.4.

²⁸⁷ In 3.5, Aristotle will add a requirement of grammatical correctness and in subsequent chapters will discuss various forms of ornamentation. These concepts were reformulated by his student Theophrastus in a treatise, now lost, *On Lexis*, as 'correctness, clarity, propriety, and ornamentation', and appear in some form in most subsequent Greek and Roman treatments of rhetoric. See, e.g., Cicero, *De oratore*, tr. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, 2 vols. (London, 1959), 3.37; id., *Orator*, tr. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbel (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), 79; and Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H. E. Butler, 4 vols. (London, 1963), 8.1-2.

²⁸⁸ See S. Consigny, 'Transparency and Displacement: Aristotle's Concept of Rhetorical Clarity', *RSQ*, 17 (1987), pp. 413-19.

²⁸⁹ For further discussion of these two alternatives see, M. Nussbaum, 'Flawed crystals: James's *The Golden Bowl* and literature as moral philosophy', *Love's Knowledge* (N.Y., 1990), pp. 125-47.

less of a philosophical difference than a difference of personality and talent. 'For if one genuinely honours the claim of great literature to explore the truth', as Nussbaum asserts, 'one will not lightly attempt to *produce* literature. One will know that the ethically valuable elements of such a work are inseparable from the poetic genius of their production'.²⁹⁰ Plato was unquestionably a literary artist of genius, and so he was able to adopt the poetic task into his own style. But Aristotle was not such an artist, or, if he was, we do not know. So when Aristotle confines his own prose to a more conventional style (and turns for poetic learning to the works of Sophocles and Euripides), he would actually be showing his respect for the literary art. Furthermore, despite Plato's partial rehabilitation of rhetorical and poetic art, he lacks respect for actual sophists and poets. He performs part of their job himself. But what he does not do, even in the *Phaedrus*, is to commend their actual works as a source of insight. Aristotle, despite remaining opposed to the writings of the sophists, allowed poetic works to exist apart as sources of insight in their own right. And, consequently, 'shows himself to be not less, but more responsive than Plato to their claim to tell the truth to human souls'.²⁹¹ The acceptance of an Aristotelian conception should lead to the recognition that the humanities are the core of our public culture, and that other techniques of reasoning are tools whose place is to assist them in their task of revealing and enacting a full and rich sense of human life and its public requirements.

²⁹⁰ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 392. Thus, unlike Iris Murdoch, Nussbaum turns to Henry James' works instead of writing her own.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, *Fragility*, p. 393.

3
*Praise of rhetoric:
Cicero and the making of the ideal orator*

I

The Romans, like the ancient Greeks, essentially regarded rhetoric as a political tool.²⁹² The first rhetoricians, the Sophists, offered their art as education in persuasive speaking for prospective leaders, and they saw themselves as performers (in the tradition of the poets and rhapsodes) engaged in battles of words. Roman rhetoric is equally political, although the forensic variety carries the most weight with the subject of this chapter, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC).²⁹³ Inscribed in his rhetoric is a particular political model, a republican one in which orators, all theoretically equals, engage in a free competition in the public arena, aiming for victory over their fellow orators.²⁹⁴ Tully's forensic temper, prizing success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth has long been widely acknowledged. Less appreciated is that rhetoric, for Cicero, is understood differently from simply elegant or ornate forms of statement. Eloquence, in the way he most often conceives it, does not refer to the beauty of the words that a writer or speaker may use, although these are of considerable importance. It refers instead to the ability to speak about the whole of the subject. True eloquence is rare precisely because it requires wide knowledge as well as the numerous other attributes essential for an orator.²⁹⁵ I suggest that, for Cicero, the orator can employ the voice of a tragedian, the gestures of the greatest actors, but he also requires the acumen of the dialectician and the ethical knowledge of philosophers.²⁹⁶ Moreover, the orator works for the good of the state and cannot rest in the flowery excursus of the pedant who performs before his

²⁹² M. L. Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome* (N.Y., 1963), 2.

²⁹³ In general see, A. Everitt, *Cicero: a turbulent life* (London, 2001); and A. Garcea, *Cicerone in esilio* (Hildesheim, 2005).

²⁹⁴ See R. Radford, *Cicero: a study in the origins of Republican philosophy* (Amsterdam, 2002).

²⁹⁵ *De oratore*, tr. E. W. Sutton H. Rackham, 2 vols. (London, 1959), 1.6-20, esp. 17-18.

²⁹⁶ *De or.*, 1.27.

students or a select group of admirers. In his practice, therefore, Cicero might use the arts and crafts of rhetoric to make the worse cause appear the better, and might boast of having thrown dust in the eyes of the jury,²⁹⁷ but in his theory oratory was purely a power for good. I also hope to suggest that the long-standing influence of Cicero's youthful treatise, *De Inventione*, seems to have distracted attention to his reformulation of rhetoric as much more than a simple translation of Greek technical rhetoric into Latin. Although clearly thoroughly conversant with rhetorical precepts, in Cicero's hands, the rules merely allow him to vary, break, or transcend them, while endeavoring to persuade an audience.²⁹⁸ In other words, Cicero did not adhere strictly to the rules of rhetoric, which he thought were only of limited value in real-life situations. For him a great deal more is required of a good orator, a point that he reiterates time and time again in his mature rhetorical works,²⁹⁹ and vividly illustrates in practice in his speeches before the courts. Cicero says (through his interlocutors) that his contemporaries cannot think carefully because they are being taught reductive and corrupt versions of rhetoric and virtually no philosophy. Among other aims, his transformations have the clear purpose of reuniting rhetoric and philosophy, 'tongue and brain', which he says had increasingly diverged during the period between 300 to 100 BC. For Cicero this partitioning began with Socrates, was extended by Aristotle, and has been damaging at both theoretical and practical levels.³⁰⁰ His dialogues on rhetoric again and again focus on the history and harmful effects of the partitioning of the *artes liberales*.³⁰¹ Cicero tries to eliminate this divide, that for him is characteristic of Greek philosophy, which is directed exclusively to the derivation of principles. It is for this reason that rhetorical techniques, in Cicero's proposed curriculum, come last, following the training of character and the acquisition of knowledge through having 'investigated and heard and read and discussed and handled and debated the whole of the contents of the

²⁹⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H. E. Butler, 4 vols. (London, 1963), 2.17.21. References from Quintilian are from this edition.

²⁹⁸ See A. Vasaly, 'Cicero's Early Speeches', *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory Rhetoric*, ed. J.M. May (Leiden, 2002), pp. 71-111; and F. Solmsen, 'Cicero's First Speeches: A Rhetorical Analysis', *TAPA*, 69 (1938), pp. 542-56.

²⁹⁹ See, e.g., *De or.*, 1.19, 145-46; 2.78-84; 3.24, 75-76, 92-93, 103, 121, 125, 188.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.60-64, 3.58-60; *Orator*, 12, 15.

³⁰¹ *De or.*, 3.69-77, 125; *id.*, *Academica*, tr. H. Rackman (Cambridge Mass., 1933), 1.3-24.

life of mankind'.³⁰² The idea of education Cicero advocates in his dialogues, therefore, might best be summed up in relation to the intersection of three terms: *sapientia*, *eloquentia*, and *prudentia*. For Cicero *sapientia* or human wisdom, refers to the achievement of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge does not refer to some form of psychological introspection or to any form of introspection at all. It means instead that the student should study the entire curriculum of thought, and take the whole of human knowledge as his province. If the object of wisdom is the whole of a subject, then the object of eloquence, for Cicero, is to speak in a manner that will present the nature of this whole in words. Hence Cicero's assertion that, 'eloquence is wisdom put into language'.³⁰³ *Res* and *verbum*, thing and word, are to be joined in the act of philosophical speech. The love of wisdom which is to be the goal of the student, must also be love of the word (as the medium of wisdom) or the love of eloquence. Finally, for Cicero the love of wisdom or philosophy is in essence the love of prudent or wise conduct in the *civitas*.³⁰⁴ But the knowledge of how to live, that is, the knowledge of proper human action, requires that the individual grasp the whole of any situation or subject that is important to him, and that this whole be put into words (so it can be objectified and understood). It follows, then, that the vision that *prudentia* (*phronesis* or practical wisdom) introduces in human affairs requires the person to have *sapientia*, a wisdom of the whole, and to be able for himself and for others to put this whole into words, to have *eloquentia*. Put differently, the foresight required for prudence requires that the totality of a situation be understood and expressed completely and articulately. For Cicero, therefore, *sapientia*, *eloquentia*, and *prudentia* are three aspects of a total process of the human mind that should be the true aim of education. This is a rhetorical conception of human knowledge tied to how we make sense together as language-using animals. It stands in opposition to the Cartesian conception of education, which advocates the reduction of all thought and language to a single method of right

³⁰² *De or.*, 3.54.

³⁰³ *De partitione oratoria*, ed. tr. H. Rackham, 2 vols. (London, 1942), 23.79.

³⁰⁴ So he opposes those philosophers who, like Socrates, were 'themselves copiously furnished with learning and with talent, but yet shrinking on deliberate principle from politics and affairs, scouted and scorned this practice of oratory' (*De or.*, 3.59).

reasoning, such that anything that was not subject to placement within the steps of this method was excluded from human knowledge, or at least discounted as illusion or as basically unimportant.

II

As seen in chapter 2, in *Rhetoric* 1.3 Aristotle identifies three species of rhetoric: deliberative, epideictic or ceremonial, and forensic or judicial.³⁰⁵ Some traits are common to all three species of rhetoric: (i) they are directed to the concrete; (ii) they are popularly oriented; (iii) they appeal to emotions; and (iv) they are agonistic.³⁰⁶ That rhetoric is directed to the concrete means that the rhetorician tries to guide his audience to *action*. '[I]t is with action, as Quintilian says, 'that [rhetoric's] practice is chiefly and most frequently concerned'.³⁰⁷ It indicates, in addition, that rhetoricians concern themselves with *specific* matters, not ambiguous questions. This is especially so in the Roman Republic. For example, in his *De Re Publica*,³⁰⁸ and the *Tusculan Disputations*,³⁰⁹ Cicero repeatedly suggests that Greek theories have proved inferior to the military, political, and moral practices of the Romans.³¹⁰ This point is echoed in Quintilian's assertion, 'Greek superiority in moral precept is matched by Roman pre-eminence in examples of conduct – which is the greater thing'.³¹¹

Civil rhetoric is also characterised by a popular *audience*: assemblies, juries, and crowds gathered for special occasions. Cicero, therefore, counsels

³⁰⁵ See also Cicero, *De inventione*, tr. H. Hubbell (London, 1949), 1.5-7; and *Inst.*, 3.12-15. Cicero had probably read the *Rhetoric*, even though this cannot be proved. Among the signs that he did is a passage from Book II of *De oratore*, where he makes Antonius say, among other things, that he read the books in which Aristotle gave his own views on rhetoric (2.160), which must refer to the *Rhetoric* – it is hard not to take this as an indication on Cicero's part that he did the same himself. For more information see, W. W. Fortenbaugh, 'Cicero's Knowledge of the Rhetorical Treatises of Aristotle and Theophrastus', in *Cicero's Knowledge of the Peripatos*, ed. W. W. Fortenbaugh and P. Steinmetz (New Brunswick, 1989), pp. 39-60.

³⁰⁶ B. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 53-4.

³⁰⁷ *Inst.*, 2.18.2-5. This relationship between rhetoric and action is clear in the traditional three *officia oratoris*, or duties of an orator: to prove (*probare*) or instruct (*docere*), to please (*delectare*), and to stir (*movere*). Of the three *officia*, it is the last duty that receives Cicero's highest praise: 'it is the one thing of all that avails most in winning verdicts' (*Or.*, 21.69-70).

³⁰⁸ See *De Republica*, ed. J.G.F. Powell (Oxford, 2006), bks. 2 and 1.2.

³⁰⁹ See *Tusculan Disputations*, tr. J. E. King (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), bks. 1-3.

³¹⁰ The 'Greeklings' are said to be 'fonder of argument than of truth' (*De or.*, 1.47-48).

³¹¹ *Inst.*, 12.2.30.

the prospective rhetorician to accommodate himself to the language and beliefs of the people:

'the whole art of oratory ... is concerned in some measure with the common practice, custom, and speech of mankind, so that, whereas in all other arts that is most excellent which is farthest removed from the understanding and mental capacity of the untrained, in oratory the very cardinal sin is to depart from the language of everyday life ...'.³¹²

The discipline of public discourse, thus, entails significant appeal to the emotions. After all, as Quintilian says,

'We [rhetoricians] ... have frequently to speak before an audience of men who, if not thoroughly ill-educated, are certainly ignorant of such arts as dialectic: and unless we force, and occasionally throw them off their balance by an appeal to their emotions, we shall be unable to vindicate the claims of truth and justice'.³¹³

Cicero, like Quintilian, gives special emphasis to the rhetorical appeal to the emotions, success in which, he holds, constitutes the chief excellence of the orator.³¹⁴ Why? Because 'men's judgments', he explains, 'are more often formed under the influence of hatred, love, desire, anger, grief, joy, hope, fear, misconception or some other emotion, than by truth or ordinance, the principles of justice, the procedure of the courts or the laws'.³¹⁵ The significance of the appeals to emotions in classical rhetoric is indicated by their status amongst the different modes of persuasion or proofs. As seen in the previous chapter, Aristotle distinguishes three interconnected dimensions of persuasion (*pistis*): *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*.³¹⁶ Only *logos* or logical explanation, is directed to the listener's reason; *ethos* and *pathos* appeal to the emotions.³¹⁷ Of the three proofs, it is *pathos*, the stirring up of an audience's vehement emotions (and thus the most emotionally charged), that is most

³¹² *De or.*, 1.3.12.

³¹³ *Inst.*, 5.14.29.

³¹⁴ *Brutus*, tr. G. Hendrickson and H. Hubbel (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), 89, 279; *Or.*, 128.

³¹⁵ *De or.*, 2.178.

³¹⁶ Aristotle, *Rh.* 1356a1-4. *Ethos* persuades when 'the speech is so spoken as to make us think [the speaker] more credible, [since] we believe good men more fully and more readily than others' (1358a3-13). *Pathos* succeeds 'when the speech stirs the emotions', for 'our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile' (1356a13-19).

³¹⁷ *Inst.*, 6.2.8. For more information see, J. Wisse, *Ethos and Pathos from Aristotle to Cicero* (Amsterdam, 1989).

highly valued by Cicero. In fact, he portrays pathos as the quintessential rhetorical talent:

‘[E]very one must acknowledge that of all the resources of an orator far the greatest is his ability to inflame the minds of his hearers and to turn them in whatever direction the case demands. If the orator lacks that ability, he lacks the one thing most essential’.³¹⁸

Cicero repeatedly asserts that such emotional appeal is the most important factor for winning cases,³¹⁹ and he was justly proud of his own skill in this regard. Ciceronian orations are rich in passages of high emotion, several going as far as to end with the orator in tears, barely able to continue.³²⁰ In *Orator*, Cicero discusses his own abilities in stirring the emotions of an audience and some of the methods that he employs:

‘[T]he appeal for pity [is not] the only way in which the feelings of the jurors should be aroused – though I have generally employed it so passionately that I have even held a baby in my arms during the peroration, and in another case involving a noble defendant, I filled the forum with wailing and lamentation by calling him forward and raising up his small son, – but the juror must be made to be angry or appeased, to be ill-or well-intentioned, to despise or admire, hate or love, desire or loathe, hope or fear, to feel joy or sorrow. ... Indeed, there is no conceivable method of arousing or soothing the mind of a listener that I have not tried – I would say brought to perfection, if I judged it were so, and if it were true, I would not fear the charge of conceit’.³²¹

For Cicero the renowned defence of Norbanus, described in *De oratore*, stands as a paradigm of a speech that combines effectively both ethos and pathos.³²² Sulpicius, the prosecutor, not only has everything going for his case, but has also employed pathos so much to his advantage, that he ‘turned over to

³¹⁸ *Brutus*, 80.279.

³¹⁹ See, e.g., *De or.* 1.17, 30, 53, 60, 2.215, 337, 3.55, 105; *Or.*, 128-133.

³²⁰ See, e.g., the perorations of Cicero’s *Pro Sulla*, 92; *Pro Plancio*, 104; *Pro Rabirio Postumo*, 48; and *Pro Milone*, 105; cf. *Pro Caelio*, 60.

³²¹ *Or.*, 131-132; cf. *De or.*, 2.194b-196, where Cicero describes the famous defense by M. Antonius of the old general Manius Aquillius. Having sensed that the jurors were moved at the sight of a former consul and decorated military commander now in court, weakened, grief-stricken, and dressed in mourning clothes, Antonius raised up his client and tore open Aquillius’ tunic, laying bare the scars that he had sustained on behalf of them and the state. Cicero himself appears to have imitated this emotional ploy in his own defence of C. Rabirius; see A. Dyck, ‘Dressing to Kill: Attire as a Proof and Means of Characterization in Cicero’s Speeches’, *Arethusa*, 34 (2001), pp. 119-130, at p. 121.

³²² *De or.*, 2.197 ff. For a detailed analysis of this speech see, Wisse, *Ethos and Pathos*, pp. 269-282.

Antonius not a court case (*iudicium*), but a conflagration (*incendium*)!³²³ He then tells us how Sulpicius' opponent, Antonius, extinguished the 'fire':

'... [W]hat a remarkable prologue you used! What fear, what indecision! With what slowness and hesitation your words came! ... How well you paved a way for yourself in this first stage, and secured yourself a hearing! But look, just when I was thinking that you had accomplished nothing more than making people think that you deserved to be excused for defending a wicked citizen because of your bond with him, you began, imperceptibly, to worm your way out – others were not yet suspecting it, but I was already beginning to be much afraid. You defended what had happened by saying that it had not been sedition caused by Norbanus, but an outburst of anger on the part of the Roman people, and not an unjust one at that, but one that was very well-deserved. After that, what commonplace did you fail to employ against Caepio? How you filled all of the proceedings with hatred, indignation, and pity! And this not just in your actual speech, but even in dealing with Scaurus and my other witnesses. You countered their testimony not by refuting them, but by resorting to the same point about the outburst of popular violence'.³²⁴

In section 201, Antonius explains that his strategy in this case relied almost entirely upon ethos and pathos. He says that he 'only touched quite briefly and quite superficially' the implications of the law and the charge of high treason. Yet, the two elements of a speech, 'one that recommends (i.e., ethos), the other that excites (i.e., pathos)', played constant and primary roles. 'This implied', Antonius explains, 'giving the impression both of being very passionate when rekindling the indignation against Caepio, and of being very mild when demonstrating my character in my dealings with those to whom I am bound. So, Sulpicius, I bested your accusation in that case not so much because the jurors were informed, but because their minds were affected'. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that Cicero at times goes as far as to advise the student to prefer emotion to reason. The hearer, he tells us, should be 'so affected as to be swayed by something resembling a mental impulse or emotion, rather than by judgement or deliberation. For men decide far more problems by hate, or love, or fear, or illusion, or some other inward emotion, than by reality'.³²⁵

³²³ *De or.*, 2.202.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.202-203.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.42.178.

But it is important to note that this kind of persuasion that finds its source in pathos is, for Cicero, closely related to persuasion that is based on ethos.³²⁶ Ethos or persuasive appeals which are based on character, was also an extremely important element of the oratory of the late Republic. In fact, character was a very significant component in the social and political milieu of Cicero's Rome, and it exerted a considerable amount of influence on native Roman oratory.³²⁷ After all, a people who built their history on the deeds of great forebears, a people who were bound by the close ties of the client-patron relationship, and to whom personal authority (*auctoritas*) was of utmost concern, were likely to be influenced in their decisions by the force of individual character. Cicero, of course, was very much aware of the great potential that proof based on character (ethos) offered the orator for persuading a Roman audience. In *De oratore*, he discusses this potential in some detail:

'[T]he character, the customs, the deeds, and the life, both of those who do the pleading and of those on whose behalf they plead, make a very important contribution to winning a case. These should be approved of, and the corresponding elements in the opponents should meet with disapproval, and the minds of the audience should, as much as possible, be won over to feel goodwill toward the orator as well as toward his client. Now people's minds are won over by a man's prestige, his accomplishments, and the reputation he has acquired by his way of life. Such things are easier to embellish if present than to fabricate if totally lacking, but at any rate, their effect is enhanced by a gentle tone of voice on the part of the orator, an expression on his face intimating restraint, and kindness in the use of his words; and if you press some point rather vigorously, by seeming to act against your inclination, because you are forced to do so. Indications of flexibility, on the part of the orator and the client, are also quite useful, as well as signs of generosity, mildness, dutifulness, gratitude, and of not being desirous or greedy. Actually all qualities typical of people who are decent and unassuming, not severe, not obstinate, not litigious, not harsh, really win goodwill, and alienate the audience from those who do not possess them. And these same considerations must likewise be employed to ascribe the opposite qualities to the opponents'.³²⁸

Here the importance of character (not only the character of the litigants, but also that of their advocates) is eloquently stressed. The audience's hearts are won over by a speaker's prestige, his past accomplishments, the reputation of

³²⁶ See, *De or.*, 2.182-214, esp. 185 and 212; *Or.*, 128-133; *Inst.*, 6.2.8-17.

³²⁷ See J. May, *Trials of Character* (Chapel Hill, 1988), pp. 1-12.

³²⁸ *De or.*, 2.182.

his life. Cicero's actual speeches are replete with proof based on character, not only that of his client and his opponent(s), but to his own *dignitas*, blatant appeals to his *auctoritas*, and repeated mention of his greatest accomplishments.³²⁹

The manner in which the orator appeals to passions alludes to rhetoric's agonistic nature. The orator excites the audience's passions both to persuade them of his position and, in deliberative and forensic oratory, to defeat his opponent, 'to prove one's own case and demolish the adversary's'.³³⁰ People use rhetoric, as Aristotle says, 'to defend themselves and attack [others]'.³³¹ The contentious character of political speech is suggested by the fact that the Greek word *agon* not only means 'contest' or 'struggle', but also denotes 'public assembly' and 'assembly place'.³³² In the Roman conception of rhetoric the contest always takes place before a *iudex*, the judge in a courtroom, or before *iudices*, the judges who are the people or the orator's fellow senators.³³³ Cicero places the judge metaphorically above the competing speakers, thus reinforcing the notion of oratory as contest: he is the *dominus* or 'lord', whose bias or irrational hostility often defeats the orator's finest efforts.³³⁴ So the orator must defeat him, just as he does the other orators he faces. For Quintilian such triumphs, in which one is able to sweep away the judges and lead them to adopt the position one wishes, so that one truly dominates them, are rare.³³⁵ But he believes, like Cicero, that in the endlessly repeated contest of oratory such triumphs can at least sometimes be engineered by the skilful. To present this model, both Cicero and Quintilian apply related metaphors of military combat, gladiatorial contests, and athletic games. For example, in Cicero's *De oratore*, Antonius sees the orator not as ruling the wills of others

³²⁹ In fact, on occasion these concerns seem to overshadow the real issue of the case. For a detailed analysis of how Cicero employs ethos in his speeches see, May, *Trials of Character*.

³³⁰ *Or.*, 25.122.

³³¹ Aristotle, *Rh.*, 135a1-2.

³³² P. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern* (Chapel Hill, 1992), p. 43.

³³³ See *De or.*, 2.29.128-29; *Inst.*, 6.2.1-7. Aristotle similarly sees all rhetoric as performance before a judge (*krites*), and he includes even epideictic speeches in this generalisation, for that sort of speech, he says, 'is put together with reference to the spectator as if he were a judge' (2.18.1).

³³⁴ *De or.*, 2.17-72.

³³⁵ *Inst.*, 6.2.3-4.

but as capturing (*excipiendas*) them,³³⁶ and using weapons to do so.³³⁷ And Quintilian refers on numerous occasions to the 'battle in the forum' (the *pugnam forensem*) or to some equivalent idea.³³⁸ The idea of oratory as essentially a combat or contest, a fight (*pugna*), is a notion that Tacitus would later insist on in his *Dialogus*,³³⁹ even though he believed that the art was degenerating into mere spectacle, and that Saint Augustine would reiterate in his *Confessions*, where he identifies rhetoric as possessing *arma*.³⁴⁰ What is more, the word *ornamenta*, which the Latins used for the tropes and figures of speech of rhetoric, also had the sense of 'soldier's gear'.³⁴¹

It is worth noting that frequent analogies of orators as public performers, such as actors and gladiators, indicate that the audience of a speech, just as that of a play or gladiatorial show, expected an entertaining performance from the orator. For example, in *De oratore*, Cicero has Antonius tell us that entertainment and showmanship are vital in speech-making:

'In this regard I am always surprised ... by Philippus, who ... usually stands up to speak without actually knowing what word he will utter first. He claims that it is his habit to fight only after warming up his arms. But he does not notice that the very gladiators from whom he draws this analogy hurl their first spears so gently, that they not only attend to preserving their strength for what follows, but that the effect is also graceful in the extreme. And there is ... no doubt that the introduction of a speech seldom needs to be forceful and combative. But if, in the actual life-or-death struggle between gladiators, ... many things ... happen before the actual engagement which seem to have the potential not for inflicting wounds, but for putting on a display, how much

³³⁶ *De or.*, 2.8.32.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-7.2-293; cf. 1.8.32, 1.32.147, 1.34.157, 2.20.84, 3.54.206.

³³⁸ *Inst.*, 5.12.17, 22; 4.3.2; 10.1.33, 79.

³³⁹ Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus*, tr. W. Peterson, rev. M. Winterbottom (London, 1970), 31-33.

³⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, tr. W. Watts (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 9.2. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) is the most important Christian writer who is indebted to Cicero. Augustine claims that the first stage in what was his eventual conversion to Christianity originated with reading Cicero: 'In the usual order of study I came to a book of a certain Cicero, whose tongue almost all admire, but not his heart to the same extent. But there is a book of his containing an exhortation to philosophy and called *Hortensius*. That book changed my perception and changed my prayers, O Lord, to you' (3.4.7). In the period immediately following his conversion, Augustine wrote a series of Christianising philosophical dialogues in Ciceronian style (these include *Adversus Academicos*, *De Vita Beata*, *De Ordine*, and *De Magistro*). His great work, *De Doctrina Christiana* (A.D. 397-426), is a Christian hermeneutics and rhetoric, intended to help teachers and preachers to understand and expound the Bible. In Book 4, sec. 27-58, he explicitly draws on Cicero's discussion of the duties of the orator (to teach, to delight, and to move), and their relation to the three kinds of style (plain, middle, and grand), as described in Cicero's *Orator*.

³⁴¹ W. J. Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 277.

more should this be expected to happen in a speech, where the audience demands pleasure rather than violence!³⁴²

Elsewhere, the speaker is compared both to a gladiator and a boxer in the *palaestra*: ‘... we must shape our orator with respect to both words and thoughts, so that he will act like those who fight with weapons or in the *palaestra*: they believe that they should not only take account of how to strike and dodge, but also of how to move with grace ...’.³⁴³ And in a striking passage from the *Brutus*, he likens the ideal orator to the great Roscius, Rome’s most eminent actor:

‘I want my orator to have this experience: When people hear that he is to speak, all the places among the benches are taken, the tribunal is full, ... the crowd is varied, the juror intent. When he rises to speak, silence is signalled by the crowd, followed by repeated applause and much admiration. They laugh when he wishes; when he wishes they cry; so that if someone should catch sight of these proceedings from afar – even if he were unfamiliar with the case at issue – he would still recognize that an orator was pleasing his audience and that a Roscius was on the stage’.³⁴⁴

In *De oratore*, Cicero explains that ‘it is impossible for the hearer to feel grief, hatred, prejudice, apprehension, to be reduced to tears and pity, unless all the emotions which the orator wishes to arouse in the juror are seen to be deeply impressed on the orator himself’.³⁴⁵ Like the actor, therefore, the orator lives his part.³⁴⁶

But it is important to note that Cicero’s characterisation of the rhetoric he advocates is more complex than has been suggested so far. For example, while admiring the skill of the actor Roscius and wanting the ideal orator to take him as a model, Cicero also declares that actors can offer pleasure only to the ear, whereas the orator’s cause should hold his audience by also appealing to its intellect.³⁴⁷ The orator can employ the voice of a tragedian, the gestures of the

³⁴² *De or.*, 2.316–317; cf. 2.325.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.200.

³⁴⁴ See also, e.g., *ibid.*, 1.124–130, 259, 2.338, 3.214, 217 ff.; *De amicitia*, 97; and *Brutus*, 6. For more information see, F.W. Wright, *Cicero and the Theater* (Northampton, MA, 1931); K. Gefick, *Comedy in the Pro Caelio* (Leiden, 1973); V. Pöschl, ‘Zur Einbeziehung anwesender Personen und sichtbarer Objekte in Cicerons Reden’, in *Ciceroniana*, ed. A. Michel and R. Verdière (Leiden, 1975), pp. 206–26; A. Vasaly, ‘The Masks of Rhetoric: Cicero’s *Pro Roscio Amerino*’, *Rhetorica* 3 (1985), pp. 1–20.

³⁴⁵ *De or.*, 2.189.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.191, 193.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.59.251, 259.

greatest actors, but he requires also the acumen of the dialectician and the ethical knowledge of philosophers.³⁴⁸ What is more, elsewhere Cicero says that the orator should use the mimicry of the actor only in passing, because that technique is insufficiently *liberale*,³⁴⁹ thus revealing a fear of social debasement. Like Cicero, Quintilian acknowledges the similarities between the orator and the actor, especially where delivery is concerned, but stresses the need for the former to maintain his distance from the latter. He urges the orator to keep the use of theatrical gestures under control 'lest, when we would capture the elegance of the actor, we lose the authority of a good and dignified man [*viri boni et gravis auctoritatem*]'.³⁵⁰ Quintilian's reference to 'a good and dignified man' here echoes his general definition of the good orator as a *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, and serves to underscore not only the moral excellence of the orator, but his upper-class status as one of the *viri boni* (the 'best people' or *optimates*).

The fear of social degradation also surfaces whenever Cicero and Quintilian strive to distinguish the orator from the athlete, whom he so closely resembles. Both prefer the orator to be a warrior, vanquishing his enemies on the battlefield,³⁵¹ rather than an athlete (Isocrates' ideal³⁵²), who for them was unable to compete in the real world:

[L]ike bodies accustomed to the oil of the training school, which for all the imposing robustness which they display in their own contests, yet, if ordered to make a day's march with the troops, to carry burdens and mount guard at night, would faint beneath the task and long for their trainers to rub them down with oil and for the free perspiration of the naked limbs'.³⁵³

In a similar vein, they prefer the grand style to the more polished one associated with Isocrates.³⁵⁴ While speaking of digressions, Quintilian tells us that it is permissible to use in them a certain grace or elegance of style. But

³⁴⁸ *De or.*, 1.27.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.62.252. It is important to note that *liberale* here indicates the upper-class status of the free man (*liber*) as opposed to the status of the slave.

³⁵⁰ *Inst.*, 11.3.184.

³⁵¹ *De or.*, 1.24.157, 2.20.84; *Or.*, 13.42. See D.K. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Princeton, N.J. 1988), pp. 21-3.

³⁵² In Isocrates, the orator becomes the athlete struggling against his opponent in the gymnasium (*Panegyricus*, 45-46).

³⁵³ *Inst.*, 11.3.26-27.

³⁵⁴ See Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, p. 22.

only as long as the orator remembers that in the portions of the speech dealing with the main topic, he should display not the swollen body of an athlete but the sinews of a soldier. What is more, he should not wear a multi-coloured cloak (that is, use a flowery style) little suited to the dust of the forum.³⁵⁵ In the third book of *De oratore*, one of Cicero's spokesmen, who has been praising the ornate style, pauses to qualify his recommendation, warning that human beings tire of such pleasures quickly and will feel disgust if there is no variety in them. He goes on: 'And one is offended all the more quickly by the curls and rouge of the orator and the poet because ... in writing and speech painted faults are detected not only by the judgement of the ears, but even more by that of the mind'.³⁵⁶ Cicero's 'curls and rouge' are the sign, not of an affected woman, but of an effeminated man, just as they are throughout Roman literature.

When Cicero attacks the excessive use of tropes and figures of speech as 'effeminate', or warns that certain gestures and facial expressions may be criticised with the same term, it is clear that he is worried that the rhetorician may be emasculated by the art he practices, turned into an effeminate man: a charge that in the Roman world evoked the spectre of homosexuality. In fact, both Cicero and Quintilian are decidedly nervous about what they see as the effeminising aspects of rhetoric, in particular because Roman men normally defined themselves through action rather than talk. Cicero tries to solve this problem by displacing it onto the Greeks, condemning them for idleness and incessant loquacity and contrasting them with the Romans, who display the virtues of industry and decorum. Although the latter must produce speeches in order to practise their profession, Cicero claims that they, unlike the chattering Greeks, speak only enough and at just the right moment.³⁵⁷ Thus, he creates an aura of masculinity for his orators by contrasting them with the

³⁵⁵ *Inst.*, 10.1.33.

³⁵⁶ *De or.*, 25.100.

³⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 2.4.17-18. Cicero's interlocutors repeatedly single out as a Greek trait the 'gross habit' of dialectic, which the Romans prefer to avoid if not eradicate entirely (2.18). Crassus says, 'for what is sillier than to talk about talking, since talking in itself is ever a silly business, except when it is indispensable?' (3.112). However, Cicero's intimation that Crassus' anti-Greek views are pretence (2.4), seems to be evidence that Romans who were learned, especially in Greek philosophy, avoided showing it for fear they would be thought disdainful towards Romans. For more information see, M. A. Trouard, *Cicero's attitude towards the Greeks* (PhD Thesis, University of Chicago, 1942).

less than masculine Graeculi, or 'Greeklings'.³⁵⁸ His diminutive suggests the lack of seriousness of Greek culture when compared with the Roman. It indicates, in addition, the Greeks' inferiority in political power, and reminds one that many Romans owned Greek slaves. Moreover, it identifies the Greeks as boys (or boy-men), thereby evoking the vision of passive homosexual activity, which for the Romans (as for the Greeks themselves) demeaned adult males and rendered them effeminate. Quintilian is just as nervous about rhetoric as Cicero is. In particular because by the late first century A.D., when Quintilian was writing, rhetoric had relatively little to do with the actual political life of the state (the management of which had traditionally been an important means for Roman men to define their identities). Revealingly, Quintilian directs harsh criticism at the rhetorical practices of his contemporaries. Why? Because of their predilection for extravagant and unnatural language, for words that are *sordida, lasciva, effeminata*. Indeed, he goes on in the same passage to compare such a practice to using curling irons on one's hair and applying cosmetics on one's face.³⁵⁹ Quintilian wants to restore the virile eloquence of the age of Cicero, and like him produce an image of rhetoric as an art of combat and competition fit for soldiers and gladiators. In short, they defend their profession by creating a dramatic, masculine vision of the Roman rhetorician, in order to counter that of an effeminated, Greekified chatterer who, with his curly hair and rouge, plays the despised role of *cinaedus* (or sodomitical).³⁶⁰ What is more, both Cicero and

³⁵⁸ *De or.*, 1.22.102. The Romans had a word for the serious-minded Greek wrapped up in his logical puzzles, namely *baro*, block-head or simpleton.

³⁵⁹ *Inst.*, 2.5.10-12; cf. 8.Pr.19-20.

³⁶⁰ However, as John Boswell and others have argued, homosexuality was not only widespread but generally tolerated throughout the urban culture of the ancient Mediterranean world. The Romans, like the Greeks, accepted it as a normal practice. In fact, even the early Christian Church did not condemn it *per se* (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* [Chicago, 1980], pp. 61-206). There are, of course, texts from both ancient cultures that criticise homosexual practices; the Roman satirists, in particular, attacked them as effeminising and linked them to what they saw as a decline in civilisation. However, what the Greek and Roman critics were objecting to was the acceptance by the adult male of the passive role in the relationship (a role normally played by a child or a slave). Such behaviour was attacked not because it was homosexual *per se*, but because it threatened to turn the social and political world topsy-turvy by having superiors and inferiors change places. Moreover, Roman satirists disliked any sort of excessive indulgence in erotic or sensual activity, so that when they condemned people for being *cinaedi* or *effoeminati*, they were more concerned with promiscuity than with sexual preference. Thus, both ancient cultures accepted homosexuality

Quintilian refer to some notion of rhetoric as ruling or dominating. Quintilian defines the perfect orator as one ‘who can guide [regere] cities by his counsels, establish laws, and purge vices by his decisions as a judge’,³⁶¹ and he claims that when the orator’s emotional power dominates the court, this form of eloquence rules.³⁶² Because of its enormous power, Cicero (citing the words of Pacuvius), celebrates rhetoric as a queen, regina, and a ‘commander’, imperator.³⁶³ Elsewhere he asks rhetorically what is ‘so ... kingly, so worthy of a free man’³⁶⁴ as the power that helps suppliants, gives security, and maintains men in the city. Nevertheless, despite such occasional references to rhetoric as rule, both Cicero and Quintilian chiefly imagine the art, using metaphors of combat, as a contest among free citizens. Cicero was, after all, a staunch republican and defender of his city-state run by free men (*liberi*). Hence his praise for rhetoric as ‘worthy of a free man’ (*liberale*) in the last quotation. Since he was unable to abide kings, one can only conclude that his calling it ‘kingly’ (*regium*) must be a matter of mere metaphor. The rhetorician’s power over others is so great that he resembles a king in that regard, even though he otherwise remains a citizen like all the other free men in the state. Put differently, in Cicero and Quintilian, although there is a recognition that rhetoric means power and dominance over others,³⁶⁵ ultimately what counts is the competition among orators in the forum or Senate. Thus Cicero writes that eloquence ‘has especially always flourished and ruled [*dominata*] in every free people, and especially in peaceful, tranquil cities’,³⁶⁶

and criticised it only if it was excessive or involved an inversion of what was considered proper social hierarchy.

³⁶¹ *Inst.*, 1.Pr.10.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 6.2.4.

³⁶³ *De or.*, 2.44.187.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.8.32: ‘tam ... regium, tam liberale’.

³⁶⁵ In the Renaissance, as seen in the next chapter, just the reverse is true: even though a connection between rhetoric and republicanism may be occasionally acknowledged, the emphasis really falls on the power that rhetoric gives the orator to control his audience and that makes him a king, a Caesar (as Cicero appeared to be), even in a free state.

³⁶⁶ *De or.*, 1.8.30.

III

Cicero's most comprehensive rhetorical work, *De Oratore*, is a philosophical treatment of rhetoric, not a technical manual for orators. In it his (ambitious and unprecedented) aim is to heal the breach between philosophy and rhetoric, the 'reprehensible severance of tongue and brain', for which he blames Socrates.³⁶⁷ Socrates is said to have usurped the term 'philosopher', hitherto common to both sides. Crassus, Cicero's mouthpiece in the dialogue, observes that in the old days the same system of instruction seems to have imparted education both in right conduct and in good speech. Nor were professors in two separate groups, but the same masters gave instruction both in ethics and in rhetoric. For example, the great Phoenix in Homer, who tells us that he was assigned to the young Achilles by his father Peleus to accompany him to the wars, in order to make him 'a speaker of words and a doer of deeds'.³⁶⁸ Since Socrates' time the philosophers had despised oratory and the orators philosophy, and this, in turn, has afflicted the entire society with two sets of teachers, 'one to teach us to think, and another to teach us to speak'.³⁶⁹ For Cicero, philosophers often fail to teach 'thought' not only because they are removed from 'the common life', but also because they are unable to use language that can communicate effectively:

'If anyone likes, he may, so far as I am concerned, give the name of orator to that philosopher who supplies us with a rich fund of matter and expression, or if he prefers to apply the name of philosopher to this orator of ours whom I declare to possess wisdom combined with eloquence, I have nothing against it; provided that it is agreed that no praise is due to the speechlessness of the man who has knowledge without being able to express it, or to the ignorance of him who has a supply of words without matter. If one must choose, I should prefer tongue-tied wisdom to loquacious folly; *but if we are looking for the ideal, the palm must be given to the learned orator.* And if the philosophers admit him to their number, there is an end of the controversy; if on the other hand they maintain the distinction, they must be judged inferior for this reason, that all their knowledge is to be found in the perfect orator, whereas philosophic knowledge does not necessarily imply eloquence, and eloquence, however much they may despise it, surely adds a sort of crowning grace to their science'.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ *De or.*, 3.16.59-61.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.15.57; Homer, *Iliad*, 9.443. Cf. *Inst.*, 2.17.8.

³⁶⁹ *De or.*, 3.59-61.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.142-3; emphasis added.

Cicero, therefore, thinks that philosophers need to see rhetoric as inevitable. When they are indifferent to rhetoric, philosophers are robbed of a vehicle of communication and thus fail to transmit knowledge.³⁷¹ In fact, as Aristotle had said, everyone practices rhetoric and dialectic to some extent, since everyone finds it necessary to criticise or to defend an argument (*logos*).³⁷² But while Cicero wants philosophers to adopt the insights of rhetoric, he also criticises those orators who are unconcerned with truth, who saw their art as a merely practical *techne*, and determined its merit solely by its persuasive success, without regard for the truth. Put differently, though critical of ‘the philosophers’ on many points, Cicero opposes with equal force any teaching of rhetoric that is severed from the study of philosophy. ‘Whatever ability I have’, he says, ‘comes not from the workshops of the rhetoricians but from the spacious grounds of the Academy’.³⁷³

In an emphatic rejection of his own training, Cicero opens *De Oratore* with a retraction of the technical rhetoric that his youthful *De Inventione* would transmit to subsequent centuries.³⁷⁴ Cicero tells his brother that he will not ‘recall from the cradle of our boyish learning ... a long string of precepts’. Instead, he will ‘repeat the things I heard of as once handled in a discussion between men who were the most eloquent of our nation. ... You will forgive me if I prefer to Greek instruction the authoritative judgement of those to whom the highest honours in eloquence have been awarded by our own fellow countrymen’.³⁷⁵ He goes on to say that *De oratore* is a replacement for ‘the sketchy and unsophisticated work’ of his youth, and emphasises that it must be ‘worthy of my present age and of the experience I have acquired from pleading so many momentous cases’.³⁷⁶ Cicero now thinks that oratorical excellence cannot be achieved by relying on the standard rules and exercises, but only ‘by means that are of a quite different order’.³⁷⁷ After all, ‘the virtue in

³⁷¹ *De or.*, 3.143-44.

³⁷² Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.1.1354a3-6; cf. *Or.*, 64: ‘All speech is oratory, yet it is the speech of the orator alone which is marked by this special name’.

³⁷³ *De or.*, 12-13.

³⁷⁴ For a fine history of *De Inventione* see, G. A. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World: 300 B.C.-A.D. 300* (Princeton, N.J., 1972), pp. 103-26.

³⁷⁵ *De or.*, 1.2.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.5.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.19.

all these rules is, not that orators by following them have won a reputation for eloquence, but that certain persons have noted and collected the doings of men who were naturally eloquent: thus eloquence is not the offspring of the art, but the art of eloquence'.³⁷⁸

Towards the end of the prologue, Cicero says that the work will be a dialogue involving great Roman speakers.³⁷⁹ The main interlocutors in the dialogue are the two great examples from Cicero's youth, Lucius Licinius Crassus (a distant relative of the more famous later triumvir), and Marcus Antonius (the grandfather of Mark Antony). In fact, in the prologues to Books II and III, Cicero tells us that the work is a monument to Crassus' (who had taken an interest in young Cicero's education³⁸⁰) and Antonius' memory.³⁸¹ This is underlined by the dramatic date: the dialogue is set some ten days before Crassus' death in September 91 B.C. In the third prologue, Crassus' last appearance in the Senate and his death are emotively recalled;³⁸² as are the violent deaths of most of the other interlocutors (with Antonius dying in a 'purge' in 87).³⁸³ But the emphasis in the prologues on the real Crassus and Antonius, does not imply that the opinions expressed in *De oratore* are theirs. The resemblance with Cicero's own views elsewhere, in particular in *Brutus* and *Orator*, make this clear enough. Moreover, he implies in one of his letters that he spoke 'through the character' of his interlocutors – in line with the conventions of the dialogue genre.³⁸⁴ The majority of readers, therefore, will have interpreted the work as an expression of Cicero's own ideas.³⁸⁵

As a number of passages make clear, one of the chief subjects of *De oratore* is the ideal orator,³⁸⁶ putting the orator before the readers' eyes in

³⁷⁸ *De or.*, 1. 32.146; cf. *Inst.*, 2.17.6, 3.2.3.

