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RHETORIC, POLITICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY:
A COMPARISON OF CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON RHETORIC

by

Philippe Azzie

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science
Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada
February 1995
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**RHETORIC, POLITICS, AND EPISTEMOLOGY:
A COMPARISON OF CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON RHETORIC**

submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Thesis Supervisor

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Abstract

This thesis is devoted to a comparison of classical and modern understandings of rhetoric. The past several years have witnessed a revival of interest in the topic of rhetoric. I argue that this revival of interest has to be understood as part of a criticism of what is taken to be the modern restriction of reason to the canons of scientific demonstration, based on the criteria of exactness and certainty. With the rise of modern scientific reason in the 17th century, forms of understanding which did not conform to these standards were rejected as irrational. Rhetoric, in particular, the legitimacy of which was based on the soundness of arguing on the basis of probabilities and reputable opinions, was rejected as a way of reasoning. The significance of rhetoric is recovered by contemporary thinkers on the basis of an inquiry into the nature of understanding which expands the scope of rationality beyond the confines of modern scientific method. This allows for a recovery of some of the sound insights of the ancients concerning the irreducibility of practical life, and the standards of rationality that govern it.

This recovery, however, also ignores some of the important insights coming from the classical understanding of rhetoric. Unlike the contemporary approach to rhetoric, which is based on a critique of epistemology and which views rhetoric as a corrective to the excessive one-sidedness of modern rationality, the classical approach understands rhetoric in relation to the nature of political life and the permanent tensions and ambiguities which constitute it. Rhetoric is both an important part of political life and a constant threat to it. I argue that because the contemporary revalorisation of rhetoric is grounded in epistemology, it tends to abstract from the issues of politics and, therefore, in its attempt to recover the concreteness of practical life over against the abstractions of modern science, it ignores certain complexities and problems that characterize the practical world. In this sense, I argue, the classical understanding of rhetoric has something to teach us.

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Introduction

Rhetoric and the end of Metaphysics

The past several years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the topic of rhetoric. This interest is evident in fields such as communication theory, practical or informal logic, speech act theory, and hermeneutics.¹ What is interesting is that this renewed interest in the topic of rhetoric coincides with the disappearance of rhetoric as a practical and an academic discipline. In fact, this renewed interest would even seem to presuppose the disappearance of rhetoric as a discipline in education since only on this basis could its parts be scattered among various other disciplines such as the ones noted above. The current interest in rhetoric has nothing to do with the practical importance of training people in the art of public speaking so as to prepare them for public life as was the case, for example, with Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. What then does account for this renewed interest ? The answer, I believe, lies in the fact that this interest coincides with a more general phenomenon which could be referred to as the proclamation of the end of metaphysics.

Metaphysics is understood as a way of thinking which 'privileges' certain 'ontological' presuppositions over others. This is usually expressed in terms of dichotomies. These dichotomies include such binary oppositions as: self vs. other, homogeneity vs. heterogeneity, stability vs. change, reason vs. emotion, truth vs. opinion, certainty vs. probability, theory vs. practice. While this does not exhaust the list of the categories of metaphysical thinking, it captures what is taken to be the defining characteristic of metaphysics. Generally speaking, metaphysics 'privileges' that which endures over that which is fleeting. Only that which endures is considered real. Anything

¹A good survey of the contemporary interest in rhetoric is given by James L. Kinneavy in Winifred Bryan Horner ed., The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric, Revised Edition (Columbia and London : University of Missouri Press, 1990), chap. 6, pp.186-224.

partaking of change or instability is less real. The corollary to this is that that which is real should be capable of demonstration on the basis of the criterion of certainty. This provides the basis for a general indictment of metaphysical thinking. The argument is that metaphysics reifies phenomena because it considers certain aspects or dimensions of them to be more real than others and, therefore, that it does not do justice to the full scope of reality. In this sense metaphysical thinking is equated with abstract thinking, and the purpose of criticising it, or calling it into question, has as its goal the recovery of the concrete.

There is broad, if not unanimous, agreement among critics of metaphysics concerning the origin of this way of thinking. It begins, we are told, with Plato who, through the character of Socrates, proposes a line of inquiry that seeks to enclose reality within a strict definitional scheme. By asking questions such as "what is justice ?", "what is virtue ?", Plato sets off a mode of investigation that, despite certain variations, has continued uninterrupted until our own time. The modern rejection of classical thought, it is argued, does not fundamentally call into question the foundations of the latter and so continues the metaphysical project. Nietzsche and Heidegger, in particular, are credited with having diagnosed the metaphysical character of western thought and proclaiming its twilight. The current generation of post-metaphysical thinkers see themselves as continuing the dismantling of this tradition.

This criticism is taken to be liberating. By freeing ourselves from the strictures of metaphysical thinking we are 'redefining' reality in such a way as to legitimize ways of knowing or understanding that, on the basis of metaphysical thinking, were eclipsed or considered irrational. It is therefore not surprising that the proclamation of the end of metaphysics and the opening of the so-called 'post-metaphysical' age should go hand in hand with a revival of interest in rhetoric. Rhetoric, along with poetry, was apparently excluded from the field of valid ways of knowing with the rise of metaphysics, and so it is not surprising that it should make a triumphant return with its defeat. Here, once again, it is possible to be quite precise. It was Plato, once again, through his Socrates, in the

dialogue Gorgias, who by holding rhetoric accountable to criteria of rationality that were not its own destroyed its validity as a legitimate way of reasoning. Despite Aristotle's effort to establish rhetoric as an art and the importance of rhetoric in classical Rome, it never recovered from its initial defeat. This devaluation of rhetoric and the trajectory it set off is captured in the following statement by Ernesto Grassi, one of the leading contemporary advocates for the re-valuation of rhetoric :

First, we must keep in mind that from Plato on, in the western world, rational language became preeminent for determining being and thus reality. Each word, in consequence of its rational definitions, aims at "fixing" out of space and time, the meaning of a being. This concept derives from the desperate effort of freeing oneself from relativity, from the subjectivity of what appears through the senses. Hence the preeminence of the "idea" of the rational concept which is at the basis of our knowledge of reality. Such a concept excludes all rhetorical discourse tied to the here and now of the situation, and all metaphor, since by transferring the meaning of a word we do not reach the precision of a logical definition. Hence the exclusion of rhetorical and metaphoric language from the realm of philosophy.²

Hence, the encounter between Socrates and Gorgias, on this account, represents the confrontation between abstract, objective, conceptual reasoning on the one hand, and concrete, relative, contextual reasoning on the other. According to Grassi, this confrontation ends with the triumph of the former.

Grassi's reconstruction attributes the exclusion of rhetoric to the nature of metaphysical thinking. This attribution is important because it provides a clue to understanding the nature of the current interest in rhetoric. Rhetoric is enlisted in the current fight against metaphysics. It is seen as a type of knowledge that is non-foundational and which therefore provides an alternative to metaphysics. As noted above, modern thought continues the metaphysical project begun by Plato and in so doing is no

²Ernesto Grassi, "The Original Quality of the Poetic and Rhetorical Word: Heidegger, Ungaretti, and Neruda," Philosophy and Rhetoric vol. 20, no.4 (1987): 248-249.

more receptive to the nature of rhetoric. Descartes, the founder of modern metaphysics, radicalises the metaphysical project by suggesting that all knowledge be judged on the basis of the criterion of certainty. Therefore, a renewed interest in rhetoric represents at the same time an attack on modern metaphysics as Chaim Perelman, another advocate for the legitimacy of rhetoric, makes clear in his work The New Rhetoric :

The publication of a treatise devoted to argumentation and this subject's connection with the ancient tradition of Greek rhetoric and dialectic constitutes a break with a concept of reason and reasoning due to Descartes, which has set its mark on western philosophy for the last three centuries.³

The radical questioning of the cartesian world view, it is argued, gives rhetoric a new lease on life. As a result of the critique of cartesian rationality rhetoric becomes valid once again as a form of understanding. Perelman describes this revaluation of rhetoric as part of the philosophical spirit of the times. Once the criterion of certainty underlying cartesian thought becomes questionable, the distinction between philosophy and rhetoric itself begins to disappear. Thinking becomes fallible, controversial, and the necessity of non-demonstrative reason becomes inevitable:

Mais si l'on n'admet pas que des thèses philosophiques puissent être fondées sur des intuitions évidentes, il faudra bien recourir à des techniques argumentatives pour les faire prévaloir. La nouvelle rhétorique devient alors l'instrument indispensable à la philosophie.⁴

This means that the 'empire of rhetoric', to use another of Perelman's expressions, is now universal. All philosophical thought is inevitably rhetorical. The scope of rhetoric

³Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. The New Rhetoric: a treatise on argumentation, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p.1.

⁴Chaim Perelman. L'Empire Rhétorique: rhétorique et argumentation (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1977), p.21.

extends beyond its classical restriction to assemblies and court rooms to what Perelman calls the 'universal audience'. Unlike classical rhetoric which dealt especially with political and judicial argumentation, the new rhetoric provides a logic of human discourse covering all aspects of human interaction through communication. The new rhetoric: "... couvre tout le champs du discours visant à convaincre ou à persuader, quel que soit l'auditoire auquel il s'adresse et quelle que soit la matière sur laquelle il porte." All forms of human communication including philosophy are rhetorical in that they embody techniques of persuasion. The new rhetoric investigates these techniques.

One of the more significant consequences of the decline of the cartesian world view according to Perelman is that it has brought about the need for an inquiry into the 'logic of value judgments'. The ancient distinction between truth and opinion supposedly confined rhetoric to an inferior position since the purpose of rhetoric was persuasion, not truth. This distinction left no place for the development of a logic of value judgments although Perelman does suggest that Aristotle's understanding of "epideictic" or display oratory did provide a potential basis for such an analysis but one which Aristotle himself did not exploit. This emergence of the importance of value judgments, a result of calling into question the criterion of certainty, allows for the notion of a 'logic of the preferable' to acquire validity.⁶ A 'theory of argumentation' can help provide an analysis of reasoning processes underlying the practical discourses we use to justify our choices and beliefs.

As noted already, the current interest in rhetoric is part of the philosophical spirit of the time and an important part of this spirit is precisely the attempt to overcome the metaphysical distinctions mentioned above. But how can a renewed emphasis on rhetoric help provide a possible solution to those problems ? The answer, as suggested above, is

⁵Ibid.p.19.

⁶"L'introduction de la notion de jugement de valeur change l'aspect du probleme et c'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles, aujourd'hui, l'étude de la rhétorique pourrait être reprise sur nouveaux frais". Chaim Perelman et Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Rhetorique et Philosophie: pour une théorie de l'argumentation en philosophie (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), p.12.

that rhetoric is seen as representative of a way of thinking that is not based on the abstractions of metaphysical thinking. Rhetoric is paradigmatic of a form of understanding that can help reconnect us to the concrete. We can examine some of the metaphysical dichotomies mentioned earlier and see how rhetoric is seen as a way of knowing that could supposedly overcome them.

Self/other : The attack on cartesian subjectivity seeks to establish a new, more primordial basis for human connectedness. The goal is, at once, to criticize the foundationalism of modern thought and to replace it with a more interactive, "human" model. This is reflected in the current emphasis on 'intersubjectivity' and 'dialogic understanding'. The so-called 'paradigm shift' from the 'philosophy of consciousness' to the 'philosophy of language' is supposed to help provide the grounds for a reconciliation between self and other. The move away from the truth semantics of Russell and Frege and the descriptivist view of language, towards a view of language as a living practice that provides the a-priori foundation for human interaction, such as one finds for example in Wittgenstein's notion of language games, Austin and Searle's analyses of speech acts, Gadamer's hermeneutics, and Habermas' analysis of communicative competence, suggests that the relation between self and other is 'always already' presupposed. In this context, rhetoric presents itself as a concrete, palpable example of the understanding of speech described above. It is paradigmatic of 'doing things with words' to use Austin's expression. It is based through and through on an understanding of speech as intersubjective.⁷

Because rhetoricians take for granted an understanding of speech as intersubjective, the practice of rhetoric at the same time provides a model for understanding the relationship between the individual and the community. In order to effect persuasion the

⁷For the argument that rhetoric is the concrete manifestation of intersubjectivity see Thomas B. Farrell, "Practicing the Arts of Rhetoric: Tradition and Invention," Philosophy and Rhetoric 24 (1991) pp.183-212. In opposition to the view that rhetoric represents a form of distorted communication Farrell puts forward the view that it represents authentic communication.

rhetorician must speak 'out of' a common ethos. He must exalt the commonly held values or assumptions of his audience and he must do so publicly. The rhetorician therefore assumes or 'taps into' the existence of prior bonds and actualizes the common ethos. The practice of rhetoric is sensitive therefore to the contextuality of understanding and the immersion of the individual in the community. The rhetorician addresses individuals as 'always already' part of a larger whole. In this sense a renewed emphasis on rhetoric could work as a corrective to the corrosive individualism and growing emphasis on the self which is characteristic of liberal politics.⁸

Reason/emotion: The triumph of cartesian philosophy, with its emphasis on clarity and distinctness as criteria of rationality, necessarily excludes both imagination and passion or emotion from the sphere of reason. This abstractly separates psychological processes which are not discrete and treats them as if they were. Rhetoric, on the other hand, has always been a type of reasoning that has appealed to the 'whole person' as a unity of thought, emotion and mood. Rhetoric provides a more concrete understanding of human rationality than the abstract model based on formal logic or strict models of inference. Once one calls into question the abstract separation of the rational from the affective the notion of pure cognition and purely rational argumentation becomes questionable as well."

