

# *The Nature of Rhetoric*

*Art of Rhetoric* [I. i]

Rhetoric is a counterpart of Dialectic, for both have to do with matters that are in a manner within the cognizance of all men and not confined to any special science. Hence all men in a manner have a share of both, for all, up to a certain point, endeavour to criticize or uphold an argument, to defend themselves or to accuse. Now, the majority of people do this either at random or with a familiarity arising from habit. But since both these ways are possible, it is clear that matters can be reduced to a system, for it is possible to examine the reason why some attain their end by familiarity and others by chance, and such an examination all would at once admit to be the function of an art.

Previous compilers of "Arts" of Rhetoric have provided us with only a small portion of this art, for proofs are the only things in it that come within the province of art; everything else is merely an accessory. And yet they say nothing about enthymemes which are the body of proof, but chiefly devote their attention to matters outside the subject; for the arousing of prejudice, compassion, anger, and similar emotions has no connexion with the matter in hand, but is directed only to the dicast.

Nevertheless, Rhetoric is useful, because the true and the just are naturally superior to their opposites, so that, if decisions are improperly made, they must owe their defeat to their own advocates, which is reprehensible. Further, in dealing with certain persons, even if we possessed the most accurate scientific knowledge, we should not find it easy to persuade them by the employment of such knowledge. For scientific discourse is concerned with instruction, but in the case of such persons instruction is impossible. Our proofs and arguments must rest on generally accepted principles when speaking of converse with the

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

1. *What makes Rhetoric a counterpart of Dialectic?*
2. *What does Aristotle think of the other Arts, i.e. manuals or handbooks, compiled previously on the rules of Rhetoric?*
3. *What make Rhetoric undoubtedly useful in Aristotle's eyes?*

multitude. Furthermore, the orator should be able to prove opposites, as in logical arguments. Not that we should do both (for one ought not to persuade people to do what is wrong), but that the real state of the case may not escape us, and that we ourselves may be able to counteract false arguments, if another makes an unfair use of them. Besides, it would be absurd if it were considered disgraceful not to be able to defend oneself with the help of the body, but not disgraceful as far as speech is concerned, whose use is more characteristic of man than that of the body. If it is argued that one who makes an unfair use of such faculty of speech may do a great deal of harm, this objection applies equally to all good things except virtue, and above all to those things which are most useful, such as strength, health, wealth, generalship; for as these, rightly used, may be of the greatest benefit, so, wrongly used, they may do an equal amount of harm.

It is thus evident that Rhetoric does not deal with any one definite class of subjects, but, like Dialectic, is of general application; also, that it is useful and further, that its function is not so much to persuade, as to find out in each case the existing means of persuasion.

# *The Kinds of Rhetoric*

*Art of Rhetoric* [I. iii]

The kinds of Rhetoric are three in number, corresponding to the three kinds of hearers. For every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object of the speech refers. Now the hearer must necessarily be either a mere spectator or a judge, and a judge either of things past or of things to come. For instance, a member of the general assembly is a judge of things to come; the dicast, of things past; the mere spectator, of the ability of the speaker. Therefore there are necessarily three kinds of rhetorical speeches, deliberative, forensic, and epideictic.

The deliberative kind is either hortatory or dissuasive; for both those who give advice in private and those who speak in the assembly invariably either exhort or dissuade. The forensic kind is either accusatory or defensive; for litigants must necessarily either accuse or defend. The epideictic kind has for its subject praise or blame.

Further, to each of these a special time is appropriate: to the deliberative the future, for the speaker, whether he exhorts or dissuades, always advises about things to come; to the forensic the past, for it is always in reference to things done that one party accuses and the other defends; to the epideictic most appropriately the present, for it is the existing condition of things that all those who praise or blame have in view. It is not uncommon, however, for epideictic speakers to avail themselves of other times, of the past by way of recalling it, or of the future by way of anticipating it.

Each of the three kinds has a different special end, and as there are three kinds of Rhetoric, so there are three special ends. The end

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

1. *Listen to the speeches of Neil Armstrong, Winston Churchill, and Socrates. What types of speeches are they? What might be the features of each type?*
2. *Besides Aristotle's classification, can you think of other ways to classify speeches?*

of the deliberative speaker is the expedient or harmful; for he who exhorts recommends a course of action as better, and he who dissuades advises against it as worse; all other considerations, such as justice and injustice, honour and disgrace, are included as accessory in reference to this. The end of the forensic speaker is the just or the unjust; in this case also all other considerations are included as accessory. The end of those who praise or blame is the honourable and disgraceful; and they also refer all other considerations to these.

#### FURTHER READING

The following chapters treat the materials which we must employ in exhorting and dissuading, praising and blaming, accusing and defending, and such are the opinions and propositions that are useful to produce conviction in these circumstances; for they are the subject and source of enthymemes, which are specially suitable to each class (so to say) of speeches.

*Deliberative Oratory* The important topics [I. iv]; happiness [I. v]; the good and the expedient [I. vi]; the degree of expediency [I. vii]; the forms of government [I. viii].

*Epidictic Oratory* Virtue and vice [I. ix].

*Forensic Oratory* Wrongdoing [I. iv]; motives of wrongdoing [I. xi]; wrongdoers and victims [I. xii]; crime and punishment [I. xiii]; the degree of wrongdoing [I. xiv]; inartificial proofs [I. xv].