³⁷⁹ *De or.*, 1.23. That is, Cicero's views will be developed through them, in the course of the three separate conversations (corresponding to the three books of the work) that make up the dialogue.

³⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 2.2.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.7-9; 3.14-16.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.1-16.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.10.

³⁸⁴ *Ad fam.*, 7.32.2.

³⁸⁵ On the interplay of reality and fiction in the dialogue see, *On the Ideal Orator (De Oratore)*, tr. and intr., J. May, and J. Wisse (N.Y., 2001), pp. 13-8; and J. Hall, 'Persuasive Design in Cicero's *De oratore*', *Phoenix* 48 (1994), pp. 210-25.

³⁸⁶ See, e.g., *De or.*, 1.64, 118; 3.83-85. For background see, E. Fantham, *The Roman world of Cicero's De oratore* (Oxford, 2004); and W. Görler, 'From Athens to Tusculum: Gleaning the Background of Cicero's *De oratore*', *Rhetorica* 6 (1988), pp. 215-35.

perfect form, and thus inspiring them to strive for oratorical excellence themselves. The experience Cicero had acquired 'from pleading so many momentous cases',³⁸⁷ had taught him that classical rhetorical rules (as he had recorded them in *De inventione*) are too inflexible to cover the difficulties of the cases facing an orator in real life.³⁸⁸ At best, they are useful as a point of reference,³⁸⁹ but are generally too rigid to be of any real help in composing an effective speech. For example, among the doctrines that are criticised, especially by Antonius in Book II, are the detailed rules for the parts of a speech, which were central to virtually all rhetorical handbooks. Why, Antonius asks, do they prescribe that in the prologue we should make the hearers 'well disposed to us, receptive, and attentive'? Surely, he replies, we should do so throughout our speech?³⁹⁰ These and other rules reveal how utterly impractical these rhetoricians are: 'they should ask themselves what it is that they want, whether they are going to take up arms for sport or for battle'.³⁹¹ Rhetorical theory, then, is not enough.³⁹² What good and successful oratory requires is wide-ranging knowledge, with particular emphasis upon civil law,³⁹³ history,³⁹⁴ and philosophy. In fact, '[t]here is no subject which

³⁸⁷ *De or.*, 1.5.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.6-20. See F. Solmsen, 'Aristotle and Cicero on the Orator's Playing upon the Feelings', *CP*, 33 (1938), pp. 390-404; *id.*, 'The Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric', *AJP*, 62 (1941), pp. 35-50.

³⁸⁹ *De or.*, 1.145.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.80-82.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.84. In *Brutus*, Cicero illustrates the paucity of wisdom that is inculcated by technical rhetoric by recounting his days in the senate. During his tenure as praetor, he met no other peer whose 'studies had embraced philosophy ... ; no one who had mastered ... the civil law, ... no one who knew thoroughly Roman history, from which as occasion demanded he could summon as from the dead most unimpeachable witness' (322).

³⁹² See esp. *De or.*, 3.81. This applies to Cicero's own rhetorical theory which is mainly presented by Antonius in Book II. For more on Cicero's rhetorical theory see, J. Wisse, 'De Oratore', in *Brill's Companion to Cicero*, pp. 375-98, at pp. 383-89.

³⁹³ *De or.*, 1.160-203. It is worth noting that pleaders in a Roman court of law were not 'lawyers' in the modern sense of the word. Most speakers who appeared in court had little or no expertise in law, a condition which Cicero laments with considerable regret (see *ibid.*, 1.166-97; *Or.*, 120). The rhetorical schools did not include the study of law, and many pleaders must have approached their task well equipped to argue, let us say, for or against the letter of the law, but ill informed about the actual details of Roman law and judicial procedure (*ibid.*, 1.169, 173, 184; *Or.*, 120). As Antonius points out, they could always apply to the professional jurist where their knowledge was deficient (*ibid.*, 1.249-50). Cicero was indignant at the ignorance of many of his fellow advocates; he delighted in the study of Roman law, which he had studied in great detail under the mentorship of the great jurists of his day, the Scaevolae. For more information see, J. Powell, and J. Paterson, *Cicero the advocate* (Oxford, 2004); F. Wieacker, *Cicero als Advokat* (Berlin, 1965). Also see, Cicero, *Political speeches*, tr. and intr. D. H. Berry (Oxford, 2006).

demands dignified and serious treatment that is not proper to the orator'.³⁹⁵ What is more, '[n]o one can hope to be an orator in the true sense of the word unless he has acquired a knowledge of all the sciences and all the great problems of life'.³⁹⁶ 'For eloquence', as Crassus explains,

'is one of the supreme virtues ... which, after compassing a knowledge of facts, gives verbal expression to the thoughts and purposes of the mind in such a manner as to have the power of driving the hearers forward in any direction in which it has applied its weight; and the stronger this faculty is, the more necessary it is for it to be combined with integrity and supreme wisdom, and if we bestow fluency of speech on persons devoid of those virtues, we shall not have made orators of them, but shall have put weapons into the hands of madmen'.³⁹⁷

Eloquence, therefore, not only requires substantial knowledge, but also cannot be separated from wisdom and virtue.³⁹⁸ The orator's aim is to instruct his hearers in the good, and he must be a virtuous man himself. Otherwise, 'we shall not have made orators of them, but shall have put weapons into the hands of madmen',³⁹⁹ undermining both the reputation of all the practitioners and the capacities of the art. For Cicero, therefore, the ideal orator possesses the highest virtue and authority, and eloquence to adorn these qualities and protect the state.⁴⁰⁰ Put differently, the good and wise should not leave political life to the clever and bad, but should acquire enough eloquence to make themselves effective. In fact, for him, the link between rhetoric and the *vita activa* was fundamental. *De Oratore* includes numerous passages praising rhetoric in glowing terms for giving those who master it the power 'to get hold on assemblies of men':

³⁹⁴ History was chiefly of use in providing examples to prove or emphasise a point: 'The recalling of past history and the production of instances from the past gives great pleasure and at the same time adds authority and credibility to a speech' (*Or.*, 120; cf. *De or.*, 1.18, 256).

³⁹⁵ *De or.*, 1.5, 2.34.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.20; cf. *ibid.*, 1.72; 2.68; 3.93; 3.124.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.55.

³⁹⁸ This point was also emphasised by the Stoics. But it is worth noting that Cicero's rhetorical theory appears to be more Stoic in sympathy than it actually is. He does not subscribe to the Stoic conception of the sage as the only truly good orator; nor does he support the Stoic stylistic norms of brevity, restraint, minimal decoration, and the exclusive appeal to the intellect of the audience. Instead, he maintains repeatedly that rhetoric has the triple objective of teaching, delighting, and persuading its audience, and that it ought to appeal to the emotions as well as to the intellect.

³⁹⁹ *De or.*, 3.55.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.5.

'In every free nation, and most of all in communities which have attained the enjoyment of peace and tranquillity, this one art has always flourished over the rest and ever reigned supreme. ... What function is so kingly, so worthy of the free, so generous, as to bring help to the suppliant, to raise up those who are cast down, to bestow security, to set free from peril, to maintain men in their civil rights? ... The wise control of the complete orator is that which chiefly upholds not only his own dignity, but the safety of countless individuals and of the entire State'.⁴⁰¹

The positive image of citizenship put forward by Cicero, therefore, centred on the figure of the *bonus civis* or *vir civilis*, i.e., the man who knows how to plead in the law courts for justice, and to deliberate in the councils and public assemblies of the *res publica*, in such a way as to promote policies at once advantageous and honourable. This is a figure who also emerges as the hero of Cicero's *De officiis*:

'While the life of those who cultivate *otium* is undoubtedly easier, safer, and less of a burden or trouble to others, the life of those who apply themselves to public affairs and the handling of great matters is at once more valuable to mankind and is better suited to winning us greatness and fame'.⁴⁰²

The connection between rhetoric and political life, reiterated so frequently by Cicero (and so influential in the Renaissance), is also found in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*:

'I want the person whom I am educating to be wise in the truly Roman sense, and thus to be capable of showing himself a true *vir civilis* in the work and experience of government, and not merely in disputations of a purely private kind'.⁴⁰³

The man who is truly civic, the true *vir civilis*, is the man who is suited to the administration of public as well as private affairs. The highest form of virtue is that of the citizen who, having entered the political process in pursuit of his particular good, now found himself joining with others in the pursuit of universal good.

⁴⁰¹ *De or.*, 1.8.30-4; cf. 1.46.202, 1.48. 211 and 214, 2.8.33, 2.9.35, 2.82.337-8, 3.4.13, 3.15.57, 3.16.1, 3.17.63, 3.19.72, 3.20.74, 3.32.131; *Brutus*, 2.6-7, 6.22, 12.45, 14.54, 76. 265, 94.324, 96.328-31; *Or.*, 41.141-2, 43.148.

⁴⁰² *De off.*, 1.21.70.

⁴⁰³ *Inst.*, 12.2.7; cf. *ibid.*, 11.1.35, 12.2.6, 12.7.1, 12.11.1.

Of the general learning the orator must acquire philosophy is only an element, but a very important one, nevertheless.⁴⁰⁴ As Cicero says in the *Orator*,

'Let us first of all lay it down ... [that] the perfect orator whom we are searching for cannot exist without philosophy ..., ... without philosophy no one can speak with breadth and fulness on great and varied themes Nor can one without philosophical training discern the genus and species of things, or define and analyse them, or judge between true and false, see logical contradictions and discern ambiguities. What shall I say of physics, which supplies much material to speeches, and of all the branches of moral philosophy, for the understanding and treatment of which a profound study of such matters is necessary?'⁴⁰⁵

The ideal orator, therefore, must be trained in philosophy if he is to achieve his (rhetorical) aims.⁴⁰⁶ The discipline may contribute to rhetoric in at least two ways: (i) directly, through philosophical inquiry into the nature of the art,⁴⁰⁷ and (ii) indirectly, through the application to rhetoric of doctrines drawn from philosophical fields.⁴⁰⁸ Cicero's emphasis on the importance of philosophy is, therefore, partly to do with pragmatic concerns. As seen in the previous section, he stresses time and again the importance of pathos (the emotional manipulation of the audience), and for this it is essential to master psychology (then a part of ethics). As Crassus asks, 'can speech be applied to kindle the emotions or to quench them again – precisely the thing most essential for an orator – without having investigated with the utmost care all the theories that the philosophers have developed about human character and behavior?'⁴⁰⁹ What is more, the orator must impress his audience, and 'send shivers down their spines'; the more he knows, the more successful he will be at that. Crassus likens him to an aedile, who has to provide 'elaborate provisions' for his games, because it is impossible to 'satisfy our Roman people with ordinary, homebred material'.⁴¹⁰ Another consideration is that an orator (and certainly

⁴⁰⁴ Originally, Cicero did not conceive philosophy as especially germane to rhetoric. In *De inventione*, for example, he distinguished philosophical from rhetorical subject matters (1.8) and argued that speakers needed to know little philosophy in order to master rhetoric (1.1.33, 77, 86).

⁴⁰⁵ *Or.*, 14-16.

⁴⁰⁶ *De or.*, 1.53-54, 1.60; cf. 1.84.

⁴⁰⁷ *Or.*, 7-19; *Part.* 139-40; *Fin.*, 4.5-6, 10; *Brut.*, 120.

⁴⁰⁸ *De or.* 1.56-57, 1.67-69, 3.122-124.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.60; cf. 1.17, 48, 53, 69, 87, 165; 3.72, 76.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.53, and 92; cf. 3.105-107, 120.

the ideal orator) needs to be able to address every possible topic, and to argue both sides of any issue. He must, therefore, have encompassing knowledge, for 'what can be more insane than the hollow sound of even the best and most distinguished words, if they are not based upon thought and knowledge?'⁴¹¹ But Cicero also demands that the orator master philosophy, because of less pragmatic reasons. He hopes, for example, that philosophy will act as a moral force, guaranteeing that the orator will not abuse his rhetorical skills.⁴¹² (This is not to say that Cicero supposes that philosophy can turn bad people into good ones. Like Aristotle, he believes that the responsibility for the abuse of rhetoric should be placed in the individual's morality and integrity.) What is more, a reunited philosophy and rhetoric forming the basis of education can both direct and generate liberal studies, which in turn will allow the creation of improved history, law and philosophy. These in turn will improve the *polis*, *civitas*, the common life.

It is important to note that by claiming that the good orator needs philosophy, Cicero involves himself in the contemporary dispute between philosophers and rhetoricians. In short, the problem arose out of the (mutually exclusive) claims of the rhetoricians and the philosophers to be the educators of the young. And the point on which they centred was whether the general questions of a philosophical (or quasi-philosophical) nature which the orator may often have to handle, belonged to the province of rhetoric or were, instead, the property of philosophy. It was often formulated in terms of the distinction between *theses* and *hypotheses*, i.e., between general and specific questions. Hypotheses included court cases, which were covered by rhetorical theory, and they were generally considered the 'property' of the rhetoricians. The theses, on the other hand, included typically philosophical and semi-philosophical questions, such as 'What is justice?', 'Should one marry?' and

⁴¹¹ *De or.* 1.51; cf. 1.17, 20, 48, 50-51, 54; 3.19.

⁴¹² Here he seems to resemble Plato. For the 'Platonic' interpretation of Cicero see, e.g., T. M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (N.Y., 1990), p. 37; C. J. Classen, 'Ciceros orator perfectus: ein *vir bonus dicendi peritus*?' in *Commemoratio. Studi di filologia in ricordo di Riccardo Ribuoli*, ed. S. Prete (Sassoferrato 1986), pp. 43-55; and W. L. Grant, 'Cicero on the Moral Character of the Orator', *CJ*, 38 (1943), pp. 472-78. It is worth emphasising that the discussion in *De oratore* begins with a reference to the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, and ends with an allusion to its end (1.28; 3.228-30). And philosophers like Charmadas often refer to Plato (1.47; 3.122, 129; cf. 1.57, 87).

others (belonging to the realm of ethics), or questions such as 'What is the size of the sun?' (belonging to the domain of physics). Rhetoricians usually began their treatises by dividing rhetorical matters into *theses* and *hypotheses*, thus arguing that their theories also covered the philosophical substance of the former. However, since they offered no actual treatment of the *theses*, they failed to deliver on those claims.⁴¹³ The philosophers took this opportunity for counterattack, and ridiculed the rhetoricians' claims; matters of ethics and political theory were, they said, clearly their property, not that of the rhetoricians.⁴¹⁴ Moreover, apart from the *theses*, some of them argued (possibly with Plato's *Phaedrus* in hand), that the importance of emotional appeal in oratory necessitated knowledge of psychology, a philosophical subject again not covered by the rhetoricians.⁴¹⁵

The quarrel is illustrated in *De oratore's* Book I, when Crassus and Antonius pass through Athens en route to or from their Roman provinces, and take part in debates with philosophers on this subject.⁴¹⁶ It is clear from these passages that there were fierce controversies, and that Charmadas, the energetic debater from the Academy (so vividly portrayed by Antonius in Book I), took a prominent part in them.⁴¹⁷ The quarrel is also central in Book III. It is here that Crassus remarks that the clash can be traced back to Socrates' hostility towards rhetoric, which caused philosophy and rhetoric to be split apart, and that he makes a plea for the restoration of the original unity of the two.⁴¹⁸ Cicero both agrees and disagrees with each opposing camp; so he combines what he regards as the best arguments on both sides in order to support his own position. A significant part of what is said in Book III about the orator's mastery of all subjects is formulated in terms of the *theses*,⁴¹⁹

⁴¹³ Some restricted themselves to claiming the ethical questions, others seem to have claimed even the physical ones. See *De or.*, 2.65-66.

⁴¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 1.41-44, 85-86.

⁴¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 1.87.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.45-47 and 57; 1.82-93.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.82-93.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.56-73. In *Orator* Cicero demands a knowledge of logic (though the subject, naturally dull, needed the application of a little polish see, 115), and of physics, the latter because the contemplation of the heavenly bodies will supposedly result in his speaking in a more lofty and magnificent manner (119; the idea was probably taken from Plato, *Phaedrus*, 270a). In *De Oratore*, however, he says that logic and physics can be left on one side (1.68); it is enough to have a thorough knowledge of moral philosophy.

⁴¹⁹ *De or.*, 3.107-125.

which for Cicero, should fall under the orator's competence. He thus agrees in principle with the rhetoricians' claim on the *theses*; yet simultaneously subscribes to the philosophers' criticism that the rhetoricians have nothing to offer to substantiate their claim. He believes, in addition, that knowledge of philosophy is necessary if the orator is to be able to speak about the *theses*, and if he is to be successful in arousing his audiences' emotions. To these arguments Cicero adds a few others, but it is these conspicuous borrowings from the two opposing camps that signal that his view is a synthesis, which should resolve the quarrel. The key ideal is that of the orator as the true *vir civilis*, the man who is suited to the administration of public as well as private affairs. With this synthesis he hopes to restore the original unity that existed before Socrates, to heal the 'rupture between the tongue and the brain'.⁴²⁰ For Cicero, therefore, 'talking well' is not merely a rhetorical ideal, it also means saying the right thing. 'If, as Crassus says, 'they [the philosophers] allow that he [the learned orator] is also a philosopher, the quarrel is over'.⁴²¹

IV

Cicero, as an advocate of rhetoric, is constantly forced to confront the charge that to play the orator is to lie. In response, he almost invariably adopts Aristotle's strategy, who, after admitting that rhetoric can be employed for both good and ill, insists that only the man who uses it for morally praiseworthy ends is a true rhetorician. In essence, he 'solves' the ethical problem his art produces simply by defining it out of existence, by proclaiming that the orator is what Quintilian, following Cato, calls him, 'a good man skilled in speaking',⁴²² and that his fraudulent double is not an orator at all. Ironically, while trying to respond to Plato's criticisms of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias*, Cicero (and later Quintilian) reaches a surprisingly similar position to the Plato of those two dialogues.⁴²³ One main difference does remain, however: for Plato, the philosopher was the only true

⁴²⁰ *De or.*, 3.61.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.143.

⁴²² *Inst.*, 1.2.1.1: *vir bonus dicendi peritus*; cf. *De part. orat.* 23.79: 'eloquence is wisdom put into language'.

⁴²³ *De invent.*, 1.2.3; *Inst.*, 1.Pr.9-20; 12.1.1-32. For more on Plato position see, chapter 2 above.

rhetorician; for Cicero, on the other hand, the ideal orator is the true *vir civilis*, the citizen who combines eloquence with universal knowledge. The old Aristotelian distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge is relevant here (a distinction which cannot be reduced to that between the true and the probable). Practical knowledge or *phronesis*, as Hans-Georg Gadamer has shown, is another kind of knowledge; primarily, it means that it is directed towards the concrete situation, and thus it must grasp the 'circumstances' in their infinite variety.⁴²⁴ This is exactly what Cicero emphasises about it. It is this idea, propounded by Aristotle against Plato's 'idea of the good', to which Cicero's references to wisdom and *sensus communis* go back to. His main concern was, of course, to show that this kind of knowledge is outside the rational concept of knowledge. But even though the practice of this virtue means that one distinguishes what should be done from what should not, it is not simply practical shrewdness and general cleverness. The distinction between what should and should not be done, for Cicero, includes the distinction between the proper and the improper (and thus presumes a moral attitude). What is more, his reasoning on the importance of emotional appeals in a large gathering does not depend solely on his belief in the intellectual superiority of the élite, but on a more fundamental assumption about human nature. Cicero attributes a pivotal role to the passions in oratory because he is very much aware that political deliberation must conclude in action, and that human passions cannot be governed by the universal prescriptions of reason.⁴²⁵ As the figure of Scaevola concedes in *De oratore*, in cases where we cannot look for certainty (as in most of the arguments characteristic of civic life), the need for eloquence becomes paramount. You cannot do without it, he says,

'if you want the case you are pleading in the courts to seem the better and more plausible one, or if you want the speeches you deliver in the assemblies to have the greatest persuasive force, or if you merely want your utterances to appear truthful to the uninstructed and skilful to the wise'.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1997), pp. 27-8.

⁴²⁵ 'In this sphere one needs, rather, convincing examples as only history can offer them. That is why Bacon describes *historia*, which gives these examples, almost as another way of philosophising (*alia ratio philosophandi*)' (ibid., p. 33)

⁴²⁶ *De or.*, 1.10.44

If, in short, your arguments fall in any way within the purview of *scientia civilis*, you will always find it necessary to supplement your reasoning with the force of eloquence.

*Rhetoric is not what it seems:
The discourse of rhetoric in the Renaissance*

I

Renaissance humanism is defined in large part in terms of its idealisation of classical culture and its attempts to imitate (or 'revive') the ancient Romans and Greeks in moral, social, and political as well as literary terms. It is also defined by the cluster of disciplines that trained a scholar to interpret and produce literary texts in Latin. The *studia humanitatis*, or 'the humanities', referred to the first two parts of the Medieval *trivium*, grammar and rhetoric, together with moral philosophy, poetry, and history. Having displaced logic or dialectic from the pre-eminent position that subject enjoyed in late Medieval culture, rhetoric was hailed as the queen of the sciences.⁴²⁷ In fact, it would be an understatement to say that rhetoric was important to the Renaissance. From the early Italian humanists to the mid-seventeenth century, rhetoric was considered an essential part of education, vital for the well-rounded individual, and it later came to hold a place of honour at the university and as the culminating stage of training at schools and colleges. James J. Murphy has calculated that more than a thousand treatises, handbooks, commentaries, and the like (texts written in virtually all the languages of Western Europe), were produced on the subject in the period.⁴²⁸ Despite attacks from critics, debates over correct styles, and the more radical 'reformation' recommended

⁴²⁷ For the development of humanist scholarship see J.J. Murphy, *Latin rhetoric and education in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Aldershot, 2005); Luis Gallardo, *El humanismo renacentista* (Madrid, 2000); Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* (Ithaca, 1996); P. Mack (ed.), *Renaissance Rhetoric* (N.Y., 1994); R. Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1988); Marc Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980); Also see, Craig W. Kallendorf (ed.), *Humanist educational treatises* (Cambridge, Mass, 2002).

⁴²⁸ J. J. Murphy, 'One Thousand Neglected Authors: The Scope and Importance of Renaissance Rhetoric', in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 20-36. See also id., *Renaissance Rhetoric: A Short-Title Catalogue of Works on Rhetorical theory from the Beginning of Printing to A.D. 1700* (N.Y., 1981); id., 'Rhetoric in the Earliest Years of Printing, 1465-1500', *QJS*, 70 (1984), pp. 1-11; and J. J. Murphy, and Martin Davies, 'Rhetorical Incunabula: A Short-Title Catalogue of Texts Printed to the Year 1500', *Rhetorica*, 15 (1997), pp. 355-470.

for it by the Ramists, it retained its central place in the culture throughout the Renaissance. Indeed, one thing that characterises rhetoric in the Renaissance (as in virtually all periods of Western history), is its embattled status, its exposure to criticism and attack. The discourse of rhetoric in the period is, in fact, anything but monolithic in its attitudes and values, rather it is very complex, replete with interpretative puzzles. So even though Renaissance rhetoric constitutes a recognisable, definable discourse, it is marked by profound ambiguities, contradictions, and divisions. My aim in this chapter is not to supply a finished narrative, but to show why the interpretative puzzles are intractable yet so interesting. Indeed, I hope to suggest that if we are to adequately give an account of what happened to rhetoric during this period, we must first take a position on at least one key set of issues which underlies not only the cultural history of the Renaissance, but the history of culture as such: what does it mean to belong to a linguistic community? How do our beliefs depend on the languages in which they are expressed? And how do they depend on the social and intellectual communities which speak those languages? To be more precise: this chapter deals with the ways in which Renaissance thinkers represented rhetoric to themselves, with how they wrote about it and how they perceived its powers and its limits, its value to society and to the individual, its relation to other fields and occupations. In the Renaissance, rhetoric is a distinctive discourse, constituted in the vast number of discussions of the subject which appear not only in individual treatises and handbooks, but also in texts from other domains.⁴²⁹ Throughout the discourse, rhetoric is most frequently portrayed as the art of persuasion, i.e., language (accompanied by supporting looks and gestures) as it is used to move people. Occasionally writers approach the art of rhetoric in a more reflective and Aristotelian manner, analysing the ways in which persuasion occurs. But more often than not, their treatises and handbooks are practical and goal-oriented, describing the tools and techniques by means of which we can get others to

⁴²⁹ The implication here is that classical humanism was a means of grasping and conceptualising politics, rather than a monolithic and detailed plan or strategy; it was not 'a programme', but 'a mode of discourse' or 'a political vocabulary'. See J. G. A. Pocock, 'The concept of a language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice', in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Pagden (Cambridge, 1987); and id., *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, 1985), ch. 1.

obey our will. In other words, for them rhetoric is concerned not only with communication as it serves to articulate one's thoughts and transmit them to others, but also with shaping those of others, determining their ideas and values and directing their behaviour.⁴³⁰ As the Renaissance conceives it, therefore, rhetoric is no language game. It is a serious business that aims to affect people's beliefs and produce real action in the world.

This chapter differs from traditional accounts in that it puts to one side the issue of diachronic development within the Renaissance. I do not attempt to build an account of the stages through which the discourse of rhetoric develops between the second half of the fourteenth century (usually taken to be the beginning of the Renaissance) and the middle of the seventeenth (its equally conventional end).⁴³¹ I hope instead to suggest that the Renaissance discourse of rhetoric displays important continuities throughout the period, and that the similarities are sufficiently great to warrant their being treated as constituent elements in a single (albeit less than monolithic), reconstructed discourse. Put differently, the discourse of rhetoric in the Renaissance manifests something like a period style. Writers from the beginning to the end of the era conceive their subject in roughly similar terms: rhetoric is not only defined as an art of persuasion directed at effecting action in the world, but also seen as a peculiarly political art. The argument that rhetoric is political in the Renaissance has, of course, been made by a number of scholars. But many, such as Paul O. Kristeller, Hans Baron, and Quentin Skinner, tend to limit the

⁴³⁰ As the German rhetorician Bartholomew Keckermann, following Aristotle, puts it: 'The word persuasion is to be interpreted broadly to mean a moving of the heart and emotions, so that the auditor is impelled not only to believe, but also to act [non tantum ut credat, sed etiam ut agat aliquid]' (*Systema Rhetorices* [Hanover, 1608], 9).

⁴³¹ Such a history would, for example, begin by tracing the revival of Ciceronian rhetoric by Italian humanists and proto-humanists (such as Petrarch in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries). It may outline the enriching of the discourse through the rediscovery of Greek texts, and then examine the debate over Ciceronian style which begins at the end of the fifteenth century and continues for another hundred years or so. It would analyse the Ramist reform in the mid-sixteenth century which threatens to reduce rhetoric to style and delivery. It might say something about rhetoric in the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation and, finally, it would deal with the impact on rhetoric of Cartesian rationalism and the New Science. For a diachronic history of at least one segment of Renaissance rhetoric see, Wilbur S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (Princeton, 1956). Most accounts treat the subject globally, paying less attention to developments within the period than to the continuities that allow Renaissance rhetoric to be differentiated from its Medieval predecessor. For examples see, John Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. A. Rabil, J., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), III, pp. 171-235; and B. Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry* (London, 1970).

identification between rhetoric and politics to the earliest phases of the Italian Renaissance;⁴³² others, such as Marc Fumaroli, stress the affiliation between rhetorical styles and political positions.⁴³³ However, I suggest that rhetoric is political in the Renaissance not simply because of the uses to which it is put or the styles it engenders, but because, in the imagination of the period, the relationship between rhetorician and audience is conceived fairly consistently in political terms as one between ruler and subject (and that that conception of rhetoric remains central to the discourse throughout the entire period).

It is important to note that this chapter, even though it does not pretend to offer a comprehensive history of Renaissance rhetoric, is clearly concerned with the historical distinctiveness of its subject. I argue not merely that the conception of rhetoric shared by thinkers from the Renaissance differs from the one held by their Medieval predecessors, but also that it differs (albeit in quite subtle and nuanced ways) from the conceptions of classical writers to whom it nevertheless owes so much. The Renaissance is, of course, often spoken of as a revival of classical antiquity, but in the course of this chapter I hope to show that the discourse of rhetoric in the Renaissance is historically distinct from everything that precedes it.⁴³⁴ Renaissance rhetoricians, even if merely commenting on, editing, or teaching ancient texts, necessarily saw those texts not with the eyes of Greeks and Romans, but with those of Renaissance Europeans. There are, of course, significant repetitions of classical materials in their works. However, those materials are 'adapted' (whether consciously or unconsciously) to suit the needs and biases, the assumptions and ideological emphases of their own time. It follows that I disagree with those scholars, to whom Renaissance rhetoric seems particularly contemporary because of its attempt to grapple with the loss of absolutes. For Nancy Struever and Victoria Kahn, Joel Altman and Thomas O. Sloane, for

⁴³² See P. O. Kristeller, 'The Humanist Movement', in *Renaissance Thought* (N.Y., 1961), 323; id., 'Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture', in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, pp. 1-19; H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, 1966); Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978), I, pp. 3-40.

⁴³³ See Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*; id., 'Rhetoric, Politics, and Society', in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, pp. 253-73.

⁴³⁴ For examples of commentators who see Renaissance rhetoric as a revival of classical rhetoric, see Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric*, p. 117; J. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* (Durham, N.C., 1979), p. 5; and W. Kennedy, *Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven, 1978), pp. 1-14.

example, the rhetoric of the period is remarkable for its connections to scepticism, its sense of the contingency and uncertainty of the world of experience, its recognition of the gap between language and reality, and its resulting commitment to dialogue and debate rather than dogmatic assertion.⁴³⁵ Hence, sceptical works such as Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, open-ended dialogues such as More's *Utopia* and Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, and plays such as Shakespeare's (which debate issues that are unresolved), are celebrated as the ultimate expression of the mentality created by Renaissance rhetoric. What is more, there is an implicit tendency in the work of some scholars to align that rhetoric with a democratic or republican form of politics, a tendency made explicit by Hans Baron, Quentin Skinner, and Eugenio Garin, who link the revival of rhetoric in the Renaissance to the democratic debates that were the lifeblood of the Italian communes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁴³⁶ While I acknowledge that the actual training students received in rhetoric during the Renaissance may have encouraged scepticism and a dialogic view of life, I suggest, instead, that the treatises and handbooks themselves see the student engaged in what is essentially a one-sided argument in which he does the speaking and his audience (overwhelmed by his eloquence), agrees to do what he wants them to do. Put differently, they conceive rhetoric as a political instrument, but not one whose main purpose is to enable free political debate and discussion. Finally, this imperial and regal conception of rhetoric as rule should not really be surprising. After all, Renaissance culture was, for the most part, hierarchical and monarchical or oligarchical, and the period is generally marked by the gradual centralisation of states under single rulers who increasingly controlled them in absolutist fashion.

⁴³⁵ N. Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J., 1970); V. Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985); J. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind* (Berkeley, 1978); and T. O. Sloane, *Donne, Milton, and the End of Humanist Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1985). See also A. Kinney, *Continental Humanist Poetics* (Amherst, 1989); T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford, 1979); and J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton, 1968).

⁴³⁶ See Baron, *Crisis*; Skinner, *Foundations*; E. Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 2^d edn. (Bari, 1961); and id., *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*, tr. P. Munz (Oxford, 1965).

II

Renaissance culture memorably acknowledged itself through simplified metaphorical or ideological formulations – such as the well-known concept of the ‘rebirth’ of scholarship from the ‘rust’ or ‘shadows’ of the past, or of the contrast between ‘learned’ and ‘unlearned’. Such self-description should leave us sceptical, however. Just as the ‘novatores’ of the seventeenth century owe more to Renaissance humanism than their claims to bold originality suggest, so too the humanists proclaimed their scorn for and independence from the scholastics while drawing on many of their methods and beliefs.⁴³⁷ It is important to remember that, the ‘dark’ or ‘middle’ ages is a pejorative coinage of Italian humanists, beginning with Petrarch, to designate (and to denigrate) the time between classical antiquity and its modern recovery.⁴³⁸ In fact, recent scholarship has shown that twelfth-century authors had a much greater appreciation of ancient philosophy than was previously thought. Under the influence of Plato’s *Timaeus* (the only substantial Platonic text known before the fifteenth century) and associated galenic and hermetic texts, the natural dimensions of the human condition were given new prominence.⁴³⁹ Man was seen as a kind of universe, a ‘microcosm’, a concept that opened up a world of anthropological analogies (particularly when combined with the psychology deriving from Aristotle’s *De Anima*).⁴⁴⁰ The ancient debate over the nature (and human condition) of ideas became the centre of dispute and the

⁴³⁷ It is no coincidence that Étienne Gilson, concluding his discussion of Medieval philosophy with an exposition of Leonardo Bruni’s *De studiis et litteris* (with its recommended series of good authors), observes, ‘We have most assuredly entered a new world’. To which he immediately adds, ‘through a continuous evolution rather than a revolution’ (*La philosophie au moyen âge* [Paris, 1952], pp. 737 ff.).

⁴³⁸ The centuries between Augustine and Petrarch, painted dark by the humanists, were blackened further by Protestant scholars. As D.R. Kelley has shown, Lutheran historians of philosophy, in particular, took over this concept in their own efforts to define the ‘modern’ period of their canon. This tripartite division – the philosophy of ancients (*veteres*), authors of the middle ages (*medium aevum*), and moderns (*moderni, recentiores, or novatores*) beginning with the ‘restoration of the letters’ – was inherited by Brucker from his predecessors, refined to admit subdivisions and non-western authors, and passed on to later historians of ideas (*The Descent of Ideas* [Ashgate, 2002], p. 53).

⁴³⁹ See J. Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome, 2003); and T. Gregory, ‘The platonic inheritance’, in *History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy*, ed. P. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 54–80.

⁴⁴⁰ See S. Spence, *Texts and the self in the twelfth century* (Cambridge, 1996); and F.E. Cranz, ‘Perspectives de la Renaissance sur le “De Anima”,’ in *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1976), pp. 359–76.

foundation of science,⁴⁴¹ though not accompanied by the interest in Pre-Socratic thought shown by Plato and Aristotle. But the past of philosophy was not forgotten in the middle ages.⁴⁴² With the recovery of Greek science in the twelfth century Medieval intellectuals extended their knowledge of *auctores* and so access to the philosophical past. Not only authority but also reason and method were employed in the examination of this ancient legacy. The chief instrument of the new science was Aristotelian dialectic, which divided the generations and cast Christian learning into centuries of discord. 'For', as Adelard of Bath told his nephew, 'I have acquired one type of learning, with reason as my guide, from my teachers, while you, fettered by the appearance of authority, follow another, as a halter...'.⁴⁴³ Aristotelian dialectic (the key to this new rationalism), was taught by the Medieval *scholasticus* (the immediate source of 'scholasticism') and transmitted from the 'trivial' arts to the high sciences.⁴⁴⁴ Along with this rationalism came a new sympathy with ancient authors who were allowed, by readers like Peter Abelard, 'to speak truer than they knew' – and in a way to 'prefigure' later ideas.⁴⁴⁵ True, on the whole, as Étienne Gilson concluded, 'The masters of the thirteenth century were making

⁴⁴¹ In the form of the 'problem of universals' taken up by Abelard and others; see, e.g., D.E. Luscombe, 'Peter Abelard', in *History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy*, pp. 279-307.

⁴⁴² To say that Medieval scholars lacked 'a sense of the past', as Janet Coleman says, is 'akin to arguing that cultures that admire artists who paint iconically in two-dimensions have no capacities to see and live in a three dimensional world' (*Ancient and Medieval Memories* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 275, see also pp. 274-304, 558-66. Also see, G. Althoff, *et. al.* (eds.), *Medieval Concepts of the Past* (Cambridge, 2002); M. Carruthers *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990); and F. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966), pp. 50-81.

⁴⁴³ Adelard of Bath, *Quaestiones naturales*; cited in P. Dronke (ed.), 'Introduction', in *History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy*, p. 11.

⁴⁴⁴ As a historical construct scholasticism took shape first as an invidious humanist stereotype and later as a Protestant caricature which represented it as producing a divorce between language and thought. Indeed, the Lutherans followed humanists in promoting the black legend of scholastic philosophy, and interpreting it as a kind of second 'barbarism'. According to Cario's sixteenth-century chronicle (which became a quasi-official Lutheran history in Melancthon's editorial hands), 'The Scholastics invented a new doctrine designed to attract and entice men into error and superstition' (Kelley, *Descent of Ideas*, p. 93). In general see, J. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Princeton, N.J., 1984); and Erika Rummel, *The humanist-scholastic debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass, 1995).

⁴⁴⁵ W. Wetherbee, 'Philosophy, cosmology, and the twelfth-century Renaissance', in *History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy*, pp. 21-53, at p. 38. Abelard was a leading champion of this new science. Like Adelard of Bath, he contrasted reason with authority and mere 'opinion'; and his *Sic et Non* revived many old heresies through questions raised presumably in order to refute them. For more information see, D. E. Luscombe, 'Peter Abelard', *ibid.*, pp. 279-307; and Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, pp. 233-73.

history, not writing it'.⁴⁴⁶ Yet their writings constituted as much a critical history of commentary as an achievement of 'science'. Moreover, long before humanism, Franciscan critics denounced the source of this science, Aristotle himself, as the 'worst philosopher'.⁴⁴⁷

If we turn to rhetoric, it has been customary for scholars to interrogate the question of how rhetoric, in the Middle Ages, all but dies as a vital art and how we must wait for the Renaissance for the resumption of substantial work in rhetorical theory. Many, perhaps most, scholars subscribe in some degree to the complaint that the works handed down to us are nothing more than a 'misapplication and perversion ... of the terms traditional in ancient rhetoric'.⁴⁴⁸ Whether reduced to a catalogue of figures (*the colores rhetoric*) or to the mechanical formulas of the *ars dictaminis*, Medieval rhetoric was a poor and diminished thing by comparison with its classical forebear. Even the art of preaching, though arguably a form of primary rhetoric in its concern with oral persuasion in the service of moral virtue, turns out to be just as guilty of the sterile formalism and the divorce of theory from practice, part from whole, and form from function that vitiating its secondary sister arts. During the long Medieval interregnum the full and authentic rhetoric lay dormant, preserved in a few precious copies of the *De oratore* and the full text of Quintilian buried in monastic libraries. Or it lived at best a shadow existence in technical treatises such as the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which generations of scribes and teachers copied and even glossed without fully understanding their contents or applying them to the practical affairs of Medieval life.⁴⁴⁹ In recent times, Medieval historians have begun to challenge this traditional view from a variety of angles. The Middle Ages were not so monolithic as non-medievalists like to assume, and the fortunes of 'primary rhetoric' were not identical for every time and place. In northern Italy, for

⁴⁴⁶ É. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London, 1955), pp. 266-72.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

⁴⁴⁸ C. S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic to 1400* (N.Y., 1928), p. 152, pp. 191-3. He laments that there was 'no medieval rhetorician who really advanced the study' (*ibid.*, p. 62). See also John Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in *Renaissance Humanism III*, pp. 171-235; B. Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988); J. J. Murphy, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* (Berkeley, Ca., 1971); and G.A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition*, 2nd rev. edn. (Chapel Hill, 1999), pp. 183ff.

⁴⁴⁹ A recent version of this argument appeared in Vickers, *Defense*, pp. 214-53.

instance, at least by the late eleventh century, rhetoric was already well on its way towards recovering many important elements of its classical identity, and elsewhere there were periods of revival as well. Margareta Fredborg and John Ward have shown that Medieval scholars understood the classical treatises far better than has been recognised, even if it is not always clear how students would have applied what they learned from those teachers.⁴⁵⁰ Others, notably Marjorie Woods, attacked the established view at its source, arguing that the concept of primary rhetoric is too restrictive, even for the period that the term was coined to describe. Chronologically, socially, and pedagogically, written literary rhetoric is every bit as primary as oral persuasive rhetoric.⁴⁵¹ What is more, if we are to have a proper appreciation of rhetoric at this time, we must move its consideration beyond the well-worked ground of tracing Cicero's influence on Medieval arts of composition and performance. Once we do so, we find that rhetoric proceeds along other, less obvious, lines of development in this period.

As Richard McKeon poignantly argued over sixty years ago, to confine rhetoric to a single subject matter denies it its vital history, in the Middle Ages or at any time: 'The many innovations which are recorded during that period in the arts with which [rhetoric] is related suggest that their histories might profitably be considered without unique attachment to the field in which their advances are celebrated'.⁴⁵² We must take issue, therefore, with those who claim that, in the Middle Ages, 'there was a detachment of rhetoric from its social and political context'.⁴⁵³ If Medieval rhetoric was distinct from that of the Renaissance, it is merely because the requirements of the period were different. Each period in history 'gets the rhetoric it deserves' or, more precisely, the rhetoric it needs. This should come as no surprise. This thesis,

⁴⁵⁰ See, e.g., K. Fredborg (ed.), *Thierry of Chartres. The Latin Rhetorical Commentaries* (Toronto, 1988); and J. O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica*', in *Medieval Eloquence*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley, Ca., 1978), pp. 25-67.

⁴⁵¹ See esp. M. Woods, 'The Teaching of Writing in Medieval Europe', in *A Short History of Writing Instruction*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Davis, CA, 1990), pp. 77-94.

⁴⁵² R. McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', in *Rhetoric*, ed. M. Backman (Woodbridge, CT, 1987), pp. 121- 66 at p. 166.

⁴⁵³ Vickers, *Defense*, p. 225. See also Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, p. 183: 'As the cities of the empire were destroyed or depopulated in the face of barbarian attack from the early fifth century, the study of rhetoric almost succumbed to the collapse of its native environment'.

after all, operates on the assumption that the discourse of rhetoric is anything but 'pure', detached from other human concerns, merely a set of rules for public oratory or an array of techniques for managing interpersonal communication. It shares the assumption of such scholars as Marc Fumaroli, Nancy Struever, and Patricia Parker that rhetoric is deeply implicated in the social and political order that produces it.⁴⁵⁴ But the discourse of rhetoric is 'impure' in another sense as well: it is contaminated, interpenetrated, by other discourses. Indeed, most of its key terms (like many key terms in any discourse) are metaphors, and as such they immediately invoke other domains of human experience.

Cicero did fix the influence and oriented the interpretation of ancient thought (Greek as well as Latin) during the Middle Ages.⁴⁵⁵ However, as McKeon has shown, Medieval rhetorical principles also developed in two other traditions. There was, first, the Augustinian tradition, a blend of Platonism with Cicero (the most important from both the theological and philosophical viewpoints until the late Middle Ages);⁴⁵⁶ and, second, one based on a fusion of Aristotle's dialectic/logic (of terms and propositions) and Cicero (on definitions and principles). The point we must bear in mind here is that Medieval thinkers in all the arts and sciences turned to rhetoric for methods,

⁴⁵⁴ See Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*; Struever, *The Language of History*; and P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* (London, 1987).