Theory/Practice: Because modern scientific rationality is guided by the standard of certainty it abstracts from the concrete world of common opinions because these are always less than certain. Practice loses its connection with the notion of shared forms of understanding and becomes merely the application of theory. Rhetoric, on the other hand, represents a rational activity that is first and foremost a form of "praxis". In other words

⁸On the importance of rhetoric for actualising the "ethos" of the community see Chaim Perelman, "Rhetoric and Politics," Philosophy and Rhetoric 17 (1984) pp.129-134.

⁹For a defense of this position see James Crosswhite, "Mood in Argumentation: Heidegger and the Exordium," Philosophy and Rhetoric 22, (1989) pp.28-42. See as well the article by Ernesto Grassi cited in note 2 above.

it represents a way of knowing that is sensitive to the contextuality of understanding. Rhetorical theory is inseparably connected to its practice and arises out of it. In this sense rhetoric is paradigmatic of the notion that all understanding is embedded in historical and cultural practices or what has come to be called the 'lifeworld'.¹⁰ Against the modern scientific and enlightenment confidence in our ability to reshape our social world is counterposed the inescapability of historically grounded prejudices which function with transcendental necessity as reference points constituting our possibilities of understanding.

Contemporary attempts to rehabilitate forms of understanding that do not conform to the standards of rationality governing modern science embody a sound insight. If the canons of scientific rationality are assumed to be paradigmatic of rationality in general then whatever cannot measure up to these standards is considered irrational. The understanding of political phenomena in particular is not likely to be able to conform to strict requirements of scientific demonstration. The reaction against this state of affairs has taken the form of thoughtful inquiries into the nature of rationality. At the same time, it is important to reflect as well on the assumptions and implications of such attempts, sound as they are. Because they have the character of a corrective to what could be called the one-sidedness of modern reason, and try to recapture the concrete, contextual nature of reasoning, they are regarded as expanding the scope of rationality. But in trying to recover the concrete it is important to recover it in all its complexity.

I would like to clarify what I mean by this by referring briefly to the thought of Thomas Hobbes, the significance of which will be more fully discussed in chapter four. Hobbes is often accused, legitimately, of transforming the understanding and intelligibility of political phenomena by imposing on them a strictly deductive, scientific conception of reasoning. Consequently, rhetoric as a form of political reasoning which does not conform

¹⁰On the importance of rhetoric in this context and more generally within the context of the return to Aristotle's understanding of "phronesis" and "praxis" in contemporary thought see Robert Hollinger, "Practical Reason and Hermeneutics," Philosophy and Rhetoric 18 (1985) pp.113-122.

to these standards is considered illegitimate by Hobbes and is rejected. But it is important to keep in mind that Hobbes is a political philosopher. His rejection of rhetoric and of the legitimacy of the common opinions on which it is based cannot be explained simply by suggesting that Hobbes is an advocate of modern scientific method or cartesian rationality. Hobbes rejects rhetoric because it conflicts with what he takes to be the goal of politics, the maintenance of peace. Rhetoric is politically dangerous, according to Hobbes, because by arguing on the basis of commonly accepted opinions it gives listeners the sense that they already have an adequate understanding of political phenomena, and therefore that their understanding is as good as anybody else's. Furthermore, since most people's opinions, according to Hobbes, are not their own but arise from particular teachers promoting certain doctrines, these opinions usually reflect certain particular rather than common interests. The political danger involved here, to put it succinctly, lies in the fact that any particular interest that passes itself off as the common interest is likely to forsake the common interest in order to further its own interest, even to the point of troubling the peace. Hobbes has at least this much in common with Aristotle and Plato that he understands the significance of rhetoric in relation to the effect it has on political life, and political life is concerned with the common good.

Hobbes' criticism of rhetoric and his move away from concrete common sense assumptions towards a more abstract science of politics arises therefore from a real political concern. This argument cannot simply be discounted. Contemporary attempts to move back towards the concrete from the abstract must confront the reasons for the initial move to the abstract. This can be explained briefly in terms of the three sets of relationships we have just discussed. In trying to overcome the distinction between theory and practice so as to retrieve a more contextual type of understanding, one still must address the distinction between politically sound and unsound prejudices and opinions. In trying to reunite the rational with the affective, one cannot ignore the need to tame certain emotions which are perhaps not as susceptible to being influenced by rational speech. And in trying to restore a more authentic type of interaction, one cannot ignore the necessity, in Hobbes' words, of being formidable with those who will not be sociable.

Contemporary advocates of the legitimacy and rationality of rhetoric tend to abstract from these political concerns. Because they view rhetoric as a corrective to modern science or metaphysical thinking they tend to abstract from its possibly negative political implications. This neglect of the issues of politics is attributable, I suggest, to the fact that contemporary defenders of the rationality of rhetoric approach the topic from the perspective of epistemology. Whether in reaction to modern science, or in response to the whole tradition of metaphysics, contemporary advocates of the legitimacy of rhetoric seek to expand the scope of rationality and recover a proximity to practice through a critique and radicalisation of epistemology. The significance of rhetoric is recovered, therefore, through an inquiry into the nature of rationality. This approach differs from both the classical understanding of rhetoric in Plato and Aristotle and its criticism by Hobbes. Both of these, as already suggested, are related directly to the nature of political life.

How did rhetoric go from being a political to an epistemological issue ? This is the topic I will be dealing with in this thesis. I argue that the current revaluation of rhetoric can be understood as an attempt to reverse the effects of the devaluation of rhetoric which was the result of the rejection of classical political philosophy initiated by Thomas Hobbes. However, this attempt took as its starting point a critique of epistemology which influenced the nature of that recovery. This resulted in an inability to recover important insights about rhetoric that were part of the classical approach to rhetoric and Hobbes' criticism of it. It is my contention that the modern revaluation of rhetoric has not adequately addressed the issues involved in Hobbes' critique. I believe, as well, that the classical approach to rhetoric provides a better answer to the problems raised by Hobbes. Both Plato and Aristotle show an understanding of the dangers of rhetoric and the need to regulate it, while at the same time recognizing its importance for the exercise of political judgment.

The arguments in this thesis are guided, at the most general level, by two insights

both of which come from the scholar Leo Strauss.¹¹ One is Strauss' contention that we are constantly tempted by what he calls two opposite charms: "the charm of competence which is engendered by mathematics and everything akin to mathematics, and the charm of humble awe, which is engendered by meditation on the human soul and its experience". I use the expressions 'mathematics' and 'poetry' to refer to these respective charms. Each of these refers to a fundamental inflexion of the human "psyche". The inflexion towards mathematics responds to the problems we face with a sense of confidence. It tends to interpret all problems as issues that can be solved if only they are seen in the proper light. The light in question casts these issues as technical problems resolvable through technical means. According to the mathematical inflexion there are no tensions or ambiguities in existence which are irreducible and which cannot be eliminated. In other words there are no permanent problems. On the other hand, the inflexion towards poetry responds to the problems we face in a spirit of humble or reverential awe. The conditions under which existence is given constitute a dispensation of fate which we tamper with at our own risk. According to this position there is really little we can do to alter the human condition.

The other insight has to do with a fundamental difference between ancient and modern political philosophy. According to Strauss, ancient political philosophy is informed by a desire to move from opinion to knowledge, whereas modern political philosophy is informed by a desire to move from the abstract to the concrete. However, since modern political philosophy tries to recover the concrete by starting out from the formal and the abstract it cannot really get beyond them. In this thesis I apply both these insights to a study of the differences between ancient and modern views of rhetoric. I will explain how in the outline of chapters that follows.

¹¹For Strauss' discussion of these see Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies (New York: Free Press, 1959; reprint ed., Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp.9-55.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter two is devoted to a discussion of Aristotle's practical philosophy. The spirit that informs Aristotle's practical philosophy, I argue, is at the basis of his approach to the significance of rhetoric and it is essential to understand the principles of the former in order to understand the latter. The main argument in this chapter is that Aristotle's understanding of the issues and problems of politics avoids the two extremes of mathematics and poetry outlined above. Politics cannot be reduced to a set of technical problems resolvable once and for all, but neither can it be reduced to a dispensation of fate, or in modern terminology, to a transcendental condition beyond our control.

Chapter three is devoted to a discussion of Aristotle's Rhetoric. In this chapter I show how the principles discussed in chapter one apply to Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric. The argument put forth is that rhetoric is both a danger and an important component of political life. It is both a rival to political science and a crucial element in exercising political judgment. I argue that Aristotle tries to influence the character of rhetoric by subordinating it to political science in such a way as to guide its practitioners towards sounder forms of argumentation. This requires the use of compulsion, proper training, and "phronesis" or practical wisdom. The guiding thread in this chapter is that rhetoric or persuasive speech is between compulsion and instruction. Since it relies on argumentation it is a higher form of rule than force or compulsion. At the same time the goal of rhetoric is to influence action by arguing on the basis of reputable opinions. It therefore does not aim at instruction.¹²

Where chapters two and three form a unity that shows how Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric represents an understanding of the fundamental and permanent

¹²This insight comes from Larry Arnhart in his commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric. See Larry Arnhart, Aristotle on Political Reasoning: A Commentary on the "Rhetoric" (De Kalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981), pp.5-6.

problems of political life, chapter four marks a transition. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of Hobbes' political philosophy with particular emphasis on his views about rhetoric. Hobbes sees himself as the true founder of political philosophy or, as he calls it, civil philosophy. His views are based on a self conscious rejection of Aristotle's practical philosophy and with it his understanding of the significance of rhetoric. I argue that Hobbes' rejection of Aristotelian practical philosophy denies any kind of rationality to rhetoric. Hobbes' political philosophy is informed by what was referred to above as the spirit of mathematics. Political problems are viewed as technical problems resolvable through the use of method. In Hobbes' system this requires that speech be purged of all ambiguity and that the conflict of opinions be resolved through a clear definition of terms. This requires, in Hobbes' view, that rhetoric be eliminated from political life. The need to eliminate the conflict of opinions requires that a science of politics be established on a more secure foundation. The perspective of the citizen is no longer the basis for the understanding of political life. With Hobbes the standards by which we evaluate political life are external to political life. With Hobbes political philosophy becomes abstract.

In chapter five I examine the reaction to the imposition of the methods of modern science on the study of political and ethical phenomena through an examination of Giambattista Vico's work On the Study Methods of our Time. In Vico's thought the devaluation of rhetoric effected by Hobbes and modern science is reversed. However this does not result in a return to the Aristotelian view. Rhetoric is no longer understood in relation to the fundamental problems of political life but in relation to epistemological problems. The question concerning the nature of rhetoric is understood in the context of a more fundamental question : What is the nature of understanding? It is understood in relation to the attempt to legitimize forms of understanding which do not conform to the criteria of modern science. In his reaction to the abstractions of modern science Vico turns to the poetic and rhetorical origins of all thought and understanding. His reaction to Hobbes, therefore, is to probe more radically into the foundations that Hobbes tried to build on. Where Hobbes subordinated rhetoric to reason, Vico subordinates reason to rhetoric and poetry. Where Hobbes represents the perspective of mathematics, Vico

represents the perspective of poetry. Rhetoric is tied inextricably to a process of cultural and ontogenetic development. Just as cultural development begins in a poetic logic, so individual development must proceed from the concrete to the abstract. Rhetoric represents a form of reasoning inextricably tied to the faculty of imagination which has to be cultivated before more abstract types of reasoning.