⁴⁵⁵ In general see, C. Nederman, 'The union of wisdom and eloquence before the Renaissance: the Ciceronian orator in medieval thought', *JMH* 18 (1992), pp. 75-95. Cicero's *De inventione* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, were the primary sources of general rhetorical theory throughout the Latin Middle Ages. The two texts were often found combined in manuscripts, of which Ward estimates that 'between 1,000 and 2,000 copies' survive, 'making them the major works of Latin antiquity for the Middle Ages', and 'arguably the most widely used classical Latin writings of all time' ('From Antiquity to the Renaissance', pp. 25-67, at p. 54 n.74; and id., 'Renaissance Commentators on Ciceronian Rhetoric', in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, pp. 126-73, at p. 127). Some Medieval scholars also had access to Cicero's *Topica* and fragmentary versions of his *De oratore* and *Orator* were also known (J.J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* [Berkeley, Ca., 1974], pp. 122-23). Some scholars even had access to Cicero's *Partitiones oratoriae*; for Thierry of Chartres and the *Partitiones oratoriae* see *ibid.*, p. 117. Quintilian's *Institutiones oratoriae*, though known only in a mutilated text (with Books 5 to 8, 9, 10, and 12 missing completely or in part) was generally available after the revival of classical learning in the eleventh century.

⁴⁵⁶ A Platonism formulated in terms refurbished and simplified from Cicero's rhetorical distinctions. Augustine differentiates two eloquences, much as Plato proves rhetoric a pseudo-art in the *Gorgias* and yet illustrates the method of the true rhetoric based on dialectic in the *Phaedrus*. For more information see, J. Mazzo, 'St. Augustine Rhetoric of Silence', *JHI*, 23:2 (1962), pp. 175-96; and J. Coleman, 'The Christian Platonism of St. Augustine', in *Platonism and the English imagination*, ed. A. Baldwin and S. Hutton (Cambridge, 1994).

distinctions, and conceptions (importantly, not simply the ancient subject matters or vocabularies) to vivify their work.⁴⁵⁷ The influence of McKeon's piece is still great despite its age, but his work has often been misappropriated. For instance, Vickers makes extensive use of the essay in his chapter on Medieval rhetoric in his *In Defense of Rhetoric*.⁴⁵⁸ Yet, he repeatedly distorts and misrepresents McKeon's analysis in order to advance his own views.⁴⁵⁹ So, for example, Vickers writes that McKeon 'noted the increasingly "perfunctory" treatment of rhetoric in the Middle Ages, despite the increased knowledge available'; and he quotes the following passage of the essay to illustrate his assertion:

'The translation of the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, and of the *De elocutione* of Demetrius in the thirteenth century would seem to have had ... no effect comparable to that of other translations of the century in stimulating interest in its subject; and the return of rhetoric to prominence during the Renaissance is explained only on the supposition that men's minds were turned once more, after a long interval, to literature and life'.⁴⁶⁰

Now, what Vickers somewhat shockingly fails to mention (and willingly omits from the quotation) is that in this excerpt McKeon is not referring to his own position. In fact, he is making a frontal attack on the orthodox history of Medieval rhetoric in the West. The full passage cited above by Vickers actually reads as follows:

'The translation of the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, and of the *De elocutione* of Demetrius in the thirteenth century would seem to have had, *by this account*, no effect comparable to that of other translations of the century in stimulating interest

⁴⁵⁷ McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', p. 166.

⁴⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 260-1.

⁴⁵⁹ Vickers adopts McKeon's four-part periodisation of the fortunes of rhetoric until the Renaissance, remarking that 'McKeon's analysis has been challenged on points of detail, but still seems the most perceptive general account of the reason for rhetoric's vicissitudes in the Middle Ages' (*Defence*, p. 221).

⁴⁵⁹ Jerrold Seigel is also guilty of taking out of context one of McKeon's assertions. In the chapter on Medieval rhetoric in his *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton, 1968), Seigel asserts that, 'So pervasive was this diffusion of rhetoric in medieval intellectual life that [as McKeon] insists "if rhetoric is defined in terms of a single subject matter – such as style, or literature, or discourse – it has no history during the Middle Ages". As rhetoric gave up many of its earlier functions to the other disciplines, its own purpose was reduced to the mere providing of ornament' (p. 179). Cf. McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', p. 166 – it is clear that McKeon is, in fact, arguing against authors like Seigel, who insist on defining rhetoric in terms of a single subject.

⁴⁶⁰ Cited in Vickers, *Defense*, p. 255.

in its subject; and the return of rhetoric to prominence during the Renaissance is explained only on the supposition that men's minds were turned once more, after a long interval, to literature and life'.⁴⁶¹

And in the phrase immediately before this one, he wrote that if we are to believe the history of rhetoric as it has been written since the Renaissance:

'The sequence of development is fortuitous and even implausible, for the treatment of rhetoric becomes more perfunctory as erudition in the works of rhetoricians increases, and rhetoric disappears abruptly when knowledge of it is at a maximum, particularly from the works of the authors who acknowledge the influence of Cicero and Quintilian'.⁴⁶²

An adequate history of rhetoric, therefore, must not regard the art as 'a simple verbal discipline, as the art of speaking well'. Neither must it regard rhetoric as 'an art determined to a fixed subject matter (so conceived, rhetoric is usually found to have little or no history, despite much talk about rhetoric and even more use of it, during the Middle Ages)⁴⁶³ nor, on the other hand, would it treat an art determined arbitrarily and variously by its place in classifications of the sciences...'.⁴⁶⁴ Instead, such a history should take into account 'the altering definitions, the differentiation of various conceptions of rhetoric itself, and the spread of the devices of rhetoric to subject matters far from those ordinarily ascribed to it'.⁴⁶⁵ Once we heed such advice, we see that despite the ascendancy of logic in Medieval times, from the fourth through the fourteenth century both the theory and practice of rhetoric greatly contributed, not only to the methods of speaking and writing well (such as composition letters and petitions, sermons and prayers, legal documents and briefs, poetry and prose), but also to vast areas of Medieval intellectual achievement, such as the development of the scholastic method, scientific enquiry, psychology and medicine. However, as seen in the next section, the Italian humanists did find themselves to be in a position to grasp further the importance of language.

⁴⁶¹ McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', p. 121; emphasis added.

⁴⁶² Ibid., pp. 121-2.

⁴⁶³ This is one of the phrases often taken out of context ('rhetoric is usually found to have little or no history, despite much talk about rhetoric and even more use of it, during the Middle Ages') by commentators; another is 'if rhetoric is defined as a single subject it has no history during the Middle Ages' (ibid., p. 166).

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

III

Scholars such as Paul O. Kristeller, Eugenio Garin, John Monfasani, and Jerrold Seigel have argued that the political re-conceptualisation of rhetoric occurs for the first time in northern Italy in the thirteenth century, in particular as a result of the appearance in that region during the preceding century of urban communes, free city-states that enjoyed republican liberty and traditions of political discussion and debate.⁴⁶⁶ Their interest in (and need for) public speaking, stimulated a new appreciation of the oratorical culture of antiquity, and it prompted significant modifications in one of the most important forms rhetoric took during the Middle Ages: the art of letter-writing or *ars dictaminis*. Created in the eleventh century, this art became increasingly classical in style over the next two centuries, and simultaneously its model letters began to include political advice. In the thirteenth century the *ars dictaminis* was joined by the new art of public speaking or *ars arengandi*. For example, in the early thirteenth century Boncompagno of Siena reluctantly devoted a chapter of his *Rhetorica novissima* to public speaking. He condemned it as being beneath the dignity of the learned and associated it with what he saw as excessive political liberty. A little later, at Bologna, Jacques de Dinant wrote an *ars arengandi* which summarised the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*; and the two arts (of letter-writing and public speaking), were fully combined for the first time in the work of Guido Faba (c. 1190-1240). So by the mid-thirteenth century, rhetorical theory included a significant public and political component. Notably, it also acquired a specifically political purpose, whether it was to be practised by the notary, the lawyer, or the letter writer (the *dictator*). The thirteenth-century *Flore del parlare* typically explains that rhetoric is useful for those who rule as well as for merchants – thus linking politics to the class that actually did dominate the cities of northern Italy in the period. About the same time Fra Guidotto da Bologna, who translated Cicero, pronounces rhetoric an art of civil importance,

⁴⁶⁶ The following discussion of the rebirth of rhetoric in Italy draws on Kristeller, 'The Humanist Movement', pp. 3-23; id., 'Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture', pp. 1-19; Garin, *Italian Humanism*, id., *Medioevo e Rinascimento*; Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric'; Skinner, *Foundations 1*, pp. 3-40; Vickers, *Defense*; and F. Cossutta, *Gli umanisti e la retorica* (Rome, 1984).

Giovanni del Vergilio praises its dignity because 'only the small part of it called letter-writing calls forth rustics to the councils of kings, enriches the needy with wealth, and adorns the dishonorable with honors'.⁴⁶⁷ An anonymous dictator declares: 'Rhetoric, by the grace of God, is the universal mediator of the state, the general teacher of consuls, orators, and judges'.⁴⁶⁸ Finally, Brunetto Latini, who was employed as a notary, was called both *dittatore* (*dictator*) and *arringatore* (*public speaker*) by his contemporaries. He not only became the chancellor of Florence (1272-74), but was later praised by the chronicler Giovanni Villani as the first person to have instructed the Florentines in politics.

According to the influential thesis advanced by Kristeller, Garin, Skinner, and others, the dictatores, who overlap with the notaries, were the immediate ancestors of the humanists. Both groups held up classical Latin language and culture as ideals to be imitated; both gained social and political advancement through their learning; both worked principally as secretaries or as teachers of rhetoric; both were dedicated to some version of the active life in society (the *vita civile*), and saw the orator as occupying a position of central importance within it. Indeed, dictators and notaries came to see themselves in classical terms, and although humanists such as Salutati and Bruni were trained as notaries, they came to prefer the honorific, classical 'orator' to the traditional 'notarius' or 'dictator' as a title. Notaries and humanists alike, in particular after 1300, were deeply immersed in the public, political world and, in the fullness of time, came to dominate the bureaucracies of the Italian towns where they worked. Initially, notaries had primarily composed documents for businessmen. But as the latter became generally better educated in the later Middle Ages and had less need of such services, public employment offered itself as an important alternative (especially as the administrative bureaucracies of towns were also expanding in this period). Considering, therefore, the actual social roles that notaries and humanists played, as well as the ideology of political service they were exposed to in the writings of

⁴⁶⁷ Cited in P. O. Kristeller, 'Un "ars dictaminis" di Giovanni del Vergilio', *IMU*, 4 (1961), p. 193.

⁴⁶⁸ Cited in J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond* (Leiden, 1976), p. 260.

treasured authors such as Cicero and Quintilian, it is hardly surprising that they would themselves develop such an ideology in their works. Neither is it surprising that they would see rhetoric as a primarily political instrument essential for the active life in society.

While the thesis of the revival of a singularly political rhetoric by dictatores, notaries, and humanists in the communes of northern Italy has much to recommend it, I think it has several shortcomings. First, it acknowledges no difference whatsoever between the conception of rhetoric shared by the late Medieval dictatores and notaries, and that of the humanists and their followers. Next, it misleads because it implicitly accepts a presumed identity between the rhetorical theories of classical authors and those of their Renaissance successors. Lastly, it posits a necessary connection between republican liberty and the rise of rhetoric in the Renaissance. In fact, most northern Italian city-states had turned to despotism by 1300, exactly at the time when many late Medieval authors were beginning to maintain the essentially political character of rhetoric. In other words, the thesis fails to explain why rhetoric continued to be thought of as political, both inside and outside Italy, throughout the Renaissance, in states which were anything but republics (and many of which were becoming increasingly absolutist in character). Even though notaries and dictatores are the ancestors of the humanists, the two groups have somewhat different notions of rhetoric as a political instrument. For the first group, rhetoric is concerned in a general way with 'civil matters'; it enables the individual to enter into political discussion, to participate in the dialogue of power occurring in the state. By contrast, for the humanists (as for those who came after them in Italy and throughout western Europe), rhetoric is identified in the political terms we have already discussed: it is seen as an instrument of rule. Francesco Petrarch (1304-74) is, by most accounts, a liminal figure, half Medieval and half Renaissance,⁴⁶⁹ but in a letter in praise of rhetoric to Tommaso da Messina, he sounds more like

⁴⁶⁹ The work of Petrarch in his youth, although a unique prelude to things to come, did not lead directly to the Renaissance ideas of the Quattrocento, and his own final view of life represents one of the great semi-Medieval syntheses characteristic of the Trecento' (H. Baron, 'Petrarch', in *Florilegium Historiale*, ed. J. G. Rowe and W. Stockdale [Toronto, 1971], pp. 19-51, at p. 46). See also, C. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher* (New Haven, 1979). For a contrasting view see, Riccardo Fubini, *Humanism and Secularization from Petrarch to Valla* (Durham, 2003).

the Medieval notaries and dictatores: although he alludes to the myth (popular among humanists) of the orator civilizer, he speaks merely of the pleasure that eloquent writing provides, not of the political role of the orator in ruling the city.⁴⁷⁰ By contrast, the notary, humanist, and Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati, writing less than a half-century after Petrarch, says:

‘For how [can one] dominate more than by means of the emotions, bend the listener where you might wish and lead him off with grace and desire where you would move him? Unless I am deceived, this is the force of eloquence; this its effort; to this goal all the force and power of rhetoricians’ labour’.⁴⁷¹

Petrarch thinks in general terms about the civic role of oratory, whereas Salutati thinks of it specifically as a means to dominate others through their emotions. This conception of the art, as a means of ruling others, will mark it throughout the Renaissance. Obsessed with their cultural programme of recovering classical antiquities, the Italian humanists do not initially produce original treatises on rhetoric.⁴⁷² However, when the first one appears in Venice, in 1433 or 1434, it opens in a way that confirms the conception we have seen in Salutati. By means of rhetoric, George of Trebizond’s *Rhetoricorum Libri V* proclaims, one establishes laws, protects others with counsel, and frightens off enemies, ‘nor could the state be governed without it’.⁴⁷³ Every eminent rhetorician who succeeded George in the Renaissance was to define rhetoric in this manner, i.e., identifying the art as the instrument of government.

There are, of course, profound similarities between this rhetoric and that of the ancient world. But a comparison of the two will show that they contain rather different political visions. The ancient Greeks and Romans essentially regarded rhetoric as a tool for political persuasion.⁴⁷⁴ The Sophists offered their art as education in persuasive speaking for prospective leaders, and they saw themselves as performers (in the tradition of the poets and rhapsodes)

⁴⁷⁰ See Petrarca, *Le familiari*, ed. V. Rossi (Florence, 1933-42), no. 9.

⁴⁷¹ C. Salutati, *Epistolario* (Rome, 1891-1905), 3:15.

⁴⁷² Poggio Bracciolini, for instance, discovered a complete Quintilian in 1416, and Bishop Gerardo Landriani of Lodi found Cicero *Brutus*, *De oratore*, and *Orator* in 1421.

⁴⁷³ George of Trebizond, *Rhetoricorum Libri V* (Venice, 1523), 1r. Coleman suggests that such beliefs were already implied in Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum*, see Coleman, *HPT*, II, p. 69.

⁴⁷⁴ M. L. Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome* (N.Y., 1963), p. 2.

engaged in battles of words.⁴⁷⁵ Roman rhetoric is equally political;⁴⁷⁶ inscribed in their rhetoric is a republican model in which orators (all theoretically equals), engage in an open competition in the public arena, aiming for victory over their fellow orators.⁴⁷⁷ To put forward this model, both Cicero and Quintilian use related metaphors of military combat, gladiatorial contests, and athletic games. For example, in Cicero's *De oratore*, Antonius sees the orator not as ruling the wills of others but as capturing them, and using weapons to do so.⁴⁷⁸ Quintilian, similarly, refers on numerous occasions to the 'battle in the forum', or to some equivalent idea.⁴⁷⁹ Both authors prefer the orator to be a warrior rather than an athlete, just as they prefer the grand style to the more polished one associated with Isocrates.⁴⁸⁰ Quintilian remarks of digressions, that it is permissible to use in them a certain elegance of style, provided the orator bears in mind that, in the portions of the speech dealing with the main topic, he displays, not the swollen body of an athlete, but the sinews of a soldier, and that he should not wear a multi-coloured cloak (i.e., use a flowery style) little suited to the dust of the forum.⁴⁸¹ For these ancient writers, therefore, oratory is essentially combat or contest, a fight. In his *Dialogus*, Tacitus would later insist on this notion, even though he feared the art was degenerating into mere spectacle.⁴⁸² And Saint Augustine would reiterate it in his *Confessions*, where he identifies rhetoric as possessing *arma*.⁴⁸³ It is worth noting that the word *ornamenta*, which Romans used for rhetoric's tropes and figures of speech, also had the meaning of 'soldier's gear'.⁴⁸⁴ What is more, in the Roman conception of rhetoric, the contest always takes place before a *iudex* (the judge in a courtroom), or before *iudices* (the judges who are the

⁴⁷⁵ G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 24-5; W. J. Verdenius, 'Gorgias' Doctrine of Deception', in *The Sophists and Their Legacy*, ed. G. B. Kerferd (Wiesbaden, 1981), pp. 118-22; and W. K. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 42-3.

⁴⁷⁶ Although the forensic variety carries the most weight with both Cicero and Quintilian, who were the chief transmitters of rhetorical theory to the Renaissance.

⁴⁷⁷ See J. L. Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* (N.Y., 1987), pp. 35, 39.

⁴⁷⁸ Cicero, *De oratore*, 2.8.32, 2-7.2-293; cf. 1.8.32, 1.32.147, 1.34.157, 2.20.84, 3.54.206.

⁴⁷⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio*, 5.12.17, 22; 4.3.2; 10.1.33, 79.

⁴⁸⁰ See D. K. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J., 1988), p. 22.

⁴⁸¹ Quintilian, *Institutio*, 10.1.33.

⁴⁸² Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus*, tr. W. Peterson, rev. M. Winterbottom (London, 1970), pp. 31-33.

⁴⁸³ Augustine, *Confessions*, tr. W. Watts (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 9.2.

⁴⁸⁴ W. J. Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 277.

people or the orator's fellow senators).⁴⁸⁵ Cicero places the judge metaphorically above the competing speakers, thus reinforcing the notion of oratory as contest: he is the *dominus* or 'lord', and his bias often defeats the orator's finest efforts.⁴⁸⁶ So the orator must defeat the judge, as he does the other orators he faces. For Quintilian such triumphs – when one is able to sweep away the judges and lead them to believe what one wishes – are rare.⁴⁸⁷ But his premise is, like Cicero's, that in the contest of oratory such triumphs can at least sometimes be engineered by the truly gifted.

If Cicero and Quintilian think of rhetoric in republican terms as a competition among equals (albeit in a highly unequal society), the Renaissance tends to see it instead as a matter of ruling. The political model inscribed in this rhetoric, as Wayne Rebhorn has shown, is hierarchical in a very particular way. It does not pit the rhetorician against his equals, but implicitly sets him above his spectators, whom he aims to dominate by means of his art. These spectators are seldom conceived as judges, because that would suggest their superiority to the orator, whereas he practices oratory precisely in order to make himself ruler over those he addresses. George of Trebizond's *Rhetoricorum Libri V*, for example, identifies rhetoric as the art of rule. After considering the difficulty of joining philosophy and eloquence, he argues that if one wishes to know the truth of things, one should pursue the former, but 'if one seeks the glory of governing the state, one should apply oneself to rhetoric'.⁴⁸⁸ George's *Oratio de laudibus eloquentie*, makes similar claims: '[J]ust as no ship ever sailed correctly without a steersman, so no state has ever been well governed if eloquence has been expelled from it'.⁴⁸⁹ He then flatters his Venetian audience by saying that their flourishing state, because governed by eloquence, exemplifies the truth of his idea. George is, of course, not alone in voicing such sentiments in the Renaissance. The Milanese Anto

⁴⁸⁵ See Cicero, *De oratore*, 2.29.128-29; Quintilian, *Institutio*, 6.2.1-7. Aristotle also sees all rhetoric as performance before a judge (*krites*), and he includes even epideictic speeches in this generalisation, because that sort of speech, 'is put together with reference to the spectator as if he were a judge' (*Rh.*, 2.18.1).

⁴⁸⁶ Cicero, *De or.*, 2.17-72.

⁴⁸⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio*, 6.2.3-4.

⁴⁸⁸ George, *Rhetoricorum Libri V*, 60r.

⁴⁸⁹ Id., *Oratio de laudibus eloquentie*, in *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic*, by J. Monfasani (Leiden, 1976), pp. 365-69, at p. 368.

Maria de' Conti, writing in the mid-sixteenth century, whilst alluding to the many excellent things rhetoric can accomplish, speaks of how it governs cities.⁴⁹⁰ But some writers go as far as to present the political model of autocratic, imperial government. Rhetoric, Guillaume Du Vair asserts, 'reigns among peoples, and establishes for itself a violent empire over the spirit of men'.⁴⁹¹ Johann Heinrich Alsted uses similar language when analysing the impact that eloquence has on the minds of those exposed to it. He asks whether rhetoric enjoys an imperium over men and answers his own question affirmatively: 'Because if it makes a great difference whether those whom one commands do something of their own free will or unwillingly, I see that the power of orators is greater than that of the greatest kings'.⁴⁹² In this context, it is hardly surprising to find that the rhetorician is often portrayed as someone (by nature and training) bound to rule – a lord, a king or an emperor. Lorenzo Valla, for instance, sees him as the 'guide and leader of the people [*rector et dux populi*]',⁴⁹³ and in the sixteenth century, Daniel Barbaro calls him the 'lord [*signore*] and possessor of each person's spirit'.⁴⁹⁴ Eloquence itself is often imaged as a queen,⁴⁹⁵ and Juan Luis Vives tells us how such a personification of rhetoric helps define the orator as a royal ruler: 'He clearly reigns [*regnat*] among men who is best equipped to speak; and rightly the tragedian Euripides named eloquence a queen'.⁴⁹⁶ For Henry Peacham, rhetoric gives men an even loftier position: it makes the orator 'in a maner the emperour of mens minds &

⁴⁹⁰ A. M. de' Conti, *De eloquentia dialogus*, in *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento*, ed. B. Weinberg, (Bari, 1970), 15.2. Also see, N. Caussin, *De Eloquentia sacra et humana*, 3rd edn. (Paris, 1630), p. 757; Vives, *De Causis*, pp. 152-53, and *De Ratione*, p. 89; Poliziano, 'Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis', in *Prosatori latini del quattrocento*, ed. E. Garin, (Torino 1977), pp. 882-44; P. Ramus, *Dialectique* (Paris, 1555; rpt. Genève, 1972) p. 134; J. Rainolds, *Oratio in laudem artis poeticae*, ed. W. Ringler and W. Allen, Jr. (Princeton, 1940), p. 44; J. H. Alsted, *Rhetorica, Dedicatio*, 2v, 7v; id., *Rhetorica* (Herborn, 1616), p. 1; Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiastica Rhetorica* (Cologne, 1582), p. 5; and Keckermann, *Systema*, p. 126.

⁴⁹¹ Guillaume du Vair, *Traité de l'Eloquence Française*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1641; rpt. Geneva, 1970), pp. 389-410, at p. 393

⁴⁹² Alsted, *Rhetorica, Dedicatio*, 8r.

⁴⁹³ L. Valla, *Dialecticae Disputationes*, p. 694; cited in J. McNally, 'Rector et Dux Populi: Italian Humanists and the Relationship between Rhetoric and Logic', *MP*, 67 (1969), p.171.

⁴⁹⁴ D. Barbaro, *Della Eloquenza*, in *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento*, ed. B. Weinberg (Bari, 1970), II, pp. 335-451, at p. 356.

⁴⁹⁵ A. Furetière builds an entire allegory on the basis of this traditional image see his *Nouvelle allégorique, ou Histoire des demiers troubles arrivés au royaume d'Eloquence*, ed. E. van Ginneken (Geneva, 1967).

⁴⁹⁶ Vives, *De Ratione*, p. 93.

affections, and next to the omnipotent God in the power of persuasion'.⁴⁹⁷ Antonio Lull of Mallorca, vicar general of the diocese of Besançon in the mid-sixteenth century, goes even further, declaring that eloquence lets the orator rule (*regnare*) among men as if he were a kind of god (*veluti Deum quemdam*).⁴⁹⁸

It is important to note that the Renaissance insistence on rhetoric as rule is not without classical precedents. The notion that eloquence could be divine goes back to the Greek goddess Peitho, 'Persuasion'.⁴⁹⁹ And Tacitus in his *Dialogus* laments the decline of that eloquence which was once the mistress (*domina*), of Roman life.⁵⁰⁰ What is more, both Quintilian and Cicero refer to some notion of rhetoric as ruling or dominating. Quintilian defines the perfect orator as one 'who can guide [*regere*] cities by his counsels, establish laws, and purge vices by his decisions as a judge'. He claims, in addition, that when the orator's power dominates the court, this form of eloquence rules.⁵⁰¹ Given its enormous power, Cicero celebrates rhetoric as a queen (*regina*), and a 'commander' (*imperator*). Elsewhere, he asks what is 'so ... kingly, so worthy of a free man' as the power that helps suppliants, gives security, and maintains men in the city.⁵⁰² However, both Cicero and Quintilian imagine the art chiefly as a contest among free citizens. The different emphases given to the politics of rhetoric by ancient Romans and Renaissance writers is startlingly clear when we compare statements made about the power of rhetoric to rule peaceful cities. Cicero says that eloquence 'has especially always flourished and ruled in every free people, and especially in peaceful, tranquil cities'.⁵⁰³ By contrast, although Giovanni Tuscanella (a professor at Bologna in the 1420s), praises the subject in phrases that echo Cicero's, there are small, yet significant, differences. 'Eloquence', he writes, 'always obtained sovereignty [*principatum*]

⁴⁹⁷ H. Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), intr. W. G. Crane (Gainesville, 1954), p. iiiv.

⁴⁹⁸ A. Lull, *De oratione libri septem* (Basel, n.d. [1554-58?]), p. 12; cited in Antonio Martí, *La preceptiva retórica española en el siglo de oro* (Madrid, 1972), p. 132. On the orator's quasi-divinity also see, T. Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique, for the use of all suche as are studious of Eloquence, sette forth in English* (1554, n.p.), 161.

⁴⁹⁹ On the Greek goddess Peitho see, Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith*, pp. 34-5.

⁵⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Dialogus*, 32.4.

⁵⁰¹ Quintilian, *Institutio*, 1.Pr.10, 6.2.4.

⁵⁰² Cicero, *De or.*, 2.44.187, 1.8.32.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1.8.30.

and has always dominated in every peaceful and free city'.⁵⁰⁴ So in Tuscanella the city-state is free, not its citizens; and whereas Cicero says eloquence flourishes, Tuscanella says it obtains sovereignty.⁵⁰⁵ Later in the Renaissance, in his dedicatory letter to Cypriano Soarez's *De Arte Rhetorica* (1589), Federico Cerutus rewrites Cicero's sentence, declaring that eloquence 'always flourished and ruled in a well established state'.⁵⁰⁶ Similarly, Philip Melanchthon, in his *Encomium eloquentiae*, asserts that eloquence always has a place 'in a peaceful city'.⁵⁰⁷ Neither Cerutus (a Counter-Reformation Catholic), nor Melanchthon (a founding father of Protestantism), make any reference to a free people. For them, as for the Renaissance in general, rhetoric is synonymous with control by one man or one class over those lower in the hierarchy – supposedly 'in their interest' and on behalf of 'natural governors'. So even though the Venetian Raphael Regius links rhetoric with republican liberty, he does not identify it with the cut and thrust of debate. Instead, he characterises it as rule and dominion, and praises Cicero for having reigned in Rome as the most eloquent man of his age.⁵⁰⁸ So rhetoric, as it has been defined from antiquity on, is neither entirely republican nor monarchical/absolutist in character. Rather, it is both (at least potentially). In Cicero and Quintilian there is a clear acknowledgement that rhetoric means power and dominance over others, but what matters most is the competition among orators in the forum or Senate. The opposite is true in the Renaissance: the link between rhetoric and republicanism is occasionally acknowledged, but the emphasis falls on the power that rhetoric gives the orator to control his audience (and that makes him a king, a Caesar). Some writers go as far as to claim that the expansion of the Roman empire paralleled, or even caused by, the flourishing of eloquence. For example, Guillaume Du Vair claims that

⁵⁰⁴ Karl Müllner (ed.) *Reden und Briefe italienischer Humanisten* (Vienna, 1899; rpt. Munich, 1970), p. 196.

⁵⁰⁵ Tuscanella's '*principatum*' can simply mean something like 'the first place'. However, in its fifteenth-century, Bolognese context, it cannot be divorced from association with princely rule.

⁵⁰⁶ See Cypriano Soarez, *De Arte Rhetorica Libri Tres* (Verona, 1589), A41.

⁵⁰⁷ P. Melanchthon, *Encomium eloquentiae*, in *Werke in Auswahl*, ed. R. Stupperich, (Gütersloh, 1961), III, pp. 43-62, at p. 52.

⁵⁰⁸ Raphael Regius, *De Laudibus eloquentiae panegyricus* (Venice, 1485), fvv. Similarly, Walter Haddon praises Cicero for his rhetorical prowess by recalling how he was famed as the 'king', the rex, of Rome (*De laudibus eloquentiae*, in *Lucubrationes passim collectae*, ed. T. Hatcher [London, 1567], pp. 1-9, at p. 5).

eloquence reached a high point in imperial Rome, because when it 'was used even by the emperors and by the Great, it breathed a loftier and fuller majesty'.⁵⁰⁹ He then cites a list of Roman leaders and emperors whom he admires for their eloquence, including Pompey, Augustus, Antony, Caligula, Claudian, and Titus. And in a work written in 1431 the Italian friar Antonio da Rho declares that practically the entire world became part of the Roman empire 'no less by eloquence than by arms', thus identifying rhetoric as an instrument of empire.⁵¹⁰ By now it should be clear that the common notion that Renaissance rhetoric constitutes a straightforward revival (or repetition) of ancient rhetoric is clearly inadequate. In the next section, I question the equation of rhetoric, humanism, and republican liberty that lies at the heart of Baron's, Garin's, and others' interpretations of the early Italian Renaissance.

Comment [A1]:

IV

In the 1920s and after, Hans Baron argued in pioneering articles that the humanists had found in the ancients and recovered for modern use a vision of civic life that proved essential to the Florentine élite of the fifteenth century.⁵¹¹ He memorably argued that the ideals of civic humanism faithfully represented the democratic reality of Florentine republicanism.⁵¹² However, Baron's

⁵⁰⁹ Du Vair, *Traitté*, p. 399.

⁵¹⁰ Müllner (ed.) *Reden und Briefe*, p. 165; cf. Richard Rainolde, *The Foundacion of Rhetorike* (London, 1563; rpt. Amsterdam, 1969), iir: 'the state of Rome could by no meanes have growen so mervailous mightie, but that God had indued the whole line of Cesars, with singuler vertues, with aboundaunt knowlege and singuler Eloquence'. For other identifications of kings or emperors as ideal orators see, F. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, intr. J.E. Creighton, rev. edn. (N.Y., 1900), p. 33; Vives, *De Ratione*, p. 95; and Caussin, *Eloquentia sacra*, pp. 39, 170.

⁵¹¹ In *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, Baron formulated one of the twentieth century's most influential arguments for the impact of politics on the intellectual life of the early Quattrocento. He identified the territorial aggression of the tyrannical Milanese Visconti as a critical catalyst for the birth of Florentine civic humanism. To make sense of their lonely stand against the awesome power of Visconti's Milan, Baron argued that the Florentines were forced into a process of rigorous self-analysis that affirmed the values for which they were fighting: freedom of speech, free access to political office, equality of all citizens before the law, and self-government. In short, the fundamentals of modern democracy. Only the unexpected death of Duke Giangaleazzo in 1402 saved the Florentine republic from becoming yet another addition to the growing territory of despotic Milan. Florentines saw their salvation as a human triumph of freedom over tyranny, republicanism over despotism. Baron thought that the republican philosophy of civic humanism grew out of this perception, thereby ensuring the transmission of democracy from antiquity to the modern era.

⁵¹² For valuable recent critiques of Baron's thesis and comprehensive bibliographies see essays by James Hankins, John Najemy, and Alison Brown, in *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, ed. J. Hankins (Cambridge, 2000); and contributions in *AHR*, 101 (1996), esp. pp. 107-29, 142-44.

argument about the vitality of civic humanism and its close relationship with political reality was faced with an enormous problem: sixty years of Medicean political hegemony in the Quattrocento. He tried to address this difficulty with the general statement that from the '1430s onward, republicanism and civic Humanism were waning in Florence, and soon the philosophical and religious trends of Neoplatonism would take its place'.⁵¹³ This argument gained widespread acceptance with the backing of Eugenio Garin, who argued that Medicean political reality (its electoral manipulation, patronage, and private character), deprived civic humanism of its guiding purpose, that is, the encouragement of citizens to participate in the political life of the republic.⁵¹⁴ The rise, in the second half of the century, of contemplative and politically withdrawn Neoplatonism, merely reflects the shrewd intellectual patronage of the Medici, and the disillusionment and crushed republican morale of Florentine humanists. For Baron and Garin, therefore, the relationship between civic humanism and the Medici was adversarial; Medici power had severed the symbiosis between the active political life and culture.⁵¹⁵ Baron continued his analysis of humanism only after 1494 and the expulsion of the Medici, after which he could declare 'democratic republicanism' to have flourished again. Recent interpretations, however, see civic humanism as evidence of the triumph of oligarchic and elitist republicanism.⁵¹⁶ John Najemy

Also see J. Hankins, 'The Baron Thesis' after Forty Years', *JHI*, 56 (1995), pp. 309-38; A. Rabil, Jr., 'The Significance of "Civic Humanism" in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance', in *Renaissance Humanism I*, pp. 141-74. There is little consensus on which aspects of *The Crisis* remain viable today and what, fundamentally, was Baron's most important contribution to Renaissance studies. Contrary to Riccardo Fubini's statement ('Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron', *J. Mo. H.*, 64 [1992], pp. 541-74) that continuing discussion about the validity of Baron's thesis has contributed to 'misdirecting Renaissance historical research', I agree with the tentative 1958 prediction of W. K. Ferguson that Baron's most important contribution 'will prove to be the stimulus his ideas will give to future research' ('The Interpretation of Italian Humanism', *JHI*, 19 [1958], pp. 14-25).

⁵¹³ Baron, *Crisis*, p. 435.

⁵¹⁴ Garin, *Italian Humanism*, pp. 78-9; id., *Portraits from the Quattrocento* (N.Y., 1963), pp. 3-29 and pp. 55-117; Baron, *Crisis*, pp. 435-39; A. Brown, *The Medici in Florence* (Firenze, 1992), pp. 215-46; and Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 295-302.

⁵¹⁵ However, Baron (albeit briefly) did suggest that the relationship may have been more complex than outlined above, when he acknowledged the need to examine the 'precise role of civic humanism for Medicean Florence' ('Moot Problems of Renaissance Interpretation', *JHI*, 19 (1958), pp. 26-34 at p. 27).

⁵¹⁶ This argument can be found in the epilogue to J. Najemy, *Corporation and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. 301-17. Also see, id., 'The dialogue of Power in Florentine Politics', in *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval*

appears to have provided the most sustained and explicit argument for this interpretation. He presents the history of political thought in Florence up to the Quattrocento as a struggle between two rival republican ideologies: (i) the republicanism of the communal era (the elder of the ideologies), which was rooted in the guilds, favouring wide participation in government councils and defining political representation as a function of class and corporate identity; and (ii) the oligarchic republicanism of the post-Ciompi era (1378), which undermined the legitimacy of communal corporate politics, favouring the politics of consensus and the participation of only a select few wealthy old families in the government. Leonardo Bruni and his humanist contemporaries, according to Najemy, helped formalise and refine oligarchic republicanism. How? By turning it into a philosophy of 'dutiful passivity', in which citizens who had once received office according to the established rights of their class, could now only receive office as a reward for their 'personal virtue', and attachment to powerful local civic families and their interests. Civic humanism, therefore, is a consolation prize with which the supporters of the failed guild-based vision of politics rationalised their political acquiescence to a restricted oligarchy. In other words, humanistic exaltation of the scholar statesman and humanistic interpretations of wealth, history, and ideal government buttressed and extended the political implications of Cosimo's reputation for prudence, wisdom, generosity, and learning. Civic humanism, in short, accommodated Medici power.⁵¹⁷ Moreover, recent work by Jill Kraye, Arthur Field, and James Hankins has considerably undermined the Neoplatonic argument put forward by Garin and his followers. They have all argued that the roots of Neoplatonism were already solidly established by the time Cosimo began to commission Platonic works from Marsilio Ficino. Kraye has suggested that humanists such as Ficino were drawn to the study of Plato

Italy, ed. A. Molho, K. Raaflaub, J. Emlen. (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 169-88; and M. Jurdjevic, 'Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici', *RQ*, 52:4 (1999), pp. 994-1020. According to Najemy, another important supporter of civic humanism as a 'strategically pursued legitimization of the hegemony of the ruling group' is Niccolò Machiavelli ('Baron's Machiavelli and Renaissance Republicanism', *AHR*, 101 [1996], pp. 119-29, at p. 126).

⁵¹⁷ Janet Coleman, Lauro Martines, Anthony Grafton, and Lisa Jardine make similar, though more general, arguments regarding civic humanism's ideological support of the ruling élite; see Coleman, *HPT*, II, p. 233; L. Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (N.Y., 1979), pp. 191-201; A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), p. 24.

because it was not central to the entrenched interests of professional university philosophers. Unlike Aristotle, Plato had made few inroads into the universities, so humanists were free to apply their philological techniques to Plato without opposition from university-based philosophers.⁵¹⁸ Field has shown that Florentine Platonic humanists were far from politically withdrawn: they wrote, lectured, and preached in the city centre, not in a rural villa, and they directed their ideas to the political community.⁵¹⁹ Hankins has persuasively argued that the Medici did not support Platonism over Aristotelianism, and has thrown considerable doubt on the popular theory that the Medici founded a formal academy or institution dedicated to the study of Plato. What is more, the rebirth of speculative philosophy in Florence took place during the 1450s, a time when Cosimo was in the midst of a political crisis (caused by the temporary fragmentation and collapse of his party) and, as a consequence, could not have organised the isolation of Florentine intellectuals outside the city.⁵²⁰

These new arguments about civic humanism as an oligarchic ideology and the rise of Neoplatonism independent of Medicean patronage suggest, therefore, that Baron and Garin misinterpreted the relationship between civic humanism and Medici ascendancy. In fact, because of the importance of northern Italian cities for the early development of humanism, scholars such as Lauro Martines have gone back to the Burckhardtian notion that humanism and despotism, not republicanism, made the best bedfellows in the early Renaissance.⁵²¹ A less extreme position has been advanced by the Italian scholar Fabio Cossutta, who notes that there were really two humanisms, one in Florence and one in Lombardy, although he also argues that what

⁵¹⁸ J. Kraye, 'Philologists and Philosophers', in *CCRH*, pp. 142-60 at pp. 142-50; also see id., 'Lorenzo and the Philosophers', in *Lorenzo the Magnificent*, ed. M. Mallett and N. Mann (London, 1996), pp. 151-66.

⁵¹⁹ See A. Field, *The origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence* (Princeton, N.J., 1988), pp. 1-24.

⁵²⁰ See J. Hankins, 'Humanism and the origins of modern political thought', in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. J. Kraye (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 131-33; id., 'Lorenzo de' Medici as a Patron of Philosophy', *Rinascimento*, 34 (1994), pp. 15-54; id., *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 3rd edn. (Leiden, 1994), pp. 3-17; id., 'Marsilio Ficino as a Critic of Scholasticism', *VH*, 5 (1994), pp. 325-33 at 330-31; id., 'The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence', *RQ*, 44 (1991); and id., 'Cosimo de' Medici and the "Platonic Academy"', *JWCI*, 53 (1990), pp. 144-62.

⁵²¹ Martines, *Power and Imagination*, pp. 191-206.

humanism tended to exalt everywhere was personal freedom, which would enable one to achieve individual excellence, rather than communal liberty.⁵²²

The mistaken identification of rhetoric with republicanism in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy has also led scholars to see a 'decline' in rhetoric as a political instrument during the course of the Renaissance. Their argument brings to mind Tacitus's thesis in his *Dialogus*, concerning the decline of rhetoric in Rome, and it does have antecedents in the Renaissance itself. According to Tacitus, oratory was used to rule during the days of the Republic;⁵²³ it was a source of power and influence and effectively enabled the advancement of merit. However, by the end of the first century (when the *Dialogus* was most likely written), Tacitus' spokesmen claim that rhetoric has been thrust from the forum and the Senate into the triviality of mere performances in schools of declamation, that men get ahead not by their mastery of the art of speaking but by currying favour with Caesar. Even though Tacitus concedes that in a state where the wisest of men – i.e., the emperor – decides matters, there is no need for oratory (which is really necessary only in countries suffering from licence and sedition), this concession seems largely ironic, an attempt to avoid reprisals, because of his implicit criticisms directed at the Rome of Domitian.

Many versions of Tacitus' thesis are reproduced by Renaissance writers. For example, in the *Panegyric to the City of Florence* and the *History of Florence*, Leonardo Bruni dated the onset of Roman cultural decline to the rise of the Caesars and the transition from republicanism to imperial government. 'Virtue, nobility, and genius', he argued, can only flourish among politically free people;⁵²⁴ so when Roman citizens gave up their liberty, their virtue also passed away.⁵²⁵ Similarly, Juan Luis Vives says that rhetoric is stronger in a

⁵²² Cossuta, *Gli umanisti*, pp. 45-49, 80-90.

⁵²³ Tacitus, *Dialogus*, 32.4.

⁵²⁴ L. Bruni, *History of Florence, Book I*, in *Humanism and Liberty*, ed. and tr. by R. Watkins (Columbia, SC, 1978), pp. 27-91 at pp. 45-7. According to Hankins, in his history of Florence, Bruni 'worked out an entire theory of historical development which identified the highest moments of human culture with its moments of greatest political freedom: Periclean Athens, late republican Rome and the modern Florentine republic' ('Humanism', p. 131).

⁵²⁵ 'Before the day of the Caesars, character was the route to honor, and positions such as consul, dictator, or other high public offices were open to men of magnanimous spirit, strength of character, and energy' (L. Bruni, *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*, in *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, by H. Baron [Chicago, 1968], pp. 217-63 at p. 46).

popular government than in a state where one man rules, since eloquent speech will have little effect in the latter case. He notes, in addition, that rhetoric only flourished in fifth-century Athens and republican Rome.⁵²⁶

The Tacitean thesis has attracted a number of scholars of the Renaissance. Eugenio Garin, for example, asserts that after the Council of Trent (1545-63) secular oratory had no place in European governments.⁵²⁷ Marc Fumaroli argues that Tacitus' line of argument (though only after the Plantin edition of his works in 1574) spoke to the Europe of the Age of Absolutism in which poetry had replaced oratory as the favoured mode of self-expression.⁵²⁸ According to Vasile Florescu and George A. Kennedy, in the latter stages of the Renaissance, rhetoric became little more than a mere ornament of the prince's court, and was eventually reduced to the cultivation of style and philological culture.⁵²⁹ And Debora K. Shuger suggests that even though sacred rhetoric continued to flourish throughout the period, secular rhetoric had little place in absolutist states.⁵³⁰ Even Fabio Cossutta, who acknowledges that there is an absolutist version of rhetoric flourishing in Quattrocento Lombardy (matching the supposedly republican rhetoric of Florence), concludes that rhetoric had no place where signorial rule was the norm.⁵³¹

I believe that there are at least three basic flaws in such arguments. First, even if one agrees with the notion that deliberative rhetoric yielded the palm to epideictic after the death of the Italian communes, it does not mean that rhetoric ceased to be political. After all, courtiers (who practised epideictic oratory), though not engaging in debates like the senators of republican Rome, nevertheless played political roles in relationship to the monarchs they served (they offered advice, served on councils of state, and pursued their own political advancement). Second, the Tacitean thesis fails to account for the fact that most Renaissance writers on rhetoric, down to the end of the period, continued to think that their art was political, concerned with ruling. After

⁵²⁶ Vives, *De Causis*, pp. 152-54. For other examples see, Fumaroli, 'Rhetoric, Politics, and Society', in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, pp. 255-58.

⁵²⁷ Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, p. 148.

⁵²⁸ Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*, pp. 63-70.

⁵²⁹ V. Florescu, *La retorica nel suo sviluppo storico* (Bologna, 1971), pp. 84-5. See Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* pp. 200-03.

⁵³⁰ Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, p. 12.

⁵³¹ Cossutta, *Gli umanisti*, pp. 112-19.

emphasising the interconnection of rhetoric and politics for the Italian humanists of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, John Monfasani remarks that, '[t]here cannot be any doubt that by and large sixteenth-century Italian authors continued to believe, teach, and preach that, in Conti's words, "*eloquentia civitates gubernari*" ("cities are governed by eloquence")'.⁵³² What Monfasani says about Italy can and should be applicable to the rest of Europe. Vives, Cavalcanti, Patrizi and others, may insist that rhetoric is essentially linked with republican rule and free states⁵³³ (scarce things in the Europe in which they lived), but nevertheless produced the subject to contemporaries who lived under signorial or monarchical governments. What is more, no matter what their political persuasion, Renaissance writers on rhetoric generally identify their art with ruling. The vast majority of them would have agreed with M. Le Grand's statement (at the height of absolutist rule in France), that 'the art of speaking well, and the sovereign eloquence of which I speak, is the most important part of politics'.⁵³⁴ The identification of rhetoric and politics in Renaissance minds is underscored by the fact that most rhetorical texts were addressed to members of the ruling class, and that they repeatedly presented their teachings as key weapons in the arsenals of actual rulers. In the early Quattrocento, the Sienese doctor Andrea Benzi, states that kings and princes have never thought they could rule without rhetoric.⁵³⁵ Later the Paduan professor Giason Denores begins his *Breve Trattato dell'Oratore* (1574) with the statement that although rhetoric is fit for all, it is especially appropriate for those 'who legitimately have occasion to rule and govern peoples and cities'.⁵³⁶ Luigi Carbone, a Jesuit professor of theology at Perugia in the sixteenth century, calls rhetoric the monarchical art par excellence, because it guarantees the authority of the prince and makes it manifest to

⁵³² Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', p. 209.

⁵³³ It is worth noting, however, that various scholars who study, for instance, fifteenth and sixteenth-century German cities, insist on this language of 'free states', but its meaning is clearly hierarchical, oligarchic and magisterial and certainly not democratic or with a wide, active power based beneath ruling, often mercantile, oligarchies.

⁵³⁴ M. Le Grand, *Discours*, n.p.

⁵³⁵ Müllner (ed.), *Reden und Briefe italienischer Humanisten*, p. 111.

⁵³⁶ G. Denores, *Breve Trattato dell'Oratore*, in *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento*, ed. B. Weinberg (Bari, 1970), III, pp. 101-34, at p. 103.

all.⁵³⁷ Sir Balthazar Gerbiers, writing during the Interregnum in England, thinks along similar lines: ‘This Science may be properly compared unto Justice in Monarchs, and Princes, as being most powerfull to keep Subjects in a due obedience, and absolutely necessary in the great Body of the State; for that well speaking in a Princes mouth, is that which above all other things captivates the hearts and affections of his Subjects’.⁵³⁸ Jean Brèche goes even further in his *Premier livre de l’honneste exercice du Prince* of 1544 (which he dedicates to François I), when he declares that only kings possess true eloquence.⁵³⁹ But two treatises intended for Henri III of France probably constitute the most dramatic example of the tendency to see rhetoric as the art of kings: the *Rhetorique françoise faite particulièrement pour le Roy Henry 3* (in all likelihood written by Germain Forget in 1580-83); and Jacques Amyot’s *Projet de l’Eloquence royale, composé pour Henry III, roi de France*.⁵⁴⁰ Echoing the Tacitean thesis, at the beginning of his work Amyot says that ancient republics gave the reins of government and the greatest rewards to eloquent men, whereas in monarchies (where one man rules and distributes honours as he chooses), there is generally little concern for eloquence.⁵⁴¹ However, he goes on to suggest that it ought to be sought out in monarchies nevertheless, for it is

‘greatly recommendable, profitable, indeed necessary to the ministers of a great king and principally to the king; and if he knows how to use it with dexterity and appropriately, he will establish, maintain, and augment his state with it, as much as or more than by any other means by which kingdoms and great signories are maintained’.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁷ Cited in Fumaroli, *L’âge de l’éloquence*, p. 183.

⁵³⁸ Balthazar Gerbiers, *The Art of Well Speaking* (London, 1650), p. 5.

⁵³⁹ Jean Brèche, *Premier livre de l’honneste exercice du Prince* (Paris, 1544).

⁵⁴⁰ Kees Meerhoff, *Rhetorique et poétique au XVIIe siècle en France* (Leiden, 1986), p. 257.

⁵⁴¹ J. Amyot, *Projet de l’Eloquence royale, composé pour Henry III, roi de France* (Versailles, 1805), p. 3.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 4. It is, of course, revealing that Brèche, Amyot and others, should have addressed to an actual king a treatise specifying the regal nature of oratory. George of Trebizond and Raphael Regius directed their works to the *gubernatores* of the Venetian state; and English authors dedicated their treatises to eminent noblemen. For example, Richard Rainolde’s *The Foundacion of Rhetorike* (1563) is dedicated to Robert Dudley (Elizabeth I’s favourite); Henry Peacham’s 1593 edition of his *Garden of Eloquence*, to John Puckering, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal; Charles Butler’s *Rhetoricae Libri Duo* of 1598, to Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal; and Angel Day’s 1599 edition of his manual of letter writing, *The English Secretary*, to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

Amyot then provides a list of rulers (including Pyrrhus and Julius Caesar), who did more by means of eloquence than by arms, and concludes by praising the kings of Persia who spoke to the people themselves rather than through their ministers, since they knew that 'the word of a King is a principal part of his power'.⁵⁴³

It is important to note that, in the Renaissance, the identification of rhetoric and politics, of orators and kings, is not restricted to rhetoric manuals and treatises. It is also reproduced and developed by political theorists and literary writers. In fact, diverse texts reveal that the discourse of rhetoric was not confined to those works that proclaimed to study the art, but extended into other discourses (which it helped to shape and which, in turn, helped to shape it). Such texts help us to draw a more complete picture of what Renaissance people thought about the art that was so central to their culture. They reveal that rhetoric was seen as regal because thinkers acknowledge that monarchical rule is indeed a matter of rhetoric; of rulers' using language and spectacle to generate (and maintain) the allegiance of their subjects.⁵⁴⁴ These texts confirm, in addition, the importance of the discourse of rhetoric in providing a language to shape this notion of politics. For example, Justus Lipsius' (1547-1626) *Politica*, a classic statement of political theory, argues that monarchy is the best form of government and, following Sallust, claims that human nature desires to be ruled.⁵⁴⁵ Men are ordinarily wild beasts who must be tamed, and the best way to tame them is to use prudence (the key faculty of judgement operative in rhetoric), rather than to rely on force. Lipsius speaks of prudence much as rhetoricians speak of the power of eloquence, and he concludes that 'in government', prudence 'is clearly the stronger, because it alone is the gentle bridle, by which those who are free [voluntarii] are brought within the compass of obedience'.⁵⁴⁶ He devotes Book VI to the problem of civil war, a burning issue in the Europe of the late sixteenth century, and he recommends

⁵⁴³ Amyot, *Projet de l'Eloquence royale*, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁴ On Renaissance rulers' use of rhetorical spectacles see, e.g., Roy Strong, *Splendour at Court* (London, 1973); and S. Orgel, *The Illusion of Power* (Berkeley, 1975).

⁵⁴⁵ J. Lipsius, *Politica – Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*, ed. J. Waszink (Assen, 2004), 2.2.4.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.1.46. Note that the image of the bridle is often implied when rhetoricians talk of how the orator controls the auditor.

dealing severely (by any means, fair or foul) with factions and sedition. Lipsius suggests keeping people disunited, corrupting opponents with money, and, most of all, using fair words, for 'it is said that you cannot hold the wolf by the ears; but we may most easily lead the people and whole cities by them'.⁵⁴⁷ For him, therefore, rhetoric is the art of kings. And in the troubled times of the late sixteenth century transcends other means for maintaining the peace of the state.⁵⁴⁸

The idea that politics is a matter of rhetorical manipulation is ever-present in Machiavelli's works. His princes are creators of *spettacoli*, of a procedure based on the deeply rhetorical assumptions that the world is a place of appearances, that all truths are contingent, and that one can impose one's will on others by manipulating the image (*ethos*) one projects.⁵⁴⁹ Machiavelli uses words such as *colore* and *colorire* to describe princely behaviour, terms that commonly refer not only to 'colour' or 'pretext', but also to 'rhetorical ornament'. So in *Il principe*, he says that the prince must know how to *colorire* his ambitious nature by making it seem virtuous; accordingly, he praises the fox-like qualities of Roman emperor Septimus Severus, who persuaded his troops to capture Rome under the *colore* of avenging the death of the old emperor. Machiavelli's central admonition to the prince is, in fact, that he should endeavour to be a lion and a fox, playing the parts of both those two animals.⁵⁵⁰ For him the prince's display of his *ethos* is analogous to the rhetorician's when creating one of his speeches: he uses the right ornaments, the right *colori*, to engage others in a rhetorical exchange that leads them to do one's bidding. In the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli insists that leaders should have the

⁵⁴⁷ Lipsius, *Politica*, 6.4. To draw the people by the ears is, of course, to practice oratory, as Fray Luis de Granada knows when he translates the same passage, which comes from Plutarch: 'They say that the wolf cannot be held by the ears, but it is very fitting that the people be led in that way' (*Ecclesiastica Rhetorica*, p. 5).

⁵⁴⁸ Rebborn persuasively argues that Lipsius's recognition of the importance of rhetoric for monarchical rule is matched by that of Jean Bodin, the thinker usually considered the chief theoretician of Renaissance absolutism (*Emperor of Men's Mind*, esp. pp. 52-3). On Bodin see, J. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge, 1973). On Renaissance absolutism see, P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974); Ellery Schalk, 'Under the Law or Laws unto Themselves', *HR/RH*, 15 (1988), pp. 279-92; and D.R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 181-99.

⁵⁴⁹ See N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, tr. R. Price, ed. Q. Skinner, (Cambridge, 1988), 7.57; and id. *Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, ed. S. Bertelli (Milan, 1960), 1.15.172.

⁵⁵⁰ Id., *Prince*, 18.73, 19.81, 18.72-73

ability to use words to inspire their followers,⁵⁵¹ and he praises Castruccio Castracani for his mastery of verbal arts. In the *Istorie fiorentine*, he recounts a speech that Lorenzo de' Medici delivered to the Florentines, noting that Lorenzo's eloquence reduced his audience to tears.⁵⁵² However, it is important to note that Machiavelli often assigns a limited role to language in the prince's performance. In fact, he spends relatively little time detailing how his prince will acquire the art of using words other than by reading history (which is in true Ciceronian terms, rhetoric), and learning from these histories of Moses, Theseus, and other 'great men' (not about who these men *really* were but who they *appeared* to be). Instead, Machiavelli emphasises that the prince's education should be more a matter of learning how to act like a soldier than to study rhetoric. After all, he tends to associate the art, as part of the *trivium*, with princes' loss of dominion and with the degeneration of the state.⁵⁵³

By contrast, in Machiavelli's comedy, *La mandragola*, the protagonist Callimaco uses language to persuade Nicia, the chief dupe of the play, to accept him as a doctor and to follow his advice in adopting a 'cure' for the supposed sterility of Nicia's wife. Greatly impressed by Callimaco's verbal powers, Nicia exclaims, '[t]his is the worthiest man one can find',⁵⁵⁴ thus showing himself the rhetorician's ideal audience. Later, in response to Callimaco's request for his *fedè*, his 'trust' or 'faith', Nicia responds earnestly: 'Go ahead and talk, for I am ready to honour you in everything and to believe in you more than in my confessor'.⁵⁵⁵ Callimaco obtains from Nicia precisely what rhetoricians throughout the Renaissance sought from their listeners – his trust. What is particularly striking is that because Callimaco delivers his speech in Latin rather than Italian, it is unlikely that Nicia understands very much of what is being said. So Nicia is moved to accept Callimaco's authority, not because the stylistic niceties of his speech persuade him to do so, but simply because his speech is uttered in an exotic and prestigious language. For

⁵⁵¹ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 3.33-475.

⁵⁵² *Id.*, *La vita di Castruccio Castracani*, pp. 36-40, and *Istorie fiorentine*, pp. 525-28; both texts in *Istorie fiorentine*, ed. F. Gaeta (Milan, 1962).

⁵⁵³ See *id.*, *Istorie fiorentine*, p. 325.

⁵⁵⁴ *Id.*, *La mandragola*, in *Il teatro e tutti gli scritti letterari*, ed. F. Gaeta (Milan, 1965), 2.2.71.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.6.75.

Machiavelli, therefore, the rhetoric of politics clearly extends beyond words.⁵⁵⁶ In fact, it often seems more heavily weighted in favour of the persuasive effect of appearances than most rhetorical treatises are. For example, in the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli tells us how Francesco Soderini (then bishop of Volterra), stopped a mob in its tracks when they were about to sack his family's home. He did so primarily by means of the splendid visual impression he created: 'Having heard the noise and seen the crowd, and having put his most honourable clothes on and over them his bishop's chasuble, he approached those armed men and stopped them with his presence and his words'.⁵⁵⁷ Words, therefore, come only after the bishop's careful, actor-like preparation of the show he puts on. But in *Il principe* Machiavelli relates an even clearer example of a persuasive princely spectacle that privileges the eye over the ear: the one involving Cesare Borgia's lieutenant, Remirro de Orco, who was executed by his master. 'He [Borgia]', Machiavelli tells us, 'had him placed one morning in two pieces in the piazza at Cesena, with a piece of wood and a bloody knife beside him. The ferocity of that spectacle made the people at the same time both satisfied and astounded'.⁵⁵⁸ The spectacle devised by Borgia is gripping, acutely persuasive, and full of meaning for both the citizens of Cesena and the readers of Machiavelli's text.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁶ It is important to note that authors of rhetoric manuals and treatises also recognise a significant non-verbal element in their art. Whenever they write about delivery (*actio*), they acknowledge that personal appearance, facial expressions, and gestures all play a role in the act of persuasion. John Bulwer, who composed an entire treatise on the use of the hand in delivery, insists that gestures are more important than words in expressing the speaker's ideas, that the mouth is useless without the hand, and that by means of the latter, ancient orators 'extorted approbation from their auditors, and, ... invading the mind through the eye, with easy accesses put themselves into the possession of the people' (*Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand and Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric*, ed. J. W. Cleary. [Carbondale, Ill., 1974], 160).

⁵⁵⁷ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 1.54.253.

⁵⁵⁸ *Id.*, *Prince*, 7.37

⁵⁵⁹ For an excellent account of this spectacle see, Wayne A. Rebhom, *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988), ch. 3; for Machiavelli's rhetorical manipulation of his readers see, *ibid.*, ch. 5. Also see, V. Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric* (Princeton 1994). Shakespeare shares a similarly broad view of rhetoric, stressing the enormously persuasive force of visual displays. His Machiavellian kings and princes are aware that silent spectacles can often accomplish as much as a torrent of words. Richard III, for example, works on the lord mayor and citizens of London by appearing before them silently reading a prayer book between two bishops (*Richard III*, 3.7). Although Renaissance rhetoricians generally prefer to avoid facing the issue of their relative powerlessness, the same cannot be said about the fiction writers of the period. In a variety of works they offer us wandering rogues, clever peasants, merchants, courtiers, aspiring noblemen – all of them

In the world of the Renaissance, when traditional loyalties have been effaced, when propaganda has become an essential tool of the church, and monarchs recognise that their success (and longevity) as rulers depends to a considerable extent on their ability to display power and magnificence in elaborate spectacles, the art of rhetoric has clearly become indispensable. But as its critics insisted, much of the disorder of their time was also due to rhetoric. In the following section we shall see how its advocates propose to re-establish order by using good rhetoric.

V

Throughout the Renaissance the discourse of rhetoric is continually afflicted by problems of ethics. To begin with, rhetoric's advocates are constantly forced to face the charge that to play the orator is to lie.⁵⁶⁰ In response they commonly adopt Bartolomeo Cavalcanti's approach, who, after acknowledging that rhetoric can be used for both good and ill, insists that only the individual who uses it for morally praiseworthy ends is a true rhetorician.⁵⁶¹ This strategy derives from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where he tries to respond to Plato's criticisms of the art in the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias*.⁵⁶² Renaissance advocates of rhetoric, therefore, 'solve' the ethical problem their art creates by claiming that the orator is, in Quintilian's words, 'a good man skilled in speaking',⁵⁶³ and that his fraudulent double is not an orator at all. But it is important to note

needy, dependent, and aware of their relative powerlessness, and all of them relying primarily on their skill with words in order to overcome the social limits imposed on them.

⁵⁶⁰ For examples see, J. Jewel, *Oratio Contra Rhetoricam*, in *The Works*, ed. J. Ayre (Cambridge, 1850), IV, pp. 1283-91, at p. 1286; G. Pico della Mirandola, 'Epistola Hermolao Barbaro, June 1485', in *Opera Omnia*, intr. C. Vasoli, (Basel, 1557; rpt. Hildesheim, 1969), pp. 351-58, at p. 352; F. Patrizi, *Della Retorica dieci dialoghi* (Venice, 1562), p. 40r; H. C. Agrippa, *De Incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium*, in *Opera* (Lyon, 1600 [?]; rpt. Hildesheim, 1970), II, p. 27; M. de Montaigne, 'De la vanité des paroles', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. A. Thibaudet and M. Rat (Paris, 1962), p. 292; and Ramus, *Dialectique*, pp. 128-29.

⁵⁶¹ B. Cavalcanti, *La retorica* (Ferrara, 1559), pp. 5-6; cf. Alsted, *Rhetorica*, p. 2; Keckermann, *Systema*, p. 504; Peacham, *Garden*, pp. 35, 52, 68-69, 75, 79, 167; Ermolao Barbaro's letter to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, in *Prosatori latini*, p. 854; de' Conti, *De eloquentia dialogus*, pp. 154-55; and Soarez, *Arte*, p. 9.

⁵⁶² Aristotle, *Rh.*, 1.1.13: 'And if it is argued that great harm can be done by unjustly using such power of words, this objection applies to all good things except for virtue, and most of all to the most useful things, like strength, health, wealth, and military strategy; for by using these justly one would do the greatest good and unjustly, the greatest harm'. Also see *ibid.*, 1.1.12, 1.3.6ff.; and *NE*, 1113a30ff. When addressing such questions Quintilian and Cicero draw on Aristotle: cf. Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.2.3; Quintilian, *Institutio*, 1.Pr.9-20; 12.1.1-32.

⁵⁶³ Quintilian, *Institutio*, 1.2.1.1: *vir bonus dicendi peritus*

that even though Renaissance writers echo the defence of rhetoric put forward by Aristotle and his Roman followers, often citing their very words, their conception of bad rhetoric often has a non-classical flavour. For example, when Francesco Patrizi condemns oratory as lying, he sees this tendency as a result of humanity's loss of its original, Edenic language, a loss that has produced 'deceptions, injuries, litigation, judges, lawyers, laws, tribunals, and orators'.⁵⁶⁴ In keeping with this Christian view, Johann Heinrich Alsted contrasts bad eloquence, which for him is 'dog-like and clearly diabolical' and ought to be banished, with good eloquence, which is sweet and useful and must be preserved as the weapon God gives people to fight against the monsters who obscure the sun of truth.⁵⁶⁵ He suggests that perverse, lying rhetoric be cut off by fire and water, so that the purified rhetoric left behind can perform its essential: curing 'souls corrupted by the fall'.⁵⁶⁶ In a world where Protestants and Catholics were competing for the allegiance of the populace, it is hardly surprising that the rhetoric used by each group to solidify its faith would at the same time be feared as supporting a bogus religion. Cypriano Soarez, a Counter-Reformation rhetorician, is typical in wanting Christian principles to purge rhetoric of its errors. He urges the reader to cut off its 'license to lie', as well as its 'repulsive vice of wounding others', so that the beauty of the Christian eloquence practised by the saints can be restored.⁵⁶⁷

The enemies of rhetoric also denounce it as a rabble-raising performance that lowers the orator to the level of the mob. As a result, the Renaissance discourse of rhetoric is permeated by a fear of social degradation. That anxiety surfaces whenever writers attempt to distinguish the orator from the actor, whom he clearly resembles. As seen in the previous chapter, even though Cicero admires the Roscius' talent and says in *De oratore* that the aspiring orator should take him as a paragon, he simultaneously remarks that actors only give pleasure to the ear, whereas the orator should also appeal to the intellect of his audience.⁵⁶⁸ Elsewhere in the dialogue, he adds that the orator

⁵⁶⁴ Patrizi, *Della retorica*, p. 31

⁵⁶⁵ Alsted, *Rhetorica, Dedication*, 3r, 6v.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

⁵⁶⁷ Soarez, *Arte*, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁶⁸ Cicero, *De or.*, 1.59.251, 259

should employ the mimicry of the actor in passing only, because that technique is insufficiently *liberale*⁵⁶⁹ (a term which in this context indicates the upper-class status of the *liber* or free man, as opposed to that of the slave), thus disclosing a fear of social debasement. Quintilian, like Cicero, accepts that there are similarities between the orator and the actor (particularly in delivery), yet emphasises the important of the former maintaining his distance from the latter. The orator, he says, should keep the use of theatrical gestures under check 'lest, when we would capture the elegance of the actor, we lose the authority of a good and dignified man'.⁵⁷⁰ It is clear that Quintilian's allusion to 'a good and dignified man', not only reiterates his description of the good orator as *a vir bonus dicendi peritus*, but also highlights the orator's moral worth, and his upper-class status as one of the *viri boni*, the 'best people' or *optimates*.

The rejection of bad rhetoric as theatre continues in the Middle Ages. Alain de Lille, for example, dismisses sermons involving buffoonery and rhythmic melodies as fit only for the theatre or the pantomime,⁵⁷¹ and Martianus Capella insists that the rhetorician must avoid the gestures of actors.⁵⁷² In the Renaissance, a time when the theatre undergoes an enormous development, such views proliferate. Pico della Mirandola wants the writing of philosophy, which he memorably characterises as a higher form of rhetoric, to have nothing 'theatrical, applause-inciting, or popular' about it.⁵⁷³ And Vives suggests that Roman oratory declined in the Empire partly because people started going to hear speeches 'as if to an entertainment in the theatre'.⁵⁷⁴ Francis Bacon concurs when he praises the Jesuits for using drama as a means to teach boys various skills, but says that the theatre in general is

⁵⁶⁹ Cicero, *De or.*, 2.62.252.

⁵⁷⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio* 11.3.184

⁵⁷¹ Alain de Lille, *Summa de arte praedicatoria*, in *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. J. M. Miller, M. H. Prosser, and T. W. Benson (Bloomington, IN, 1973), p. 231.

⁵⁷² M. Capella, *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*, tr. W. H. Stahl, R. Johnson, and E. L. Burge (NY, 1977), p. 205. See also Thomas Waleys *De Modo Componendi Sermones Cum Documentis*, in *Artes Praedicandi*, ed. Th.-M. O. P. Charland (Paris, 1936), p. 373. On the Medieval recognition of the close relationship between oratory and theatre see, Jody Enders, *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama* (Ithaca, 1992).

⁵⁷³ Pico, *Epistola*, p. 354.

⁵⁷⁴ Vives, *De Causis*, p. 168.

‘disreputable’.⁵⁷⁵ But it is when rhetoricians consider *actio* or delivery that concerns about the orator’s theatricality surface most often. Trebizond insists that the orator’s gestures should not be those of ‘actors’,⁵⁷⁶ and more than a century later Luis de Granada voices the same view: one should not imitate theatrical manners for fear of ‘degenerating to the gesticulating and frivolity of actors’.⁵⁷⁷

As Renaissance rhetoricians make the ideal orator the source of civilisation,⁵⁷⁸ so their dread of social degradation is linked with a fear of barbarism. Richard Sherry defines the stylistic fault called ‘Barbarie’ as that ‘whych turneth the speche from his purenes, and maketh it foule and rude’. He goes on to provide examples, which for him have been produced by barbarous men.⁵⁷⁹ In this passage, ‘barbarism’ is a historical category, the set of rhetorical and linguistic practices of the preceding age, which rhetoricians claim to have transcended, as they rehearse the belief that their culture has surpassed that of the Middle Ages and instigated a rebirth of the classical world.⁵⁸⁰ The sense of

⁵⁷⁵ Bacon, *Adv. L.*, p. 208; cf. D. Erasmus, *Ciceronianus*, in *Erasmus von Rotterdam, Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. W. Welzig (Darmstadt, 1972), VII, p. 88.

⁵⁷⁶ Trebizond, *Rhetoricorum*, 59r.

⁵⁷⁷ Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiastica Rhetorica*, p. 369

⁵⁷⁸ The many Renaissance renditions of the myth of the orator-civilizer can be traced back to passages found in texts written by Isocrates, Cicero, Horace, and Quintilian; see Isocrates, *Antidosis*, in *Works*, tr. G. Norlin (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 254-56; Cicero, *De oratore* 1.8.33; Horace, *Ars poetica*, in *Opera*, ed. E. Wickham and H. Garrod, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1929), pp. 391-401; and Quintilian, *Institutio*, 2.16.9. But the most influential of the ancient versions occurs at the beginning of Cicero’s *De inventione*, and its general outline parallels what one finds in Renaissance texts. In the beginning, Cicero writes, men wandered like animals guided only by brute strength, not reason. Lacking religion, marriage rites, and laws, they satisfied their desires through the abuse of physical force (1.2.2). Then a great man appeared who brought men together from the fields and woods and, through reason and eloquence, tamed them and taught them to observe justice, to work for the common good even at the cost of personal sacrifice, and to accept their social equality with others. Such a man is identical with Cicero’s ideal orator, i.e., one who combines wisdom with eloquence and stands forth as the most useful and devoted citizen in the state (1.1.1). For Renaissance versions of the myth see, e.g., Raphael Regius, *Panegyricus* (1492), pp. fiv-fiiir; George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), ed. G. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 22-3; Joan de Guzman, *Primera Parte de la Rhetorica* (1589), ed. and intr. by B. Perinan (Pisa, 1993), 31v, Du Vair, *Traitté*, p. 395.

⁵⁷⁹ R. Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550), intr. H. W. Hildebrandt (Gainesville, 1961), pp. 35-36. See also Puttenham, *Arte*, pp. 257-58.

⁵⁸⁰ The humanists consistently characterised their project of reviving classical Latin as a struggle against barbarism. For them foreign invasion and occupation was the cause of the original cultural decline and the effort to reverse this decline would, to a considerable extent, involve purifying the contemporary culture of foreign influences. The humanist preoccupation with barbarism can, of course, be traced back to classical Greece – the term is said to be onomatopoeic in origin; to the Greeks, the incomprehensible speech of rival tribes made a noise that sounded like ‘bar-bar’ (see A. Pagden, *Peoples and Empires* [N.Y., 2001], pp. 12-13).

Medieval corruption and decay was already articulated by Boccaccio, in a letter to Jacopo Pizzinghe from around 1370. He begins by writing in admiring tones about how ancient Rome achieved a total civilizational unit, which combined military triumphs with artistic, philosophical and moral ones, and then proceeds to complain that 'our ancestors' neglected all of these achievements 'with Godlike irresponsibility', and 'allowed them to be defiled, to be snatched away or shamefully destroyed by foreign peoples'.⁵⁸¹ For Philip Melanchthon only true speech is eloquent speech, and says that individuals in the previous age, who living 'in eternal darkness', lacked the eloquence that the Romans classified as part of *humanitas* (so-called because it could bring one out of barbarism).⁵⁸² In a similar vein, M. Le Grand observes that even though his countrymen possessed native sources of eloquence that went back to the ancient Druids, the barbarian invasions of the Middle Ages impaired the development of rhetoric until Renaissance writers such as Ronsard and Du Bellay found ways to 'pronounce their thoughts more clearly'.⁵⁸³ And it is to this 'myth of the Renaissance', that the Venetian humanist Ermolao Barbaro refers in the letter he wrote to the Florentine Neoplatonist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, praising him for his learning and eloquence, while attacking the Scholastics, the 'Germans', for their lack of a 'shining and elegant style'. The letter prompted what would become a famous letter to Barbaro.⁵⁸⁴ Pico, who had spent six years studying the writings of men Barbaro dismisses as 'barbaric', responds first by thanking him for his kind words and then by devoting most of the letter to a hypothetical speech that the maligned Germans might deliver in their own defence. In it Pico makes two

From a certain perspective, the Romans regarded their entire history as one long struggle against barbarianism, and this theme found its way into Roman accounts of eloquence. The Renaissance, therefore, had ample classical precedent for thinking about political conflict as involving a struggle against barbarianism. Italian thinkers, in particular, were aware of the fact that it was 'barbarian' Germanic tribes from the north who had brought about the final demise of the Roman Empire.

⁵⁸¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, 'Letter to Jacopo Pizzinghe', in *The portable Renaissance reader*, ed. J. B. Ross and M. M. McLaughlin, rev. edn. (Harmondsworth, 1978), pp. 125-6.

⁵⁸² Melanchthon, *Encomion*, pp. 48, 50.

⁵⁸³ Le Grand, *Discours*, n.p.

⁵⁸⁴ Pico della Mirandola, 'Epistola Hermolao Barbaro', at p. 358. For the phrase from Barbaro's letter see, Q. Breen, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric', *JHI*, 13 (1952), pp. 393. Also see, J. R. Henderson, 'Humanist Letter Writing: Private Conversation or Public Forum?' in *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*, ed. T. Van Houdt and J. Papy (Leuven, 2002).

complementary moves: he criticises rhetoric, focusing on the issue of elegant style, and he exalts the philosophical writing of the Scholastics. There is a clear tongue-in-cheek quality about Pico's defence, for he not only writes in an extremely elegant Latin style (as Barbaro himself would later note), but declares at the conclusion that his speech is a mock encomium, and that his aim has been to bring Barbaro to compose a praise of eloquence (just as Plato's Glaucon praised injustice in *The Republic* in order to goad Socrates to the praise of justice). Still, Pico's letter assembles some of the most telling arguments the Renaissance would make against rhetoric. He denounces it as deception and lies, as a trivial kind of theatricality, and as a vulgar display fit only for fools or the mob.⁵⁸⁵

If throughout the Renaissance the good rhetorician is a hero, then bad rhetoric is a monster, a grotesque body, to be driven away or slain. Shakespeare's *Falstaff* and Molière's *Tartuffe* provide fine examples of a correlation between physical grotesqueness and defective rhetoric. Both (albeit in quite different ways) indulge in verbal excesses that match their physical bulk. But perhaps the most grotesque figure of all appears in Thomas Nashe's satirical novel *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Jack Wilton, the work's protagonist, at one point listens to a ridiculous oration delivered in honour of the Duke of Saxony – it is packed with foolish redundancies, absurd puns, pedantic jokes, and obscure terms. However, the physical attributes of the man who delivers the oration are even more grotesque:

'A bursten-belly inkhorn orator called Vanderhulk they picked out to present him [the Duke] with an oration, one that had a sulphurous, big, swollen, large face like a Saracen, eyes like two Kentish oysters, a mouth that opened as wide every time he spoke as one of those old knit trap doors, a beard as though it had been made of a bird's nest plucked in pieces which consisteth of straw, hair, and dirt mixed together'.⁵⁸⁶

This passage stresses the appropriately named Vanderhulk's grotesqueness in a number of ways: it emphasises his monstrous size; it makes him appear half-human and half-animal; associates him with disease and evil (his 'sulphurous' face); links him to the barbarous ('Saracen'); and mocks him as dirty and

⁵⁸⁵ Pico, *Epistola*, pp. 352, 354, 355.

⁵⁸⁶ T. Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, ed. M. Lawlis (N.Y., 1967), p. 480.

disorderly. In this portrait are present virtually all the negative features symbolised by the deformed body of bad rhetoric.

If bad rhetoric has a monstrous body, good rhetoric must have a beautiful one. George of Trebizond, writing about *dispositio* or arrangement, compares the members of an oration to the parts of the body, saying that all should be in their proper places, as they are in Cicero's works.⁵⁸⁷ Similarly, Bartholomew Keckermann says that, 'an oration ... ought to be similar to a beautiful body, in which we marvel not so much at the members themselves as at their mutual joining together'.⁵⁸⁸ And for Thomas Wilson comeliness should also characterise the actual body of the ideal orator:

'The head to bee holden upright, the forehead without frowning, the browes without bending, the nose without blowing, the eyes quicke and pleasant, the lippes not laied out, the teeth without grenning, the armes not much cast abroad, but comely set out, as time and cause shall best require: the handes sometimes opened, and sometimes holden together, the fingers pointing, the breast laied out, and the whole bodie stirring altogether, with a seemely moderation. By the which behaviour of our bodie after such a sorte, we shall not onely delite men with the sight, but perswade them the rather the trueth of our cause'.⁵⁸⁹

Wilson, therefore, thinks that such a body will not only delight the audience but persuade them in and of itself to believe in the truth of the orator's cause.

Even so, Renaissance rhetoricians clearly fail to protect good rhetoric from charges of immorality. What is more, they fail to ensure its upper-class status, because they often make the art of kings appear like the spectacle of a lower-class swindler. Yet, this slippage is hardly surprising. After all, like bad rhetoric, good rhetoric is intended for all kinds audiences; so the danger of contamination by contact with the 'low' type is inevitable. One good example of Renaissance anxiety about the protean nature of rhetoric can be found in Antonio Riccobono's *Oratio pro studiis humanitatis*. After alluding to Aristotle's remark that the province of rhetoric encompasses all subjects, he says:

'Although the special function of the orator is to treat of civil matters, nevertheless eloquence has not been circumscribed with railings, has no fixed

⁵⁸⁷ George, *Rhetoricorum*, 54v.

⁵⁸⁸ Keckermann, *Systema*, p. 128.

⁵⁸⁹ Wilson, *Arte*, 221.

borders and established limits for itself. It wanders and sallies forth wherever it pleases, and disputes of all things even pertaining to other disciplines so that it makes them its own. Nor should one think it has gone outside its limits and seized those things which belong to others ...'.⁵⁹⁰

For Riccobono, as for so many others in the Renaissance, rhetoric is the supremely imperial art, and he thus celebrates it for its malleability and power. But despite his enthusiasm, when he insists that rhetoric's violation of boundaries should not be seen as such (because rhetoric cultivates the territory it invades), we can discern a certain misgiving about the art's capacity for boundary violation to surface. In fact, his attempt at rationalisation highlights the potential immorality involved in violating boundaries. After all, by crossing boundaries rhetoric can potentially create intellectual, social, and political confusion – a problem rhetoricians generally prefer to ignore. The critics of rhetoric lambasted it precisely because of this capacity, which they associated with sedition and rebellion. Such attacks prompted its defenders to insist that their art was a source of order, a cure for the ills which, ironically, rhetoric itself helped to produce. Still, many acknowledged these issues and, as a consequence, sought to reform the art.

This effort partly explains not merely the endless production of rhetoric books in the period (all promising to correct the defects of their predecessors), but also the radical reform of the discipline undertaken by the protestant martyr Pierre de la Ramée (1515-72), better known as Petrus Ramus.⁵⁹¹ Ramus and his followers, who attained considerable influence in Cambridge as well as Paris, urged educational authorities and students to take up a new, pragmatic version of dialectic and rhetoric. His proposed reorganisation of the liberal arts was rooted in Ramus' conviction that the traditional curriculum (especially the teaching of the *trivium*), had become filled with redundancies

⁵⁹⁰ A. Riccobono, *Oratio*; cited in G. Mazzacurati, *La crisi della retorica umanistica nel cinquecento* (Naples, 1961), p. 176.

⁵⁹¹ His polemical career came to a violent end when Ramus, an early convert to Huguenotism, was murdered in the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day in 1572. He was educated at the Collège de Navarre of the University of Paris during the late 1520s, a crucial period for the teaching of dialectic in the University. For more on Ramus and Ramism see, Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*; P. Sharratt, 'Ramus 2000', *Rhetorica*, 18 (2000), pp. 399-455; K. Meerhoff and J.-C. Moisan (eds.), *Autor de Ramus: texte, théorie, commentaire* (Québec, 1997); J. Freedman, 'The Diffusion of the Writings of Petrus Ramus in Central Europe, c1570-c1630', *RQ*, 46:1 (1993), pp. 98-152; J. C. Adams, 'Ciceronianus and the Place of Peter Ramus' *Dialecticae libri duo* in the Curriculum', *RQ*, 43:3 (1990), pp. 551-69; and N. Bruyère, *Méthode et dialectique dans l'oeuvre de La Ramée* (Paris, 1984).

and overlapping categories.⁵⁹² It is worth noting that Ramus was building on the pioneering work undertaken by Rudolphus Agricola (1443-85),⁵⁹³ who was dismayed at the great confusion, the 'filthiness', which he saw afflicting the realm of learning. 'All things, as though they had sprung out of a cave', Agricola complains, 'have burst through the rightful bounds of their neighbours, nor do we learn almost anything at this time in its proper place'.⁵⁹⁴ Here his view of boundary violation is purely negative: it is filth and confusion and an assault against what is right (*ius*).⁵⁹⁵

However, as seen earlier, rhetoric is by its very nature a boundary violator, so even though it may be liberating in some constructions, it will always be threatening (despite the best efforts of rhetoricians to make it appear otherwise). Whether good or bad, therefore, rhetoric will always be a monster, and to banish the monster means nothing less than to banish rhetoric itself. But such a move is clearly impossible, for as Vives and many others knew, rhetoric is infused in all things, present wherever language is in use. To banish the monster of rhetoric would be to banish communication, to banish human society.

VI

⁵⁹² With its businesslike stress on method and analysis and its de-emphasis of rhetoric, Ramism had a strong appeal to the class of rising bourgeois who in England and in the continent were inclined to embrace Calvinism. In fact, Ramus' works enjoyed particular favour not in highly sophisticated intellectual circles but rather in elementary or secondary schools or along the fringe where secondary schooling and university education met. See W. J. Ong, 'Ramist Method and the Commercial Mind', in his *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971), pp. 165-89, at p. 165. Neal Gilbert suggests that Ramism appealed to the Protestant ethic by providing a way of training students 'to make useful contributions to the betterment of man's estate in the shortest possible time' ('Review of W. J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue and Ramus and Talon Inventory*', *RN*, 12 [1959], pp. 269-71, at p. 271).

⁵⁹³ For more on Agricola see, L. Jardine, 'Inventing Rudolph Agricola', in *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Culture*, ed. A. Grafton and A. Blair (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 39-86; for a critique see, J. Monfasani, 'Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola', *JHI*, 28 (1990), pp. 181-200.

⁵⁹⁴ R. Agricola, *De Inventione dialectica libri tres* (Cologne, 1528; rpt. Hildesheim, 1976), pp. 142-43. Book II is devoted to dialectic and the place of rhetorical invention in it. Agricola endorses the Stoic analogy of the difference between logic and rhetoric as that between the closed and the open hand. He thinks that rhetoric differed from logic only in that it presented more prettily and loosely what logic had demonstrated in a stricter fashion.

⁵⁹⁵ Ramus is also obsessed with the idea of maintaining sharp boundaries between discrete subjects, an obsession that helps to explain the drive behind his programme of reform. See *Attack on Cicero: Text and Translation of Ramus's Brutinae Quaestiones*, ed. J.J. Murphy, tr. C. Newlands (Davis, Ca., 1992), pp. 22, 42.

The domain of rhetoric in the Renaissance was truly enormous. As seen above, in the thinking of the period rhetoric is not limited to the three varieties traditionally associated with the art (by means of the formal situations in which it is practised): forensic rhetoric for the law courts, deliberative rhetoric for political discussions, and demonstrative or epideictic rhetoric for speeches of praise and blame. Rhetoric had already migrated into poetics in the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance continues to conflate the two, just as it follows the former period in conceiving letter-writing and preaching as branches of the art. What is more, many Renaissance writers take their cue from Aristotle and Cicero and do not limit rhetoric to formal speeches. Instead, they conceive of it in the widest terms as being present practically wherever communication and persuasion occur. In an insightful article on Renaissance culture, William J. Bouwsma has shown that the breakdown of boundaries between conceptual and social spheres generated both a certain cultural anxiety and a new freedom and mobility for individuals. 'Renaissance rhetoric', he says, 'was ... valued for its plasticity, its ability to flow into and through every area of experience, to disregard and cross inherited boundaries as though they had no real existence, and to create new but always malleable structures of its own',⁵⁹⁶ Polymorphous and ubiquitous, therefore, rhetoric could serve practically all individuals and fit practically all situations as it blithely crossed boundaries among disciplines, professions, and social classes.

In the Renaissance rhetoricians were, in general, men striving to rise above the social stations they inherited at birth, an advancement that their talents and training were supposed to make possible. The acquisition of rhetorical (and other) skills in the process of education did enable many of them to gain positions, not just as schoolmasters, but as bureaucrats and legislators, notaries and lawyers, secretaries and courtiers. In other words, a training in rhetoric and the other liberal arts enabled people from the lower and middling classes to move up the social ladder and, in some cases, even to associate with the élite. What that training normally could not do, except in the rarest of instances, was to allow them to actually become part of the élite.

⁵⁹⁶ W. J. Bouwsma, 'Anxiety and the Formation of Early Modern Culture', in *After the Reformation*, ed. B. Malament (Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 215-46, at p. 234.

Comment [A2]:

Sir Thomas More's rise to the rank of Lord Chancellor is the exception that proves the rule. Renaissance rhetoricians, like the vast majority of those they trained, remained in the middle, above the bulk of the population (consisting of peasants and craftsmen), but distinctly below the nobles and merchant-magnates who ruled states and city-states throughout Europe.

The deeply conflicted desire for social advancement felt by most Renaissance men, surely lies behind their fantasies about the power of oratory, and their clear identification with ancient figures such as Demosthenes, Cicero, and, more revealingly, Caesar. Perhaps the most dramatic revelation of the orator's ultimate powerlessness – unless, of course, he was not already sovereign ruler – is a simple historical fact, which rhetoricians seem unable to keep out of their works. For example, in his *Foundacion of Rhetorike*, Richard Rainolde celebrates the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes as enabling their social advancement and even allowing them to rebuke tyrants. He adds, however, a section on how both 'wer put to death' on the order of tyrannical rulers.⁵⁹⁷ Rainolde, thus, acknowledges what every rhetorician in the Renaissance knew: Cicero may have been the king and consul of Rome because of his eloquence, but that fact did not prevent Mark Antony's soldiers from murdering him and placing his severed head and hands on the rostra in the forum.⁵⁹⁸ As such anecdotes show, Renaissance rhetoricians knew full well that they were dependent on the great and powerful, and that the political, legal, and military power of their rulers (whether kings or tyrants), constituted an absolute limit for them. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that faced with such a reality they would make exaggerated claims about the power of their art. Even though their intermittent complaints about mistreatment and low salaries, and their occasional references to Cicero's death, expose those claims as the product of a compensatory fantasy.