In chapters six and seven I examine two contemporary thinkers whose thought embody the different inflexions of mathematics and poetry: Jürgen Habermas and Hans Georg Gadamer. Chapter five is devoted to an examination of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. I argue that Gadamer's search for criteria of rationality not reducible to those of modern science is reminiscent of Vico's thought and that Gadamer's admiration of rhetoric as well as his appeal to Aristotle's account of *phronesis* have to be understood in this way. Gadamer's understanding of practical philosophy as a search for the 'concrete' is influenced by his understanding of Hegel and Heidegger in particular. Chapter seven is devoted to an analysis of Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. I argue that Habermas' thought, despite his criticism of Hobbes, represents the triumph of the spirit of Hobbes' philosophy. Habermas tries to bring together and reconcile the strains of mathematics (Hobbes) and poetry (Vico) through a theory of cultural rationalization. Within this scheme rhetoric is united at once with the drive for enlightenment and the desire for human connectedness or intersubjectivity. The debate between Gadamer and Habermas reproduces the conflict between the perspectives of poetry and mathematics.

Chapter eight is devoted to a discussion of Plato's Gorgias. If one were to proceed in chronological or historical order one would have to treat Plato first. What justifies concluding with Plato? I will argue that the dramatic action in the Gorgias help bring to light certain shortcomings in the positions of the contemporary advocates of rhetoric. Both Gadamer and Habermas, I suggest, abstract from problems which each one raises in his criticism of the other. These are addressed in the Gorgias. The point here is not to argue that Plato has the answer to the problems we face today. Turning to Plato to

solve our problems is, I believe, no less naive than blaming Plato for all our problems. By arguing that the Gorgias brings out fundamental problems associated with rhetoric I will argue against the view, set out earlier, according to which Plato simply rejected rhetoric. I will argue that despite his severe criticism of rhetoric, his position is more nuanced, that like Aristotle, he believes that rhetoric is both dangerous and necessary and that the problems associated with it are permanent human problems.

The conclusion is devoted to a short reflection on the possibility of distinguishing between rhetoric and sophistry in contemporary democratic societies. I use Jean Elshtain's diagnosis in her work Democracy on Trial to discuss some of the tendencies in contemporary democratic societies which frustrate rather than foster the possibilities for the exercise of sound public deliberation.

Chapter 2

The Nature of Aristotle's Practical Philosophy

The purpose of this chapter is to give a general overview of the spirit of Aristotle's practical philosophy which will serve as an introduction to, and a basis for, an analysis of the Rhetoric in the following chapter. Apart from Aristotle's statement in the Rhetoric according to which rhetoric is an offshoot ("paraphués") of political science, there are no methodological statements which explicitly connect the Rhetoric to practical philosophy. It is my contention, however, that Aristotle's interest in the phenomenon of rhetoric is directly related to its practical significance. This, however, requires that one clarify Aristotle's understanding of the nature of the practical world.¹ The guiding concern of this examination will be to show that Aristotle approaches the study of practical, i.e., political and ethical matters, in a way that avoids two extremes, described in the introduction, both of which have their advocates in modern and contemporary political philosophy. One extreme tends to view the problems that arise in political life as issues that are perfectly resolvable through the proper application of method. According to this view, which we have called 'mathematical', all political problems are essentially technical problems, which means that all tensions and ambiguities can be eliminated or smoothed out through technical competence. The other extreme tends to view the conditions under which political life is given as a dispensation that we tamper with at our own risk. According

¹In the medieval classification of Aristotle's works both the Rhetoric and the Poetics were included in the organon as part of Aristotle's logical works. This classification which was prevalent among Arabic commentators apparently had its origin in the Alexandrian school which included such commentators as Ammonius, Philoponus and Olympiodorus. Within this school logic was understood as comprising three parts: 1. The study of the principles of method. This would be the purpose of the Categories, On Interpretation, and Prior Analytics. 2. The study of apodeictic proof itself. This would be the purpose of the Posterior Analytics. 3. The study of those activities which serve as accessories to demonstrative method. This would be the purpose of the Topics, Sophistical Refutations, Rhetoric and Poetics. On the classification of the Rhetoric see Deborah L. Black, Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), pp.1-16.

to this view, which we have called 'poetic', political life is simply too complex and mysterious to be tampered with in any way. Aristotle's practical philosophy is situated between these two extremes and, therefore, the two beliefs which they embody : on the one hand, the belief that we can do everything, and, on the other hand, the belief that we can do nothing.

According to Aristotle the principles of the various sciences are discontinuous. He distinguishes between three types of sciences or knowledge: theoretical, practical, and productive. Theoretical knowledge concerns itself both with the study of things that are eternal, or which do not admit of variation, and also with such things whose principle of change lies within themselves. Theology is a theoretical science which investigates such things as are eternal or the divine things, while physics is a theoretical science which deals with substances which have within themselves a principle of motion and rest.² The end of a theoretical science is knowledge for its own sake. Productive sciences are those which aim at producing something. The goal of medicine, for example, is the production of health. Productive sciences include all the arts or crafts concerned with making. Practical science is concerned with action ("praxis"), as opposed to production ("poesis"), with things done rather than with things made. Its end is not truth or knowledge for its own sake but performance or knowledge for the betterment of action, action being an end in itself.³ When Aristotle talks about "praxis", he contrasts it with both "techne" and

²For a discussion of these distinctions see Aristotle, Aristotle's Metaphysics, 3d. printing, trans. with commentaries and glossary by Hippocrates G. Apostle (Bloomington and London: Indiana University press, 1973), 993b20-23, 1025b20-1026a25. All citations from the works of Aristotle will refer to the Stephanus numbering.

³It is important to note that while Aristotle holds to these distinctions for the most part the limits between these categories are not rigid. In the Politics for example Aristotle refers to a theoretical dimension to practical investigations, i.e. a desire for knowledge for its own sake. In the Eudemian Ethics he refers to political science as a "productive science". As we will see, it is especially in the modern age that distinctions between the sciences are rigidly drawn and transcendently grounded. See Aristotle, The Politics, trans. and with an introduction, notes, and glossary by Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1279b11-15; Aristotle, The Complete Works of Aristotle, 2 vols., Revised Oxford translation, Bollingen Series, ed.

"episteme". Unlike "episteme", which deals with things that do not vary, both "techne" and "praxis" deal with variable things, that is, things that do not exist by necessity. But unlike "techne", which aims at an end beyond itself, "praxis", as just stated, is its own end.

What does Aristotle mean by "praxis" and what constitutes its uncertainty and variability? According to Aristotle, action is part of the realm of things that are referred to as the "human things". The "human things" are part of, but not reducible to, human nature. For example, there are aspects of human nature that we share with both vegetative existence and animal existence. Such processes as growth, breathing, reproduction, and other psychic and bodily functions are not specifically human. These aspects of human nature can be studied by theoretical sciences such as biology, physics, and the study of the soul. At the same time, there is a dimension of human nature that transcends the merely human and partakes of the divine or eternal. This capacity is actualised, for example, in the activity of contemplation. Human nature, according to Aristotle, embodies an aspect from every stratum of reality or every order of being, from the inorganic to the eternal. This complexity of human nature is captured in the saying that we are between the beasts and the gods. What, then, is characteristic of those things referred to as the human things?

The answer lies in the fact that human beings do not operate simply on the basis of impulse ("horme"), or necessity ("anangke"), but also on the basis of what is voluntary, on the basis of choice ("prohairesis") and deliberation ("bouleusis"). Choice and deliberation deal with the pursuit of such things as we believe will lead to our happiness and that which is good both for ourselves and others. Happiness ("eudaimonia") is the good ("agathon") for man or the good which man seeks through action ("praxis"). These concerns, relating to what is achievable through action, constitute the realm of the "human

things". These things are the concerns of sciences such as ethics and politics, which is why Aristotle refers to such inquiries by the expression philosophy of human affairs. Only human beings act, according to Aristotle, because only human beings have the capacity to deliberate and choose concerning goodness and badness, or the capacity thoughtfully to pursue the satisfaction of their desires. The cause of action, Aristotle says, is choice and the cause of choice is desire and reasoning towards some end. Choice represents the unity of thought and desire. Aristotle describes it as 'desiring thought' or 'intellectual desire'. Unlike 'impulse' which can be the result of instinct, 'choice' is a matter of character ("ethos"). Character, for its part, does not develop naturally or spontaneously but is the result of training and habituation which fix in us a disposition ("hexis") to act in a certain way and to desire certain things in a certain way.

Things about which we deliberate do not involve necessity. If all things happened by necessity there would be no scope for deliberation and choice. Because the things that are the concern of action and deliberation involve uncertainty and variability they do not admit of an exact or precise treatment. In treating of them, therefore, one must be sensitive to their nature and not demand more precision and certainty than the phenomena will bear.⁴ According to Aristotle though, this requirement does not exclude the possibility of giving a scientific treatment of these phenomena. However, in order to understand what Aristotle means by a scientific treatment of things that are imprecise and variable, it is important to examine more closely some of the things that account for this imprecision and variability. Here one has to go beyond Aristotle's methodological statements regarding the uncertainty and variability of practical affairs to an examination of the phenomena themselves.

⁴See Aristotle, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 2d. ed., trans. with commentaries and glossary by Hippocrates G. Apostle (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1984, 1094b20-30. All subsequent references to this work will be to this edition.

Practical affairs are very complex according to Aristotle. One of the things that accounts for the complexity and imprecision of practical matters is the fact that the subject matter admits of a variety of conflicting opinions. It might be more precise to say that the subject matter of practical affairs *is* these various opinions. There is no unanimous agreement as to what constitutes justice, or happiness, or virtue, and it is in the nature of such issues to foster allegiance and partizanship. This uncertainty and difference of opinion can lead to the belief that all such views are merely arbitrary and that there is no way to adjudicate between them.⁵ Aristotle often refers to these different opinions as "endoxai", or reputable opinions. On most political and ethical issues there are legitimate arguments on either side, either for or against a position. As we shall see "endoxa" provide the basis or foundation for rhetorical reasoning. Here it is important to remember that these opinions about the human good are not abstract 'points of view'. They reflect the plurality of human types or human characters. It is not possible, according to Aristotle, to abstract these opinions from the characters and dispositions of those who express them. Choices, once again, are the results of character and disposition.

But while there is an irreducible plurality of human types according to Aristotle there is not an indefinite plurality. As just stated, it is not possible to separate opinions and choices from the characters of those who hold these opinions and make these choices, or to reduce these opinions to more fundamental determinants. At the same time these opinions can be understood, ultimately, as expressions of a finite or limited number of human types such as the 'rich', the 'virtuous', the 'many'. In a similar way, when Aristotle treats of the character of political regimes he understands them as expressions of a finite number of basic types such as democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy.

Therefore, an important reason for the imprecision in practical matters is the plurality and complexity of human beings themselves. Not only are there many different opinions on these matters concerning the human good, but human beings themselves are

⁵See *Ibid.*, 1094b15.

subject to many different and often conflicting desires and passions. If human existence were governed by one overriding passion or drive, then regulating practical matters would be much more simple and manageable. As we will see, the attempt to reduce the complexity of human existence to the controlled conflict of a few basic passions is what characterises the political philosophy of Hobbes.⁶ Aristotle, on the other hand, does not think it possible or desirable to eradicate the tensions and ambiguities within human existence.⁷

It is precisely because of this that choice and deliberation play such an important role in Aristotelian political science. It is simply not possible, according to Aristotle, to satisfy every human desire and every human longing at one and the same time. By satisfying certain desires or needs, others may not be able to be satisfied or cultivated. In other words, the causes of uncertainty and imprecision have to do with the conditions and requirements of political life itself. The requirements of political life are often in conflict with one another. It is not always possible, for example, to avoid conflict between what is required for the maintenance of political life on the one hand and for the promotion of a virtuous life on the other, or between the origin of politics, which is for the sake of life, and the goal of politics which is living well.⁸ One must be able to balance between those things that make a polis, and those things that make it well administered.

Related to this is the fact that in practical matters one is rarely, if ever, dealing with ideal conditions. The best political order would require conditions that are more a result of chance than of planning. Practical life is therefore often regulated by factors that we do not totally control. A political science that would undertake to deal with practical

⁶See below, chap. 4.

⁷This is evident for example in his criticism of Phaleas in book two of the Politics. This will be dealt with below.

⁸See for example Aristotle's discussion of the relation between the good man and the good citizen in book three of the Politics.

matters adequately is obliged to deal with four things according to Aristotle. First it must explore that regime that is best by nature, including the necessary external or material conditions. Second, it must explore that constitution which is best under existing circumstances since the best, as we have said, is rarely a possibility. Third, it must explore those situations in which a constitution that falls short of the best it can achieve can be maintained. Finally, it must explore the constitution that is best in most cases. One must therefore work on the basis of what is available or possible.⁹

All of these factors constitute the nature of the realm of "praxis" with which practical philosophy deals. Aristotle approaches these things not as defects that can be eradicated but as tensions that have to be managed. They reveal the permanent problems that are part of human affairs. It is this spirit that informs his view of the science that deals with these matters. It was stated above that the uncertainty and variability of practical life did not preclude a scientific treatment of the subject. What then constitutes the scientific character of the inquiries into these matters? The scientific character of these inquiries is constituted more by comprehensiveness than by certainty. The goal of practical philosophy is not to transcend the phenomena so as to apply theoretically derived rules of practice to them, but to work from among the phenomena so as to acquire a comprehensiveness and breadth of vision that sees further but in the same direction. As Leo Strauss has put it, classical political philosophy is related directly to political life. It preserves the perspectives of citizens and politicians but expands them. In this way it manages to be not only about political things, but public spirited as well.¹⁰ If one tries to reduce political phenomena to more fundamental determinants of behavior then one is no longer doing justice to the phenomena. One is explaining the political on the basis of the pre-political or the non-political, or to use the expressions we used earlier, one is reducing the human things to more basic determinants of human nature.

⁹See the discussion at the beginning of book four of the Politics.

¹⁰See Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy ? And Other Studies, pp.78-94.

A comprehensive account should not be confused with a systematic account if one understands by the latter an attempt to eradicate all uncertainty and ambiguity from the phenomena in question by constructing a logically coherent account of them. A comprehensive account does not eradicate the tensions and ambiguities from the phenomena. On the contrary, it is precisely by doing justice to the phenomena, by revealing them fully as what they are, in all their complexity, that the tensions and ambiguities reveal themselves. Because it is public spirited this science aims at shedding light on these tensions and ambiguities of practical life, not in order to eradicate them, but because a greater clarity into their nature enhances the ability to understand the possibilities and limits of action. Stephen Salkever has given a good summary of such an approach to phenomena. Such a comprehensive approach explains "the phenomena in such away as to make a certain disposition and orientation towards those phenomena inescapable for anyone who accepts the explanation".¹¹ Of course this immediately begs the question as to who precisely will accept or understand this approach to the nature of political phenomena. It was stated above that the nature of political or practical matters is inseparable from issues of character. It is also the case that those who are to engage in the proper study of these matters must be of a particular disposition and character.

What kind of aptitude or skill is involved in this ability to understand practical matters in the way just described, that is, in such a way that the ordering principle comes from within the phenomena themselves rather than outside of them? It can only come from long experience in having handled such matters. In other words the study of practical things is inextricably linked to the life of politics itself. Statesmanship and the study of politics are linked. Aristotle refers to this ability as "phronesis" or practical wisdom.¹² "Phronesis" is the ability to deliberate well about things that are good and bad

¹¹For an excellent treatment of Aristotle's teleology and a defense of it vis à vis modern criticism see Stephen Salkever, Finding the Mean: theory and practice in Aristotle's political philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), chapters 1-3.

¹²Aristotle's fullest discussion of phronesis is in book six of the Nicomachean Ethics.

for human beings in general. Because "phronesis" is concerned with deliberation and we can only deliberate about things that are variable or attainable through action, decisions are based for the most part on probability rather than certainty. However, although the nature of deliberation necessarily involves imprecision, the judgments made through practical wisdom do nevertheless provide a sound ordering principle. This ordering principle comes from experience. Experience in practical matters gives one a general sense of what is appropriate or feasible in relation to the human good. This ability to see how particular situations, which require that choices or decisions be made, promote or hinder one's good in general, is not the result of determinant judgment, the subsuming of particulars under a given universal, but is acquired through experience of particulars themselves. Someone with practical wisdom actually 'sees' or intuitively grasps the general in the particular. This allows one to structure and orient judgment about things that are by nature imprecise.

While Aristotle refers to "phronesis" as an intellectual or "dianoetic" virtue he does not mean by this that it is merely a cognitive skill. It is an acquired disposition or habit ("hexis"), and, therefore, is inextricably linked to one's character. Aristotle refers to "hexis" as an acquired and stable disposition which is hard to dislodge or displace. He distinguishes it from "diathesis" or a disposition that is easily changed or altered. This disposition or "hexis" provides one with a thoughtful stance towards one's desires that enables one to deliberate properly about practical matters. As we have seen, because practical matters involve choice about what is good and bad for us they cannot be abstracted from desire. But neither should the choices be simply controlled by desire. Choice as was said above, unites desire and reason.¹³ It is thoughtful desire, or deliberation made in full knowledge of what one is doing, and an awareness of alternative possibilities. It is not a matter of reason or intellect controlling desire but rather a unity

¹³Prohairesis, or deliberate choice is one of the things that separates humans from animals and explains why human beings participate in action or praxis while animals do not. Animals do not deliberate regarding their desires. See the discussion of prohairesis in Salkever, Finding the Mean, pp.65-71.

of both acquired through proper habituation. As already mentioned it takes the form of knowing what is good for oneself and others.

This proper disposition towards one's desires provides an ordering principle that gives coherence and stability to action. Since it can only be acquired through experience, the young are not fit students of political science. This is not because they are passionate but rather because they are led by their passions. They are likely to respond to particular circumstances and the choices they have to make as a set of discrete moments rather than by evaluating them on the basis of a coherent perception of what is best for themselves and others. On the other hand, someone who has been properly trained and habituated knows first principles in relation to practical matters. These first principles are acquired through habituation. In fact says Aristotle, first principles in relation to practical matters can be known only through training and in no other way.¹⁴

There are different types of "phronesis" or practical wisdom. One type refers to the management of domestic affairs and is called domestic economy. Another type refers to politics and is divided into legislative science, which is architectonic since it determines the character of the regime or the constitution, and deliberative science, which deals with particular occurrences. The latter division is itself subdivided into deliberative and judicial science. Another type of phronesis refers to ethics or the question of the good for man.¹⁵ There is a sense in which all of these are related. Deliberative and judicial science are necessarily related to legislative science since they reflect the character of the regime, which is the concern of legislative wisdom. Furthermore, the pursuit of one's own good requires both domestic economy and political science. As Aristotle puts it : "... perhaps one's own good cannot exist without financial management nor without some form of

¹⁴Cf. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1095a1-10, 1095b5-10, 1098b1-10.

¹⁵See Ibid. 1141b25-35.

government".¹⁶ Finally ethical science is not reducible to, but it is related to, political science as Aristotle makes clear at the beginning of the Nicomachean Ethics.¹⁷

Having now seen how Aristotle sets out the nature of the practical world and the nature of the science that deals with it, it is important to see how this science deals with the issues that arise in the practical world. It is possible to return to the causes of complexity and variability in practical affairs described earlier and to see, through examples that Aristotle himself gives, the ways in which he approaches them. Earlier, it was stated that imprecision in practical affairs was due to the multiplicity of conflicting opinions. This led many to believe that they were simply arbitrary and did not exist by nature. For Aristotle, however, this variability is revelatory of the irreducible plurality of perceptions of the human good. In light of this, Aristotle approaches this plurality of opinions as more a sign of their partiality than of their arbitrariness. Because they are partial they are neither totally right nor totally wrong. They cannot be entirely dismissed, nor can they be accepted uncritically. Through a confrontation of different opinions and perspectives one subjects them both to criticism and justification. This approach is evident for example in Aristotle's discussion of the different claims of justice in the Politics.

When Aristotle talks about the political community he refers to the constitution that gives the community its character. The laws must always be adapted to the constitution. Constitutions, more often than not, embody different conceptions of justice: wealth, excellence, freedom, are all put forward as claims to justify either equal or unequal treatment. Problems arise because while each of these claims embodies an aspect of justice, each one may claim to represent justice in its entirety. The rich, for example, claim that because they are superior in wealth they should be superior in all things. On the other hand the many believe that because they are equal in some things they should

¹⁶Ibid. 1142a9-10.

¹⁷See Ibid. 1094b1-10.

be equal in all things. The political partnership is made up of a plurality of people, all of whom have a partially justified claim to rule. Politics is about judging which differences and distinctions are politically relevant and adjudicating between these different claims so as to render them commensurable in some way. For example, height and strength are criteria on the basis of which we differentiate between people, but they are not politically relevant. Wealth, virtue and numbers however are politically relevant and so one must be able to render commensurable the claim of virtue in relation to the claim of numbers, and the claim on the basis of wealth.

The preservation of the political association is based on the ability to weave together these different conceptions of justice.¹⁸ Therefore when Aristotle talks about the political community or the association it is important to keep in mind that he is not talking about a homogeneous entity. This need to weave together different conceptions of justice provides a concrete example of the type of trade-off or compromise that defines the nature of political life in Aristotelian practical philosophy. By trade off or compromise I am referring specifically to the fact that political life cannot satisfy at one and the same time all human longings. Aristotle's account of political justice described above is a concrete example of this because it is unlikely that one would be able to satisfy, at one and the same time, a longing for community and connectedness with a desire for the recognition of plurality. Recognising the plurality of conceptions of justice, if taken seriously, is likely to entail a certain amount of political conflict and tension within the community.¹⁹

Through these discussions one gains a sense of the importance of the ordering of the passions and desires in political life. This is not to say that everyone who participates

¹⁸See Aristotle, Politics 1283a23-40.

¹⁹Rousseau provides a good example of a thinker who recognised the implications of the alternative, i.e., that the elimination of conflict and friction in the community would require the elimination of plurality. This is most clearly evident in the doctrine of the general will.

in political debate has "phronesis", as the discussion of rhetoric in the next chapter will show. At the same time one cannot reasonably discuss the human good and act responsibly in order to attain it unless one is sufficiently self controlled to submit one's own views and those of others to scrutiny. In this sense, practical affairs are guided neither by scientific detachment nor by empathic understanding but by what Stephen Salkever has referred to as "... the generalizing operations of logos ..." ²⁰. In order to understand this it is important to understand the significance of speech in Aristotle's practical philosophy.

At the beginning of the Politics, Aristotle explains why human beings are more political than other animals. He explains that while animals have 'voice', which allows them to express pleasure and pain, human beings have speech which allows them not only to express pleasure and pain, but the expedient and the inexpedient, or the useful and the harmful. He concludes by saying that it is a community in such things that makes a polis. What Aristotle is suggesting is that whenever we talk about what is expedient or inexpedient, we are referring to a conception of the human good. Through speech we articulate the conceptions of the good contained in human desire. In other words, speech reveals the teleological structure of human desire. By articulating the relationship between desire and the human good, or by allowing us to have experiences of the human good, speech allows us the possibility of ordering our actions according to these perceptions. At the same time these perceptions of the human good inevitably introduce a dimension of commonality or generality that allows them to be discussed, scrutinized, debated. This is so because the human good is always more than simply my good or someone else's, but refers to the good in general. This is what is suggested by the expression "the generalizing operations of logos".

This is what constitutes a "polis" according to Aristotle. A "polis" is a community concerning such things that are of common concern. This does not mean that the common

²⁰Salkever, Finding the Mean, pp.95-96.

good or the perception of commonality is based on only one, unanimous understanding of the human good. Speeches about the human good take the form of opinions about the good, and the plurality of opinions reveals the plurality of views about the good. A political community is not necessarily constructed of one piece as we have seen. Rather than abstract from these opinions, Aristotle starts with them. He begins, not with a theory of speech, but with speech in all its contradictoriness, as it expresses itself in political life. These opinions are clarified on the basis of a dialectical process in which they are compared to each other. Looking back to the discussion of justice in the Politics mentioned above, Aristotle's procedure is to weave together the various views in such a way as to maintain the sound core of each opinion. In this sense the goal of politics is to preserve as much as possible the reputable opinions that guide political life.

The attempt to deal with the complexities that are part of human nature, rather than to reduce them to a more manageable form is well exemplified in Aristotle's criticism of Phaleas in book two of the Politics. Phaleas argued that poverty or deprivation was the cause of crime and that therefore the solution was to ensure a certain amount of private property to individuals. Aristotle argues that it is more important to take into account people's desires than the amount of property they own. While the scheme suggested by Phaleas may help solve petty crimes it will have no effect on the greater ones because people do not simply commit crimes out of necessity. One must take into account the full range of human desires and develop an appropriate response to each type. Some people commit crimes out of necessity, while others do so out of a desire for superfluities, while still others seek pleasures without any admixture of pain. Aristotle prescribes different remedies for each type: for the first he prescribes employment, for the second, temperance, and for the third philosophy.²¹ Phaleas is representative of that understanding of political life which I have referred to as 'mathematical'. He believes that the problems of human existence can be resolved through technical competence. The significant thing about Phaleas, and more generally about those who approach political

²¹See Aristotle, Politics 1267a1-15.

issues in this way, is that his optimism about the capacity to solve human problems through politics is based on a tendency to reduce human desire to a fundamental drive or motivation.

The example of Phaleas is significant not only because it shows Aristotle's refusal to reduce the problems of human existence to a universal motive, but also because it exemplifies one of the characteristics of his practical philosophy mentioned earlier, that is, the sober treatment of existing opinions. It is important to remember that before criticizing Phaleas, Aristotle had criticized the communism set out by Socrates in the Republic by arguing that maintaining private property was a better way of fostering civic virtue. However, as his criticism of Phaleas shows, a simple advocacy of private property is not the solution to every problem either.