⁵⁹⁷ R. Rainolde, *Foundacion of Rhetorike*, xlviiiiv.

⁵⁹⁸ When Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian met near Bologna in 43 BC to form the Second Triumvirate and decided to draw up proscription lists to get money to reward their troops, Antony demanded that Cicero's name be put first. He was killed trying to escape to Greece to join the forces of Brutus and Cassius, and Antony had his hands and head cut off and nailed to the speaker's platform in Rome, from which Cicero had delivered many of his speeches against Antony (the so-called 'Philippics'). See *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia*, ed. D. Crystal, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1999); and C. W. Wooten, *Cicero's Philippics and Their Demosthenic Model* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1983).

We have seen that in the 'Machiavellian' world of the Renaissance – when traditional allegiances have been effaced, when propaganda is becoming an essential tool of the church, and monarchs recognise that their success as rulers depends in good measure on their ability to display power and magnificence in elaborate spectacles – the art of rhetoric had become indispensable. However, as the critics of rhetoric insisted, much of the disorder of the contemporary world was also due to rhetoric. Its defenders, tried to re-establish order, not by banishing rhetoric altogether, but by using more rhetoric – this time good rhetoric, to replace or drive out the bad. Yet, in the Renaissance (as in the modern world), medicine and poison are often indistinguishable. Put differently, rhetoric, characterised in such terms, is simultaneously both cure and disease.

*The rhetoric of reason:
Philosophy and rhetoric in Hobbes and Locke*

I

Of the many philosophers and political theorists who have railed against rhetoric, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704) surely count as two of its staunchest opponents. In a well-known passage in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke sets the arts of rhetoric at odds with the pursuit of knowledge. '[I]f we would speak of Things as they are', he says, 'we must allow, that all the Art of Rhetorick, besides Order and Clearness, ... are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgement; and so indeed are perfect cheat ...'. Because of this, in 'all Discourses that pretend to inform or instruct' and 'where Truth and Knowledge are concerned', rhetoric is 'wholly to be avoided' and 'cannot but be thought a great fault...'.⁵⁹⁹ Hobbes shares Locke's distrust and, in *De Cive* (1642), he specifically denounces the practitioners of the *Ars rhetorica* as among the most dangerous enemies of social stability. For Hobbes, one reason why creatures such as ants and bees are capable of living sociably without government, while humans can never hope to do so, is that, 'such animals lack that art of words by means of which good can be represented to the mind as better, and evil as worse, than is truly the case'.⁶⁰⁰ The corresponding passage in *Leviathan* (1651) is even more bitterly phrased. The 'art of words' is such that its advocates can 'augment, or diminish the apparent greatnesse of Good and Evil' whenever they like, 'discontenting men, and troubling their Peace at their pleasure'.⁶⁰¹ In a similar vein, Locke remarks in the *Essay* that 'If we consider, in the Fallacies, Men put

⁵⁹⁹ J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), III.x.34, p. 508; emphasis added.

⁶⁰⁰ T. Hobbes, *De Cive*, ed. H. Warrender (Oxford, 1983), III.v.v., p. 133.

⁶⁰¹ Id., *Leviathan, Or The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* [1651], ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge, 1996), XVII, pp. 119-20.

upon themselves, as well as others, and the Mistakes in Men's Disputes and Notions, how great a part is owing to Words, and their uncertain or mistaken Significations, we shall have reason to think this no small obstacle in the way to Knowledge ...'.⁶⁰² Even though they did not always practice what they preach, we must take seriously Hobbes's and Locke's frequent statements against ornamentation and in favour of a plain, undogmatic style. They attacked scholastic language, appropriating and elaborating the humanist critique of scholasticism. Another target was the copious and highly ornamented language associated with Renaissance poetry and rhetoric.

In this chapter, I suggest that Hobbes's and Locke's arguments against rhetoric allow us to grasp why the art was thought to be so powerful in the field of civil philosophy. Both philosophers believe that rhetoric represents a dangerous threat to the basis of political life, and continually emphasise how citizens are often swayed by bad or false rhetoric into believing in false politics. In *Behemoth* or the Long Parliament, a set of dialogues written in the 1660s, Hobbes says he regards the interregnum as one of the nadirs of British history: a time when superstition, irrationality, hypocrisy and self-conceit reigned supreme. He blames two groups in particular for this poisonous intellectual climate: the Presbyterians and other 'Fanatick Ministers', and the 'democratic gentlemen' in the House of Commons. Despite always being a minority in the House, the rhetorical training of those MPs made them 'great Haranguers' and they were thus able to impose any amount of folly and vice on the majority and to win over and betray the common people. For Hobbes the same applies with even greater force in the case of the Presbyterians and their allies, whose 'long practised Histrionick faculty preached up the rebellion powerfully'.⁶⁰³ In the Preface to his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Locke complains that the clergy have adopted Filmer's absolutist doctrine and arrogated to themselves the role of teachers of civic ideas. Locke says they have 'done the Truth and the Public wrong' and we thus have 'reason to complain of the Drum

⁶⁰² Locke, *Essay*, III.ix.21, pp. 488-9.

⁶⁰³ T. Hobbes, *T. Behemoth or the Long Parliament*, ed. F. Tönnies, 2nd edn., intr. M. M. Goldsmith (London, 1969), p. 363. 'To Hobbes', as Quentin Skinner concludes, 'the English revolution appears as a victory for the irrational but overwhelming power of neoclassical and antinomian rhetoric over the small power of science and rationality' (*Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* [Cambridge, 1996], p. 435).

Ecclesiastick', for 'there cannot be done a greater Mischief to Prince and People, than the Propagating wrong Notions concerning Government'.⁶⁰⁴ And in the *Essay*, Locke maintains that the 'artificial Ignorance, and learned Gibberish' of scholastic 'Disputants' or 'all-knowing Doctors,' had 'prevailed mightily in these last Ages' to mislead the citizenry.⁶⁰⁵

For Hobbes and Locke, in short, times of political turbulence in their respective lifetimes appear as a victory for the irrational but overwhelming power of rhetoric. In this context, it is hardly surprising that, for them, the question of how to resolve the problem of rhetoric and language ambiguity remains one of the major tasks facing any civil philosophy worthy of the name. In the remainder of this chapter, which falls into two main parts – dealing with Hobbes and Locke respectively – I show how their main works exhibit a quasi-Platonic antagonism towards rhetoric. Like Plato in the *Gorgias*, Hobbes and Locke may also be said to uphold genuine truth against rhetoric's apparent truth, the only difference being that for Plato the villains are the Sophists and for Hobbes and Locke, the scholastics and certain Puritan preachers. Again like Plato, neither Hobbes nor Locke condemn rhetoric *tout court*. Their animus is not directed against persuasion as a concomitant of instruction, but against the forensic temper which prizes success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth. I suggest not only that both philosophers use rhetoric to fight rhetoric, but that in their works two forms of persuasion, echoing Plato, are alluded to: (i) a rhetoric that produces persuasion in the absence of knowledge, and (ii) a genuine or 'true' art of rhetoric, the sort that produces knowledge (*epistêmê*) in the privileged sense.⁶⁰⁶

Notwithstanding the similarities of Hobbes's and Locke's animus towards rhetoric and rhetoricians there is, of course, a deep and significant difference in the two teachings. The bulk of Hobbes's political writings, in *Leviathan* and elsewhere, is dedicated to the proposition that 'the supreme power must always be absolute'.⁶⁰⁷ The argument that it is necessary to obey the sovereign

⁶⁰⁴ J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. P. Laslett (Cambridge, 1988), 31-51.

⁶⁰⁵ Id., *Essay*, III.x.9, p. 495.

⁶⁰⁶ See, e.g., Plato, *Gorgias*, 454e; and *Phaedrus*, 269d. Also see ch. 2 above, esp. pp. 37-59.

⁶⁰⁷ *Behemoth*, p. 112.

(who must become the commonwealth's final 'Arbitrator or judge'⁶⁰⁸) and keep the peace – no matter how inconvenient – depends on the assumption that the alternative to obedience is general conflict. The only 'true' or 'good' rhetorician for Hobbes is, therefore, the absolute sovereign. For a radical such as Locke, Hobbes's absolutism was repugnant, overriding as it necessarily did individual civil liberty. So it is hardly surprising that, in his view, any truly free and rational individual can – at least in theory – be a good rhetorician. This is clearly the kind of genuine rhetoric Locke expects from the people's elected representatives. As Locke says in the *Two Treatises*, they ought to 'freely act and advise, as the necessity of the Commonwealth, and the publick Good should, upon examination, and mature debate, be judged to require'.⁶⁰⁹ As I suggest in the second part of this chapter, Locke's stress on honesty and boldness – provided it is governed by impartial judgement – contrasts sharply with the sycophantic rhetoric of courtiers, as well as with the delusive rhetoric of the scholastics and certain enthusiastic preachers. And his strand of theorizing constitutes an attempt to replace the culture of authoritarianism with a culture which emancipates citizens to follow reason. Locke took from the 'new philosophy' of Hobbes, Descartes and Malebranche an understanding of the need to suspend assent to any authoritative belief until it has been thoroughly examined. But he moves beyond anti-dogmatism, grafting a different notion of liberty onto it.⁶¹⁰ Put differently, Locke's assault on 'bad' or 'false' rhetoric goes hand in hand with his anti-Hobbesian view of liberty. He attacks the *ars rhetorica*, not in order to replace the ethical and legal norms of politics with an unscrupulous *realpolitik*, but in order to rescue a classical understanding of politics as deliberative co-operation among equals, which requires truthful and open discourse.

⁶⁰⁸ See *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, ed. F. Tönnies, 2nd edn. (London, 1969), pp. 90-1; *Leviathan*, V, pp. 32-3; VI, p. 39.

⁶⁰⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, II.222.44-6.

⁶¹⁰ According to Quentin Skinner, Locke's understanding of civil liberty is 'neo-roman' (*Liberty before Liberalism* [Cambridge, 1998]). In the history of political thought, variants of this notion of liberty run from Aristotle to Karl Marx and beyond, and are in opposition to Hobbes's version of negative liberty, which has served to underpin what may be termed liberalism and possessive individualism. Also see, C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1962).

II

One of the most important development in Hobbes scholarship in recent times has been the recovery of the centrality of rhetoric for the development of his political philosophy. Some scholars, like Leo Strauss, distinguish between a humanistic period (1608 to circa 1630) and a scientific period (1630 to 1679) in Hobbes.⁶¹¹ He famously contends that there is an apparent disjunction between the years leading up to Hobbes's exposure to geometry, which are typically humanistic, and the years following his Euclidean 'revelation'. In the early period – exemplified by Hobbes's translation of Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War*⁶¹² – history is the source of knowledge; in the later, science (particularly geometry), is the basis of genuine knowledge. Other scholars, such as Miriam Reik and David Johnston, dismiss the presumed discontinuity between Hobbes's humanist and scientific periods.⁶¹³ They argue that Hobbes's humanistic concerns did not disappear: his devotion to literature persisted, as in his end-of-the-life translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into English. In addition, they emphasise the implausibility of a forty-one-year-old philosopher totally breaking with his previously held ideas – ideas held for over twenty years.

In the past decade, it is Quentin Skinner who has most substantially and notoriously explored the domain of rhetoric in Hobbes's political philosophy. Skinner associates his argument with Johnston's, and distinguishes it from that of Leo Strauss.⁶¹⁴ According to Strauss, Skinner tells us, Hobbes's interest

⁶¹¹ It is important to note that even though Strauss states that Hobbes broke with his humanist past before he wrote any of his major works, he also argues that the essence of Hobbes's political theory derives from his humanist period. See his *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, tr. E. M. Sinclair (Chicago, 1952), pp. 27-9.

⁶¹² See *Eight Bookes of the Peloponnesian Warre Written by Thucydides ... Interpreted ... By Thomas Hobbes* (London, 1629). In this work, Hobbes stressed that he had attempted to achieve 'the highest standards of humanist textual scholarship' (Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric*, p. 239). For information on the Thucydidean character of Hobbes's mature philosophy see, Gabriella Slomp, 'Hobbes, Thucydides and The Three Greatest Things', *HPT*, 11:4 (1990), p. 566; George Klosko and Daryl Rice, 'Thucydides and Hobbes's State of Nature', *HPT*, 6:3 (1985), p. 405; and Clifford Brown, Jr., 'Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Derivation of Anarchy', *HPT*, 8:1 (1987), pp. 53-5.

⁶¹³ M. Reik, *The Golden Lands of Thomas Hobbes* (Detroit, MI, 1977), esp. ch. 2; D. Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton, 1986), esp. ch. 1.

⁶¹⁴ Q. Skinner, "'Scientia Civilis' in classical rhetoric and in the early Hobbes", in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. N. Phillipson and Q. Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 77-8.

in rhetoric was confined to his 'humanist' period, which ends with the 1620s. After this Hobbes returned to his youthful philosophical studies, made his epoch-making (if confusing) 'discovery' of geometrical method, and turned to the preoccupations characteristic of his 'mature period' as a political scientist.⁶¹⁵ The main line of Skinner's argument may be put quite simply. Hobbes began as a humanist who accepted, with most of his contemporaries, the importance of the *ars retorica*.⁶¹⁶ But he came to reject the cornerstones of rhetorical practice: (i) to 'start by securing so far as possible the goodwill and favourable attention of our audience';⁶¹⁷ (ii) to elicit 'wise guidance in practical affairs ... from a study of history',⁶¹⁸ and (iii) the willingness to accommodate 'arguments to generally accepted beliefs and their expression in common speech'.⁶¹⁹ This shift, which occurred in the 1630s, was caused by his discovery of the geometrical method, his pursuit of his scientific interests through his association with Sir Charles Cavendish and his friends, and his introduction to the Parisian scientific circle of Marin Mersenne. He now conceived philosophy (and politics as one of its parts), as a rigorous deductive science modeled on mathematics and the natural sciences, in which the linguistic devices of rhetoric had no place, and which, spurning eloquence, relied solely on the power of reason to teach the truth. The product of this stage was his two earliest political treatises, *The Elements of Law* in 1640 and *De Cive* in 1642. Then with the publication in 1651 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes reversed his position again, claiming a distinction between moral and natural sciences and demonstrating that in the moral sciences eloquence must be employed as support for demonstrative reasoning. In this stage, which proceeded from his reflections on the experience of the English civil war,⁶²⁰ Hobbes came to

⁶¹⁵ While this account of Strauss's position correctly registers what he took to be a development of Hobbes's *method*, it probably under-emphasise Strauss's general argument, i.e., that this must not obscure some fundamental continuities. Thus Strauss argues that there was no change in the essential content of the argument and aim of Hobbes's political philosophy from the introduction to his translation to Thucydides up to the latest works (*Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, p. 112).

⁶¹⁶ Skinner focuses on rhetoric, but he emphasises that the young Hobbes was extremely well versed in the other characteristically humanist disciplines, such as poetry and history (*Reason and Rhetoric*, pp. 215-49).

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁶²⁰ Richard Ashcraft argues that not only is the Civil War to be understood as the background to

acknowledge that reason by itself was incapable of persuading people of the truth or of making his own political ideas acceptable.⁶²¹ Skinner tells us that as Hobbes came to believe that 'interest' could undermine reason, he 'reverts to the humanist ideal of a union between *rattio* and *orattio*'.⁶²² And he did so in such a way that, according to Skinner, *Leviathan* is 'a belated but magnificent contribution to the Renaissance art of eloquence'.⁶²³

It is important to note, however, that neither the proponents nor the critics of the 'break hypothesis' maintain their position absolutely.⁶²⁴ Hobbes's 'discovery' of science involved both his abandonment of some previously held ideas and his retention of others. Strauss thus acknowledges that Hobbes's focus upon the passions as motives of war (a question Thucydides had posed) established a 'fundamental moral attitude' which defined the 'essential content' of his later works. As the passions underlay war, so they would furnish (in 'fear of death') the motive for peace.⁶²⁵ Similarly Hobbes's 'post-humanist' break with Aristotle's philosophy stood in contrast to a preoccupation with his rhetoric (which Hobbes described as 'rare') which spanned the 1630s and profoundly influenced his later writings.⁶²⁶ Even though Skinner presents Hobbes's paraphrase of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*⁶²⁷ as one of the main achievements of his humanism, he also acknowledges that the work is the earliest example of Hobbes's 'misgivings' about eloquence. And a citation Skinner gives to illustrate Hobbes's 'sweeping attack' on the intrinsic link between rhetoric and sedition, refers to Hobbes's 'Life of Thucydides',

Hobbes's political views, but that it shapes the substance of his political theory ('Ideology and Class in Hobbes' Political Theory', *PT*, 6 [1978], pp. 27-62).

⁶²¹ Skinner quotes from *Leviathan*'s 'A Review and Conclusion': 'In all Deliberations, and in all Pleadings, the faculty of solid Reasoning is necessary: for without it the Resolutions of men are rash, and their Sentences unjust: and yet if there be not powerfull Eloquence, which procureth attention and Consent, the effect of Reason will be little' (*ibid.*, p. 352).

⁶²² *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶²⁴ Thus Strauss speaks of a humanist essence that remains throughout Hobbes's later political theory, while Reik and Johnston find new emphases and interests. Yet, Reik deems 'the path that led from ... humanistic studies to political and scientific concerns ... a natural one for the seventeenth-century mind, just as it was natural then for a poet like Milton to write a textbook in logic as well as his poems' (*Golden Lands*, p. 51).

⁶²⁵ Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, pp. 42, 108-13, 170.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-43, 170. The emphasis on Aristotle is noted by Conal Condren, 'On the Rhetorical Foundations of *Leviathan*', *HPT*, 11 (1990), pp. 703-20.

⁶²⁷ Published anonymously as *A Briefe of the Art of Rhetorique* in c. 1637. Text published in *The Rhetorics of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Lamy*, ed. J. Harwood (Carbondale, Ill., 1986).

written in 1629, i.e., before the about-face. Skinner himself is, of course, aware that Hobbes's re-conversion to rhetoric in *Leviathan* is problematic: 'He continues to harbour many of his earlier anxieties about its deceiving nature and its potentially pernicious effects on the proper conduct of public life'.⁶²⁸

My own position here owes most to Skinner's, and yet I believe that his analysis might have benefited, had he not tried so hard to confine himself to a very narrow and indeed technical understanding of rhetoric. Skinner's argument derived from his conception of rhetoric as 'a distinctive set of linguistic techniques ... derived from the rhetorical doctrines of *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, the three principal elements in classical and Renaissance theories of written eloquence'.⁶²⁹ However, rhetoric is more than a set of linguistic techniques – it is also a culture, outlook, and philosophy. Skinner does acknowledge the broader meaning of rhetoric as more than rhetorical devices. He discusses argument *in utramque partem*, scepticism, and the 'politics of eloquence',⁶³⁰ as part of the rhetorical tradition. But in the *Leviathan* Hobbes continues to reject these aspects of the rhetorical tradition: he continues to view argument *in utramque partem* as politically dangerous; he retains the scientific, non-rhetorical goal of demonstration in *Leviathan*;⁶³¹ and he persists in his attack of the republican, and rhetorical, ideal of the *vir civilis*. Hobbes's returns to rhetoric in *Leviathan* must, therefore, be further qualified because of Hobbes's rejection of the non-stylistic elements of rhetoric.

I suggest that if we attend more to the philosophic response to the dangers posed by rhetoric for politics as set out, for example, in Plato's *Gorgias* or even in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, we are more likely to arrive at a better understanding of why and how Hobbes moves from an view of politics in which rhetoric is

⁶²⁸ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 343. Skinner chronicles the general expressions of hostility toward, and specific criticisms of the classical theory of eloquence contained in *Leviathan* (pp. 344-46). Hobbes 'renews his attack on *inventio*', 'raises a number of doubts about rhetorical *elocutio*', and assails rhetorical deliberation.

⁶²⁹ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 6. This definition of rhetoric as a 'set of linguistic techniques' allows Skinner to argue more easily that Hobbes returned to rhetoric in *Leviathan*. In contrast to the anti-rhetorical Hobbes, who avoided the trappings of eloquence in *The Elements* and *De Cive*, Hobbes in *Leviathan* abandons 'the severely scientific prose of *The Elements*' for a 'highly "ornamental" style' and the use of *ornatus* in *Leviathan* (ibid., p. 363).

⁶³⁰ That is, republican virtue as a rhetorical ideal.

⁶³¹ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, pp. 335-36.

condemned as a cause of civil strife, to his confidence in *Leviathan* that the internal causes of civil strife can be altogether eliminated. We can also show more conclusively that Hobbes's very conception of civil science is based upon his understanding of rhetoric. I also hope to suggest that it is easy to exaggerate the tension between science and rhetoric to be found in Hobbes's writings.⁶³² The truth is, I think, that Hobbes's politics always combined rhetoric and science, but that it took some time for his philosophy of science to acknowledge this fact and allow that science and rhetoric were reconcilable. Finally, I argue that it is in speech in general, and in the misuse of words, that Hobbes finds the sources of conflict and sedition. Put differently, his view of rhetoric as a danger to civil society is intimately related to his mistrust of language in general.

In all three of his political treatises Hobbes takes issue with Aristotle's comparison of political man to other gregarious animals.⁶³³ He advances six objections to the tenet that man is by nature a political animal like the bees or ants. First, unlike bees, men compete for precedence and honor, and for the 'acknowledgment of wisdom' which can be a source of honor, and thus fall into hatred and disputes. Second, man's private good lies in being eminent in 'dominion, superiority, and private wealth', and thus is not identical with the common good. Third, having high opinions of their own wisdom, men claim to invariably perceive defects in governments and devise schemes for altering them. Fourth, men (unlike bees⁶³⁴) possess the 'art of words' by which things can be made to appear better or worse than they actually are, and hence are able to 'instigate one another to faction'. Fifth, men alone can quarrel over differing conceptions of right and wrong, and distinguish between 'injury' and

⁶³² It seems to me that Johnston is guilty of exaggeration when he claims that Hobbes chose a scientific presentation of his politics in *The Elements of Law* and was only converted to the uses of rhetoric in *Leviathan* (p. 61). At times, however, even Johnston finds himself reluctant to deny that *Leviathan* is a work of science or that *The Elements of Law* has flashes of eloquence. This undercuts his claim that a fundamental dilemma faced Hobbes's political philosophy and that a choice had to be made between rhetoric and science.

⁶³³ *EL*, 1.19.5; *De Cive*, V.5; *Leviathan*, XVII, p. 111. Tom Sorell argues that, even though the essentials remain the same in all three political treatises, the presentation changes in *De Cive* and *Leviathan* ('Hobbes's Persuasive Civil Science', *PQ*, 40:160 [1990], pp. 342-51).

⁶³⁴ In fact Aristotle argues in the *Politics* (1253a1-18) that it is precisely speech that differentiates men from bees. Politics for Aristotle is to a large degree contestation in words over doctrines of justice.

mere 'damage'. Finally, the union of men is artificial, while that of bees is natural.

It is important to note that four of the six human traits Hobbes puts forward as proof that men are naturally unsociable – a principle which is essential to his civil science – are associated with language. I believe this to be indicative of Hobbes's concern with words and doctrines as sources of conflict and sedition. 'The tongue of man', Hobbes says, is a trumpet of war and sedition'.⁶³⁵ This is true not only in the state of nature (which is characterised by an 'anarchy of meanings' as well as the absence of sovereign power⁶³⁶), but also in the imperfectly constituted commonwealths whose experience, in his view, comprise most of history. In all his treatises on the nature of the state he conceives the task of civil science as one of reconstituting the state as artifice, by human will.⁶³⁷ And the success of his project depends to a large extent on the correct application of language – from the form of words in the founding covenant to the sovereign's authority to promulgate right doctrine. It is also a precarious one, threatened at every stage by failure to reach agreement or abide by the rules established. And while Hobbes points to the persistence of private opinion (grounded in private passions) as the ultimate source of conflict, verbal disputes are its most common immediate and manifest cause.⁶³⁸

Despite his extreme individualism and materialistic motivation, the Hobbesian man is not so much acquisitive as he is avid for power, honor, and preeminence.⁶³⁹ And Hobbes presents the manipulation of words as an important – perhaps even the primary – means to both of these ends. Men achieve power by persuading others to follow them or their cause; men achieve eminence through the reputation of cleverness or wisdom. In either case, disputes arise over differences of opinion, which may often be reduced to

⁶³⁵ *De Cive*, V.5.

⁶³⁶ Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston, 1960), p. 257.

⁶³⁷ M. Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Berkeley, CA., 1975), p. 7.

⁶³⁸ On the Hobbesian covenant as a 'bypass of [private] political opinion' see, Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., 'Hobbes and the Science of Indirect Government', *APSR*, 65 (1971), pp. 97-110, at p. 100.

⁶³⁹ For an different view see, Macpherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. The place of 'vanity' in the motivation of Hobbesian men is stressed most notably by Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, pp. 10-13.

differences over the meaning of words. Hobbes goes so far as to say that ‘all controversies’ stem from contradictory use of such appellations as *meum/tuum*, *just/unjust*, *good/evil*.⁶⁴⁰ He emphasises the danger in his own day not only of pernicious doctrines, but also of the impact and emotive overtones of a single word:

‘From the reading ... of such books, men have undertaken to kill their Kings, because the Greek and Latine writers, in their books, and discourses of Policy, make it lawfull, and laudable, for any man so to do; provided before he do it, he call him Tyrant. For they say not *Regicide*, that is, killing of a King, but *Tyrannicide*, that is, killing of a Tyrant is lawfull’.⁶⁴¹

Hobbes’s England endured a ferocious civil war and a republic declared by Puritan regicides. Writing in an age of severe ideological conflict, he was one of the first modern political philosophers to stress again and again the force of words as political weapons. Words can both exacerbate conflicts of interest and generate new conflicts of principle with a momentum of their own. Yet, Hobbes admits that differences of opinion, which prevent cooperation or a natural union of men, are inevitable. This is a consequence of certain psychological mechanisms connected with the pleasure attached to honor:

‘[W]hen every man follows his own opinion, it is necessary that the controversies which rise among them, will become innumerable and indeterminable; whence there will breed among men, who by their own natural inclinations do account all dissension an affront, first hatred, then brawls and wars ...’.⁶⁴²

This partly explains why Hobbes thinks that unrestrained liberty of opinion is incompatible with civil peace, and that ‘in the well-governing of opinions consisteth the well-governing of men’s actions’.⁶⁴³ His experience with civil war led him to conclude that, if chaos was to be avoided, knowledge had to be based on unequivocal foundations.⁶⁴⁴ On everyday concerns such as weather – do the clouds signify rain? – there is no harm in uncertainty and diversity. But in religion and morals, Hobbes believes, epistemological uncertainty spells

⁶⁴⁰ *De Cive*, VI.9; cf. J. W. Watkins, *Hobbes’s System of Ideas* (N.Y., 1968), p. 151

⁶⁴¹ *Leviathan*, XXIX, p. 226.

⁶⁴² *De Cive*, XVII.27.

⁶⁴³ *Leviathan*, XVIII, p. 116.

⁶⁴⁴ See R. Ashcraft, ‘Ideology and Class in Hobbes’ Political Theory’, *PT*, 6 (1978), pp. 27–62. Ashcraft argues that the Civil War should be understood not only as the background to Hobbes’s political views, but that it shapes the substance of his political theory.

social ruin. In these areas, it is necessary to have knowledge that can compel assent.⁶⁴⁵ The function of the sovereign, after wielding the 'sword of justice' and the 'sword of war', is to 'make some common rules for all men, and to declare them publicly, by which every man may know what may be called his, what another's, what just, what unjust, what honest, what dishonest, what good, what evil ...'.⁶⁴⁶ The authoritative definition of all such politically sensitive or disputed terms is thus claimed as a prerogative of the sovereign in the state.⁶⁴⁷ In fact, before the establishment of sovereign authority there cannot even be said to have existed any common sense of such words, whose only public meaning, Hobbes maintains, 'proceeds from the right of the magistrate'.⁶⁴⁸ He nevertheless believes that philosophers such as himself (who follow 'right reasoning' and therefore practice 'good' rhetoric) have an important role to play. They may, for example, provide counsel to the sovereign when one exists, teach true principles in times of disturbance, and unmask fallacies or abuses of words and reasonings at all times. 'In the right definition of names', Hobbes says in *Leviathan*, 'lies the first use of speech; which is the acquisition of science'.⁶⁴⁹ And from correct definitions proceeds correct political science, and thence, peace in the commonwealth. I shall turn later to Hobbes' conception of science as one of the proper uses of language; first, I shall examine his criticisms of its various improper uses and the dangers thereby arising in society.

Hobbes lists various abuses of language. Men can speak passionately, or lie, or use language metaphorically, wresting words from their true signification 'either to adorn or deceive', and using words as weapons 'to grieve one another'. People may also speak without thinking, out of habit, or through reliance on

⁶⁴⁵ 'For Hobbes, there was no philosophical space within which dissent was safe or permissible. ... The aim of philosophy was the highest degree of certainty that could be obtained. ... The production of certainty would terminate disputes and secure total assent' (S. Shapin and S. Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* [Princeton, 1985], pp. 107-08).

⁶⁴⁶ *De Cive*, VI.9. Watkins discusses the ways in which Hobbes anticipates modern linguistic philosophy, particularly with reference to Austin's account of 'performatives' (*Hobbes's System of Ideas*, p. 153). Also see David R. Bell, 'What Hobbes Does with Words', *PQ*, 19 (1969), pp. 155-58.

⁶⁴⁷ See Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, pp. 254-56, 259-60.

⁶⁴⁸ *De Cive*, XII.1.

⁶⁴⁹ *Leviathan*, VIII, p. 22.

unexamined authority.⁶⁵⁰ For the most part these abuses seem to be perversions of legitimate functions of language. The principal such function is rational thought, including science, or the formation and communication of true or hypothetical propositions, and the prudential or probable knowledge that is derived from reflection on experience. Even though Hobbes claims that, in the end, all reasoning is at the service of the passions,⁶⁵¹ he nevertheless maintains the possibility of exact and demonstrable science (geometry being the prototype), and of dispassionate, precise reasoning on any subject (given prior agreement on first principles). Corresponding to this use of language is a class of abuses that may be called errors or fallacies, which are more characteristic of the written word. The pernicious influence of dubious philosophical doctrines in religion and politics stands out as a major example of this kind of perversion.

Hobbes does acknowledge that speech is legitimately used to express certain passions, such as appetites (as in interrogation, requesting, prayer) and will (as in promising, threatening, and commanding). But he warns that speech functions like these may be easily transformed into perverted forms, such as instigation and appeasement or persuasion and exhortation beyond the limits of rational discourse.⁶⁵² Hobbes calls this kind of abuse 'passionate' speech, which occurs when speech is immediately in the service of passions (especially of passions other than fear or prudence).⁶⁵³ The principal danger of this sort of abuse lies in the spoken word, with eloquence appearing as a frequent villain.

If we look first at Hobbes' theory of the passions⁶⁵⁴ and language abuse, it is important to note that for him every word is a name that signifies a conception in the mind of the speaker. For him, words can only stand for our conceptions of things; all 'names or appellations of things', he already asserts in *The Elements of Law*, consist of nothing more than 'the voyce of a Man,

⁶⁵⁰ *De Homine*, X.3; *EL* 1.5.14; *De Cive*, XVIII.4; *Leviathan*, IV, p. 19.

⁶⁵¹ *Leviathan*, VIII, p. 46.

⁶⁵² *EL*, I. 13.6-7; cf. also *Leviathan*, VI, p. 38.

⁶⁵³ Strauss argues that, although all reason is in the service of passion, Hobbes can maintain a notion of 'right reason' as reason in the service of the greatest passion, fear (*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, p. 150; and id., *Natural Right and History* [Chicago, 1953], p. 201).

⁶⁵⁴ The impact of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on Hobbes's thinking is clear when he examines the character of the 'affections' in chapters 8 and 9 of *The Elements of Law*. John Aubrey's biography tells us that, 'Even though Hobbes declares Aristotle to be 'the worst teacher that ever was, the worst politician and ethic', he nevertheless acknowledges that his *Rhetoric* was 'rare' (*Brief Lives, chiefly of Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between the years 1669 and 1696*, ed. A. Clark, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1898], I, p. 357).

arbitrarily imposed, for a mark to bringe to his minde some Conception concerning the thinge on which it is imposed'.⁶⁵⁵ The meaning of words, therefore, is not pre-existent. It is derived from our own arbitrary impositions: 'the first truths were arbitrarily made by those that first of all imposed names upon thing'.⁶⁵⁶ If meaning is derived from each individual's arbitrary impositions, it is also subject to the influence of his particular set of passions. Unfortunately, our passions often obstruct right reasoning, and thus Hobbes commonly refers to them as 'perturbations of the mind'. 'And therefore in reasoning', he concludes in chapter 4 of *Leviathan*,

'a man must take heed of words; which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker; such as are the names of Vertues, and Vices; For one man calleth *Wisdom*, what another calleth *feare*, and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*; one *prodigality*, what another *magnanimity*; and one *gravity*, what another *stupidity*, &c. And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination'.⁶⁵⁷

In the absence of an objective basis for moral epithets, man (given the freedom) will define his terms subjectively, according to his passions. People's diverse prejudices inevitably lead them to different conceptions of the same term: 'For one man calleth *Wisdom*, what another calleth *feare*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*; one *prodigality*, what another *magnanimity*; and one *gravity*, what another *stupidity*, &c'.⁶⁵⁸ What is more, like Montaigne, he also thinks that our affections are in turn shaped by the power of custom and habit. In fact, Hobbes at times seems to regard this point as even more crucial to an account of how the same action can always be described in morally contrasting ways. 'Ratio', he maintains in *The Elements of Law*, 'now, is but Oratio, for the most part', because 'Custome hath so great a power, that the minde suggesteth onely the first word, the rest follow habitually'. His account of the laws of nature in *De Cive* stresses that differences in custom

⁶⁵⁵ *EL*, p. 18; cf. *Leviathan*, IV, p. 31: '[A]ll names are imposed to signifie our conceptions.'

⁶⁵⁶ Thus, Hobbes explains, while it is true that 'man is a living creature', it is only true by virtue of our having imposed the name 'living creature' on a certain class of things (*Elements of Philosophy*, 1.3.8, p. 36); Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 246. This arbitrariness of science, as seen in the following section, makes geometry – as opposed to experimentation and empirical observation – the model of science.

⁶⁵⁷ *Leviathan*, IV, p. 31; cf. *De Homine* XII. 1.

⁶⁵⁸ *Leviathan*, IV, p. 31.

and individual sensibility will always affect the use of evaluative language.⁶⁵⁹ In *Leviathan* he similarly observes that, 'Good and Evill, are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions; which in different tempers, customes, and doctrines of men, are different'.⁶⁶⁰

This explains, in part, why Hobbes denies that the moral order can be viewed as an aspect of the order of nature. In all versions of his civil science he denies any suggestion that the virtues (and thus the laws of nature), can be treated as a part of the eternal harmony of things. The laws of nature, as Hobbes asserts most forcefully in chapter 15 of *Leviathan*, are improperly called laws. They are simply dictates of reason, i.e., prudential maxims referring to the achievement and preservation of peace.⁶⁶¹ He is even more insistent about the impossibility of reaching general agreement about the correct judgements to be placed on individual actions or states of affairs.

One of the main problems of passionate speech, therefore, pertains to names of 'inconstant signification'. The most dramatic instances of this invariable feature of experience and thinking are words (concepts, notions) such as 'good', 'evil' and related terms central to morals and politics and thus to civil science. While for Hobbes all language is, in a superficial sense, artificial and arbitrary,⁶⁶² it is evaluative (as opposed to simple) 'naming' that preoccupies him most, since most disputes arise from such words. In chapter 6, he explains that these words have no objective qualities:

'But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth *Good*: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, *Evill*; And of his Contempt, *Vile*, and *Inconsiderable*. For these words of Good,

⁶⁵⁹ *Leviathan*, III.xcxi, p. 119.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, XV, p. 110.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, XV, p. 111. The problem for Hobbes, as seen below, is that we cannot turn these prudential maxims into Laws until we set up, by contract, the third party sovereign as coercive enforcer.

⁶⁶² Hobbes was of course a nominalist. But his nominalism included an out-of-hand rejection of all 'referential' or 'object-word' theories of meaning, i.e., all theories according to which the meanings of words are or could be given by reason or rationally derived from the 'things' themselves. On Hobbes's nominalism and its implications for ethics and politics see, Gordon Hull, 'Hobbes's Radical Nominalism', *Epoché*, 11:1 (2006), pp. 201-23; G. K. Callaghan, 'Nominalism, Abstraction, and Generality in Hobbes', *HPQ*, 18:1 (2001), pp. 37-56; J. W. N. Watkins, 'Philosophy and Politics in Hobbes', in *Hobbes Studies*, ed. K. C. Brown (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 255-57; id., *Hobbes's System of Ideas* (N.Y., 1968), esp. pp. 104-7, 144-50; and M. M. Goldsmith, *Hobbes's Science of Politics* (NY, 1966), pp. 63-64. For background see, D. Sepkoski, 'Nominalism and constructivism in seventeenth century mathematical philosophy', *Historia Mathematica*, 32:1 (2005), pp. 33-59.

Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves⁶⁶³

Due to such disagreements, Hobbes concludes, the names of the virtues and vices 'can never be true grounds of any ratiocination'.⁶⁶⁴ This list may be extended to include the names of the passions themselves, each of which has two names, as 'glory', depending on one's feelings, is equivalent to 'pride'.⁶⁶⁵ Hobbes includes, in addition, names that depend on judgments about moral accidents, such as the contraries 'democracy/anarchy', 'aristocracy & oligarchy', and 'monarchy & tyranny' – which, Aristotle notwithstanding, signify not different things but conceptions differing according to the speaker's passions.⁶⁶⁶ Such words, therefore, cannot be used for ratiocination. (And even then their lack of tangible referents renders them liable to inconstancy, or shifts of meaning under the influence of the passions.)

Hobbes disapproves of the use of *ornatus* or rhetorical devices in reasoning on the same grounds: '[A]ll metaphors', he writes in *The Elements of Law*, 'are (by profession) equivocal. And there is scarce any word that is not made equivocal by divers contextures of speech, or by diversity of pronunciation and gesture'.⁶⁶⁷ But it is important to note that, unlike Plato, Hobbes does not condemn literary 'adornments' because they are mere appearances, imitations of reality.⁶⁶⁸ For him rhetorical devices are unsuitable, because they foster conceptual diversity and, ultimately, civil war. '... Metaphors, and senseless and ambiguous words', he says in *Leviathan*, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them, is wandering amongst innumerable

⁶⁶³ *Leviathan*, VI, p. 39; emphasis added.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 31.

⁶⁶⁵ *EL*, 1.9.1

⁶⁶⁶ *De Cive*, VII.2.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I.5.7, p. 16; cf.: *De Corpore*, 11.12: 'every metaphor is by profession equivocal'. For Hobbes names can be univocal or equivocal (i.e., they may have precise or variable meanings), depending on how they are used. '[F]or some use them properly and accurately for the finding out of truth; others draw them from their proper sense, for ornament or deceit' (*EL*, I.5.7). This suggests that by equivocation Hobbes refers to variability of signification that is normally conscious, even intentional. Any word can be made equivocal (*ibid.*), a fact that Hobbes attributes to the human faculty of quickness of mind, a peculiar verbal ability producing 'those grateful similes, metaphors, and other tropes, by which both poets and orators have it in their power to make things please or displease...' (I.10.4).

⁶⁶⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 601a-c.

absurdities; and their end, contention, and sedition, or contempt'.⁶⁶⁹ As seen in the previous chapter, such a rejection of *ornatus* was not unparalleled. In fact, there was a long tradition of hostility to the exaggerated use of highly ornamented and emotional speech even within the humanistic disciplines.⁶⁷⁰ Hobbes's attack on the use of rhetorical ornamentation is clearly indebted to that tradition. But Hobbes, especially in *The Elements of Law* and *De Cive*, seems to carry the repudiation of *ornatus* much further.⁶⁷¹

Metaphor can of course be employed simply for ornamentation, although even in this case it can be dangerous. Hobbes gives the Bible as an example, which he insists must receive authoritative interpretation precisely because it contains so many metaphors.⁶⁷² He says, for example, that the reader should be aware that 'spirit' and 'inspiration' are used metaphorically, while 'Kingdom of God' is not. But equivocation can also be used for deliberate political aims, and in this regard also Hobbes has concerns about the Holy Scriptures. He points out, for example, that the word 'justice' occurs frequently in the Greek and Latin versions, but that in English this is often subversively rendered 'righteousness', 'which few understand to signify the same, but take it rather for rightness of opinion'.⁶⁷³

A more general problem of elaborate speech, which is usually based on equivocation, is *elocutio*. A summary of Hobbes's position on this issue is found in the section on rhetoric on part II, chapter 8 of *The Elements of Law*,

⁶⁶⁹ *Leviathan*, VI, p. 36.

⁶⁷⁰ Even the advocates of rhetoric conceded that in the case of scientific (and especially mathematical) reasoning, the techniques of powerful speaking are generally out of place. See, e.g., Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p., 1554). In the early seventeenth century this argument was taken up by many English natural philosophers. See the excellent discussion in Barbara J. Shapiro, *A culture of fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000), pp. 5, 29, 97, 160-65; and *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), pp. 227-66.

⁶⁷¹ In his first two political treatises, as Skinner has shown, Hobbes denounces the very presence of *ornatus* in expository prose – both in the natural sciences and in the *studia humanitatis*. Since *scientia civilis* is a science, he insists we have no need to supplement its findings with the techniques of persuasion. In addition, Skinner argues that when Hobbes launches his vicious attacks on *elocutio* and *ornatus*, his main target were Renaissance humanists. In fact, he maintains that one of Hobbes's fundamental objectives in *The Elements of Law* and *De Cive* is to discredit and replace the Renaissance ideal of a union between reason and rhetoric, and thus between science and rhetoric. See *Reason and Rhetoric*, esp. pp. 250-56, 294-302; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 250-93 (Hobbes's rejection of eloquence); and pp. 294-326 (Hobbes's scientific style).

⁶⁷² *Leviathan*, XXXIV and XXXV, pp. 257, 264, 269.

⁶⁷³ *Behemoth*, pp. 242-43.

where he complains that orators not only 'derive what they would have to be believed from somewhat believed already, but also by aggravating and Extenuations make good, and bad, right and wronge, appeare greate or lesse, according as it shall serve their turnes'. Such techniques, Hobbes regrets, can have a remarkable 'moving' effect:

'Such is the power of Eloquence, as many tymes a man is made to believe thereby, that he sensibly feeleth smart and dammage, when he feeleth none, and to enter into rage and indignation, without any other Cause, than what is in the words and passions of the Speaker'.⁶⁷⁴

Hobbes, therefore, launches a particularly vicious attack on the orator's most powerful weapon: his ability to manipulate the (fickle) emotions of his audience and moving them to accept his point of view. 'Eloquence', he concludes, 'is nothing else but the power of winninge beliefe of what we say, and to that end we must have Aide from the passions of the Hearer'.⁶⁷⁵ Hobbes, therefore, is vehemently against speeches in which 'a metaphorical use of words [is] fitted to the passions', and that aim at victory rather than truth.⁶⁷⁶

Such eloquence, he emphasises, is particularly dangerous in assemblies of men, where becomes a weapon in the competition for eminence.⁶⁷⁷ In fact, his criticisms of collective counsel as susceptible of kinds of oratorical imprudence to which the councillors separately would not be subject,⁶⁷⁸ and of democracy as a contentious 'aristocracy of orators',⁶⁷⁹ are based on his observations of the readiness with which public speaking departs from the proper 'rational' function of words. It is all too easy, he stresses in *The Elements of Law*, for powerful orators to rouse and move the passions of their hearers in such a way as 'to inclyne and sway the assembly to their owne ends'.⁶⁸⁰ 'Impudence in

⁶⁷⁴ *EL*, p. 177. The same argument is reiterated in *De Cive*: 'The gift of eloquence lies in being able to make good and evil, expedient and inexpedient, honourable and dishonourable appear to be greater or less than they are in fact, and in being able to make injustice appear to be justice (X.xi, pp. 177-78). For an excellent analysis of *elocutio*, including a detailed account of the techniques used by Renaissance humanists to 'amplify' their arguments see, Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, esp. pp. 47-51, 55-65, 138-39, 181-82.