Finally, in relation to the conflicting requirements of political life, Aristotle is conscious of the need to make concessions and accommodations in order to deal with the various forces at work in a regime. This is evident in the Politics where Aristotle deals with the question regarding those things over which the many should have authority. This is a topic that will be important when we come to deal with rhetoric. According to Aristotle, to have the many share in the greatest offices is not safe. On the other hand, to exclude them from office altogether is also dangerous because this is likely to make them enemies of the regime and a regime can only realistically survive if all or most are friendly to it. The solution for Aristotle is that the many should share in the offices of deliberating and judging.²² So the many have no claim to rule on the basis of virtue, but if they are excluded the political friendship that maintains the polis, the deliberate choice to live together, is also jeopardised. The irreducible plurality of the polis imposes the need for accommodation.

²²See *Ibid.*, 1281b22-35.

What this discussion of Aristotle's practical philosophy has shown thus far is the spirit of moderation and sober accommodation that pervades it. Aristotle does not approach the issues of politics and ethics as a set of perfectly solvable problems. As we have seen there are a number of complexities, tensions, and ambiguities which cannot be resolved once and for all. On the other hand, it would be incorrect to draw from this the conclusion that politics is essentially mysterious or tragic for Aristotle and that little can be done to change or fine tune political life. There is a critical dimension to Aristotle's science of politics and a tough mindedness about political issues that cannot be easily reconciled with the view that political life is constituted ultimately by the reverence for tradition or the inviolability of time-worn practices. As will be seen, Aristotle is just as clearly opposed to this view of politics as he is opposed to the view that politics is constituted by a set of perfectly solvable problems on the basis of technical competence.

This can perhaps best be seen through his discussion of legislation in both the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics. The significance of legislation and the science of legislation are repeatedly emphasized by Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics begins and ends in reference to the architectonic nature of this science:

... for it is this which regulates what sciences are needed in a state and what kinds of sciences should be learned by each ... and to what extent. The most honored faculties, too, e.g., strategy and economics and rhetoric, are observed to come under this faculty. And since this faculty uses the rest of the practical sciences and also legislates what men should do and what they should abstain from doing, its end would include the ends of the other faculties.²³

The Politics too begins by referring to the political community as supreme (1252a5) and makes reference to the importance of law for regulating the life of the community by noting that man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but when sundered from law and

²³ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1094b1-7. See also Ibid., 1146b26 for reference to legislative science as supreme and directive.

justice, he is the worst of beasts (1253a30). It is important to note that Aristotle is not equating lawmaking with the highest activity, nor is he saying that simply obeying the law is coextensive with virtue. Concerning the first point, it is important to remember that political science is the most authoritative of the sciences, not the highest. This is made clear in the Nicomachean Ethics (1141a22) where Aristotle states that it would be absurd to think that political science is the highest type of knowledge since man is not the highest thing in the universe. Concerning the second, it is important to remember that according to Aristotle obedience to law is not coextensive with virtue. After referring to the architectonic nature of political science, Aristotle states that his investigation is only "in a sense" the study of politics (1094b12). In other words ethics is closely associated with politics but not reducible to it. For example, in both the Nicomachean Ethics and the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle distinguishes between the true virtue of courage and five lesser forms of it. One of these lesser forms is what he calls 'political' or civic courage ("politike andreia"). It is related to the law and is based on the motive power of shame : "... civic courage is the effect of law. But in truth none of these forms is courage, though they all are useful for encouragement in danger".²⁴ Furthermore, shame, as Aristotle makes clear in the Nicomachean Ethics (1108a32) is not a virtue. Although it is praised and although it is effective especially in controlling youthful passion it is a feeling and not a disposition, which all virtues are according to Aristotle. Finally, there are also Aristotle's statements in book ten of the Nicomachean Ethics to the effect that the law is there to compel those who cannot be trained in virtue. There is a compulsive dimension to law that is necessary in order to influence towards proper behavior those who are not amenable to virtue. These people are kept in line through fear as Aristotle makes clear²⁵.

²⁴Aristotle, Eudemian Ethics 1229a30-31.

²⁵See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1179b12, 1179b30, 1180a5.

Having said this, it is nevertheless also the case that legislation can foster or hinder the existence of virtue in the political community and its members. Aristotle suggests that anyone concerned with making people better must pay attention to legislation.²⁶ Legislation can provide the basis for a virtuous disposition if the laws are properly enacted or for the existence of vice if the laws are bad or improperly enacted. Even the exercise of virtue has its basis in that which is commanded and forbidden:

Thus the law orders us to perform the actions of a brave man ... and those of a temperate man ... , and those of a good tempered man ... , and similarly with respect to the other virtues and evil habits, commanding us to do certain things and forbidding us to do others; and it does so rightly if it is rightly framed but less well if hastily framed.²⁷

The teaching of virtue is powerless without a foundation in good habits, and this is not possible unless one has been brought up under proper laws. While there are those, perhaps the greatest number, who will never be motivated by anything but fear of the law, even those who do act virtuously will do what is right, at least in the beginning, because the law states that it is right. A certain degree of compulsion is necessary for the noble to come into being. But Aristotle is suggesting more than this. He is not only relating virtuous activity to what the law prescribes and proscribes but to the way in which the laws are enacted. Laws which would enjoin virtuous conduct but which would not prescribe what is necessary for its manifestation are bad laws. This relationship between the laws and the manifestation of the virtues is dealt with in the Politics.

It is in book two of the Politics that one finds perhaps the clearest example regarding the relationship between lawmaking and a virtuous disposition. In his criticism of the system of legislation in Plato's Republic Aristotle suggests a connection between public regulations and certain of the ethical virtues. He argues that the proposals for the

²⁶See Ibid. 1180b24-30.

²⁷Ibid. 1129b19-25.

community of wives and children, and for the abolition of private property, make it impossible for the virtues of friendship, liberality and temperance to appear.

On the subject of political friendship Aristotle criticises the belief that friendship can be fostered by destroying, through legislation, all that is private or particular. Aristotle believes that instead of trying to legislate the bonds of political friendship directly, the legislator should approach the subject obliquely keeping an eye on what gives rise to it:

For there are two things above all which make human beings cherish and feel affection, what is one's own and what is dear; and neither of these can be available to those who govern themselves in this way²⁸

That friendship begins in particular preferences does not mean that it is essentially self-serving but it does mean that legislation that would abolish the family so as to foster sociability is in fact ignoring the fact that friendship is rooted in self-love which is itself fostered through having things of one's own.

In the Nicomachean Ethics it is suggested that friendship has its root in basic forms of justice regulated through legislation. Justice, which is the subject of the fifth book of the Nicomachean Ethics, deals with it in its most basic manifestation, the rules governing taking and giving or the exchange of goods. Aristotle calls this reciprocal justice. These rules are the most basic bonds that maintain a community. In book eight of the Nicomachean Ethics friendship is described as the virtue that completes justice since if men are friends there is no need of justice (1155a27). Now although friendship surpasses or completes justice in this basic sense, this does not alter the fact that political friendship has its origin in the basic forms of distributive and reciprocal justice. The nature of friendship is not exhausted by the conditions under which we first come into contact with others but it does presuppose a proper ordering of these basic relations. Aristotle states this clearly in book three of the Politics when discussing what makes a

²⁸Aristotle, Politics 1262b20-24.

city :

It is evident, therefore, that the city is not a partnership in a location and for the sake of not committing injustice against each other and of transacting business. These things must necessarily be present if there is to be a city, but not even when all of them are present is it yet a city, but the city is the partnership in living well both of households and families for the sake of a complete and self-sufficient life.²⁹

In other words while it is true that one cannot simply legislate friendship it is also true that legislation does not necessarily interfere with the bonds of friendship. While Aristotle does not believe that one can simply legislate friendship and a sense of commonality into existence, neither does he believe that legislation has no role to play in it either.

When Aristotle discusses the virtues of liberality and temperance and their relationship to private property it also becomes clear that legislative competence has a role to play. Without private property the virtue of liberality cannot exist: "For it will not be possible to show oneself as liberal or to perform any liberal action, since the task of liberality lies in the use of possessions".³⁰ This is closely connected to the possibility of friendship since friends take pleasure in doing things for each other. Furthermore, temperance is also a virtue related to the existence of private property since temperance is fostered through a sense of what is one's own and what is not. Therefore the belief that everything is common makes it much more difficult to be temperate. This necessarily affects the existence of "phronesis" or practical wisdom since the "phronimos" is supposed to possess all the virtues. Temperance in particular, Aristotle notes, is closely linked to the existence of practical wisdom since the expression "sophrosyne" means "preserving prudence".³¹ As we have seen the ability to deliberate well requires that one not be a slave

²⁹Ibid. 1280b30-35.

³⁰Ibid. 1263b10-13.

³¹See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1140b10-15.

to one's desires but that one be able to exercise self-control.

Once again, Aristotle is not suggesting that legislation in general or legislation concerning property in particular is a sufficient condition for the manifestation of virtue. On the other hand ethical virtues such as friendship, liberality and temperance, as well as intellectual virtues like practical wisdom, have certain necessary prerequisites which cannot be ignored and which are not beyond the possibility of being regulated. As noted earlier, the ethical virtues do not arise in us by nature according to Aristotle. They have to be fostered. Practical wisdom also, as we have just seen, the ability to deliberate well concerning the good, can be fostered or hindered by legislation. This goes back to what was said earlier concerning the interrelationship between the various types of practical wisdom. The practical wisdom concerned with legislation is important in fostering the conditions for that practical wisdom concerned with deliberation. A wise legislator is one who knows how to foster conditions conducive to the ends he wants to achieve. In investigating regimes and their various arrangements Aristotle notes that it is important to evaluate these arrangements not only in relation to the best regime but in relation to the ends desired. For example, a legislator who would seek to give the regime a democratic character and who would install a high property qualification in order to qualify for citizenship is in fact establishing a regime with an oligarchic character. He lacks practical wisdom since he does not know how to establish what he wants. Practical wisdom relating to legislation is therefore crucial according to Aristotle in order for the virtues to appear.

This is suggested as well by the fact that whenever Aristotle discusses the nature of the political community he does not dissociate it from the virtue of the legislator and questions of rulership. Because we are not self-sufficient we come together although even if we had no need of one another we would desire to share a common life, Aristotle says in the Politics (1278b20). However Aristotle makes it clear that this natural gregariousness is not enough to maintain a community: "Accordingly, there is in everyone by nature an impulse toward this sort of partnership. And yet the one who first

constituted a city is responsible for the greatest of goods".³² What maintains and dissolves a community is the constant concern of the legislator.

It is important to note that at the very beginning of the discussion of regimes in book two of the Politics, Aristotle states that he is going to consider both theoretical proposals as well as already existing political regimes. This is significant because if Aristotle had considered legislation solely from the perspective of tradition, or actually existing practices, then there would be no reason to consult theoretical proposals or blue prints such as those of Socrates, Phaleas and Hippodamus. It is at least possible that such blue prints could make valid suggestions that could in fact be an improvement of actual practice. When Aristotle does in fact criticise these proposals it is because, in his opinion, they cannot achieve what they want to achieve on the basis of the means put forward, and not because they are too abstract, theoretical, or technical.³³

Here it is perhaps important to remember two related implications of Aristotle's view that human beings are "by nature" political animals which help explain the side of Aristotelian politics we have just been exploring. First, when Aristotle says that politics is natural there is a tendency to counterpose to this the view that politics is conventional or artificial as if the two were mutually exclusive. Aristotle, however, does not draw a hard and fast distinction between nature and convention or artifice. Art completes nature according to Aristotle and that means that nature needs artifice in order to actualise itself. Nature's goals either cannot come into being on their own or conflict with one another, or simply have to be controlled, and therefore a certain amount of artifice is required. In this sense, Aristotle does not denigrate the technical or productive dimension of politics.

³²Aristotle, Politics 1253a30-31.

³³While Aristotle does clearly distinguish between "praxis" and "poesis" or "techne" this distinction should not be drawn too rigidly. There is an important element of "poesis" or making in Aristotelian "politiké". It is precisely the drive to purify practical philosophy of any admixture of the technical that leads to the neglect of this aspect of politics. See note 3 above.

One must therefore be careful not to overextend the distinction between "techne" and "praxis". Secondly, precisely because there is a tendency to contrast nature to convention, there is another implication to Aristotle's view that politics is natural that tends to be forgotten. This is the fact that politics is not divine or divinely sanctioned. There is no sacredness to politics that would sanction a sense of awe or reverence towards it and therefore a posture of passive acceptance.