⁶⁷⁵ *EL*, p. 177; cf. *De Cive*, XII.xii, p. 193.

⁶⁷⁶ *De Cive*, XII.12. Where Quintillian presents the ideal of the *vir civilis* as pleader for the truth, Hobbes argues that the 'goal of eloquence, as all the masters teach, is not the truth but victory, so that truth is only attained by accident' (Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 265).

⁶⁷⁷ *De Cive*, X. 11.

⁶⁷⁸ *Leviathan*, V, p. 30.

⁶⁷⁹ *EL*, II.2.5.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

democratical assemblies', Hobbes adds in *Behemoth*, 'does almost all that is done ... it is the goddess of rhetoric, and carries proof with it'. 'For what ordinary man', he concludes, will not, from so great boldness of affirmation, conclude there is great probability in the thing affirmed?'⁶⁸¹ In this context, Hobbes is adamant about the fact that the most likely result from the eloquence of demagogues (who invariably compete to flatter the vanity of their audiences), are reckless and dangerous policies:⁶⁸²

'For a man that reasoneth with himself, will not be ashamed to admit of timorous suggestions in his business, that he may the stronglier provide; but in public deliberations before a multitude, fear (which for the most part adviseth well, though it execute not so) seldom or never showeth itself or is admitted'.⁶⁸³

Hobbes, therefore, equates this type of eloquence with sedition. In fact, in all his political treatises he holds that it was 'bad' or 'false' rhetoric joined with lack of judgment or wisdom which fomented sedition. In *The Elements of Law*, for example, Hobbes says that 'when eloquence and want of judgment go together, want of judgment, like the daughters of Pelias, consenteth, through eloquence, which is the witchcraft of Medea, to cut the commonwealth in pieces'.⁶⁸⁴ And in *De Cive*, he emphasises that eloquence devoted to truth (i.e. 'good' rhetoric) is almost always linked to wisdom, while eloquence aiming at victory (i.e. 'bad' or 'false' rhetoric) rarely is. He admits that each form has its use – the former in deliberation, the latter in exhortation. But as seen earlier, the danger is that foolish or wicked men will use exhortation, rather than deliberation in counsel and in assemblies.⁶⁸⁵

In *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England*, Hobbes points to another area where eloquence contributes to the

⁶⁸¹ *Behemoth*, p. 250.

⁶⁸² This is one example of one of the many lessons that Hobbes drew from Thucydides. Skinner says that when he published his translation of Thucydides, 'he appended an introductory essay ['On the Life and History of Thucydides'] pointing with obvious admiration to the fact that Thucydides had despised and detested the public assemblies of his day' (*Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 229). Skinner has shown that the essay takes the form of a classical forensic oration (*genus iudiciale*) in defence of the historian's achievement (*ibid.*, esp. pp. 244-49).

⁶⁸³ 'On the Life and History of Thucydides', in *Hobbes's Thucydides*, ed. R. Schlatter (New Brunswick, 1975), p. xvi. Hobbes says that he translated Thucydides to show the English the dangers of flatterers and wicked, foolish men who used eloquence to arouse the passions of assemblies and lead them into folly (pp. 12-3).

⁶⁸⁴ *EL*, p. 178; cf. Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, pp. 300 ff.

⁶⁸⁵ *De Cive*, p. 139.

ambiguity of words. For example, his attack on the common law (and his preference for clearly defined statute law), is partly to do with the prevalence of equivocation in pleadings. This arises, in turn, not only because of the vagueness of common law terminology, but also because of the lawyer's vested interest in suits, which induces him to try to 'wrest the sense of words from their true meaning', and to cultivate a 'faculty of rhetoric to seduce the jury, and sometimes the judge also...'.⁶⁸⁶ More alarmingly still, political controversies feed on the disputatious habits of lawyers, whose profession teaches them 'the art of cavilling against the words of a statute'.⁶⁸⁷

In *Behemoth*, Hobbes launches an attack on the disorders caused by the preaching of the itinerant friars of an earlier age, and compares them to the Puritan preachers of his own day. He claims such disorders are inevitable when private men exercise the liberty of public speaking without license from the state. Hobbes believes this to be an invitation to sedition – and one which is unique to Christendom. 'The heathen kings', he concludes, 'foresaw, that a few such orators would be able to make a great sedition'.⁶⁸⁸ Significantly, Hobbes describes this kind of religious man in terms of their histrionics, their ability to feign inspiration, and their knowledge of how, in speaking, to play on the fears and interests of their audience.⁶⁸⁹

But rhetoric is a hazard not only of spoken language, nor are Parliament and the law courts the only institutions that Hobbes finds guilty of uncritical speech. Written discourse also presents dangers, and in this regard, his favourite target were the universities and the school philosophy they taught.⁶⁹⁰ The *dogmatici*⁶⁹¹ (by contrast to the *mathematici*), err in starting from

⁶⁸⁶ *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England*, ed. J. Cropsey (Chicago, 1971), pp. 6-71.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁸⁸ *Behemoth*, p. 183.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-96.

⁶⁹⁰ In his verse *Vita*, Hobbes recalls the scholastic curriculum with unmixed contempt. See T. Hobbes, *Vita Carmine Expressa*, in *Opera Philosophica*, ed. W. Molesworth (London, 1839), I, pp. lxxxvi-lxxxvii, lines 33-50.

⁶⁹¹ The *dogmatici* are said to put forward their opinions with passion (*EL*, 1.13.4), like the adherents of the various Greek philosophic schools. Of whom Hobbes says: 'Their Moral Philosophy is but a description of their own Passions; ... they make the Rules of *Good* and *Bad*, by their own *Liking* and *Disliking*: By which means, in so great diversity of *tastes,* there is nothing generally agreed on; but every one doth (as far as he dares) whatsoever seemeth good in his owne eyes, to the subversion of Common-wealth' (*Leviathan*, XLVI, p. 461).

unexamined custom or literary authority. Those who talk about ‘right and wronge, good and bad’, as Hobbes says in *The Element of Law*, are largely content to adopt the opinions ‘of such as they admire, as Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and others of like authority’. However, these authors have merely ‘given the names of right and wronge as their passions have dictated; or have followed the authority of other men, as we doe theirs’.⁶⁹² The controversial forty-sixth chapter of *Leviathan* (‘Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions’), is at the heart of his critique of the universities. The chapter has been shown to be a satirical riposte to a well-established academic genre (favoured particularly by Presbyterian authors) praising the antiquity, utility, and necessity of the schools.⁶⁹³ The ‘Schoolmen’ are also mocked in chapter 5, because they ‘take the habitual discourse of the tongue for ratiocination’, and proceed without ‘any evident demonstration’:

‘in any business, whereof a man has not infallible Science to proceed by; to forsake his own naturall judgement, and be guided by general sentences read in Authors, and subject to many exceptions, is a signe of folly, and generally scorned by the name of Pedantry’.⁶⁹⁴

In chapter 47, Hobbes puts forward several points to reveal who benefits from obscurity of language and thought. In the twelfth and final point, he accuses

‘the Metaphysiques, Ethiques, and Politiques of Aristotle, the frivolous Distinctions, barbarous Terms, and obscure Language of the Schoolmen, taught in the Universities, (which have been all erected and regulated by the Pope’s authority,) serve them to keep these Errors from being detected, and to make men mistake the *Ignis fatuus* of Vain Philosophy, for the Light of the Gospell’.⁶⁹⁵

Three of the four causes of ‘spiritual darkness’ are doctrines maintained through scholasticism: erroneous interpretation of Scripture, the admixture with religion of erroneous philosophy, and ‘fained, or uncertain History’.⁶⁹⁶ In *Behemoth*, Hobbes argues that the hopeless incomprehensibility and

⁶⁹² *EL*, p. 177.

⁶⁹³ See R. Serjeantson, “Vaine philosophy:” Thomas Hobbes and the Philosophy of the Schools’, in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Condren (Cambridge, 2006), ch. 5. He also sheds light on one of the key issues in the history of early modern philosophical personae: how a self-conscious ‘novator’ such as Hobbes positioned himself in relation to the dominant late Aristotelian philosophical culture of the universities.

⁶⁹⁴ *Leviathan*, V, p. 37.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, XLVII, p. 477; emphasis added.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, XLIV, p. 418.

contentiousness of Roman Catholic doctrine is due to its assimilation of Aristotelian teachings of the sort perpetuated at the universities. Philosophy is said to be a salve for ‘a great many absurd articles ... which ... they thought fit to have believed, because they bring, some of them profit, and others reverence to the clergy, even to the meanest of them’.⁶⁹⁷ In general, as Hobbes concludes in *The Elements of Law*, all theological controversies involve ‘words some of them without meaning, and nothing but the canting of Grecian sophisters’.⁶⁹⁸ More alarmingly still, the universities promote subversive political doctrines:

‘Studying Greek and Latin, [men] became acquainted with the democratical principles of Aristotle and Cicero, and from the love of their eloquence fell in love with their politics, and that more and more, till it grew into the rebellion’.⁶⁹⁹

These philosophers – ‘Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, and the rest of the maintainers of the Greek and Roman anarchies’⁷⁰⁰ – are guilty of making the meaningless verbal distinction between ‘Kings’ and ‘Tyrants’ which Hobbes is so at pains to expose.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, the universities instill into their students not merely erroneous doctrine, but also (and equally insidiously) an overrated sense of their own wisdom, conducing to the dangerous habit of political criticism:

‘For it is a hard matter for men, who do all think highly of their own wits, when they have also acquired the learning of the university, to be persuaded that they want any ability requisite for the government of a commonwealth, especially having read the glorious histories and the sententious politics of the ancient popular governments of the Greeks and the Romans ...’.⁷⁰²

Hobbes, therefore, was a savage critic of the medieval tradition of Aristotelian metaphysics and natural philosophy, and of the Catholic theology that relied so heavily on ‘Vain Philosophy’.

These attacks on erroneous or absurd doctrines bring Hobbes’s final category of language abuses – that pertaining to the use of ‘words

⁶⁹⁷ *Behemoth*, p. 215.

⁶⁹⁸ *EL*, 11.6.9.

⁶⁹⁹ *Behemoth*, p. 218.

⁷⁰⁰ *De Cive*, XII.3.

⁷⁰¹ *Leviathan*, XXIX, p. 214; XLVI, p. 447.

⁷⁰² *Behemoth*, pp. 192-93.

insignificant' and words for 'feigned things', i.e., words which, though uttered, do not signify any coherent conception in the mind, and words which, though significant, do not refer to any 'something' in the world.⁷⁰³ Words for 'feigned things' are clear mental conceptions arrived at through the faculty of 'compound imagination', but which do not correspond to any real object:

'as when from the sight of a man at one time, and of a horse at another, we conceive in our mind a Centaure. So when a man compoundeth the image of his own person, with the image of the actions of an other man; as when a man imagins himselfe a *Hercules*, or an *Alexander*, (which happeneth often to them that are much taken with reading of Romants) it is a compound imagination, and properly but a Fiction of the mind'.⁷⁰⁴

Hobbes suggests that words like 'democracy' (under whose influence he saw his seditious contemporaries acting), are perhaps significant only of conceptions imaginatively generated through the association of a variety of images. In contrast to these, are words which are strictly insignificant or non-sensical, even lacking a coherent mental conception, but which are nevertheless used to the detriment of used to the detriment of civil peace. A contradiction such as '*round Quadrangle*' falls into this category of 'senseless speech' that Hobbes calls absurdity.⁷⁰⁵ So does the logical error of treating an abstraction (i.e., a class of accidents) as if it were a body – as is done when one says (as Roman Catholics do) that 'faith' is 'infused'. Another example of this is the case of the common lawyers, who reject the definition of law as command, and seek an alternative definition in 'natural reason', 'universal reason', or especially 'legal reason'. They define 'legal reason' as the 'artificial perfection of reason, gotten [by lawyers] by long study, observation, and experience'. But for Hobbes the concept is unintelligible: 'There is no reason in earthly creatures, but human reason'.⁷⁰⁶

Hobbes' favorite example of a senseless word, however, is '*Ghost*', which 'signifieth nothing, neither in heaven, nor earth, but the Imaginary inhabitants

⁷⁰³ *De Corpore*, 11.6.

⁷⁰⁴ *Leviathan*, II, p. 16. Hobbes suggests that words like 'democracy' (under whose influence he saw his seditious contemporaries acting), are perhaps significant only of conceptions imaginatively generated through the association of a variety of images.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 26; V, p. 34.

⁷⁰⁶ *Dialogue*, pp. 122, 22.

of mans brain'.⁷⁰⁷ For him ghosts are mere verbal absurdities, and alleged experience of them is ascribed to various freaks of sensation coupled with ignorance. Yet, people seem to have a strong inclination to absurdities of this sort. Their natural curiosity, aided by imagination, leads them to seek causes, but their ability to account for everything materially is limited. Meanwhile, phantasms occurring in dreams or in 'hallowed places' at night (though in fact nothing but motions in the brain⁷⁰⁸) are taken for subsisting things – especially by guilty, fearful, or superstitious men – and identified as ghosts.⁷⁰⁹ And from the belief in ghosts there arises a '*Ghostly Authority*' to challenge the civil sovereign:

'working on mens minds, with words and distinctions, that of themselves signifie nothing, but bewray (by their obscurity) that there walketh (as some think invisibly) another Kingdome, as it were a Kingdome of Fayries, in the dark'.⁷¹⁰

Interestingly, Hobbes's system appears depends on a 'disenchantment' of the world, because otherwise the fear of violent death would remain secondary to the fear of ghosts, and the sovereign edifice would crumble. Thus, he concludes that fear of other men is commonly greater than that of 'Spirits Invisible'.⁷¹¹ Still, certain political actors can exploit the strong inclination that common people seem to have to believe absurdities of this sort. For example, the belief in ghosts that produced gentile demonology was exploited by the Roman Catholic priesthood to justify their ritual practice.⁷¹²

Hobbesian science, as I try to show in the following section, is directed with full force against all the mythical, customary, and symbolic elements which, although once necessary foundations for states, he regards in the present as hindrances to peace. But even though Hobbes exposes the greater part of such elements as resting on various kinds of language abuse, he

⁷⁰⁷ *Leviathan*, XXXIV, p. 273.

⁷⁰⁸ The sort that may be caused by a blow to the eye, refracted light, visual error, or day-dreaming (Ibid., XLV, pp. 418, 447-48; *EL*, I.11.5). Note that Hobbes uses 'phantasms' as generally equivalent to 'images' in the mind, the source of which is always physical and external, and which usually but not always reflect an external body.

⁷⁰⁹ *De Corpore*, XXV.9.

⁷¹⁰ *Leviathan*, XXIX, p. 226.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., XIV, p. 99. Yet elsewhere Hobbes contradicts himself, conceding that the civil authority will always be troubled by the claims of a spiritual party, 'because the fear of Darkness, and Ghosts, is greater than other fears' (XXXIX, p. 227).

⁷¹² Ibid., II, p. 18; XLV, pp. 448-49.

nevertheless cannot offer any reasons to believe that their force among people is subsiding.

III

In the present section I wish to analyse two Hobbesian prototypes of the correct use of language, which stand as counterparts to the perversions discussed above: counsel and science. It is in chapter 25 of *Leviathan* that Hobbes discusses the question of counsel. He begins by distinguishing it from both command and exhortation. Command he defines as imperative speech addressed to someone by a an individual who expects that *his will to have something done* is sufficient reason for the thing to *be done*.⁷¹³ Hobbes also says that commands are issued for the benefit of the ones doing the commanding. By contrast, counsel is imperative speech accompanied by reasons why acting on the speech is for the benefit of the one *addressed*. It is should be imparted,

‘as significant and proper language, and as briefly, as the evidence will permit. And therefore *rash, and unevident Inferences; ... obscure, confused, and ambiguous Expressions, also all metaphorical Speeches, tending to the stirring up of Passion*, (because such reasoning, and such expressions, are usefull onely to deceive, or to lead him we Counsell towards other ends than his own) *are repugnant to the Office of a Counsellour*’.⁷¹⁴

Exhortation is said to be a perverted kind of counsel, because it is counsel that is vehemently pressed for the honour or glory of having one’s advice followed.⁷¹⁵ Counsel, given that it is imperative speech, is essentially prescriptive. But it can also be backed by reasons or reasoning – so it has something in common with scientific speech. In fact, Hobbes regards counsel as an exemplar of legitimate speech because it is simply an extension of the rational faculties, enlarging the ruler’s experience and assisting in his reasoning from cause to effect, and from end to means.⁷¹⁶ Counsel thus understood presupposes the absence of passion or interest on the part of the

⁷¹³ *Leviathan*, XXV, p. 176.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXV, p. 177.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XXV, p. 179.

counsellor. The end of counsel is the benefit of the ruler of whose reason the counsellor is an extension.

Because in practice no counsel can ever be entirely free of passion, this is not merely an ideal.⁷¹⁷ What purports to be counsel readily shades over into its perverted, 'vehement' counterpart, exhortation or dehortation. These, while attempting to maintain the appearance and forms of ratiocination, are varieties of illicit 'passionate speech':

'And therefore they have in their speeches, a regard to the common Passions, and opinions of men, in deducing their reasons; and make use of Similitudes, Metaphors, Examples, and other tooles of Oratory, to perswade their Hearers of the Utility, Honour, or Justice of following their advice'.⁷¹⁸

Hobbes argues that proffering unwanted advice, such as Parliament directed at an unwilling king, amounts to exhortation, and in this form it is prohibited by the law of nature.⁷¹⁹ Giving false 'counsel' may, in addition, be motivated by the counsellor's self-interest. But it may also be pressed on an unwilling ruler, because – as with public speaking in general – it is a source of honour. 'To hearken to a mans counsell, or discourse of what kind soever, is to Honour; as a signe we think him wise, or eloquent, or witty'.⁷²⁰ In fact, it is because of men's vanity and passions that Hobbes denies the possibility of 'good' or genuine counsel being given to a multitude:

'[T]he passions of men, which asunder are moderate, as the heat of one brand; in Assembly are like many brands, that enflame one another (especially when they blow one another with Orations) to the setting of the Common-wealth on fire, under pretence of Counselling it. ... [T]here cannot be an Assembly of many, called together for advice, wherein there be not some, that have the ambition to be thought eloquent, and also learned in the Politiques; and give not their advice with care of the businesse propounded, but of the applause of their motley orations, made of the divers colored threds, or shreds of Authors ...'.⁷²¹

It is for this reason that Hobbes suggests that a sovereign listen to counsellors separately and never in an assembly. So even though he offers counsel as a type of rational speech or 'good rhetoric', he at the same time emphasises its

⁷¹⁷ *EL*, 11.5.4.

⁷¹⁸ *Leviathan*, XXV, pp. 177-78.

⁷¹⁹ *EL*, 1.17.8.

⁷²⁰ *Leviathan*, X, p. 64.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, XXV, pp. 181; cf. *EL* 11.5.4.

tendency to degenerate into its opposite.

It is important note that although Hobbes never identifies the tenets for sovereigns and subjects in his treatises as pieces of counsel, they nevertheless appear to meet the prescriptions given in chapter 25 of *Leviathan*. When Hobbes tells rulers to exercise to the full the rights of sovereigns, or when he names reluctance to exercise sovereignty as one of the causes of the dissolution of the state, he is clearly issuing the imperative: 'Exercise no less power than peace requires!' The imperative is not issued by Hobbes merely for his own benefit; and the reasons given for it certainly establish the benefit to the commonwealth which the sovereign personifies. The reasons Hobbes gives are, therefore, the kind that are supposed to accompany a piece of counsel. What is more, the counsel is not vehemently pressed. It is put to the ruler in a book largely composed of passionless, syllogistic speeches or demonstrations. The science on the basis of which he thinks that Sovereigns should act is, therefore, Hobbesian civil science. Similarly, the imperative 'Obey the law!' that Hobbes addresses to subjects or citizens, was put to his readers in books of cool, impersonal demonstrations. That, too, was substantiated by reasons why it was beneficial for subjects or citizens to follow the law. Now, it seems to me that classifying the advice in Hobbes's political treatises as counsel enables us to resolve the tension that otherwise exists in his writings between the concepts of reason and eloquence. Moreover, what else but counsel could have come more naturally from a man who throughout his life earned his keep as a personal and political counsellor?

One of Hobbes fundamental aspirations in all his treatises on the nature of the state is to construct a genuine civil science or, as he puts it in *Leviathan*, 'the science of Vertue and Vice'.⁷²² His conception of what science should be is most eloquently expressed in his critique of Thomas White's *De mundo*:

'It is necessary that Philosophy [i.e. science] should be treated logically. For the goal of students of Philosophy is not to move the emotions but to know with certainty. So Philosophy has nothing to do with Rhetoric. Moreover the goal is to know the necessity of consequences and the truth of universal propositions. So Philosophy has nothing to do with history. Much less has it anything to do with

⁷²² *Leviathan*, XVI, p. 111.

Poetry; which narrates individual events, and in addition professedly neglects the truth'.⁷²³

Hobbes says in the *Leviathan* that such a science is needed because, 'neither *Plato*, nor any other Philosopher hitherto, hath put into order, and sufficiently, or probably proved all the Theoremes of Morall doctrine, that men may learn thereby, both how to govern, and how to obey ...'.⁷²⁴ In *De Corpore*, Hobbes speaks with a surprising amount of confidence of the contrast between his own knowledge of moral theory and the mere opinions held by ancient philosophers on the same subject.⁷²⁵ There were 'no philosophers natural or civil among the ancient Greeks, even though there were men so called'. 'If we think of civil philosophy as a genuinely scientific subject, then it is 'no older ... than my own book *De Cive*'.⁷²⁶ Science for Hobbes was not mere dispassionate knowledge.⁷²⁷ '[T]he Science of Naturall Justice', he says in the *Leviathan*, 'is the onely Science necessary for Sovereigns, and their principall Ministers ...'.⁷²⁸ Hobbes's experience with civil war led him to conclude that, if chaos was to be avoided, knowledge had to be based on unequivocal foundations.⁷²⁹ What makes knowledge unequivocal is, in his view, human imposition. Hobbes, therefore, creates an epistemology and a civil science that, despite having their source in nature, achieve their legitimacy through convention, i.e., through human construction.⁷³⁰ Accordingly, all human thinking originates in nature, manifested in sense impressions. '[T]here is no conception in a mans mind',

⁷²³ *Critique du 'De mundo' de Thomas White*, ed. J. Jacquot & H. Whitmore (Paris, 1973), p. 107; cited in Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, pp. 262-63.

⁷²⁴ *Leviathan*, XXXI, p. 254.

⁷²⁵ The Latin version first appeared in 1655, the English translation in 1656; see H. Macdonald and M. Hargreaves, *Thomas Hobbes* (London, 1952), pp. 41-2.

⁷²⁶ *Elements of Philosophy. The First Section, Concerning Body*, in *English Works*, I, p. ix. It is in *The Elements of Law* that Hobbes first announces that he has discovered the true and only foundations for a science of justice and policy (*EL*, pp. xv, xvi; cf. *De Cive*, p. 76). In the *Leviathan* he declares that his conclusions in that treatise 'concerning the Morall Vertues' are 'evident Truth' (XXVI, p. 191), and that he has 'sufficiently or probably proved' the full range of the theorems relating to 'the Science of natural Justice' (XXXI, p. 254).

⁷²⁷ The usefulness of knowledge is, of course, a Baconian theme. For more information see, S. Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001); J. Leary, Jr., *Francis Bacon and the Politics of Science* (Ames, Iowa, 1994); and J. Martin, *Francis Bacon, the State and the Reform of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁷²⁸ *Leviathan*, XXXI, p. 254.

⁷²⁹ Hobbes's supposedly unequivocal theory of knowledge is, of course, meant to replace the rhetorical epistemology (exemplary of equivocation) of the Renaissance humanists.

⁷³⁰ For an excellent discussion of Hobbes's use of the nature-convention distinction see, Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 331-38.

Hobbes says, 'which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of Sense'.⁷³¹

Even though all knowledge must, of necessity, begin in nature, Hobbes does not believe that nature alone can produce certain knowledge. Prudence, for example, is based on the senses, yet is uncertain.⁷³² Univocal knowledge can only be reached through convention and is the product of science. In contrast to memory (which is innate) or prudence (which is gotten by experience), science is 'attained by Industry'.⁷³³ Men, therefore, create science. They do so,

'first in apt imposing of Names; and secondly by getting a good and orderly Method in proceeding from the Elements, which are Names, to Assertions made by Connexion of one of them to another; and so to Syllogismes, which are the Connexions of one Assertion to another, till we come to a knowledge of all the Consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is it, men call SCIENCE'.⁷³⁴

For Hobbes, therefore, scientific truth consists in 'the right ordering of names in our affirmations'.⁷³⁵ But as seen earlier, the meaning of words is not pre-existent. Meaning is derived from our own arbitrary impositions: 'the first truths were arbitrarily made by those that first of all imposed names upon

⁷³¹ *Leviathan*, V, p. 35. It is for this reason that we cannot conceive of anything that is imperceptible, like God, because its existence lies outside the natural world (*Elements of Philosophy: the first section, Concerning Body*, 1.1.8, p.10; Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, p. 45).

⁷³² *Leviathan*, III, pp. 22-3; V, pp. 35-7; VIII, pp. 52-3.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, V, p. 35.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.* It is important to note that there is nothing particularly original about Hobbes's general conception of science. After all, the ideals of certainty and demonstration from evident principles had been central to the Aristotelian tradition, and in this respect there are significant continuities with Galileo's conception of demonstrative science. There are also clear analogies with the outlook of Mersenne and his circle, and even more with the view of scientific method developed by Descartes. An even closer parallel can be drawn between Hobbes's methodology and Bacon who, in his project for the reform of natural philosophy, had already focused on mathematical methods. In *The Advancement of Learning*, while discussing the various 'idols' that interfere with the progress of science, Bacon considers 'the false appearances that are imposed upon us by words, which are framed and applied according to the conceit and capacities of the vulgar sort'. The solution lies in recognising that, 'it is almost necessary in all controversies and disputations to imitate the wisdom of the mathematicians, in setting down in the very beginning the definitions of our words and terms that others may know how we accept and understand them, and whether they concur with us or no' (p. 134). What is more, the idea that we ought to seek knowledge by following the precepts of authorities had already been criticised by other thinkers, most notably Bacon. For example, in the *Novum Organon*, he complains that even the leaders of the sciences 'still have not dared to abandon their adherence to received beliefs', but 'continue to rely on accepted opinions and customs' (p. 128). Bacon's own philosophy, by contrast, 'makes no effort to flatter the intelligence by dealing in preconceived ideas' (p. 153). For more information see, Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon*, passim; and in general P. Hoffman, *The quest for power* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1996).

⁷³⁵ *Leviathan*, IV, p. 28.

thing'.⁷³⁶ It is because of this arbitrariness that Hobbes becomes convinced that geometry, as opposed to experimentation and empirical observation, must be the model of science. Like the definitions and figures of geometry, good science is artificially constructed. It is not the passive replication of objective phenomena.⁷³⁷ By beginning with (humanly devised) settled definitions, geometry ends with indisputable conclusions.⁷³⁸ For Hobbes, this characteristic becomes an inherent quality of truth. It is for this reason that in the *Leviathan*, he declares that 'Geometry, ... is the onely Science that it hath pleased God hitherto to bestow on mankind ...'.⁷³⁹ Interestingly, he seems to write as if truth and agreement were indistinguishable: 'Doctrine repugnant to Peace, can no more be True, than Peace and Concord can be against the Law of Nature'.⁷⁴⁰ It is important to note that, in the same way that Hobbes earlier identified 'bad' or 'false' rhetoric with discord, he now equates truth with unanimity and 'true' rhetoric. In his project, science and 'false' rhetoric stand in antithesis to one another: 'the signs of this being controversy; the sign of the former, no controversy'.⁷⁴¹

It is important to note that, for Hobbes, science or 'the knowledge of Consequence', 'is not Absolute, but Conditionall'.⁷⁴² Science is conditional because it grounded in sense experience: '[T]he knowledge of Fact', after all, 'is originally, Sense; and ever after, Memory'. For Hobbes, therefore, 'no discourse whatsoever can End in absolute knowledge'. Even though Hobbesian civil science cannot compel assent in doctrine or morals, it can nevertheless clarify the conditions under which a doctrinal and moral consensus can be reached. By clear deductions, therefore, Hobbes tries to makes out an entire

⁷³⁶ *Elements of Philosophy*, 1.3.8, p. 36; Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 246.

⁷³⁷ Although, as Funkenstein points out, Hobbes sometimes emphasises the arbitrary beginnings of science (from definitions) and, at other times, its hypothetical-experimental beginnings, nevertheless, his science is arbitrary throughout. Even in experimental science, there is never a one-to-one relation between phantasms – our perceptions of external reality – and things; 'the congruence is guaranteed by the strict material causation in the universe' (Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, pp. 333-34 n. 20).

⁷³⁸ *EL*, I.13.3, p. 50; *Leviathan*, IV, p. 28.

⁷³⁹ *Leviathan*, IV, p. 28. The geometers, Hobbes writes in *De Cive*, have produced strong defence works and marvellous machines. 'If the moral philosophers, had done their job with equal success, I do not know what greater contribution human industry could have made to human happiness' ('Ep. Ded.', p. 6).

⁷⁴⁰ *Leviathan*, XXX, p. 233.

⁷⁴¹ *EL*, I.13.3, p. 51.

⁷⁴² *Leviathan*, VII, p. 47.

body of the law of nature, i.e., the universal, objective principles of right action.⁷⁴³ And his view, 'the true and only moral philosophy' is the 'science' of the 'laws of nature'.⁷⁴⁴ It was in chapter 6 of *The Elements of Law* that Hobbes first outlined what he calls the four steps of science that need to be followed if we wish to attain the kind of knowledge that will make us wise.⁷⁴⁵ The tracing of these steps, he adds in *De Cive*, can be described as a matter of following right reasoning,⁷⁴⁶ which in turn consists of 'beginning with the most evident principles and constructing a discourse by continually drawing out necessary consequences'.⁷⁴⁷ So for Hobbes the same process of thought which guides us to a precise insight into the nature of physical body is also applicable to the state. We can only succeed in reducing the structure of the state and of society to the rule of law and reason by an inquiry into its sources. Society must submit to being treated like physical reality under investigation.

However, since men (because their judgement is ever clouded by vanity and passions) cannot arrive at any agreement on doctrine or morality on their own, Hobbes claims they must create a decisive authority that will do so on their behalf.⁷⁴⁸ Nature, he argues, drives pre-political man to confer his rights on a sovereign. Chapter 14 of part I of *The Elements of Law*, contains Hobbes's earliest description of the state of nature. Raising the question how secure men are by nature – that is, how secure they are when one considers their faculties of physical strength, reason, experience and passion – Hobbes answers, 'Not secure at all'. For while they are in fact equal to one another in most respects, not all of them are willing to admit it and satisfy themselves with a share of goods commensurate with their equality. A few are bound to deny their equality and try to get by force a bigger share of available goods than others, who, wanting only their fair share, will resist and fight in turn.⁷⁴⁹

Hobbes, therefore, paints a picture of human behaviour unconstrained by

⁷⁴³ *Leviathan*, XIV-XV, pp. 91-111.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, XII, p. 79.

⁷⁴⁵ *EL*, pp. 26, 66. Hobbes thinks of it as a method, 'a way of searching out the truth' (*De Cive*, XVII.xxviii, p. 279).

⁷⁴⁶ *De Cive*, XVI.i, p. 234.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, XVII.xvi, p. 213; cf. *Leviathan*, V, p. 35.

⁷⁴⁸ A conditional statement that reflects Hobbes's views can be formed as follows: if moral and doctrinal consensus is to be reached, then it can only be the result of a common power, appointed by us, that will impose such a consensus.

⁷⁴⁹ *EL*, I.14; *Leviathan*, XIII, pp. 88-9; XIV, p. 92.

coercive law, and he hopes that his readers will find what he depicts so fearful that they will prefer life under even a harsh system of law to life under no law at all. Natural equality, vainglory, comparison, self-love and the relative scarcity of goods general demand make a conflict between people inevitable in the state of nature.⁷⁵⁰ What is more, according to *The Elements of Law*, there is a natural right of each to whatever goods there are, a natural right that leaves the means of getting what is wanted up to each individual. Whatever action looks as if it will succeed in securing desired goods is permissible, even if the action involves depriving potential competitors of their goods.

Yet, Hobbes believes the misery of men's natural condition alone cannot make allegiance to the sovereign absolutely binding.⁷⁵¹ In fact, nature as the Commonwealth's sole justification is an unstable foundation for political obligation. After all, the passions that drive us often change, and thus some men who at present wish to obey the sovereign, may wish to disobey him in the future. To ensure univocality Hobbes must, therefore, ground the creation of the sovereign in convention. His means for producing this is a covenant, in which the covenanting men agree among themselves to give up their rights to self-government and authorise a single will – whether one man or an assembly of men – as the absolute sovereign.⁷⁵² In return, the subjects of the Commonwealth are protected from the conditions of the state of nature. Like all 'true' knowledge, the covenant to form the Commonwealth receives its univocality from an arbitrary act of the covenanting people. It is an artificial construction.⁷⁵³ Thus Hobbes's description of the Commonwealth as an 'Artificial Man' and civil laws as 'Artificial Chains', which men 'themselves, by mutual] covenants, have fastened at one end, to the lips of that Man, or Assembly, to whom they have given the Sovereigne Power; and at the other end to their own Ears'.⁷⁵⁴ The will of the state emerges from the covenant, because this will can only be known by, and founded in, the covenant.⁷⁵⁵ Again,

⁷⁵⁰ *De Cive*, esp. ch. I and ch. 13.

⁷⁵¹ Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, p. 335.

⁷⁵² *Leviathan*, XXIX, p. 227.

⁷⁵³ *EL*, I.19.5, p. 80; *Leviathan*, XXIX, p. 226.

⁷⁵⁴ *Leviathan*, XXXIII, pp. 263-64; cf. V, pp. 32-3, VI, p. 39; *EL*, pp. 90-1.

⁷⁵⁵ This, therefore, is the bond which connects Hobbes's doctrine of nature with his doctrine of the state.

the paradigm here is geometry – as geometry is demonstrable because it is man-made ‘for the lines and figures from which we reason are drawn and described by ourselves’, so Hobbes’s civil science ‘is demonstrable because we make the commonwealth ourselves’.⁷⁵⁶

But it would be a mistake to think of Hobbes’s sovereign as instituted only to terrify his subjects into obedience. He keeps the peace not only by threatening subjects with punishment, but also by adjudicating their disputes and in giving them the set definitions of words, in law, by which to do this. Otherwise the multiplicity of a people cannot become a unified body politic. This can only happen through the unity of the sovereign’s person, and only by representation by that sovereign. Without such representation, a people do not constitute a political body, but only an unorganized multiplicity. The distinguishing feature of a commonwealth is that ‘not the Appetite of Private men, but the Law, which is the Will and Appetite of the State’ as represented by the sovereign, becomes the measure of good and evil, virtue and vice.⁷⁵⁷ The unity guaranteed by the sovereign promises to negate ‘partiality’ in two senses: the incoherence of particularism, the chaotic coexistence of a multitude of parts without a whole; and (once the people have been united into a body politic) the partiality or bias of individual members of that body, who from time to time may forget that their own welfare is organically united with the welfare of the whole body. Hobbes knows that such absolute power can be abused, but he points out that there is no condition of human life without inconveniences. In democracy, where each man bears some part of the sovereignty, the sum total of those able to enrich and serve themselves at the expense of the public interest is at a maximum. In a monarchy there can be only one Nero, in a democracy there can be as many Neros as there are orators flattering the populace.⁷⁵⁸ Monarchy, then, is the best form of government.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁶ ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ to *Six Lessons to the Professors of Mathematics, One of Geometry, the Other of Astronomy ...*, in *EW*, VII, p. 184.

⁷⁵⁷ *Leviathan*, XLVI, p. 469.

⁷⁵⁸ See, e.g., *ibid.*, XXVI, p. 187; cf. *De Cive*, X, esp. §7, §8, and §15.

⁷⁵⁹ An aristocracy in this regard stands somewhere between the other two forms. It becomes better the more it approaches monarchy, worse the more it approaches democracy (*Leviathan*, XXVI, p. 187).

It is important to note that Hobbes's ruler or arbitrator, must determine not only the definitions but also the proper uses 'of all names not agreed upon, and tending to Controversie'.⁷⁶⁰ This must be done by those exercising sovereign power because moral epithets are defined by the individual's passions, and thus have no social meaning independent of the Commonwealth. As Hobbes puts it in the *Leviathan*, 'notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there [the state of nature] no place'.⁷⁶¹ It is commonly said that such judgements must be made according to right reason. But the problem is that 'commonly they that call for right reason to decide any Controversie, do mean their owne'.⁷⁶² As with doctrine, the absence of a moral arbiter leads inevitably to civil war, in which violence becomes the means of settling moral disputes. The implication, as Hobbes remarks in the *Leviathan*, is that those who call for the settlement of moral disputes by reason are calling for 'every of their passions, as it comes to bear sway in them, to be taken for right Reason, and that in their own controversies: bewraying their want of right Reason, by the claym they lay to it'.⁷⁶³ In this context, the only possible solution is to appoint someone to make our judgements for us. We must institute some person or body of persons whom we agree in advance to accept as our final 'Arbitrator or judge'.⁷⁶⁴ '[S]eeing right reason is not existent, as Hobbes concludes in *The Elements of Law*, the reason for some man, or men, must supply the place thereof'.⁷⁶⁵

The decisions of the ruler or arbitrator will of course, be arbitrary (in effect, as God's was when he named things in Genesis according to HIS will). If we wish to avoid coming to blows, we have no alternative but to agree in advance to treat it as beyond appeal. To say this is, of course, to say that right reason must be supplied by 'he, or they, that hath the Sovereigne power'. It follows that,

⁷⁶⁰ *EL*, p. 189.

⁷⁶¹ *Leviathan*, XXVI, p. 188.

⁷⁶² *EL*, p. 188; cf. *De Cive*, XIV.xvii, pp. 213-14.

⁷⁶³ *Leviathan*, V, p. 33.

⁷⁶⁴ *EL*, pp. 90-1; *Leviathan*, V, pp. 32-3, VI, p. 39.

⁷⁶⁵ *EL*, p. 188. As Tuck rightly stresses, Hobbes's claim is thus that moral consensus can only be created politically (*Hobbes*, p. 57).

'the civill Lawes are to all subjects the measures of their Actions, whereby to determine, whether they be right or wronge, profittable or unprofitable, vertuous or vitious; and by them the use, and definition of all names not agreed upon, and tending to Controversie, shall be established'.⁷⁶⁶

Hobbes's last word, therefore, is that if we wish to overcome the threat of ambiguous language by fixing our moral language unambiguously onto the world, we can only hope to do so by fiat. The sovereign, who is the only true orator in the full sense of the word, has the power to create a religious and moral consensus where previously there was none. To the extent that it was the covenanting individuals who created the sovereign, this consensus can be said to derive its validity from those individuals.⁷⁶⁷

Hobbes's precepts for a civil science can be understood to be persuasive whether or not all his inferences are sound. They can also be seen to amount to a science and a prime example of Hobbesian 'true' rhetoric. For given the two fundamental laws of nature – those enjoining one to seek peace if it can be done safely and to lay down rights for the sake of peace – all of the rest of the laws of nature can be deduced. And for Hobbes it is deductive structure that is crucial for the scientific status of a doctrine. His system of precepts has another claim to scientific status, for it is supposed to uncover what the various patterns of behaviour enjoined by moral precepts – what the various virtues – have in common. What they share, in Hobbes's view, is that they promote peace, and with that, self-preservation. I suggest, therefore, that Hobbes's system of the laws of nature, the precepts about seeking peace, laying down rights, keeping covenants, being complaisant, being grateful and the rest, amount to a moral philosophy that is both persuasive (and a demonstration of what he considered a legitimate use of the art of rhetoric) and scientific. Still, Hobbes's persuasive civil science is a kind of embarrassment for his civil science, because he repeatedly emphasised that

⁷⁶⁶ *EL*, pp. 188-9; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 112; *De Cive*, III.xxix-xxxii, pp. 119-21, VI.viii-xi, pp. 139-41; XIV.xvi-xvii, pp. 213-14; *Leviathan*, V, pp. 32-3; VI, p. 39; XXVI, pp. 190-1, XLVI, p. 469.

⁷⁶⁷ Unlike the humanists, who believed that the whole body of the faithful (that is, the Church) continued to express the *consensus fidelium*, Hobbes allows the men who are to form the Commonwealth just a single opportunity to agree that they are incapable of doctrinal and moral consensus and thus require an external consensus-maker. After the covenant, their personal moral and religious opinions do not matter. Therefore, insofar as they have no right after the covenant to question the sovereign's moral and religious pronouncements, consensus is only formally linked to the public.

science was one thing and rhetoric another. In any event, it is important not to exaggerate the tension between science and rhetoric to be found in Hobbes's writings. I believe that he always combined rhetoric and science in his treatises, but that it took some time for his philosophy of science to acknowledge this fact and recognise that science and rhetoric were reconcilable. In *The Elements of Law*, not wishing to tar his own writings with the brush he applies to the speeches of the movers and authors of sedition, Hobbes insists (at least in theory) on a distinction between the two. And in *De Cive* and *Leviathan* he moves toward a reconciliation.⁷⁶⁸

IV

When John Locke set out in 1679 to persuade his readers about 'the true original extent and end of civil government', he produced a book which was in some respect like *Leviathan*. Like Hobbes, Locke believes that rhetoric represents a dangerous threat to the moral basis of political life. Like Hobbes, he begins with a state of nature without government, and assumes that people are in a condition of original freedom and equality.⁷⁶⁹ Like Hobbes, Locke views the state as an artificial construct, created by contract in the state of nature. The agreement is, again, to relinquish private rights (or liberties) of protection, punishment, or vengeance, transferring them to the state. The state is 'authorised' by its citizens to do the protection and punishing for them. Locke's teaching, furthermore, is not unlike Hobbes's in the assertion that 'civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature'. Yet, Locke's work is quite unlike *Leviathan* in doctrine. *Two Treatises* differed considerably from *Leviathan* in the form of its argument, because Locke had rejected Hobbes's psychological assumptions and his entirely rationalistic, unempirical view of natural law, because of Sir Robert Filmer, and because of his beliefs so completely in contrast with the Hobbes'. Hobbes

⁷⁶⁸ For an excellent discussion see, Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, part II.

⁷⁶⁹ See *Two Treatise*, II, §4, p. 269: Natural freedom derives from natural equality, 'there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without Subordination or Subjection ...'.

argues for the right of the state to control, and the duty of people to obey. Locke argues for the right of people not to be controlled, and the duty of the state to be tolerant. He shows again and again that absolute arbitrary power is no remedy for the evils of the state of nature. Unlike Hobbes, Locke stressed that the supercession of partiality is a strenuous process, for magistrates and philosophers as well as ordinary people, so many are the obstacles placed in the way of the human understanding's efforts to rise above its biased and partial perspectives.