The purpose of this chapter has been to show how Aristotle's practical philosophy cannot be understood either in terms of an approach which views political issues as a set of technical problems that can be resolved, or in terms of an inviolable set of practices which are by nature unreceptive to any kind of improvement or intervention. While Aristotle believes that there are problems of politics that are permanent, which means that they can never be totally resolved, he also believes that quite a bit can be done to manage these problems. Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric is imbued with the same spirit. The existence of, and the need for rhetoric, testify to the need for persuasive speech that will always fall short of enlightenment. At the same time, the practice of rhetoric is not necessarily based on deception or trickery but can be improved.

Chapter 3

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric. The exhaustive work done by Cope in the last century and by Grimaldi in this century, as well as the more recent commentary by Arnhart have fulfilled that task, and, in so doing, have provided a wealth of material for anyone studying the Rhetoric.¹ My goal is more thematic. I want to show that rhetoric is a complex phenomenon for Aristotle, that it has positive and negative implications for political life and that it is important for a statesman, therefore, to try to foster the positive aspects while trying to control the negative ones. In so doing I will show how Aristotle's approach to the subject of rhetoric is representative of his understanding of practical things as set out in the previous chapter. Keeping in mind the themes of 'mathematics' and 'poetry', I will show how Aristotle's account of rhetoric avoids both extremes. The very existence of rhetoric, and Aristotle's desire to improve its practice, serve as a reminder of the importance of the discursive dimension of politics, and the need to cultivate political judgment. The issues of politics cannot be reduced to technical problems resolvable simply through the proper application of rules or procedures. On the other hand, neither is politics a mysterious force that simply defies regulation and improvement through technical means. Legislation does not

¹See Edward M Cope, An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric: with analysis notes and appendices (London and Cambridge: Macmillan, 1867); Edward M. Cope, The Rhetoric of Aristotle with a Commentary, 3 vols., revised and edited by John E. Sandys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877) ; William M.A. Grimaldi, Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1972); Larry Arnhart, Aristotle on Political Reasoning: A Commentary on the Rhetoric (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981). Unlike the more diffuse commentaries of Cope and Grimaldi, Arnhart views the Rhetoric as paradigmatic of a way of reasoning which does not impose the standards of modern science on the understanding of political phenomena.

necessarily interfere with the bonds of 'intersubjectivity' but can enhance the character of public speech through which we actualise those bonds.

Much of the contemporary interest in Aristotle's thought is directed towards his views on rhetoric. Aristotle's treatise on the topic is viewed in both a positive and a negative way. The positive evaluation of the work comes from thinkers working in such fields as communications theory, informal or practical logic, and theory of argumentation. These thinkers see Aristotle's Rhetoric as an early attempt to develop a general theory of human communication and to analyse the logic of human discourse. Two of the most prominent contemporary thinkers to have taken this approach to the Rhetoric are Chaim Perelman, whose work was mentioned earlier, and William Grimaldi. Grimaldi's intention is to counter the interpretation of the Rhetoric proposed early in this century by Friedrich Solmsen who sees the work as an amalgam of views on the topic from earlier and later periods of Aristotle's life. This hypothesis, based on a reconstruction of Aristotle's intellectual development, accounts for apparent inconsistencies in the work itself by suggesting that the Rhetoric is not a systematic work. According to Solmsen, Aristotle had no "theory" of rhetoric.

According to Grimaldi, however, Aristotle's Rhetoric is a systematic work of philosophy.² Its consistency, despite apparent inconsistencies, is to be found in Aristotle's attempt to uncover the rational core of human discourse. The central element in the work, the one which provides the basis for its unitary structure, is the theory of the "enthymeme", or practical syllogism, which constitutes the body ("soma") of rhetorical argumentation according to Aristotle. By introducing his theory of the syllogism into the study of rhetoric Grimaldi argues that Aristotle introduces logic into rhetoric and thereby makes it a more rational activity. Aristotle's great achievement, according to Grimaldi, is the transformation of rhetoric from a deceptive and manipulative use of speech to a logical activity based on an epistemology of the probable. Perelman also sees in the

²See Grimaldi, Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric, chap. 1.

Rhetoric an attempt to develop a logic of the probable. Both of these thinkers find in Aristotle a defense of the rationality of rhetoric.

On the other side there are thinkers who see precisely in Aristotle's attempt to make rhetoric more rational, a distortion of its true nature. They agree with thinkers like Grimaldi and Perelman that Aristotle tries to draw rhetoric closer to logic by introducing his theory of the syllogism into the study of the former, but they view this as a loss rather than an improvement. The loss takes the form of an over-rationalisation or intellectualisation of rhetoric. The argument criticising the intellectualisation of rhetoric is not new. It can be found at least as early as Cicero who referred rather derisively to the "Graeculi" or "Greeklings" who knew much about theory and little about actual disputation. However, the contemporary thinkers referred to are not only opposing the practice of rhetoric to its theory, but also the mysteriousness or ambiguity of rhetoric to its subsequent rationalisation.

Nietzsche, in his lectures on rhetoric, suggests that rhetoric as an activity is originally tied to an oral culture. The ancients sound rhetorical to us because our prose derives more from the activities of reading and writing whereas the prose of antiquity was an echo of public speech.³ Nietzsche goes on to argue that rhetoric is inextricably bound to the essence of speech itself. There is no unrhetorical naturalness to language according to Nietzsche. Language is rhetorical. Neither language nor rhetoric aim to instruct, but to convey. Rhetoric, like speech itself, does not present things logically, it displays. All words are tropes and all language is essentially metaphorical according to Nietzsche. Tropes are not ornaments of speech but constitute the true nature of speech. What are taken to be the proper meanings of words are really faded metaphors.

³For Nietzsche's published lectures on rhetoric see Friedrich Nietzsche, Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language, edited and translated by Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, David J. Parent (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

This perspective can be seen in the work of contemporary thinkers. Paul Ricoeur, for example, suggests that Aristotle divorces rhetoric and poetry from each other and from their common root in the natural "metaphoricity" of language. Jacqueline de Romilly has argued that rhetoric is initially tied to the practice of magic and incantation, and that Aristotle represents the highest stage of rationalisation of the activity. By defining rhetoric as the power ("dunamis") to see ("theorein") the available means of persuasion, Aristotle introduces a theoretical component into rhetoric that separates it from practice. From this perspective Aristotle, despite his defense of rhetoric, merely continues the platonic devaluation of it since he tries to defend it on platonic grounds, as an art ("techne") rather than a knack ("tribe"). This criticism of Aristotle's approach to rhetoric is well expressed by John Schaeffer in his book on Giambattista Vico entitled Sensus Communis:

What Aristotle finds uncomfortable are those things the audience requires. In fact, he finds the audience uncomfortable. One gets the impression that Aristotle would cheerily dismiss them from his mind, because their presence contributes nothing but the disfigurement of a dialectic that ought to be exclusively focussed on facts.

Aristotle's Rhetoric was the text of secondary rhetoric in Europe for centuries. It provided the apparatus for teaching the various parts of rhetoric and gave its readers a substantial catalogue of figures and schemes, as well as the standard list of the topoi. Yet this impressive achievement was impossible without writing and, in fact, the very Platonic training that made it possible called into question its value as an educational tool. Aristotle clearly believed that the oral culture for which rhetoric was designed would be better served by dialectic, that is by thought processes made possible by the interiorization of writing.⁴

Both of these ways of approaching the Rhetoric, that which sees it as a positive contribution and that which sees it as a negative one, bring out important aspects of Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric. Both, however, tend to abstract from the practical significance of the work by downplaying its relation to the problems of political life.

⁴John D. Schaeffer, Sensus Communis: Vico, Rhetoric and the Limits of Relativism (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), pp.16-17.

Grimaldi and Perelman, for example, approach the Rhetoric as logicians interested in extracting the rational or logical core of Aristotle's teaching. Schaeffer, on the other hand, sees the Rhetoric as a reification of the true nature of the practice. This is what he means by referring to it as 'secondary' rhetoric. 'Primary' rhetoric would be the actual practice of rhetoric in an oral culture, a rhetoric imbedded in and inseparable from its own practice. Once the practice is raised to the level of reflective awareness, its nature is perverted. Despite the differences that clearly separate these two approaches, they are similar in that they both focus exclusively on the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic or the attempt to rationalise rhetoric by developing a logic of practical reasoning.

Carnes Lord has suggested a line of inquiry that focuses on the relationship between rhetoric and politics by arguing that Aristotle's Rhetoric must be understood as a practical work with a practical intention.⁵ Lord calls into question Grimaldi's interpretation by suggesting that Aristotle is less concerned with developing a theory of rhetoric than in changing contemporary attitudes towards it. Contrary to Grimaldi's suggestion that the similarity between rhetoric and dialectic is designed with the intention of rationalising the former, Lord argues that

...the provisional assimilation of rhetoric to dialectic serves the important purpose of conferring on rhetoric a dignity capable of engaging the attention of men of intellectual and moral seriousness and of ensuring that such men are encouraged to view rhetoric, not as an instrument of personal aggrandizement in the sophistic manner, but rather as an instrument of responsible and prudent statesmanship.⁶

In other words the relationship Aristotle suggests between rhetoric and dialectic arises out of prudential or political considerations. Lord argues that, in fact, Aristotle fully recognised that there were aspects of rhetorical argumentation that were based on trickery

⁵See Carnes Lord, "The Intention of Aristotle's Rhetoric." Hermes 109, (1981): 326-339.

⁶Ibid, p. 337.

and deception. However if it were possible to bolster the legitimacy of rhetoric, and attract the highminded to it, then it would be possible to control these abuses more effectively. Such control would take the form of subordinating rhetoric to political science.

Lord's interpretation has the advantage of highlighting what the other interpretations downplay, i.e., the practical considerations underlying Aristotle's interest in the topic of rhetoric. By the time that Aristotle came to treat of rhetoric, it had already become a well established practice in Greece.⁷ According to certain accounts, upon his arrival in Athens Aristotle would have been attracted initially to the rhetorical school of Isocrates rather than the Academy of Plato. It has been suggested that he became disillusioned with the pedagogical and philosophical pretensions of the school of Isocrates but that instead of giving up rhetoric altogether he started to teach it himself.⁸ Finally, according to these accounts, Aristotle would have written not one but four works on rhetoric : the existing Art of Rhetoric and three lost works : the Gryllus , the Sunagogue Technos, and the Theodectes.

The Art of Rhetoric has had an important effect on the historical development of rhetoric that is recognised even among those who do not take it to be a unified or systematic work.⁹ Aristotle's Rhetoric is reportedly the first rhetorical treatise to introduce

⁷For a good survey of rhetoric in ancient Greece see George Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion in Greece (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

⁸On the supposed rivalry between Aristotle and Isocrates see Cope, An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric, pp. 39-40, and Anton Chroust, Aristotle: New light on his life and some of his lost works, 2vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), vol. 1, pp.105-116; vol.2, pp.29-42. This rivalry is also referred to by Cicero in De Oratore 3.141, and Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria 3.1.13-15. Since Isocrates died in 338 B.C. any actual intercourse between them must have taken place during Aristotle's first residence in Athens From 367 - 347 B.C. For Isocrates' defense of his pedagogical program, see Antidosis.

⁹See for example Friedrich Solmsen, "The Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric." Keith V. Erickson, Aristotle: The Classical Heritage of Rhetoric (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow

the three-fold distinction between deliberative, forensic and epideictic oratory. His three-fold distinction between mode of persuasion ("pistis"), style ("lexis"), and arrangement ("taxis"), provided the basis for the classical five-fold distinction used by both Cicero and Quintilian : Invention ("inventio"), which corresponds to Aristotle's modes of persuasion; Disposition ("dispositio"), which corresponds to arrangement; Elocution ("elocutio"), which corresponds to style; and finally memorization ("memoria"), and delivery ("pronunciatio").

But neither Aristotle's involvement in teaching rhetoric nor his contribution to rhetorical theory can explain his interest in rhetoric, although they are no doubt signs of that interest. Lord is therefore justified in suggesting that Aristotle's interest in the phenomenon of rhetoric stems from his recognition of both its advantages and dangers in practical affairs rather than from a purely theoretical interest in the topic. Having said this however, it is important to clarify what is meant by a practical concern. While Lord does not explicitly articulate the position, there is a suggestion that Aristotle's concern with rhetoric is primarily circumstantial and that the Rhetoric itself is primarily a "livre de circonstance". On the basis of this suggestion, Aristotle's practical interest in rhetoric would be attributable primarily to his recognition of the growing influence and power of rhetoric in civic life, itself attributable to the increasing democratization of politics. Under these circumstances it became important to try to control its abuses. There are good arguments to support this view. It is certainly reasonable to assume that with the democratization of politics in Athens and the admission of the 'many' to public assemblies and court rooms, the influence of rhetoric grew and that it would simply be a matter of political prudence to try to manage its growing power and influence.

That Aristotle recognised the importance of democracy in political life is beyond doubt. He states in the Politics that due to the largeness of cities it is perhaps no longer

easy for any regime other than a democracy to arise.¹⁰ Nor can one ignore the evidence in the Rhetoric itself where Aristotle refers to the character of the audience that is incapable of taking in long arguments, and to the need to treat of questions of style and arrangement due to the depravity of the regimes. Because of the importance of rhetoric in civic affairs and the potential dangers it held for proper political rule, especially in democracies, it would be important to try to influence attitudes towards it. As we have seen, it is a principle of Aristotelian political philosophy that a science of politics must aim not only at establishing the best regime, but also at establishing what is the best possible regime under given circumstances. This would suggest that under democratic regimes, one would have to confront the importance of rhetoric.

At the same time, it is important not to limit the practical significance of the work to circumstantial considerations. Aristotle sees rhetoric as an important part of practical life regardless of the regime.¹¹ While a significant part of practical life has to do with rule over the 'many', this does not mean that his concern with rhetoric is simply an effect of the growth of democracy. The growth of democracy may significantly increase the importance and the dangers of rhetoric. In this sense, as will be seen later, Aristotle and Hobbes would be in full agreement. But it does not follow from this that the significance of rhetoric or its nature can be completely explained by the growth of democracy. It is in fact the case, as will be seen, that rhetoric, regardless of the regime, is an important part of political judgment according to Aristotle.

¹⁰See Aristotle, Politics 1286b19-21.

¹¹To argue that rhetoric is simply a democratic phenomenon would make it difficult to explain why Aristotle considers knowledge of the various regimes, and the need to adapt to their various characters as the most important topic of deliberative oratory. See Aristotle, The Rhetoric of Aristotle: An Expanded Translation with Supplementary Examples for Students of Composition and Public Speaking by Lane Cooper (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1932; reprint ed., 1960), 1.8.1365b20-1366a6. All subsequent references to the Rhetoric will be to this edition.

Despite what has just been said it may not be immediately self-evident that there is a relationship between rhetoric and Aristotelian practical philosophy. On the basis of the generally negative reputation the practice had acquired by Aristotle's time, rhetoric might appear more as a parody of Aristotelian practical philosophy than as part of it. Rhetoricians seem to distort the notion that speech is what characterizes human beings by exercising it in one of its lowest possible forms, as an instrument of trickery and deception so as to obtain victory rather than consensus or agreement. Rhetoricians seem to take the existence of a plurality of opinions and perspectives as an opportunity for manipulating and showing the arbitrariness of all opinions. Rhetoricians seem to take the notion that one's speech should be adapted to the nature of one's listeners as a license to manipulate their passions and inflame their prejudices. As will be seen later on, it is partly on the basis of a belief in the impossibility of distinguishing between rhetoric, as it has just been described, and classical political philosophy that Hobbes rejects the teachings of the latter. Aristotle himself states in the Nicomachean Ethics and the Rhetoric that rhetoric tries to pass itself off as political science. And yet he seems to have considered it important enough a topic to write a treatise about it, a treatise generally recognised as one of the best ever written on the subject.

In order to explain Aristotle's position it is perhaps appropriate to begin with the way in which he approaches the phenomenon of rhetoric. Aristotle's way of approaching rhetoric is characteristic of the way in which he deals with practical phenomena generally. His approach is based neither on wholesale acceptance nor on wholesale rejection. As was seen earlier, Aristotle rarely, if ever, accepts or discounts a phenomenon outright. Every opinion, every phenomenon, is at least partially revelatory of something meaningful, something that cannot simply be discounted or dismissed. The way to discover the significance of any phenomenon is to try to give as comprehensive an account of it as possible. This is the approach he takes in the Rhetoric. He begins, as he does generally, with the current opinions on the subject and through criticism and clarification he preserves what he takes to be the sound core of the prevailing views. In this way he gradually elaborates his own views on the scope and function of rhetoric.

The Scope and Function of Rhetoric

One of the defining characteristics of Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric is the spirit of moderation and sobriety that informs it. His attitude to rhetoric, as just stated, is neither one of uncritical acceptance, nor one of wholesale rejection. Although he is critical of existing handbooks on the subject and the way in which it is practised, he believes that rhetoric is nonetheless useful. It should be reformed rather than rejected. Aristotle's criticism of the current practice of rhetoric is essentially a criticism of its limited perspective. Existing textbooks on rhetoric do not deal with rhetoric in its entirety but only with a part of it. That is why, despite his criticism of the existing treatment of the subject, he does not reject it altogether. The point is not to dismiss what current manuals say, but to incorporate it by dealing with it in its proper place and according to its proper function. Despite his severe criticism of rhetoric and rhetoricians and his apparent dismissal of certain practices it becomes clear through his own treatment of the subject that there is nothing that Aristotle criticises in the practice of rhetoric that he totally discounts. Everything he criticises and seemingly rejects, he eventually incorporates into his own view.

There are two important examples of this. The first one has to do with Aristotle's criticism of the current emphasis in rhetorical argumentation on emotional appeal, that is to say the attempt to sway the judges by playing on their feelings. Such tactics, says Aristotle, have nothing to do with the issue to be judged. Aristotle does not furnish any examples but among such tactics, for example, was the practice of introducing one's family or relatives before the judges in order to play on their pity. Such tactics are especially prevalent in forensic oratory according to Aristotle. In criticising these tactics he says : "the man who is to judge should not have his judgment warped by speakers arousing him to anger, jealousy, or compassion. One might just as well make a carpenter's rule crooked before using it as a measure".¹²

¹²Ibid., 1.1.1354a24-25.

But, having said this, it is clear that Aristotle does not exclude emotional appeal from rhetorical argumentation. This is clear from the fact that emotional appeal constitutes one of the particular topics or sources ("eide") from which arguments can be drawn. Rhetorical syllogisms or "enthymemes" are constructed on the basis of three modes of persuasion ("pisteis"). One is based on the subject matter itself ("pragma"), another is based on the speaker showing himself to be of a certain character ("ethos"), and the third is based on the ability to put the listeners into a certain frame of mind by appealing to their emotions ("pathos"). These will be examined more fully below. What is even more interesting is the fact that, not only does Aristotle deal with emotional appeal extensively in the second book of the Rhetoric, but he states that it is most useful in forensic oratory, precisely the type of oratory in which he says it is most likely to be abused. This will be dealt with more fully when we deal with the issue of judgment below.

The second example of Aristotle's approach has to do with his criticism of the current focus in rhetorical theory and practice on issues such as delivery and what ought be the content of the parts of the discourse, that is to say with issues such as style ("lexis") and arrangement ("taxis"). This concerns such things as the division of the speech into its parts: introduction ("proemium"), narration ("prothesis"), proof ("pistis"), conclusion ("epilogos"), and other things such as rhythm and voice modulation. This issue is related to the previous one because, argues Aristotle, the concern with such things is based on the desire to put the judges into a certain frame of mind:

... it is clear that our authors of handbooks, in attempting to define the proper content of the Proem, the Narration, and the other divisions of the speech, and the like, are dwelling upon irrelevant matters, for their rules have to do simply and solely, with the production of a certain mental attitude in the judge. These authors tell us nothing about artistic proofs - nothing, that is about the way in which one is to become a master of the enthymeme.¹³

¹³Ibid., 1.1.1354b16-22.

And yet, despite this apparent dismissal of these issues Aristotle does treat them. The third book of the Rhetoric is devoted completely to a discussion of matters relating precisely to the issues of style or delivery and arrangement.

How is this to be explained ? Has Aristotle, in both cases, simply contradicted himself or is it perhaps the case that he simply could not make up his mind ? In both cases it seems clear that Aristotle has not contradicted himself, nor is it the case that he simply could not make up his mind. This is evident because in both instances where he criticizes the existing practices he makes it clear that they deal with incidentals or parts and do not deal with the substance of the matter. If rhetoric is an art or "techne" it must deal with the substance of the matter it treats, not simply with the accessories. It is not possible to give a rational account of accessories unless one deals with them in relation to the substance of the matter. In the case of emotional appeal, for example, it is legitimate, and as we shall see, important, if it is part of the argument rather than beside the argument. Such is not the case, for example, with someone who brings his family before the judges. In the case of questions of style and arrangement, if these are dealt with as parts, which means as supplements to the proofs then they can also constitute a part of rhetorical argumentation.

So in both cases it is more a matter of dealing with these issues at the appropriate place or in the appropriate way rather than excluding them altogether. The problem with the current practice of rhetoric is that it takes the part for the whole. Aristotle makes it clear that rhetoricians are dealing with a part ("morion") of rhetoric when they deal with emotional appeal.¹⁴ In order to see the part as a part, however, one must see the whole. This attempt at developing a more expansive view helps explain the significance of Aristotle's definition of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the power or capacity ("dunamis") to see the available means of persuasion in relation to the particular. Because this definition of rhetoric introduces a theoretical component it has led to the view that Aristotle

¹⁴Ibid., 1.1.1354a12-13.

'intellectualises' rhetoric and that he is more concerned with theory than with practice. This is the view, for example, underlying the argument described above, according to which Aristotle develops a 'secondary rhetoric'. This is an overstatement. Aristotle's definition of rhetoric does not imply or suggest an abstraction from practice merely because it introduces a theoretical component. Such a view is compounded by the fact that just before he defines rhetoric Aristotle states that

its function is not absolutely to persuade, but to discover the available means of persuasion in a given case ... Herein Rhetoric is like all other arts. Thus the aim of medicine is not, strictly speaking, to restore a sick man to perfect health, but to bring him as near to health as the case admits.¹⁵

As we have seen, Aristotle criticises certain tactics used to influence decision making. But it is not legitimate to infer from this that he is not concerned with effective means of persuasion and that he takes refuge in rhetorical theory. The above quotation does suggest that the rhetorician should not try to win at any cost. But this does not entail an abstraction from practical concerns. In fact it seems rather to suggest something that is, practically speaking, quite significant : that in some cases persuasion will not be possible. The only way to know what is persuasive, however, is to know all the available means of persuasion. Ignorance about such things may lead to a situation in which something that might have been persuasive was not used. When, therefore, Aristotle defines rhetoric as the ability to see ("theorize") the available means of persuasion, he is not opposing 'theory' to 'practice'. He is trying to re-orient the current practice of rhetoric by giving a more comprehensive account of it.¹⁶ Only in this way will all the available

¹⁵Ibid., 1.1.1355b10-14.

¹⁶That Aristotle's concern with giving a more complete account of rhetoric is at the same time concerned with the practice of rhetoric is evident in his criticism of current handbooks for downplaying the significance of ethical appeal ("ethos") as a mode of persuasion. Aristotle says: "It is not true, as some writers on the art maintain, that the probity of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness; on the contrary, we might almost affirm that his character ("ethos") is the most potent of all the means of persuasion". *Rhetoric* 1.2.1356a11-13.

means of persuasion be revealed. Just as the man of practical wisdom knows generally what is good for himself and others in particular situations, so the rhetorician should have a general sense of what is effective in particular circumstances.

This leads to another important aspect of Aristotle's understanding of the scope and function of rhetoric. This has to do with the power of rhetoric. So far the argument has been that Aristotle's approach to rhetoric is guided by a spirit of moderation. The last paragraphs may have given the impression that Aristotle's approach to rhetoric is anything but moderate and this in three ways. First, he defines rhetoric as seeing the available means of persuasion in relation to *any* issue. Second, he says that there are three available means of persuasion, not just the one current one rhetoricians appeal to. Third, he says that rhetoric is too narrowly focused on the forensic branch, and that deliberative oratory is more noble. He seems, in all three cases, to be expanding the range of rhetoric and this could be interpreted as a particularly immoderate move. Quintilian, for example, makes the following comment about the significance of dividing rhetoric into deliberative, forensic and epideictic, a division he attributes to Aristotle:

Aristotle himself also by his tripartite division of oratory, into forensic, deliberative and demonstrative, practically brought everything into the orator's domain, since there is nothing that may not come up for treatment by one of these three kinds of rhetoric.¹⁷

However as stated in the previous chapter, an analysis that aims to be comprehensive does not exclude moderation and sobriety since what is revealed in a comprehensive approach are the possibilities and the limits of various pursuits. In this sense there is a sobriety in Aristotle's analysis and it is evident particularly when one considers the question of the power and usefulness of rhetoric. Aristotle refers to the usefulness of rhetoric right from the start. Rhetoric is useful ("chresimon") because it

¹⁷Quintilian, The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, 4 vols. with an english translation by H.E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1921; reprint ed., 1953), 2.21.23.

deals with things that concern all men. Each and every one of us, at some point, has to attack someone or defend himself through speech. Rhetoric is useful because it helps bring the true and the just to light.¹⁸ Generally speaking, what is true and better is easier to prove and more likely to persuade. Therefore, Aristotle says, if decisions are improperly made it must be due to the manner of advocacy. It is disgraceful when this happens. Speech is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings and not being able to defend ourselves on the basis of what distinguishes us from animals would be disgraceful. Some people make an unfair use of these powers but such is the nature of useful things and that is no reason to exclude them.¹⁹

What is significant here is that while Aristotle acknowledges that rhetoric is useful, he certainly does not exaggerate the importance of what we should expect from it. Once again, as the definition of rhetoric itself suggests, there are limits to what we can accomplish through speech. When Aristotle says that rhetoric helps bring the true and just to light and that that which is true and better is easier to prove and more likely to persuade he is not simply striking an optimistic note or trying to bolster the legitimacy of rhetoric by associating it with truth and justice rather than trickery and deception. He is suggesting that if our case is not a good one, we have less hope of succeeding. This is suggested early on. According to Aristotle, one of the reasons why deliberative oratory is less abused than forensic oratory is because people's own interests are at stake in deliberative oratory and so they are less likely to be deceived by clever speakers. If the case is weak, clever speaking is not likely to help. This does not mean that clever speakers are ineffective. Aristotle is certainly aware of the possibility of "making the weaker argument the stronger".²⁰ As will be seen later on, one of the advantages of arguing on the basis of "endoxa" or reputable opinions is that it helps expose clever

¹⁸See Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.1.1355a21-24.