Locke looks as if he is striking a blow for modernity. He seems to be arguing for rolling back religion to leave room for the modern, secular state. But this general impression is misleading with respect to Locke's political philosophy as a whole. It may be modern, but it is not a political philosophy in which God has moved out of the way. The most obvious and significant example is his benevolent state of nature, with its theologically-based natural law, its consecration of the basic rights of life, liberty and property. In Locke's state of nature 'though Man ... have an uncontrollable Liberty', 'it is *not a State of License* The *State of Nature* has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges everyone'.⁷⁷⁰ And this law, for Locke, is clearly the law of God.⁷⁷¹ In his view the law of nature is a real law, offering obligatory commands rather than prudential advice.⁷⁷² Unlike Hobbes, he maintains that the law of nature obliges us and lays down what is right and wrong, independently of the positive institution or commands of human law-makers. The obligations of the law of nature are stated in two ways. Every man is obliged to preserve himself, and every man is obliged to preserve all mankind:

'Every one as he is *bound to preserve himself*, and not to quit his Station willfully; so by the like reason, when his own Preservation comes not in

⁷⁷⁰ *Two Treatise*, §6, pp. 270-71. cf. *ibid.*, §19, p. 280: 'Men living together according to reason, without a common Superior on Earth with Authority to judge between them, is *properly the State of Nature*'.

⁷⁷¹ It is important to note that even though the law of nature in Locke is more clearly than in Hobbes the law of God, he maintains that the law of nature is knowable by reason alone and does not depend upon any special revelation. He thus tells us in the *Essay* that 'there is a law, knowable by the light of nature; i.e. without the help of positive revelation' (*Essay*, I.iii.13). Later in the *Essay*, Locke declares that '[i]n all Things of this Kind, there is little need or use of *Revelation*, GOD having furnished us with natural and surer means to arrive at the Knowledge of them' (*Ibid.*, IV.xviii.4, pp. 690-91.).

⁷⁷² *Two Treatises*, II, § 6, pp. 270-71.

competition, ought he, as much as he can, *to preserve the rest of Mankind*, and may not unless it be to do Justice on an Offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the Life, the Liberty, Health, Limb, or Goods of another'.⁷⁷³

According to Locke self-preservation and the preservation of humankind are rights derived from prior duties imposed upon men by God. 'For Men being all the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; ... sent into the World by his order and about his business', he tells us, 'they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's Pleasure'.⁷⁷⁴ And God having planted in man a strong desire of Self-preservation, 'Reason, *which was the Voice of God in him*, could not but teach him and assure him, that pursuing that natural Inclination he had to preserve his Being, he followed the Will of his Maker ...'.⁷⁷⁵ In pursuing that profound desire of self-preservation, therefore, we are also fulfilling our obligation to God and nature – the very definition of reasonable behaviour. In this sense, the law of nature is known to all people, and men cannot but follow its dictates. But in another sense, that of understanding the means by which that desire might be fulfilled, men are ignorant of the law of nature 'for want of study of it', and unwittingly behave contrary to its dictates, contrary to reason (i.e., contrary to their interest in their own preservation).

However the law of nature may be 'writ in the Hearts of all Mankind',⁷⁷⁶ therefore, it is unlikely that men in the state of nature can know how to obey it. After all, in the state of nature, '*every one has the Executive Power of the Law of Nature*',⁷⁷⁷ and although the law of nature is 'intelligible and plain to a rational Creature, and a Studier of that Law',⁷⁷⁸ 'yet Men being biassed by their Interest as well as ignorant for want of study of it, are not apt to allow of it as a Law binding to them in the application of it to their particular Cases'.⁷⁷⁹ It is because of 'those Evils which necessarily follow from Mens being Judges in

⁷⁷³ *Two Treatises*, II, §6, p. 271

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I, §86, p. 323.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, II, §11, p. 274.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, §13, p. 275.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, §12, p. 275.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, §124, p. 351.

their own Cases', that the state of nature is 'not to be endured'.⁷⁸⁰ As Locke says,

'Civil Government is the proper Remedy for the Inconveniences of the State of Nature, which must certainly be Great, where Men may be Judges in their own Case, since 'tis easily to be imagined, that he who was so unjust as to do his Brother an Injury, will scarce be so just as to condemn himself for it ...'.⁷⁸¹

The state, therefore, was formed by social contract because in the state of nature each was his own judge, and there was no protection against those who lived outside the law of nature.⁷⁸² First, in the 'original compact', they agree to transfer the powers that each had in the state of nature into the hands of the community, and then by a second compact, to the government (*on the condition* that the government will protect their 'property' – Locke's broad term for their lives, liberties and estates).⁷⁸³ But it is worth emphasising that, for Locke, the state should be guided by natural law. In fact, the civil laws of political society are only so far right as they are founded on the law of nature (by which they are to be regulated and interpreted):

'The Obligations of the Law of Nature, cease not in Society, but only in many Cases are drawn closer, and have by Humane Laws known Penalties annexed to them, to enforce their observation. Thus the Law of Nature stands as an Eternal Rule to all Men, *Legislators* as well as others. The *Rules* that they make ... must ... be conformable to the Law of Nature, *i.e.*, to the Will of God, of which that is a Declaration, and the *fundamental Law of Nature* being the *preservation of Mankind*, no Humane Sanction can be good, or valid against it'.⁷⁸⁴

The relevance of the pre-political to the political is made clear in Locke's remark that 'the great and *chief end* ... of men's uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the *preservation of their Property*'.⁷⁸⁵ In the state of nature, property is 'very unsafe, very insecure', because three things necessary to its preservation are lacking: (i) 'an *establish'd, settled, known Law*'; (ii) a '*known and indifferent Judge*, with

⁷⁸⁰ *Two Treatises*, §13, p. 276.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, §13, p. 276.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, §89, p. 325. Only those who make such an express compact with one another are in political society together; those who do not join are, in relation to the society and its members, still in the state of nature.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, §87, pp. 323-24.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, §135, pp. 357-58.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, §124, pp. 350-51.

Authority to determine all differences according to the established Law'; and (iii) the 'Power to back and support the Sentence when right, and to *give* it due Execution'.⁷⁸⁶ Political society, the opposite of the state of nature, is designed to remedy these defects, by providing a power to make law and judge controversies, and a power to execute the judgements and punish offenders. It is for this reason that the natural powers of individuals in the state of nature are transformed, by compact, into the political powers of civil society. However, these political powers are limited by the purpose for which they were made, i.e., to remedy the uncertainty and danger of the state of nature. The people, Locke says, entrust to the government their natural rights, 'with this express or tacit Trust, That it shall be employed for their good, and the preservation of their Property'.⁷⁸⁷ It follows that the exercise of unlimited power is not, and cannot be, considered political power:

'Absolute Arbitrary Power, or Governing without *settled standing Laws*, can neither of them consist with the ends of Society and Government, which Men would not quit the freedom of the state of Nature for, and tie themselves up under, were it not to preserve their Lives, Liberties, and Fortunes; and by *stated Rules of Right and Property* to secure their Peace and Quiet. It cannot be supposed that they should intend, had they a power so to do, to give to any one, or more, an *absolute Arbitrary Power* over their Persons and Estates This were to put themselves into a worse condition than the state of Nature, wherein they had a Liberty to defend their Right against the Injuries of others, and were upon equal terms of force to maintain it ...'.⁷⁸⁸

Locke's insistence on the limited nature of political power reveals both his agreement and very great disagreement with Hobbes. Both philosophers start from the principle of self-preservation as the rock-bottom foundation of civil society, but unlike Hobbes, Locke shows repeatedly that absolute arbitrary power is not a remedy for the evils of the state of nature. This is hardly surprising when we consider that the drawbacks of the state of nature differ in the two accounts, and consequently the solutions put forward by Locke and Hobbes diverge accordingly. For Locke the state of nature is not 'a state of war'

⁷⁸⁶ *Two Treatises*, §124, p. 351.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, §171, p. 381.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, §137, p. 359.

of every man against every man.⁷⁸⁹ If, as it seems, force will commonly be used without right in Locke's state of nature, it is not because most men are vicious or savage and bloodthirsty. He does not, as Hobbes does, speak of every man as the potential murderer of every other man. The main threat to the preservation of life in the state of nature lies not in the murderous tendencies of men but instead in the poverty and hardship of their natural condition.⁷⁹⁰ The main outcome of the differences in the two interpretations is the fact that the civil government Locke proposes has a far less violent and absolute character than Hobbes'.⁷⁹¹ For him 'it is evident that *Absolute Monarchy* ... is ... *inconsistent with Civil Society*, and so can be no Form of Civil Government at all'.⁷⁹² Locke argues that the absolute monarch cannot be a legitimate political authority, because the concentration of legislative and executive power in one figure prevents his being a separate, impartial, and indifferent judge:

'For [the Absolute Prince] being suppos'd to have all, both Legislative and Executive Power in himself alone, there is no Judge to be found, no Appeal lies open to any one, who may fairly and indifferently, and with Authority decide, and from whose decision relief and redress may be expected of any Injury or Inconvenience, that may be suffered from the Prince or by his Order'.⁷⁹³

To be subject to a ruler's arbitrary power without the right or strength to defend oneself against him is a condition far worse than the state of nature, and it cannot be supposed to be that to which men consented freely, for 'no rational Creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse'.⁷⁹⁴ The government, therefore, is merely a trustee of the people's political power; should it dishonour the people's trust, its power (which is only a 'Fiduciary Power'), reverts to its original owners.⁷⁹⁵ It is important to note

⁷⁸⁹ In fact, he does not equate the states of nature and war; he tells us that they 'are as far distant, as a State of Peace, Good Will, Mutual Assistance, and Preservation, and a State of Enmity, Malice, Violence, and Mutual Destruction are one from another' (ibid., §19, p. 280).

⁷⁹⁰ For more information see, A. Tuckness, *Locke and the legislative point of view* (Princeton, N.J., 2002).

⁷⁹¹ The most obvious sign of the difference is the much greater attention Locke gives to the subject of property.

⁷⁹² *Two Treatises*, II, §90, p. 326.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., §91, p. 326.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., §131, p. 353.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., §149, p. 367.

that Locke's argument for the separation of powers by 'ballancing the Power of Government, by placing several parts of it in different hands',⁷⁹⁶ rests not a little on his suspicion of the rhetorical trope by means of which absolute monarchs of the Renaissance could claim or feign impartiality.⁷⁹⁷ According to Sir Edward Coke, the eminent common lawyer, the function of the 'plenary and entire power' concentrated in the king as head of the body politic was 'to render justice and right to every member of this body ... otherwise he should not be a head of the whole body'.⁷⁹⁸ Coke clearly believes that there is no inconsistency between the king's wielding sole and undivided power, his constituting a part of the body politic, and his judicial impartiality. In rhetorical terms, Coke's absolute sovereign is an ideal synecdoche, a part of the body politic that also embodies or represents the whole; for Locke this is a dangerous synecdoche, a (necessarily) partial member of the body politic who may impose his partial understanding and interests upon the whole.

Another important consequence of the divergence between the Locke's and Hobbes' accounts is the fact that the solution on how to overcome the dangers of rhetoric that Locke puts forward is much less authoritarian than Hobbes'. As hinted at earlier, both philosophers believe that rhetoric represents a dangerous threat to the moral basis of political life, because people are often swayed by bad or false rhetoric into believing in false politics. For them, accordingly, the question of how to resolve this problem, is one of the major tasks facing civil philosophy. We saw in the previous section that Hobbes's last word on this issue is that, if we wish to overcome the threat of rhetoric and ambiguous language, we can only hope to do so by fiat. The sovereign must become the commonwealth's final 'Arbitrator or judge',⁷⁹⁹ the only true rhetorician. But for Locke the suggestion that the only possible solution is to appoint someone to make our judgements for us is simply repugnant. Instead, he held that political debate must be purified of 'false

⁷⁹⁶ *Two Treatises*, §107, p. 338; cf. §91, 326-27.

⁷⁹⁷ On the importance of the category of wholeness to the organisation of knowledge in the Renaissance see, M. Foucault's section on the Renaissance *epistémè* in his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (NY, 1970). On the vogue for 'anatomies' aiming to portray a unified order' and their significance as a way for organizing knowledge in the Renaissance, see Devon L. Hodges, *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy* (Amherst, 1985).

⁷⁹⁸ Cited in C. Weston and J. Greenberg, *Subjects and Sovereigns* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 8.

⁷⁹⁹ See *EL*, pp. 90-1; id., *Leviathan*, V, pp. 32-3; VI, p. 39.

rhetoric', and society at large cleansed of cultural conventions and institutions which sustain it – such as the teaching of poetry to the youth. So the political manifesto Locke famously presents in *Two Treatises of Government* and in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, is paralleled by the manifesto of cultural reform he presents in the *Essay*. Seen together, these three works attempt to offer the citizenry an education to liberty by instructing them both in the principles of politics and in the art of political discourse. Locke can be seen to have engaged in what might be termed a *Kulturkampf*, pervading politics, education, and religion.

But what are Locke's specific arguments for considering rhetoric such a dangerous weapon? In a well-known and often-quoted passage in his *Essay*, he says that, 'where Truth and Knowledge are concerned', the 'Art of Rhetorick cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the Language or Person that makes use of them'.⁸⁰⁰ Locke condemned rhetoric as an instrument of deceit and error whose sole purpose was to insinuate false ideas, excite the passions, and mislead the judgement. So it is hardly surprising to find Locke portraying rhetoric as the 'Abuse of Words,' and rhetoricians as those 'whose business is only the vain ostentation of Sounds'.⁸⁰¹ For him this is 'perverting the use of Words', which nevertheless Locke reluctantly accepts 'have their place in the common use of Languages...'.⁸⁰² To which he immediately adds:

'It looks like too much affectation wholly to lay them by: and Philosophy it self, though it likes not a gaudy dress, yet when it appears in publick, must have so much Complacency, as to be cloathed in the ordinary Fashion and Language of the Country, so far as it consist with Truth and Perspicuity'.⁸⁰³

These are, of course, the familiar complaints of the man of reason and advocate of plain speech, who can barely conceal his disdain for those who require serious ideas to be dressed up in pleasing rhetorical form. Put differently, Locke expresses the view widely held among philosophers, that '[t]o resort to images and metaphors, to the full set of implements proper to

⁸⁰⁰ *Essay*, III.x.34, p. 508.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, III.x, pp. 490-508; III.xi.7, p. 512.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, III.ii.5, p. 407; II.xxi.20, p. 243.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, II.xxi.20, p. 243.

rhetoric ... merely serves to make it “easier” to absorb rational truth’.⁸⁰⁴ Often ignored is the fact that rational thinking and speaking is parasitic on the very rhetorical (passionate, affective) speech Locke would like to exclude in discourses in which ‘we would speak of Things as they are’ (i.e., where knowledge is at stake). In fact, political theorists have commonly interpreted Locke’s works as monuments to rational speech and to a subject that searches for knowledge of things as they really are.⁸⁰⁵ He is portrayed as a man ever vigilant over the incursion of unexamined belief into the chamber of the enlightened understanding (the slayer of the ‘Idols of the Mind’). But such accounts, though not without merit, tend to neglect those aspects of Locke’s thought that call into question the power of reason and rational language in the adjudication of political and philosophical debates. Moreover, as shown below, his disavowal of false rhetoric actually stems both from the traditional anti-rhetorical posture of philosophy, and out of the certainty that his own theories represent a (much needed) renovation of philosophic discourse.

Rhetoric takes hold of men’s minds in early childhood, usually at the hands of a woman. Locke’s argument against the existence of innate principles, as William Walker has shown, traces the origin of notions of sacred truth onto the figure of the woman as gatekeeper of Idols.⁸⁰⁶ Whilst trying to explain why men are willing to die rather than abandon what they take for truth, Locke writes:

“This, however strange it may seem, is that which every days Experience confirms; and will not, perhaps, appear so wonderful, if we consider the *ways*, and *steps by which* it is brought about; and how really it may come to pass, that *Doctrines*, that have been derived from no better original, than the Superstition of a Nurse, or the authority of an old Woman; may, by length of time, and consent of Neighbors, *grow up to the dignity of Principles* in Religion or Morality’.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁴ E. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy* (Carbondale, Ill., 1980), p. 26.

⁸⁰⁵ For example, Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), asserts that such a subject emerges as part of the Lockean project of self-understanding, the means by which reason can attain full certainty of itself. In Locke’s view, Taylor says, ‘... many things have been declared authoritatively true ... which have no real title to the name. The rational, self-responsible subject can break with them, suspend his adhesion to them, and by submitting them to the test of their validity, remake or replace them’ (p. 174).

⁸⁰⁶ W. Walker, ‘Locke Minding Women: History, Gender, and the *Essay*’, *ECS*, 23:3 (1990), pp. 245-68.

⁸⁰⁷ *Essay*, I.iii.22, p. 81.

For Locke, what makes these 'Principles' so extraordinarily difficult to question, is that they are antecedent to all memory and thus come to be wrapped in an aura of the sacred or the natural.⁸⁰⁸ What concerns Locke is the subject's inscription into an inherited background which is composed of (ungrounded) figures not (grounded) truths.⁸⁰⁹ What passes for innate principles lies outside the scope of 'reflexion', to use Locke's term, or the Mind's consciousness of its own activity. The woman's authority is likewise secured inasmuch as the adult mind cannot remember the moment when it was first impressed with a rhetorical figure, usually conveyed through a story, which now takes the form of a principle.⁸¹⁰ Thus the *Essay* is haunted by the woman as she comes to stand for the origin of error. Now, it would seem that to expose the woman who first cared for us as the origin of error and Idol worship, as Lockean empiricism tried to do, would be sufficient to deprive her of her power. To remember her is to regain control over our symbolic production. However, notwithstanding Locke's attempt to locate the cause of our errors in an external cause and subject it to reason, it is clear that he remains perplexed by the 'something that blinds their [men's] Understandings'⁸¹¹ and puts them in the service of unreasonableness: 'Men worship the Idols that have been set up in their Minds; grow fond of the Notions that they have been long acquainted with there; and *stamp the character of Divinity, upon Absurdities and Errors*, become zealous Votaries to Bulls and Monkeys; and contend too, fight, and die in defence of their Opinions'.⁸¹² Such remarks, of course, open rather than close the question of the origins of self-blindness. So it is unlikely that the empiricist discovery of the real figure of the superstitious nurse or mother, or any childhood

⁸⁰⁸ G. A. J. Rogers, *Locke's Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1994), has argued that 'the principle has been taught as if it were an undeniable truth, even though it really had no higher source "than the Superstition of a Nurse, or the Authority of an Old Woman"' (p. 17). But in fact the principles men later come even to die for are not initially taught as truths (or even as principles which one could decide for or against).

⁸⁰⁹ As Ludwig Wittgenstein would later put it, an 'inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false' (*On Certainty*, tr. D. Paul and G. Anscombe [N.Y., 1972], §94).

⁸¹⁰ The mind cannot recognise this moment as part of its own development and thus, writes Walker, as 'an instance of female presence or power' (Walker, 'Locke Minding Women', p. 250).

⁸¹¹ *Essay*, II.xxxiii.18, p. 400.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, I.iii.26, p. 83.

authority, would persuade anyone to divest himself of that sort of affect.

If we turn to the section entitled 'Of the Association of Ideas', which was added to Book II of the *Essay's* fourth edition in 1700, the difficulties that the attachment to idols and other such affective props creates for the sort of subject that we associate with the name John Locke become clearer. This section, as Cathy Caruth has shown, stands in a peculiar relation to associationism, the tradition it founded, as it was developed most prominently by David Hartley. 'The use of association to name a principle of rational thought', Caruth asserts, '... altered the meaning it had in Locke's work, in which it referred to a thought process subversive of normal reasoning and described as 'madness'. ... In transferring the name to "rational thought" processes, the eighteenth-century empiricists effectively eliminated the phenomenon that, in Locke, had raised serious questions about the principles established in the rest of the *Essay*'.⁸¹³ It is important to note, first, that such madness is not a general condition that affects only some men and is opposed to sanity. Instead, as Locke says, it is 'a Weakness to which all Men are so liable'.⁸¹⁴ In fact, 'this flaw has its Original in very sober and rational Minds'.⁸¹⁵ What is more, the madness emerges, not when a man 'is under the power of an unruly Passion, but [rather] in the steady calm course of his Life'. It is a 'disease of the mind' that each is quick to find in the other but blind to in himself. An otherwise critical man can exhibit a stubborn 'Unreasonableness', refusing to yield 'to the Evidence of Reason, though laid before him as clear as Day-light'. One would think him 'fitter for *Bedlam*, than Civil Conversation'.⁸¹⁶ Consider Locke's account of how the association of ideas works its spell:

'Some of our *Ideas* have a natural Correspondence and Connexion one with another: It is the Office and Excellency of our Reason to trace these, and hold them together in that Union and Correspondence which is founded in their peculiar Beings. Besides this there is another Connexion of *Ideas* wholly owing to Chance or Custom; Ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in Mens Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they

⁸¹³ Cathy Caruth, *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions* (Baltimore, 1991), p. 1.

⁸¹⁴ *Essay*, II.xxxiii.4, p. 395.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.3, p. 395.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.4, p. 395; II.xxxiii.1, p. 394; II.xxxiii.2, p. 394; II.xxxiii.4, p. 395. Cf. *id.*, *First Treatise*, p. 58: Locke notices how 'The busie mind of Man' is as capable of carrying us to absurdity and monstrosity, as to truth, reason, and light: 'nor can it be otherwise in a Creature, whose thoughts are more than the Sands, and wider than the Ocean'.

always keep company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang always inseparable shew themselves together'.⁸¹⁷

For Locke, therefore, every rational connection of ideas can be plagued by an importunate outsider who pushes his way in on thought and plants his obscene presence in the way of proper thinking; and in the passage above this rapidly expands into a vision of the mad understanding as virtually stampeded by gangs of imposters. So deeply does this unnatural kinship of Ideas 'set us awry in our Actions, as well Moral as Natural, Passions, Reasonings, and Notions themselves', Locke says, that 'perhaps, there is not any one thing that deserves more to be looked after'.⁸¹⁸ However, the measures he advocates to prevent these unnatural associations from ever forming (especially in young people), pale in the face of the threat itself. For example, we can exercise greater vigilance over a child's education at the hands of tutors; we can discipline nurses who fill their young charges with 'Ideas of Goblins' and other such 'nonsense'. But as Locke himself acknowledges, not only are associations formed at all stages of life, their very nature, so utterly idiosyncratic and unpredictable (because so unique to each subject), that no amount of vigilance can possibly anticipate the wholly unexpected nature of association. 'This strong Combination of *Ideas*', he says, 'not ally'd by Nature, the Mind makes in it self either voluntarily or by chance, and hence it comes in different men to be very different, according to their different Inclinations, Educations, Interests, etc.'⁸¹⁹ These 'frisking Ideas' cause Locke such great anxiety because

⁸¹⁷ *Essay*, II.xxxiii.5, p. 395.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.9, p. 397.

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.6, p. 396. Consider the idiosyncratic character of the following example, which Locke gives 'if only for the pleasant oddness of it': 'It is of a young Gentleman, who having learnt to Dance, and that to great Perfection, there happened to stand an old Trunk in the Room where he learnt. The *Idea* of this remarkable piece of Houshold-stuff, had so mixed it self with the turns and steps of all his Dances, that though in that Chamber he could Dance excellently well, yet it was only whilst that Trunk was there, nor could he perform well in any other place, unless that, or some such other Trunk had its due position in the Room' (II.xxxiii.16, pp. 399-400). The Gentleman's madness is a serious problem, because the madness is universal yet utterly idiosyncratic in the particular form it takes. One could say that we each have a 'trunk', i.e., an apparently meaningless psychic object that the subject drags from place to place and that has no logical place in the social grammar, but without which such grammar remains meaningless for the subject. If a trunk can take on such significance for a Gentleman, nothing can prevent another equally unremarkable object from assuming the same strange status in the individual's fantasy life – therein lies the disruptive power of association

they 'have leaked into virtually every aspect of social life'. He tells us that at the origin of 'the Irreconcilable opposition between different Sects of Philosophy and Religion', are these 'wrong and unnatural Combinations of Ideas'. Significantly, association becomes a way of explaining what Locke, in his voice as the man of reason, is at a loss to explain, i.e., that the followers of these sects would 'knowingly refuse Truth offer'd by plain Reason'. Even interest, he concedes, cannot 'be thought to work whole Societies of Men to so universal a Perverseness, as that every one of them to a Man should knowingly maintain Falsehood'. 'There must be something that blinds their Understandings, and makes them not see the falshood of what they embrace for real Truth'.⁸²⁰ Association, he concludes, 'gives Sence to *Jargon*, Demonstration to Absurdities, and Consistency to Nonsense, and it is the foundation of the greatest, I had almost said, of all the Errors in the World'.⁸²¹

Partner in this crime against reason and reasonableness is language itself – another form of association. It too threatens to unleash 'frisking Ideas' that are both necessary to and subversive of the social bond. The 'Association of Ideas' leads directly into Book III of the *Essay*, which deals with language (a natural transition when we consider how words themselves work on the model of association). There is a fundamentally inventive and creative dimension to language considered in its rhetorical aspect, which is the primary aspect that concerns Locke when he speaks about 'the abuse of words'. Here Locke is particularly anxious about the rhetorically based faculty of *ingenium*, i.e., the human capacity, in Grassi's words, to 'surpass what lies before us in our sensory awareness' by 'catching sight of relationships, of *similitudines* among things'.⁸²² Akin to the process of association, *ingenium* creates connections between things that have none; there is nothing logical or necessary in the

for an education in reason, a power that no pedagogy based on causal explanation can defeat. Note that inside the trunk is only 'noise' or 'the insignificant buzz of purely empty sounds'. Yet, it is this noise which both enables symbolic meaning (the common grammar of the dance), and keeps the subject from being fully inscribed in that grammar. We may say that in the trunk is the stuff of rhetoric, that part of signification and subjectivity that is inventive, imaginative. So within Locke's framework, the Gentleman's Trunk undercuts another sort of fantasy: the fantasy of a wholly rational subject (when rational is understood as free of the influence of passion or affect).

⁸²⁰ Ibid., II.xxxiii.18, p. 400.

⁸²¹ Ibid., p. 401.

⁸²² Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, p. 8.

connections we create through the use of rhetorical language. In contrast to rational language (which never discovers anything new but only what is already given in the premises), *ingenium* is the art of invention. Rhetorical language ‘provides that which deduction can never discover’.⁸²³ It is important to note that Locke’s stance towards the ingenious dimension of language is ambivalent. This ambivalence is partly related to his non-naturalistic view of signification, which argued for the difference between *res* and *verba*. For Locke language is: (i) not a nomenclature (because it refers not to things in the world but to ideas in the mind); (ii) arbitrary (since there is no necessary connection between an idea and its sign); (iii) more or less voluntaristic (as it is the individual alone who chooses to make a particular sign stand for a particular idea); and (iv) private (because the sign he chooses stands for an idea in his own head and because the connection between sign and idea is invisible to others). Locke affirms language as the social bond; a well ordered commonwealth is, after all, unimaginable without language. However, ‘[t]o make words serviceable to the end of Communication’, he tells us, ‘it is necessary that they excite, in the Hearer, exactly the same *Idea*, they stand for in the Mind of the Speaker’. ‘Without this’, Locke warns, ‘Men fill one another’s Heads with noise and sounds; but convey not thereby their Thoughts, and lay not before one another their *Ideas*, which is the end of Discourse and Language [be it ‘civil’ or ‘philosophical’]’.⁸²⁴ Language, therefore, enables thought, communication, and sociality; but it only fulfils its purpose when the members of a given speech community agree to make certain sounds stand for certain ideas that they trust each other to keep.⁸²⁵

This view, often repeated in the *Essay*, would seem to connect Locke with a tradition of seventeenth-century efforts (e.g. those of John Wilkins, Seth Ward, and George Dalgarno) to purge language, especially philosophical language, of its figurative properties and to bring it into accordance with the real existence of things. John Wilkin’s *Essay towards a Real Character and a*

⁸²³ Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, p. 97.

⁸²⁴ *Essay*, III.ix.6, p. ; III.ix.2, p. ?.

⁸²⁵ So where Locke has us as a community agreeing and consenting to what words stand for, Hobbes thinks we will never do this, we will always remain solipsists and therefore require an overarching sovereign to name names.

Philosophical Language (1668), a work sponsored by the Royal Society, is a good example of the project to create 'noise-free channels of communication and to produce authoritative systems of meaning'.⁸²⁶ The word, for Wilkins, should exactly match the thing; things of the imagination, because they did not exist, should have no word. Locke clearly shares with seventeenth-century linguistic reformers the belief that contests of meaning are more about uncertain uses of words than about real differences in ideas. He wonders whether 'the greatest part of the Disputes in the World are not merely Verbal, and about the Signification of Words'; and whether

'if the terms they are made in, were defined, and reduced in their Signification (as they must be, where they signify any thing) to determined Collections of the simple *Ideas* they do or should stand for, those Disputes would not end of themselves, and immediately vanish'.⁸²⁷

It follows that 'A Man should take care to use no word without a [precise] signification, no Name without an *Idea* for which he makes it stand'.⁸²⁸ Locke complains persistently against the willful 'abuse of words', which compounds the natural imperfections of language.⁸²⁹ And, in his own modest contribution to linguistic reform, Locke proposes that 'Words standing for Things, which are known and distinguished by their outward shapes, should be expressed by little Draughts and Prints made of them'.⁸³⁰ But several features of Locke's thesis set it at odds with the obsessions of universal language schemers and linguistic reformers. For example, despite his belief that the flagrant abuse of words should be curtailed, Locke's understanding of the nature of linguistic signs raises doubts about the effort to eliminate uncertainty in our speaking practices. '[I]t is easy to perceive, he says, 'what imperfection there is in Language, and how the very nature of Words, makes it almost unavoidable, for many of them to be doubtful and uncertain in their significations'.⁸³¹ We should, of course, remedy the defects of language where we can (e.g. the willful

⁸²⁶ Robert Markley, *Fallen Languages: Crises of Representation in Newtonian England 1660-1740* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), p. 32.

⁸²⁷ *Essay*, III.xi.7, p. 511.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*, III.xi.8, p. 512.

⁸²⁹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, III.x.13, p. 497; III.ix.21, 489.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, III.xi.25, p. 522. This is proposed as a temporary solution, because Locke's ideal of a dictionary containing a 'Natural History' of names, 'will require too much time, cost, and pains, to be hoped for in this Age' (*ibid.*).

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, III.ix.1, pp. 475-6.

abuse of words), but we are not to worship the idol of human perfection.

Locke's semiotics is not only at odds with Adamicists (who yearn for the perfection of language before the Fall), but also with those reformers who would construct language anew. 'I am not so vain to think', he says, 'that any one can pretend to attempt the perfect *Reforming the Languages* of the world, not so much as that of his own Country, without rendring himself ridiculous'.⁸³² After all, 'whenever we make them [words] stand for any thing, but those *Ideas* we have in our own Minds', it is 'perverting the use of Words', and 'brings unavoidable Obscurity and Confusion into their Signification'.⁸³³ The language reformers, therefore, merely recreate the problem of uncertainty in signification that they pretend to eliminate. What is more, for Locke, the fantasy of a perfectly transparent and common language also exhibits an implicit authoritarianism:

'To require that Men should use their words constantly in the same sense, and for none but determined and uniform *Ideas*, would be to think, that all Men should have the same Notions, and should talk of nothing but what they have clear and distinct *Ideas* of. Which is not to be expected by any one, who hath not vanity enough to imagine he can prevail with [or force] Men, to be very knowing, or very silent'.⁸³⁴

So if the abuse of words incites wars of interpretation, the dream of a common language, stifles public debate. Language reformers deny that,

'every Man has so inviolable a Liberty, to make Words stand for what *Ideas* he pleases, that no one hath the Power to make others have the same *Ideas* in their Minds, that he has, when they use the same Words, that he does. And therefore the great *Augustus* himself, in the Possession of that Power which ruled the World, acknowledged, he could not make a new Latin Word: which was as much as to say, that he could not arbitrarily appoint, what *Idea* any Sound should be the Sign of, in the Mouths and common Language of his Subjects'.⁸³⁵

This 'inviolable Liberty' of every man to make words stand for ideas in his own mind is at the centre of Locke's political semiotics. However, it is important to note that, for Locke, there is an important difference between Adam's liberty to affix words to ideas as he pleased and ours. He explains that 'in Places,

⁸³² *Essay*, III.xi.2, p. 509.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, III.ii.5, p. 407.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, III.xi.2, p. 509.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*, III.ii.8, p. 408.

where Men in Society have already established a Language amongst them, the signification of Words are very warily and sparingly to be alter'd'.⁸³⁶ So while common use is established through what Locke calls 'tacit consent', individuals thereafter are deprived of that initial freedom (i.e., of being able to make those sounds stand for any ideas they please).⁸³⁷ Since we are bound in a loose form of reciprocal obligation to use words as 'the rule of propriety' dictates,⁸³⁸ he who exhibits '... an affected misapplication of them cannot but be very ridiculous. He that hath new Notions, will, perhaps, venture sometimes on the coining new Terms to express them: But Men think it a Boldness, and 'tis uncertain, whether common Use will ever make them pass for currant'.⁸³⁹ Locke, then, has little patience with men who are so vain as to coin new words. However, it is important for his political semiotics to insist upon our inheritance of Adam's linguistic liberty. This liberty, in tandem with the arbitrary character of the sign, supports Locke's critique of Filmer's political semiotics: no man could possibly define for all posterity the absolute meaning of a word. Language is not substance; the sign has no core that persists through time (as Adamicists like Filmer would have it).

However, the wish to make language a substance is not unique to Adamicists and universal language schemers. It also animates the double character of what Locke calls the 'secret reference' that men give to their words. 'First, they suppose their Words to be Marks of the Ideas in the Minds of other Men, with whom they communicate'; and 'Secondly ... they often suppose their Words to stand also for the reality of Things'.⁸⁴⁰ According to Locke, the secret reference is entangled in the perverse logic of association. '[T]here comes by constant use, to be such a Connexion between certain

⁸³⁶ *Essay*, III.vi.51, p. 471.

⁸³⁷ See *ibid.*, III.xi.11, p. 514, where Locke evokes the normative power of this informal duty by comparing words to money: 'For Words, especially of Languages already framed, being no Man's private possession, but the common measure of Commerce and Communication, 'tis not for any one, at pleasure, to change the Stamp they are current in; nor alter the *Ideas* they are affixed to; or at least when there is a necessity to do so, he is bound to give notice of it'. By using this metaphor he is drawing on a long tradition; see, e.g., Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H.E. Butler, 4 vols. (London, 1963), I, p. 113; Bacon, *Adv. L.*, p. 231; Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 28-9.

⁸³⁸ *Essay*, III.ix.8, p. 479; cf. III.x.31, p. 506: 'He that applies his names to ideas, different from their common use, wants propriety in his language, and speaks gibberish'.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, III.vi.51, p. 471; cf. III.ii.8, p. 408; III.vi.44-5, pp. 466-8.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, III.ii.4, p. 406; III.ii.5, p. 407.

Sounds, and the Ideas they stand for, Locke says, 'that the Names heard, almost as readily excite certain *Ideas*, as if the Objects themselves, which are apt to produce them, did actually affect the Senses'.⁸⁴¹ His anxiety is that words actually have the force of empirical objects; they create sensations that give rise to *Ideas* (in the subject) whose connection to reality is questionable. The tendency to confuse words with things, Locke tells us, has its origins in our very formation as speaking subjects:

'[B]ecause by familiar use from our Cradles, we come to learn certain articulate Sounds very perfectly, and have them readily on our Tongues, and always at hand in our Memories; but yet are not always careful to examine, or settle their Significations perfectly, it *often* happens that *Men*, even when they would apply themselves to an attentive Consideration, do set their Thoughts more on Words than Things. Nay, because Words are many of them learn'd, before the *Ideas* are known for which they stand: Therefore some, not only Children, but Men, speak several Words, no otherwise than Parrots do'.⁸⁴²

The 'childish' man attributes substance to the sign and takes words for things. Above all, he is not in control of his symbolic production. The words that we have 'readily on our Tongues, and always at hand in our Memories' are more like sounds without any distinct signification. They do not correspond to a clear idea in the mind but are like a melody that plays in our head. In the *Conduct of the Understanding*, Locke describes these archaic, infantile memories as 'the chiming of some particular words or sentence in the memory',

'[I]t is a sort of childishness, if I may say so, of the understanding, wherein, during the fit, it plays with and dandles some insignificant puppet to no end, nor with any design at all, and yet cannot easily be got off from it. Thus some trivial sentence, or scrap of poetry, will sometimes get into men's heads, and make such a chiming there, that there is no stilling of it; no peace to be obtained, nor attention to anything else, but this impertinent guest will take up the mind and possess the thoughts in spite of all endeavors to get rid of it'.⁸⁴³

Singling out the chiming as the most debilitating form of the 'transferring of thoughts' that 'clog' our understanding and impede our reason, Locke notes

⁸⁴¹ *Essay*, III.ii.6, p. 407.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, III.ii.7, p. 407. This infantile spectacle of parrot-speech recalls Locke's account of how children receive 'borrowed Principles' into their minds, which they later come to adore and even die for as adults (I.iii.22, p. 81).

⁸⁴³ *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. T. Fowler (Oxford, 1901), §45, p. 100.

that, like the (unnatural) association of ideas, this meaningless noise afflicts even the most reasonable men, ‘persons of very good parts’.⁸⁴⁴ The chiming marks a point of impasse, a sort of affective tie that binds the subject to an ‘object’.⁸⁴⁵ For Locke, it is the task of the understanding to cast out the ‘impertinent guest’, to still the noise, ‘immediately disturb and check it, [and] introduce new and more serious considerations’. After all, he says, ‘Men know the value of their corporal liberty, and therefore suffer not willingly fetters and chains to be put upon them’. A man should be ‘fully master of his own thoughts’.⁸⁴⁶ Locke reassures us that, if diligent, we can prevail over the aforementioned threats to rational thought. However, his analysis actually suggests a less optimistic outcome of our ‘struggle to preserve the freedom of our better part’ (i.e., our rational part), to keep at bay any passion that may ‘take possession of our minds with a kind of authority’.⁸⁴⁷

V

Locke, like Hobbes, attempts to fight what he saw as the destructive power of rhetoric with his own version of true persuasion. His animus, therefore, is not directed against persuasion as a concomitant of instruction; rather it is directed against the forensic temper that prizes success in verbal combat above responsibility to truth. In fact, Locke’s assault upon ‘bad’ rhetoric derives from a standard attack upon scholasticism.⁸⁴⁸ In 1689, in the wake of a revolution which jettisoned King James II, but preserved the institution of monarchy in Britain, Locke’s *Essay* attacked the scholastic rhetoric which had, in his view, helped the absolutist regime stay in power. For Locke ‘the Governments of the World owed their Peace, Defence, and Liberties’, to ‘the unscholastick Statesman’; whereas the ‘artificial Ignorance, and learned Gibberish’ of scholastic ‘Disputants, these all-knowing Doctors,’ had ‘prevailed mightily in

⁸⁴⁴ *Two Treatises*, §45, pp. 96, 97, 100.

⁸⁴⁵ See, e.g., *ibid.*, §45, p. 102..g., ‘some trivial sentence or scrap of poetry’ or ‘the insignificant buzz of purely empty sounds’.

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, §45, p. 101.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, §45, p. 97.

⁸⁴⁸ In the course of the seventeenth century, scholasticism was subjected to devastating criticisms that had roots in humanist assaults in the sixteenth century by the likes of Pico della Mirandola and are even traceable to Petrarch in the fourteenth century.

these last Ages' to mislead the citizenry.⁸⁴⁹ In fact, on the testimony of those who knew him best, Locke's one great pastime was fulminating against disputers and disputations.⁸⁵⁰ He had a rather telling name for disputation in the Schools:⁸⁵¹ 'Hogshearing', the laborious clipping of tiny hairs from the skins of vociferating animals (not swine apparently, but yearling lambs). Locke hated it (and he did it badly).⁸⁵² This was partly the reason why he 'pitched upon the study of physique', where he was simultaneously away from the Schools, and 'as far as might be from any publique concernes'.⁸⁵³ His repudiation of dispute, participating as it does in a larger polemic against scholasticism within Restoration culture, is important for what it reveals about the method and rhetoric of his epistemology. Primarily, it shows the depth of his allegiance to the master-builders of the new science.⁸⁵⁴ To Locke's colleagues in the Royal Society the disputation epitomised all that was stagnant and word-bound in scholasticism. Bacon's theme that 'the customs and institutions of schools, academies, [and] colleges ... [are] adverse to the progress of science'⁸⁵⁵ was taken up again and again by the Society's fellows. Robert Boyle, for example, laments that 'the Naturall Philosophy hitherto taught in most Schools, hath been so Litigious in its Theorie, and so barren as to its Productions'.⁸⁵⁶ Likewise, John Evelyn complains that 'Obstreperous and Noisy Disputes' about metaphysical abstractions were responsible for 'affrighting, and (till of late) deterring Men from adventuring on further Discoveries'.⁸⁵⁷ In rejecting disputations, Locke's scientific contemporaries advocated a philosophy that was heuristic and pragmatic, concerned more

⁸⁴⁹ *Essay*, III.x.9, p. 495.

⁸⁵⁰ See J. Le Clerc, *The Life and Character of Mr. John Locke* (London, 1706), pp. 3, 27; and Pierre Coste, 'The Character of Mr. Locke', in *A Collection of Several Pieces of Mr. John Locke*, ed. P. Desmaiseaux (London, 1720), p. xvii.

⁸⁵¹ Disputations were central to the curriculum of British universities in Locke's day: undergraduates were set disputing in college classes to sharpen their logic, and the attainment of most degrees depended on a successful performance in formal public debates.

⁸⁵² P. Laslett, 'Introduction', *Two Treatises*, p. 22.

⁸⁵³ 'Locke to Thomas Herbert, Eighth Earl of Pembroke, 3 December 1684', in *Correspondence*, ed. E. S. de Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford, 1976-89), II, p. 663.

⁸⁵⁴ In general see, M. Ben-Chaim, *Experimental philosophy and the birth of empirical science: Boyle, Locke, and Newton* (Aldershot, 2004).

⁸⁵⁵ F. Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding, et. al., 7 vols. (London, 1857-59), IV, p. 89.

⁸⁵⁶ R. Boyle, *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy* (Oxford, 1663), pp. 2-3.

⁸⁵⁷ J. Evelyn, *Acetaria: A Discourse of Sallets* (London, 1699), A3r.

with action and the pressing needs of humanity than with establishing universal principles.⁸⁵⁸

In a similar vein, notwithstanding his tenacious grip on his Christ Church fellowship, Locke made no attempt to disguise his contempt for the university curriculum of his day. For example, he told his friend and colleague Jean Le Clerc that he had often ‘wish’d his Father had never sent him to *Oxford*’.⁸⁵⁹ And in *Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke warns parents against hiring as a tutor a mere scholar who would merely empty ‘into his Pupil all the Latin, and Logick, he has brought from the University’.⁸⁶⁰ Locke attacks disputation in many of his works, but his most thorough and damning analysis of its dangers (criticisms already voiced by, among others, Joseph Glanvill, Robert Boyle, and John Evelyn) can be found in the *Essay*. ‘[T]he admired Art of Disputing’, he remarks, ‘hath added much to the natural imperfection of Languages, ... more than to discover the Knowledge and Truth of things ...’.⁸⁶¹ He tells us of his strong aversion to the violence and competitiveness of disputes, which turn students into captious ‘wranglers’ rather than careful thinkers.⁸⁶² For Locke such combative fora clearly stunt intellectual growth. ‘[V]ictory’ in the schools is, after all, ‘adjudged not to him who had Truth on his side, but the last word in the Dispute’. As a result, even when men are ‘bafled and silenced in this Scholastique way’, they are ‘seldom or never convinced, and so brought over to the conquering side ...’.⁸⁶³ Onerous words and esoteric notions are developed primarily to create a privileged class of professionals and this testifies to the egotism of traditional philosophy. Pride, Locke tells us, explains it all:

‘the Schoolmen since, aiming at Glory and Esteem, for their great and universal Knowledge, easier a great deal to be pretended to, than really acquired, found this a good Expedient to cover their Ignorance, with a curious

⁸⁵⁸ It is worth noting that the Royal Society was in many ways an institution concerned with political and religious order and, consequently, by no means entirely comfortable with the implications of its divergence from the universities in methodology. See J. R. Jacob, ‘Restoration, Reformation, and the Origins of the Royal Society’, *H. Sci.*, 13 (1975), pp. 155-76; and id., ‘Restoration Ideologies and the Royal Society’, *H. Sci.*, 18 (1980), pp. 25-38.

⁸⁵⁹ Le Clerc, *Life and Character*, p. 2.

⁸⁶⁰ *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. J. W. and J. S. Yolton (Oxford, 1989), p. 150.

⁸⁶¹ *Essay*, III.x.6, pp. 493-4; cf. III.x.7, pp. 494; IV.iii.30, p. 561.

⁸⁶² Plato had compared elenctic debates to wrestling matches, a metaphor revived in Restoration accounts of disputation. See, e.g., Obadiah Walker, *Of Education*, 6th edn. (London, 1699), p. 120.

⁸⁶³ *Essay*, III.x.7, p. 494; IV.xvii.4, p. 677.

and unexplicable Web of perplexed Words, and procure to themselves the admiration of others, by unintelligible Terms, the apter to produce wonder, because they could not be understood'.⁸⁶⁴

Locke creates a mocking myth of the origins of scholastic maxims or axioms. To prevent the endless spinning out of disputations between 'obstinate Wranglers',

'whilst one never fail'd of a *medius terminus* to prove any Proposition; and the other could as constantly, without, or with a Distinction, deny the *Major* or *Minor*; ... certain general Propositions ... were introduced into the Schools, which being such as all Men allowed and agreed in, were look'd on as general Measures of Truth, and serv'd instead of Principles ... beyond which there was no going, and which must not be receded from by either side'.⁸⁶⁵

Because these maxims were given the name of principles beyond which one could not go, they were wrongly assumed to be the source of all knowledge 'and the Foundations whereon the Sciences were built'.⁸⁶⁶ This 'Method of the Schools', Locke warns, has 'allowed and encouraged Men to oppose and resist evident Truth, till they are baffled, *i.e.* till they are reduced to contradict themselves, or some established Principle'. Yet, 'obstinately to maintain that side of the Question they have chosen, whether true or false, to the last extremity' is considered 'a Vertue and a Glory'.⁸⁶⁷ Locke repudiates, in addition, the three modes of argument on which the disputant chiefly relies, *i.e.*, the arguments *ad Verecundiam*, *ad Ignorantiam* and *ad Hominem*.⁸⁶⁸ In his view, to demand that an adversary accept an argument as true 'out of respect, or any other consideration, but that of conviction', or merely because he cannot provide a better one, is to build on 'Ignorance, or Errour'.⁸⁶⁹ This is a topic on which the usually measured voice of the *Essay* becomes emphatic, even indulging in hyperbole: In their disputations, 'these all-knowing Doctors' have had 'the Advantage to destroy the Instruments and Means of Discourse, Conversation, Instruction, and Society'.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁴ *Essay*, III.x.8.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.vii.11, p. 600.

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 601

⁸⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, IV.xvii.19-22, pp. 685-87. The true philosopher, by contrast, relies on *Argumentum ad Judicium*. 'This alone of all the four, brings true Instruction with it, and advances us in our way to Knowledge' (*ibid.*, xvii.22, p. 686).

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 686-7.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, III.x.9, p. 495; III.x.10, p. 495.

It is important to note that, with this appeal to the ends of ‘Conversation, Instruction, and Society’, Locke evokes an ideal of discourse central to the Royal Society’s formulation of its own project. Indeed, from its inception, the Society encouraged candid conversation in its meetings. If we are to believe Samuel Sorbière’s description of the Society’s proceedings, these ideals seem to have been put into practice:

‘There is no body here eager to speak, that makes a long Harangue, or intent upon saying all he knows: He is never interrupted that speaks, and Differences of Opinion cause no manner of Resentment, nor as much as a disabling Way of Speech: There is nothing seemed to me to be more civil, respectful, and better managed than this Meeting’.⁸⁷¹

Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* (1667) goes further and suggests that collective discussion was valued above physical demonstration. After all, ‘though the *Experiment* was but the private task of one or two, or some such small number’, Sprat says, ‘the debating on its consequences, was still the employment of their full, and solemn Assemblies’.⁸⁷² This commitment to open exchange is, of course, a concomitant of the Baconian view that natural philosophy is by definition a collective endeavour.⁸⁷³ Robert Boyle fills the early *Philosophical Transactions* with long catalogues of ‘heads of inquiry’ in question form on topics as diverse as blood transfusion and the natural history of the West Indies. Readers of the journal were quick to reply, fleshing out Boyle’s outlines from their own observation. The *Transactions*’ informal epistolary exchanges, in contrast to the disputation’s tight focus on a single, general thesis, are adapted to the varied and often random character of sense experience. With its play of voices about themes of common interest, the rhetoric of the *Transactions* comes to approximate sustained conversation.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷¹ S. Sorbière, *A Voyage to England* (London, 1709), pp. 36-7; first published in Paris in 1664.

⁸⁷² T. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, ed. J. Cope and H. Jones (St Louis, Mo., 1959), p. 102.

⁸⁷³ For more information on Bacon see the excellent study by Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁸⁷⁴ Charles Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science* (Madison, 1988), esp. pp. 77-8, examines the developing rhetoric of the *Transactions* between 1665 and 1800, tracing the genealogy of the modern scientific article. He argues that the form of the journal fostered debate and disagreement which, in turn, encouraged more theoretically motivated programmes of experimentation. For more information see, Peter Dear, ‘*Totius in verba*: Rhetoric and Authority in the Early Royal Society’, *Isis*, 76 (1985), pp. 145-61; and id. ‘Narratives, Anecdotes, and Experiments: Turning

It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that Boyle's *The Sceptical Chymist*, clearly aspires towards polite conversation. In fact, he vows to provide in his work a model of 'Philosophical conference', an alternative to the 'Dialectical subtleties' of the Schoolmen, and to demonstrate 'how to manage even Disputes with Civility'. Moreover, 'in a book written by a Gentleman, and wherein only Gentlemen are introduc'd as speakers', Boyle tells us, 'the Language should be more smooth and the Expressions more Civil than is usual in the more Scholastick way of writing'.⁸⁷⁵ The dialogue thus begins with large displays of friendship and fine manners. Carneades, Boyle's spokesman, welcomes his fellow *virtuosi* into his garden 'with open looks and armes, and ... with his wonted freedom and civility'.⁸⁷⁶ And, of course, the interlocutors in *The Sceptical Chymist* are *virtuosi* of the best possible sort, i.e., accomplished experimentalists whose first-hand chemical experience is the product of private study. It is important to note, finally, that in Boyle's work there is also a constant attempt to find a *via media* in metaphysical disputes. The corpuscular hypothesis, he says, is something that transcends metaphysical disputes between the Cartesian and Epicurean schools, whose hypotheses 'might by a person of a reconciling disposition be looked on as ... one philosophy'.⁸⁷⁷ Eclecticism is presented here as an ingredient in gentlemanly behaviour, something to be contrasted with the adversarial mode of Scholastic disputation.

Stephen Shapin has argued that there is an intimate relationship between the emerging image of natural science and the development of modern 'selfhood'.⁸⁷⁸ The new science was a communal and public enterprise among gentlemen, so it required modesty and respect for the arguments (and experiments) of peers, the openness to attend to all relevant evidence, and for

Experience into Science in the Seventeenth Century', in *The Literary Structure of Scientific Argument*, ed. P. Dear (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 135-63 (where he contrasts this rhetoric with that of Aristotelian science, which worked deductively rather than hypothetically).

⁸⁷⁵ R. Boyle, *The Sceptical Chymist, or Chymico-Physical Doubts and Paradoxes*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1680), pp. 5, 14.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁷⁷ *Id.*, *Preface to Some Specimens of An Attempt to make Chymical Experiments useful to illustrate the notions of the Corpuscular Philosophy*, in *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle*, ed. T. Birch, 2nd edn., 6 vols. (London, 1772), i.355-8 at p. 356.

⁸⁷⁸ See S. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth* (Chicago, 1994); and *id.* and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump*.

hypotheses to be tested in a public forum. Shapin is certainly right to emphasise that the pervasive ideology of a gentlemanly, 'experimental' persona is something that permeates and in some respects shapes natural philosophical practice.⁸⁷⁹ However, he does not trace its origins back further than Robert Boyle,⁸⁸⁰ whereas there are significant Baconian precedents for both the idea of a *via media*⁸⁸¹ and for the idea of experiment and observation replacing Scholastic methods of disputation. Moreover, in using the dialogue form, scientists like Boyle worked with canons of civility that had been characteristic of its functioning from antiquity to the Renaissance. Neither was a gentlemanly preoccupation with civil conversation in any way peculiar to English natural philosophy. For example, the issue of a 'civil' and experimental approach to natural philosophy, and the inculcation of these values in natural philosophers, had been raised by Descartes in his *La Recherche de la Vérité par la lumière naturelle*, which dates from the 1630s or 1640s.⁸⁸² So it is misleading to construe the continuing vitality of a register as a new ideology and to see a persona like Boyle's as fashioning a modern self. Still, he undoubtedly lived the scientific persona with conspicuous success, and his critiques of Hobbes were an effective way of presenting the openness of Eclecticism, as an alternative to the prioristic over-reaching of speculative argument.

Boyle was one of the great influences on Locke's thought and it is his model of philosophical conversation which Locke especially promotes in the *Essay*.⁸⁸³ He wants to promote the work as exemplary polite conversation and

⁸⁷⁹ Shapin, *Social History*, esp. pp. 409-10.

⁸⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 160-8.

⁸⁸¹ In *Temporis Partus Masculus*, Bacon says that Democritus 'destroyed two falsehoods by knocking their heads together and opened up a middle path to truth'. In the *De Sapientia Veterum*, he uses the images of steering between Scylla and Charybdis, and of the flight of Icarus: 'Moderation or the Middle Way is in Morals much commended, in Intellectuals less spoken of, though not less useful and good' (*Works* vi.754). And in the *Novum Organum*, Bacon warns that to avoid the 'Idols of the Cave', we must steer a middle course between 'extreme admirations for antiquity' and 'extreme love and appetite for novelty' (*Nov. Org.* I lvi, in *Works* i.170; iii.59-60).

⁸⁸² See Descartes, *Oeuvres*, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery, 2nd edn., 11 vols. (Paris, 1974-86), X, pp. 495-527. See A. Ranea, 'A "Science for honnêtes hommes"', in *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, ed. S. Gaukroger, *et al.* (London, 2000), pp. 313-29.

⁸⁸³ Locke's regard for Boyle is registered in the 'Epistle to the Reader' in the *Essay* (pp. 9-10), where Boyle is named as one of the 'master builders' in the advancement of science, alongside Isaac Newton, Thomas Sydenham, and Christiaan Huygens. In 'an Age that produces such

the very antithesis of dispute. The natural setting for thought, after all, should be a guard against the obscene self-serving professionalism of the Scholastics. Thus his own candid and informal method he likens to two 'virtuous pastimes', hawking and hunting,⁸⁸⁴ and his well-known account of the genesis of the *Essay*, whereby the 'well directed study' is an extension of a conversation among 'five or six Friends meeting at my Chamber'.⁸⁸⁵ This conversation among friends, unlike the average disputation, is portrayed as truly open and free and draws attention to the problematic character of judgement.⁸⁸⁶ The process of balancing competing claims and of gathering all the evidence which might bear on the issue demands the utmost 'Diligence, Attention, and Exactness'.⁸⁸⁷ Locke calls 'discourse' both this seminal discussion and the book it gave rise to. What is more, Locke does not assume the authority commonly granted to a philosopher. He claims to have written the *Essay* merely 'for my own Information, and the Satisfaction of a few Friends'.⁸⁸⁸ We are 'not to expect any thing here, but what being spun out of my own course Thoughts, is fitted to Men of my own size'.⁸⁸⁹ This intimate and diffident mood is sustained by his acknowledgement of the continuing role of his friends in revising the *Essay*. So for example, in the second edition Locke tells us that he was put upon a strict review of the controversial chapter on power: '... I my self from the beginning fearing, and a very judicious Friend of mine, since the publication suspecting ... [there to be] some mistake in it ...'.⁸⁹⁰ Moreover, by addressing the opening Epistle to us and by making large gestures of deference

Masters', Locke says, 'tis Ambition enough to be employed as an Under-labourer in clearing the Ground a little, and removing some of the Rubbish, that lies in the way of Knowledge ...'. But as Rosalie Colie has (I think rightly) pointed out, Locke's is 'an odd kind of modesty', because 'it insists that such masters of thought have not sufficiently clarified knowledge so that an under-labourer of the sort Locke's makes himself out to be, is still needed' ('The essayist in his Essay', in *John Locke*, ed. J. W. Yolton [Cambridge, 1969], pp. 234-61, at p. 244).

⁸⁸⁴ *Essay*, Epistle.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

⁸⁸⁶ See R. Kroll, *The Material Word* (Baltimore, 1991), who argues for a prevailing rhetoric of probability in the Restoration, and points to the regularity with which neo-classical writers 'allude to and dramatize the reader's necessarily contingent activity when faced with a text' (p. 53). For Locke's contribution to the Restoration debate about probability see, Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty*; M. Osler, 'John Locke and the changing ideal of scientific knowledge', *JHI*, 31 (1970), pp. 3-16; and D. Patey, *Probability and Literary Form* (Cambridge, 1984), esp. pp. 27-34.

⁸⁸⁷ *Essay*, iv.xvi.9.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, II.xxi.71, p. 282.

to our judgements, Locke establishes the readers' role as conversants (clearly intended as a compliment): 'I consider my self as liable to Mistakes', he says, 'as I can think thee'.

In chapter 2 we saw how, for Aristotle, one of the most important elements in persuasive or effective speech is the character or ethos displayed by the speaker.⁸⁹¹ When we listen, we pay attention not only to the *message* conveyed but to the *person* conveying it. If the speaker strikes us as a trustworthy person, we are much more likely to accept (and act) on what he says. Locke's writings in general reveal how well he learned this lesson. The *Essay* in particular is a classic example of the way in which an argument can be enhanced by skilful self-presentation. His voice in the *Essay* is that of a patient, moderate, bourgeois man, who despite his Protestant faith can be trusted to take a detached and impartial view of things. The very plainness of his style contributes to his Quaker-like tone. The impact of the *Essay* is clearly enhanced by the fact that he does not indulge in fanciful metaphors or overheated eloquence (those stylistic habits that make other writers entertaining, but not entirely trustworthy).⁸⁹² When John Wynne of Jesus College, Oxford, asked him to write an English epitome of the *Essay* for the use of undergraduates, Locke's answer was that he had not expected such a request. After all, he wrote 'in plain and popular stile, which having in it noething of the aire of learning nor soe much as the language of the schools was litle suited to the use or relish of those who as teachers or learners applyd them selves to the mysterys of scholastique knowledge'.⁸⁹³ His 'modesty' is, of course, a counter-statement to scholastic 'mysterys'. The 'true' philosopher, for him, should be modest, acknowledge the limits of his office. In fact, Locke is the clearest example of a powerful writer who tried to make deference and modesty his literary signature. From the first, the *Essay* was recognised as an attempt to establish a new way of writing philosophy. Not everyone was

⁸⁹¹ See, e.g., Aristotle, *Rh.*, I.2.1356a.

⁸⁹² Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, 1974), has argued that the tradition of plain talk in philosophy that Locke represents resembles in a secular sense an old rhetorical-theological strategy that was articulated by another professor of rhetoric, St. Augustine: 'The teaching of the truth need not be accompanied by pleasing words or forceful exhortations, because the truth itself, if it is understood, both delights and moves' (p. 34).

⁸⁹³ *Correspondence*, V, p. 266.

enthusiastic about the innovation. The biographer of Locke's most bitter opponent, Bishop Stillingfleet, labelled the book 'modish popularising':

'This Essay abounding with a Set of new Philosophical Terms, as if some wonderful Improvement of Knowledge was to have been hoped for from it, and being written with a graceful Air, ... and elegancy of Style and politeness of Expression, a smoothness in Reasoning, and an ingenious improvement of his Arguments to the best Advantage, ... no wonder true Understanding, and a right Apprehension of Things, set off with these uncommon Advantages, should easily recommend it self to the Affections of the Studious, especially the younger part of them'.⁸⁹⁴

That is in fact a good description of the *Essay*, which is ingratiating and persuasive in just those ways. Later readers have come to take Locke at his word as merely a modest and plain speaker. Indeed, simplicity and downright drabness as a writer are what some critics have granted him. George Saintsbury singled out Locke's style as the lowest moment in the history of English prose and found that his literary innovation consisted in making that prose 'positively mean in every point of style'.⁸⁹⁵ R. I. Aaron, a less exquisite judge, concluded that his style reflected his genuine directness and simplicity.⁸⁹⁶ It is easy to underestimate the rhetorical artifice of the *Essay* because there is nothing that is showy about it. By comparison with the magnificence of Bacon's architectonics and clarity, with the incisive duplicities of Hobbes, and with the witty fluency of Hume, Locke's style can seem as trivial as his thoughts seem to some. But we must not allow ourselves to be so easily deceived, however, by the art that conceals art. His very simplicity of style is itself part of a cunningly planned rhetorical strategy.

Locke's image of philosophy, therefore, still draws on the promotional rhetorics of office. He casts his argument in the language of duty and responsibility, of ends and functions and what has impeded their fulfilment. The answer he provides is by and large, cut out and stitched with the same materials of intellectual office and its abuse as Hobbes had used: the complete obfuscation of past philosophy and the delusions of rhetoric, which are

⁸⁹⁴ T. Goodwin, *The Life and Character ... of the Late Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet (1710)*, pp. 86-7; cited in J. Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (London, 1956), p. 89.

⁸⁹⁵ G. Saintsbury, *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (Bloomington, 1965), p. 229.

⁸⁹⁶ R. I. Aaron, *John Locke* (Oxford, 1971), p. 49.

attacked *tout court*, thus stigmatising the persona of the rhetorician as the enemy of the under-labourer.

Epilogue: living with uncertainty

Four books and thirteen chapters into his autobiography, and still not having advanced beyond the day of his birth, Tristram Shandy realised that to chronicle his life was going to take even longer than to live it.⁸⁹⁷ It is clear that the present analysis is plagued by a version of the same problem, for a comprehensive examination of this opposition between philosophy and rhetoric, would take up more space than the original works, and a great deal more than is available here. There is room, however, to look briefly at how the enmity of rhetoric has persisted in contemporary philosophy. It is worthwhile raising this problem because, unlike the thinkers analysed in the main body of this work, most academic philosophers do not acknowledge, or even deny, that if the voice of reason is to have any prospect of being heard it will need to speak the language of rhetoric. Put differently, the question of rhetoric is considered unworthy of philosophical consideration. As hinted at repeatedly in this thesis, the predominant tendency in modern Anglo-American philosophy has been to either ignore the relation between form and content altogether, or, when not ignoring it, to treat rhetoric as largely decorative, i.e., as irrelevant to the contents that might be conveyed. Yet, philosophers, no less than other scholars, are entangled in the web of language, and draw (whether consciously or not) on the intellectual heritage of their culture. We saw that this situation is partly the result of the long-standing fascination of many Western philosophers with the method and style of natural science, which at different times has been taken to embody the only kind of rationality worth emulating – even in the ethical sphere. Though it is perfectly plausible to maintain that the true nature of the ethical sphere is such that it can best be conveyed in the style usually linked with mathematics or natural science, it is an error to take a method and style that have been effective for the exploration of certain truths, and apply them to a vastly different domain of human existence, a sphere that

⁸⁹⁷ L. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London, 1903), p. 259.

may require a different norm of rationality, a different kind of precision. As Martha Nussbaum persuasively puts it,

‘Whether Kant’s views ... were being defended or attacked ..., the conventional style of Anglo-American philosophical prose usually prevailed: a style correct, scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid, a style that seemed to be regarded as a kind of all-purpose solvent in which philosophical issues of any kind at all could be efficiently disentangled.... That there might be other ways of being precise, other conceptions of lucidity ... that might be ... more appropriate for ethical thought – this was, on the whole, neither asserted nor even denied’.⁸⁹⁸

This sort of stance is prevalent among contemporary proponents of ‘deliberative democracy’ or ‘discursive democracy’. In fact, their contempt for rhetoric becomes apparent when we learn that they have upheld conversation as the preferred model of political communication. Put differently, for them political deliberation takes the form, not of public oratory, but of ‘public conversation’, ‘discourse’ or ‘dialogue’.⁸⁹⁹ According to most proponents of deliberative democracy, political decision-making is legitimate only insofar as its policies are produced in a process of public discussion and debate in which citizens and their representatives, going beyond mere self-interest and limited points of view, reflect on the general interest or on their common good (and presumably thereafter come to binding agreements about it).⁹⁰⁰ The deliberation of citizens, in short, is vital if decisions are not to be merely imposed upon them.⁹⁰¹ But participants in this modern public sphere are to be conceived, not as citizens of an ancient polis assembling together to engage in the common exercise of political will, but as the dispersed members of ‘a society engaged in critical public debate’.⁹⁰² In other words, deliberation is a ‘public’ rather than a ‘collective’ or a group-specific activity. Under the aegis of ‘public opinion’, power and domination in human life were to give way to free

⁸⁹⁸ M. C. Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 19–20.

⁸⁹⁹ See A. Gutmann and D. Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), p. 131.

⁹⁰⁰ The two main statements that guide the theory of deliberative democracy outlined here are that of Jürgen Habermas (*Between Facts and Norms*, tr. W. Rehg [Cambridge, 1992], esp. chs. 7 and 8) and that of John Rawls (*Political Liberalism* [N.Y., 1993], esp. ch. 4; and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* [London, 2001], esp. Pt. I).

⁹⁰¹ For more on the connection between deliberation and democracy see, W. Rehg and J. Bohman, ‘Discursive and democracy: The formal and informal bases of legitimacy’, *JPP*, 4 (1996), pp. 79–99.

⁹⁰² J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, tr. T. Burger and F. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), p. 52.

acceptance of the enlightened order of human rationality. From the discursive perspective, the question we ask ourselves is: Would everyone agree to be regulated by my maxim? Habermas and others, therefore, propose to replace the monological test of the categorical imperative with a *dialogical* test. At present a number of designs are available,⁹⁰³ but I wish to write about them in general terms, though also with some particular references.⁹⁰⁴ In one way or another, each of the theories must deal with the main causes of disagreement (particular interests, relationships, and values) and of false or inauthentic agreement (inequality and misinformation). Since all these causes inevitably pervade the real world, moral and political philosophers, whilst trying to ensure the rationality of public judgement, are driven to design an ideal conversational setting and then an ideal speaker and/or an ideal set of speech acts.⁹⁰⁵ But as seen earlier what they fail to acknowledge is that the substance of everyday experience invariably refers to a 'here and now'; general theoretical abstractions, by contrast, profess to apply always and *everywhere* and, consequently, hold good *nowhere-in-particular*.⁹⁰⁶ 'What the historical record strongly suggests', as Skinner eloquently concludes, 'is that no one is above the battle, because the battle is all there is'.⁹⁰⁷ It is also important to bear in mind that the heart of moral experience does not lie in a command of general rules and theoretical principles, no matter how well reasoned those principles may seem, but 'in the wisdom that comes from seeing how the ideas behind those rules work out in the course of people's lives[;] ... in ... seeing ...

⁹⁰³ For more information see, S. Benhabib, 'Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy', in *Democracy and Difference*, ed. S. Benhabib (Princeton, 1996), pp. 67-94; J. Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', in *The Good Polity*, ed. A. Hamlin and P. Pettit (Oxford, 1989), pp. 17-34; id. 'Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy', in *Democracy and Difference*, pp. 95-119; A. Gutmann and D. Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996); J. Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy* (Cambridge, 1990); Cass Sunstein, *The Partial Constitution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), p. 133-45; Jean L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); and J. Fishkin, *Democracy and Deliberation* (New Haven, CT, 1991). Also see, Jon Elster (ed.), *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge, 1998); J. Bohman and W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997); S. Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996); and J. Bohman, *Public Deliberation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

⁹⁰⁴ I acknowledge in advance that the particular references will not do justice to the complexity and sophistication of the theories involved.

⁹⁰⁵ For a sketch of these procedural idealisations see, Robert Alexy, 'A Theory of Practical Discourse', in *The Communicative Ethics Controversy*, ed. S. Benhabib and F. Dallmayr (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).

⁹⁰⁶ Thomas Nagel cited in Toulmin, *Return to Reason*, pp. 15-6.

⁹⁰⁷ Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 7

what is involved in insisting on (or waiving) this or that rule in one or another set of circumstances'.⁹⁰⁸ Put differently, our hope for certainty and clarity in theory needs to be balanced with the impossibility of avoiding uncertainty and ambiguity in practice. In any event, as long as philosophy is inclined to hold out at least the prospect of eternal truths and definitive certainties, then consensus as the ideal of rhetoric, and agreement subject to later revocation as the result attained by persuasion, had to seem contemptible to it. Once this prospect is abandoned, we recognise that in reasoning about the practical activities of life, it is often more rational to proceed rhetorically, aiming at an actual consensus – and thus to accept something on insufficient grounds – than to insist on a procedure modelled after science. Put differently, we must set aside permanent validity as illusory, and we must connect our notion of rationality to specific functions of human reason. Such scepticism towards the claim that rationality has a permanent validity is commonplace among students of rhetoric and history, and must now be embraced by philosophers.

II

For theorists of deliberative democracy conversation is a public form of speech, i.e. suited to the political arena. But before the modern era deliberative rhetoric was seen as the most suitable genre for the political realm, because the uneducated mass of the people was integral to it. So why did previous ages regard deliberative rhetoric, and not conversation, as the most appropriate genre for political debate? To begin with, thinkers understood that political speech is public and directed primarily towards popular audiences, who, as Quintilian put it, 'if not thoroughly ill-educated, are certainly ignorant of such arts as dialectic'. It follows that 'unless we force, and occasionally throw them off their balance by an appeal to their emotions, we shall be unable to vindicate the claims of truth and justice'.⁹⁰⁹ Cicero tells us that, 'when the matter under consideration is ... important', then *copia* or the 'non-rational' use of stylistic abundance, 'is necessary either to win the Senate to a wise

⁹⁰⁸ A. Jonsen and S. Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley, Ca., 1988), p. 314.

⁹⁰⁹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H. E. Butler, 4 vols. (London, 1963), 5.14.29.

policy or to furnish it with information',⁹¹⁰ '[M]en's judgments', as he explains in *De oratore*, 'are more often formed under the influence of hatred, love, desire, anger, grief, joy, hope, fear, misconception or some other emotion, than by truth or ordinance, the principles of justice, the procedure of the courts or the laws'.⁹¹¹ Public discourse, therefore, entails significant appeal to emotions.⁹¹² Reason alone, for them, is insufficient in a large group, regardless of its social or class composition. Conversation, on the other hand, because conducted among a smaller group, can rely almost entirely on rational argument.

Another reason why the ancients saw oratory, not conversation, as appropriate for political debate is that oratory, like politics, is aimed at *action* in a way that conversation is not. Political oratory is highly structured, while conversations are less formal and need not to conclude in agreement. It is important to note that, for Cicero, this preoccupation with action does not diminish rhetoric's standing *vis-à-vis* philosophy. 'Service is better than mere theoretical knowledge', he says in *De officiis*, because 'the study and knowledge of the universe would somehow be lame and defective, were no practical results to follow'.⁹¹³ And in *De Re Publica* Cicero tells us that the political life is superior to the contemplative, '[f]or there is no principle enunciated by the philosophers – at least none that is honourable – that has not been discovered and established by those who have drawn up codes of law for States'.⁹¹⁴ In fact, while Aristotle and Plato eschew the statesmen's morally ambiguous methods, he maintains that statesmen, because they lead people to act, bring about greater good than philosophers.⁹¹⁵

In addition, for the ancients, conversation may further philosophical truth better than oratory, but its egalitarianism, tranquillity, and rationality tend to

⁹¹⁰ Cicero, *De legibus*, ed. J.G.F. Powell (Oxford, 2006), 3.18.40

⁹¹¹ Id., *De oratore*, tr. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, 2 vols. (London, 1959), 2.178; cf. *Brutus*, 89, 279; *Orator*, 128 (both works in *Brutus and Orator*, tr. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbel [Cambridge, Mass., 1952]).

⁹¹² *De or.*, 1.3.12.

⁹¹³ Id., *De officiis*, ed. and tr. by W. Miller (London, 1913), 1.43-153. Plato seems to voice a similar view in the *Gorgias*, when Gorgias answers Socrates with the following objection: 'of what use is all the physician's knowledge if the patient does not pluck up courage to do what the physician has prescribed?' So one does need rhetoric to convince him.

⁹¹⁴ Cicero, *De Re Publica*, ed. J. G. F. Powell (Oxford, 2006), 1.2.2; cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. S. Everson (Cambridge, 1996), 1325b14.

⁹¹⁵ *De off.*, 1.21.70.

hinder the emergence of an exceptional person from the group.⁹¹⁶ Politics, for Cicero, clearly required such an outstanding leader. In *De Re Publica*, he describes the 'ideal statesman' as a man of 'ability, virtue, and dedication like the ancestral heroes, who should dominate the senate and magistracy of the ideal mixed state in order that it may function properly'.⁹¹⁷ But as Cicero makes abundantly clear in *De oratore*, it is eloquence, above all other skills, that allows the leader to attain greatness:

'There is to my mind no more excellent thing than the power, by means of oratory, to get a hold on assemblies of men. ... For what is so marvellous as that, out of the innumerable company of mankind, a single being should arise, who either alone or with a few others can make effective a faculty bestowed by nature upon every man?'⁹¹⁸

The ideal statesman and the ideal orator, as seen in chapter 3, are the same.

The above explains why the ancients were convinced that deliberative rhetoric was more suited for political debate. Those who, like today's deliberative democrats, would condemn the orator for arousing the emotions of his audience, should bear in mind that the essence of human beings is determined both by logical and emotional elements, and thus must be addressed as such. Put differently, speech can persuade the human being only if it appeals to both these aspects.⁹¹⁹ In fact, even if we argue that decisions should be arrived at rationally, the impetus to act on a decision usually involves pathos. Cicero attributes a pivotal role to the emotions in civil rhetoric because of this and the fact that political deliberation must conclude

⁹¹⁶ Although for Cicero those engaged in philosophically supported oratory or in status group conversation are already quite extraordinary. See Cicero, *De Re Publica*, esp. the *Somnium Scipionis*. The conversation of Scipio and his friends is an illustration of the ideal behaviour of Roman senators. The purpose of the *Somnium* is to show that public service is a divinely sanctioned and divinely rewarded activity.

⁹¹⁷ N. Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 178.

⁹¹⁸ *De or.*, 1.8-30-31.

⁹¹⁹ It is important to note that some important contemporary philosophers, mostly women, such as Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and Martha C. Nussbaum have argued that moral debates cannot be solved by 'rational proof' alone, but must be resolved through some mixture of reason and emotions. Rorty contends that the emotions involve evaluation and appraisal and are not, as such, either rational or irrational (see A. O. Rorty, 'Varieties of Emotion', *SSI*, 24 [1985], pp. 343-53). Similarly, Nussbaum maintains that the emotions can be rational or irrational and that they are appropriate in deliberation – in fact, we would not be better off if decisions were made by calculating intellects lacking empathy. After all, intellect without emotions 'lacks the sense of the meaning and worth of persons' needed to deliberate about less-visible human concerns, like far-off famines, homelessness, and safety standards (M. Nussbaum, 'Emotions and Women's Capabilities', in *Women, Culture, and Development*, ed. M. Nussbaum and J. Glover [Oxford, 1995], pp. 360-95, at pp. 381-82).

in action. Advocates of deliberative democracy, on the other hand, overlook the link between emotions and action, and as a result they play down the role of action. For them political debate is about discussion, but this debate need not culminate in activity. Simone Chambers, for example, contrasts her (Habermasian) methodology, where 'participants are interested in bringing about a "change of heart," in which communicative actors are primarily interested in mutual understanding as opposed to external behaviour', with that of 'strategic action', where 'participants are primarily interested in bringing about a desired behavioural response'.⁹²⁰ But while the goal of 'mutual understanding' is perfectly legitimate and even admirable, surely the lack of action in a political context, may potentially have serious consequences? A discussion about racism, for instance, can culminate with a 'change of heart' for some participants, but unless we attempt to translate those ideas into action, 'external' racism will remain unaffected.

For deliberative democrats rational argument, which excludes any type emotional appeals, is the sole legitimate mode of persuasion in collective deliberation. Because only the 'force of the better argument' should persuade participants, conditions must be set whereby 'only rational, that is, argumentative convincing is allowed to take place'.⁹²¹ Non-rational persuasion, by contrast, becomes likened to coercion. 'Force', Chambers says, 'does not always come in the form of a state with a big stick. It can also come in the form of deception, psychological pressure, subtle forms of domination, and emotional manipulation'.⁹²² Coercion is not limited to 'threats and bribes', but includes 'rhetorical manipulation', which consists chiefly of appeals to the passions.⁹²³ Since deliberative democrats disagree with introducing passions into political discussion, they either ignore or oppose rhetoric.⁹²⁴ For them rhetoric manipulates people into a consensus that is not rationally based and

⁹²⁰ Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy*, p. 99.

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*; cf. Benhabib, 'Toward a Deliberative Model', p. 69.

⁹²² Chambers, *Reasonable democracy*, p. 151.

⁹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 187, n. 30.

⁹²⁴ It is worth noting, however, that Benhabib does criticise Rawls for eliminating 'all contestatory, rhetorical, affective, impassioned elements of political discourse, with all their excesses and virtues' ('Toward a Deliberative Model', p. 76). But she does not explain how rhetoric fits in her own model of discourse. Bohman also acknowledges the need for rhetoric in public deliberation (*Public deliberation*, p. 7).

is, therefore, illegitimate. From this point of view, rhetoric limits, rather than enhances, social justice, because 'rhetoric moves people and achieves results without having to render an account of the bases upon which it induces people to engage in certain courses rather than others'.⁹²⁵ But to portray rhetoric as unevenly grounded on emotional appeals is clearly misleading. Classical thinkers were concerned with the moral ends of the appeals and often ambivalent about moving the passions. For example, in his *Rhetoric* Aristotle initially says that 'the arousing of prejudice, pity, anger and similar emotions has nothing to do with the essential facts'. But he later asserts that, given Athens' large juries and assemblies, the orator must appeal to emotions.⁹²⁶ Classical rhetoric, therefore, involved a balancing of rational and emotional proofs. The question of when and how to appeal to the emotions can be morally troubling, but it cannot be escaped from in the realm of politics. For deliberative democrats emotional appeals are coercive. At times this may well be true. But is reason itself never coercive? Zeno's analogy of rhetoric to the palm of the hand, and of dialectic to the closed fist, refers to the greater force of logical argument.⁹²⁷ And for many so-called postmodernists, no coercion-free zone is possible within discourse. Reason is not neutral – it is a means of control, a form of coercion.⁹²⁸

Advocates of deliberative democracy require, in addition, that the participants in any given conversation be equal. Equality, for them, is essential to political discourse. This is, of course, in stark contrast to what happens in civil or deliberative rhetoric, where citizens are merely spectators. Joshua Cohen, for instance, includes equality (formal as well as substantive) as one of

⁹²⁵ Benhabib, 'Toward a Deliberative Model', p. 83; cf. Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy*, p. 206. Habermas discusses rhetoric as display, but not as a part of deliberation (*Structural Transformation*, p. 8).

⁹²⁶ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: a Theory of Civil Discourse*, tr. G. A. Kennedy (Oxford, 1991), 1354a 15-20, 1377b 21-25.

⁹²⁷ Cicero, *De finibus*, tr. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass., 1914), 2.6.17.

⁹²⁸ See Danna Villa, 'Post-modernism and the Public Sphere', *APSR*, 86 (September 1992), pp. 712-21. Chambers acknowledges that not all coercion is the same: 'One cannot imagine social interaction that is completely free from ... coercion [but] we must distinguish between "how little and how much" coercion, between situations when public understanding is shaped by strong (implied or explicit) threats, such as ostracism, anonymous denunciations, public reprimands, even burning at the stake ... [and] situations where individuals do not live under these threats' (*Reasonable Democracy*, pp. 230, 234; cf. pp. 5-6, 232).

the four prerequisites for deliberative decision-making.⁹²⁹ Equality also dominates Bohman's list of the 'basic normative requirements and constraints on deliberation'.⁹³⁰ And for Benhabib, 'egalitarian reciprocity' is at the very core of the theory of deliberative democracy; she describes it as the moral axiom which maintains that 'each individual has the same symmetrical rights to various speech acts, to initiate new topics, to ask for reflection about the presuppositions of the conversations'.⁹³¹ The idea of equality, therefore, is more than a right accorded to all potential participants. As Chambers explains, it is a belief that, for deliberative democracy to work, 'it is essential that as many voices as possible are heard in the debate ..., that a high level of participation is maintained'.⁹³² Procedural democracy is difficult to object to in principle because its tenets rest on a commitment to a reasonable equity principle: The legitimacy of a decision is a function of the fairness of the process by which it was reached. Yet, pluralistic politics makes this standard of deliberative democracy suspect. It is clear that diversity and interdependence among members of civil society pose the challenge of reaching a decision in which partners are able to assemble, participate, speak, and publicise freely. But deliberative democrats also fail to acknowledge that some persons will always be better at political deliberation than others (or, indeed, better placed to engage in it). What is more, they demand more than a citizen's formal right to enter public discourse – they stipulate a *substantive* right. Put differently, instead of equality of opportunity to participate, they demand a *de facto* equality in participation. I fail to understand how we could guarantee such a thing. In fact, I even doubt such equality has ever existed. As Chambers acknowledges, 'the major barrier to discursive resolution in liberal democracies usually comes in the form of political apathy, not conscious suppression'.⁹³³ Most individuals have little interest in the decisions that affect them and are willing to allow others to debate the issues and find solutions. However, if we accept Cicero's assumption of the inherent value of political

⁹²⁹ Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', pp. 22-3.

⁹³⁰ Bohman, *Public Deliberation*, p. 16.

⁹³¹ Benhabib, 'Toward a Deliberative Model', p. 78.

⁹³² Chambers, *Reasonable democracy*, pp. 197-98; cf. Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, p. 37.

⁹³³ Chambers, *Reasonable democracy*, p. 198.

activity, then the deliberative democrats' demand for egalitarian political deliberation becomes more compelling. As seen earlier, 'true honour', for him, 'lies in worth, which finds its brightest lustre in serving the state with distinction'.⁹³⁴ But even though theorists of deliberative democracy distance themselves from Cicero's strong republicanism, they nevertheless adopt a weaker version of it. Chambers, for example, argues that

'advocates of deliberative democracy find republican models of democracy too demanding; [republicans] require a level of civic virtue not likely to be attained in liberal democratic societies, [they] put too much stress on the creation of a community that acts as one, and ... are not concerned enough with the autonomy of the individual within collective procedures. [But] with the exception of the question of autonomy, *the difference is really one of degree*'.⁹³⁵

Deliberative democrats, therefore, may wish to situate their ideal between the individualist liberal model and the communitarian republican model, but in the end they come closer to the republican model, because for them political activity is the form of communication that best expresses our humanity.

It is clear that the pluralism and complexity of modern society are strong *prima facie* obstacles to deliberative democracy. Pluralism undermines deliberation by producing intractable conflicts. Deliberation, it would seem, only works for relatively homogeneous groups who share many values and beliefs – and even in those it is not always possible. I said earlier that the conversational project presupposes the value of agreement; it also presupposes the *possibility* of agreement. Acquiescence is not enough, rational and explicit agreement is required. This, I believe, is a major flaw of all models of deliberative democracy. If the precondition for modern democracy is civil society, then its associated networks of diverse individuals and groups in relationships of mutual dependence will at least occasionally preclude shared standards of rationality. The fairness of procedural norms we have inherited from antiquity and have thematised as the basis of democracy are not particularly accommodating of such pluralism. Liberties such as religious liberty, liberty of conscience, liberty of thought and expression, and rights of

⁹³⁴ Cicero, *Ad familiares* 10.12.5, 2.15.3.

⁹³⁵ Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy*, p. 184; emphasis added. Deliberative democracy has a 'Kantian component [valuing individual autonomy] that is not usually found in republican models of democracy'.

person and personal property can themselves constrain democratic procedures. After all, there are distinct, incompatible understandings of value, each reasonable, to which people are drawn under favourable conditions for the exercise of their practical reason. Even if reasonable citizens holding irreconcilable views make good-will gestures so as to live with one another on mutually acceptable terms, it does not mean that there will be convergence on a single philosophy of life (as the criterion of warranted assent implies). What is more, how can it ever be certain that the better argument in any particular conversation is the best of all possible arguments? Moreover, acknowledging conversation as a legitimate form of political communication should not require invalidating another form, such as civil rhetoric. Even though the heroic features of the art may not be as important for us as to earlier societies, the sustained argument and freedom from interruption that political oratory provides is still necessary. 'As Plato's dialogues suggest', and as Michael Walzer persuasively put it:

'the philosopher requires a largely passive interlocutor if he is to make a coherent argument. And since coherent arguments are important in democracies, too (though Plato did not think so), while democratic interlocutors are rarely passive, political debate among citizens cannot always take conversational forms'.⁹³⁶

Despite the wishes of deliberative democrats, the distinction between speaker and audience cannot be made to vanish. That speaker and listeners are not equal, however, does not exclude listeners from the political process. Ultimately, it is the audience, not the speaker, which must deliberate, in the literal sense of 'weighing' the competing arguments and deciding between them. Although such deliberation may not conform to the dictates of 'rational-critical' discourse, it is participation nevertheless. Rhetorical democracy at its best, therefore, does not expect contestants to find one another's reasons acceptable as their own, but it does respond to them as legitimate contributions to the deliberative process. We should begin from the premise that there are no definitive, metaphysically pure, unassailable arguments that can once-and-for-all ground democratic practices in ultimate and final

⁹³⁶ Michael Walzer, 'A Critique of Philosophical Conversation', *PF*, 21 (Fall-Winter 1989-90), pp. 182-96, at pp. 189.

principles, and that any attempt to do so is but a historically-situated act of persuasion. On the other hand, this commitment to post-metaphysical and pragmatic criticism does not open the door to a naive and thorough-going relativism that is unable to cite certain forms of evidence as a part of the argument in favour of one form of democracy over another. Even while the notion of evidence or data is in itself rhetorically constructed,⁹³⁷ the public give-and-take of democratic dialogue nonetheless obliges citizens to attempt to support their political claims with sound arguments grounded at least in part on lessons learned from a sincere appraisal of the available evidence regarding a given topic of debate. Relations that involve conflicts, negotiation, and compromise seldom adhere to philosophers' standards for reaching rationally warranted assent. The motivation to engage in deliberation arises from the impact of communal conditions on attachments and a perceived need to protect or advance them. Political issues and decisions are, as Aristotle observed, in the realm of the contingent and consider what is true for the most part and, consequently, can only be resolved through the dynamics of rhetoric, which are not entirely explicable in rationalistic terms.

⁹³⁷ R. Berkhofer, *Beyond the great story: History as text and discourse* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

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