¹⁹Ibid., 1.1.1355b1-7.

²⁰See Aristotle's criticism of the "art" of Corax at 2.24.1402a16-27.

speakers.

In order to clarify Aristotle's view as to the power and usefulness of rhetoric it might be helpful to compare his views briefly to the views of two famous rhetoricians : Gorgias and Isocrates. Both were teachers of rhetoric and, as stated earlier, the school of Isocrates was the rival of that of Plato's and is reputed to have initially interested Aristotle. Both Gorgias and Isocrates have left behind works which contain some of their views on rhetoric itself. In the case of Gorgias this happens to be his Encomium of Helen. In this work Gorgias defends a mythical person, Helen, generally regarded as being bad or immoral.²¹ Gorgias' defense of Helen's actions, i.e., leaving her husband Menelaus for Paris, is based primarily on the overwhelming power of persuasive speech. According to Gorgias Helen should not be considered immoral if in fact she was persuaded and deceived by speech because speech is a powerful ruler ("logos dunastes megas estin") .²²

Gorgias describes the spellbinding effect speech has on human beings. Its achievements are superhuman. It is able to stop tears, remove sorrow, create joy, augment pity.²³ Gorgias refers to speech as having a force similar to incantation or magic. He also says that it is like a drug. Speech moulds the mind as it wishes. Persuasion has the same power as compulsion.²⁴ No sharp distinction is drawn between getting someone to believe something and getting them to do something. The verb "peithonai" means both to believe and to obey. It is Gorgias, we are told, who defined rhetoric as "peitoûs demiourgos", the

²¹Both of the existing complete works of Gorgias, the Encomium of Helen, and the Defense of Palamedes are defenses of mythical persons regarded as immoral or bad. In reference to this D. M. MacDowell says in his introduction to his translation of the Encomium of Helen: "Presumably their purpose is to show how skillful argument can make even the worst case seem good". See Gorgias, Encomium of Helen, edited with introduction, notes and translation by D.M. MacDowell (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1982), p.10.

²²See *Ibid.*, pp.23-25.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp.25-27.

artificer of persuasion. The pretensions of Gorgias' rhetoric are the theme of Plato's Gorgias. In response to Socrates' question about what rhetoric deals with, Gorgias says that it deals with the greatest of human things ("Ta megista ton anthropeion pragmaton"), and he then goes on to list what we can accomplish through it. Gorgias felt that it was the orator's duty to speak on any and every subject and claimed to be able to answer any question put to him.²⁵

If one compares Gorgias' claims to those of Aristotle it is clear that Aristotle has a more moderate view of the power of rhetoric and speech. Nowhere in the Rhetoric does he make any more extravagant claim than to say that rhetoric is useful. When he defines rhetoric as seeing the available means of persuasion he may possibly have in mind the desire to contrast it to Gorgias' definition of rhetoric as the artificer of persuasion. Just as a doctor may not always be able to cure his patients, so a rhetorician may not always be able to persuade. Aristotle says nothing to suggest that rhetoric is a drug that works like compulsion. At the same time, this more moderate view concerning the power of rhetoric may also contain a more serious view of its purpose. It has been suggested, as noted above, that Aristotle tries to tame rhetoric by drawing it closer to dialectic and logic and away from poetry and magic.²⁶ While this is perhaps true, it is also important to keep in mind that rhetoric is a serious pursuit for Aristotle and that in drawing it away from such a view he may in fact not simply be 'intellectualising' it, but making it a more serious activity.

This can be addressed perhaps by taking up an objection that might be raised in reference to Gorgias' claims about rhetoric. It might perhaps be objected that in his

²⁵See Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria 2.21.21.

²⁶See Jacqueline de Romilly, Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 67-88, and Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp.9-43.

Encomium of Helen Gorgias is not being completely serious about what he is saying but merely engaging in an exercise of "epideictic" or display oratory which may in fact tend towards exaggeration. Gorgias was in fact renowned for his epideictic oratory which approached poetry in its style. Gorgias' claims about rhetoric would therefore seem to go hand in hand with a certain taste for display and even a certain lack of seriousness. The speech is as much an "encomium" to rhetoric as it is a defense of Helen. Moreover, at the end of the Encomium of Helen Gorgias says that the piece is intended to be an amusement or playful ("paignion").²⁷ Furthermore we may recall what was said earlier. Helen is a mythical character. Whether her case is won or lost is not a serious matter.

But this lack of seriousness may in fact be the problem. Certain characteristics of "epideictic" oratory noted by Aristotle seem to suggest that it is more susceptible to amusement or playfulness. When Aristotle begins to deal with "epideictic" oratory in the Rhetoric he notes that praise may be serious or frivolous. Men often praise inanimate objects as well as animals. "Epideictic" oratory may be more prone to entertainment because unlike forensic and deliberative oratory, the listeners do not have to render a decision or a judgment.²⁸ They are not judges but spectators and are therefore more likely to evaluate the speakers on the basis of the enjoyment produced by the speeches. Aristotle also suggests that "epideictic" oratory is more prone to making use of exaggeration than

²⁷Scott Consigny defends Gorgias by arguing that his use of display speeches has an instructional and polemical purpose. He argues that it serves precisely to expose the deceptiveness of the techniques used by rhetoricians: "For in his orations he draws attention to his own adaptive maneuvers and reveals the deceptiveness of his own articulations." Scott Consigny, "Gorgias's Use of the Epideictic," Philosophy and Rhetoric 25, (1992), p.284.

²⁸As we see in Plato's Gorgias, there is a strong element of display involved in the practice of rhetoric. Both Gorgias and Polus give speeches of praise for their chosen discipline. In this sense it is perhaps significant to note Callicles' statement at the beginning of the dialogue, informing Socrates that he has missed a fine display. He may in fact be poking fun at Gorgias by suggesting that his speeches are beautiful but useless. Without overdrawing the similarity, one could say that Callicles is closer to Aristotle in thinking that one should devote oneself to politics. A moderate Callicles might be an ideal deliberative orator.

either deliberative or forensic oratory.²⁹ Therefore even if Gorgias is not serious about his claims this may be due precisely to the nature of the display rhetoric that he practices. In fact Aristotle criticises Gorgias' rhetorical style as too poetic and attributes this to the desire to win fame by displaying his skillful use of language. Aristotle may make more modest claims for rhetoric, but he also may be making more serious ones. The purpose of rhetoric is not entertainment.³⁰

Isocrates provides perhaps a more interesting comparison because of the highmindedness and seriousness of his own views on rhetoric. Isocrates opened a school of rhetoric where he professed to teach complete moral instruction under the name of philosophy. Isocrates' praise of speech or logos differs from Gorgias'. Although he does recognise that speech, especially poetry, can have a bewitching effect on listeners he praises it especially for its more positive psychological effects. He argues that listening to discourses can help make us better or more virtuous by providing us with models to emulate. In many ways Isocrates seems to be similar to Aristotle. The importance he attributes to the life of politics, as well as the inability to reduce practical matters to a precise science remind one of certain elements of Aristotle's practical philosophy. Isocrates' criticism of courtroom oratory and his preference for deliberative oratory also remind one of Aristotle's statement at the beginning of the Rhetoric according to which deliberative oratory is more noble than forensic oratory because the latter deals only with

²⁹See Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.9.1368a20-30.

³⁰This does not mean that Gorgias' rhetoric is not effective rhetoric. It's danger may well be that it is effective. In book three of the Rhetoric Aristotle says that Gorgias' style, the poetic style, is effective with the majority of the uneducated. See Aristotle, Rhetoric 3.1.1404a20-27. Aristotle's opinion seems to be similar to the one expressed in Cleon's speech to the Athenian assembly as recounted by Thucydides. Cleon criticises the Athenians for having lost their capacity to deliberate and judge properly because of their tendency to listen to oratory for pleasure, i.e., as spectators rather than judges: "And to speak plainly, overcome with the delight of the ear, you are rather like unto spectators sitting to hear the contentions of sophisters than to men that deliberate of the state of a commonwealth". Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War. The Complete Hobbes Translation with notes and a new introduction by David Grene (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3.38. p.177.

private transactions. According to Quintilian, it was Isocrates who first referred to rhetoric as a "dunamis", power or faculty, which is the definition used by Aristotle. Isocrates divides rhetorical instruction into three parts: natural ability, precept or training, and practice. Both Cicero and Quintilian follow him in this and in his belief that natural ability and aptitude is the most important element. Without this ability, learning all the skills and precepts will be of little help.

The Antidosis is the fullest exposition of Isocrates' position and in examining it we find that despite the similarities mentioned above, there are also differences between his views and those of Aristotle. The Antidosis takes the form of a fictitious trial in which Isocrates defends his way of life and teachings against his detractors. It derives from an actual case in which Isocrates was involved. The wealthy citizens of Athens were required to bear the expense of public services. Among them was that of fitting a ship for war. Any citizen allotted to this duty could challenge another to undertake the charge and this was called an "antidosis". Isocrates underwent such a challenge and lost. According to Isocrates himself, this opened his eyes to the fact that he was generally misunderstood. The Antidosis is his defense of his way of life and the type of moral instruction he provides.

Isocrates defends the superiority of the type of rhetoric he teaches, which deals with lofty themes and is akin to poetry, over that which takes place in court rooms. People who study with him are honoured and held in esteem everywhere and at all times. They are able to master, if they want, the oratory of the courts. He goes on to say that orators are more deserving of praise than legislators because the latter need only choose among existing laws while the former must constantly innovate :

nay, those who have elected to make laws have had at their service a multitude of laws already made (for they have no need to search for new laws, but only to put forth the effort to collect those which are approved in other states, which anyone who so desires can easily do), while those who occupy themselves with oratory, seeing that most subjects have been

seized upon and used by others before them, are in the opposite case; for if they repeat the same things which have been said in the past, they will be regarded as shameful babblers, and if they seek for what is new, they will have great difficulty in finding it. This is why I stated that, while both are entitled to your praise, they are the more entitled to it who are able to execute the harder task.³¹

Isocrates then goes on to extol the virtues of speech, which, he says, is responsible for all good things.³² He equates philosophy, as he understands it, with a life of public activity and sees the more exact sciences as 'verbal gymnastics' to help prepare one for the life of politics of which there is no exact science.³³

Aristotle takes issue with, or at least qualifies, both the notion that speeches can make us better and the notion that legislation is easy. Furthermore, there is a connection between these two themes according to Aristotle. As was seen earlier, wise legislation is an important dimension of Aristotle's practical philosophy. Legislation provides for the possibility of a proper education and the development of a virtuous disposition. It is naive to think that one can foster the latter without paying attention to the former. In the Rhetoric itself the references to Isocrates are positive. Aristotle draws from Isocrates' writings in order to provide examples of certain techniques of argumentation and certain lines of reasoning. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest at the same time that Aristotle is in fact critical of Isocrates for his nighmindedness and his "naive optimism".³⁴ While Aristotle is similar to Isocrates in arguing for a more ethical type of rhetoric he does not share the latter's optimism in the power of speech, nor the view that legislation is easy.

³¹Isocrates. Isocrates. 3 vols., with an english translation by George Norlin. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1929; reprint ed. 1968), vol. 2: Antidosis 83, p.231.

³²See Ibid., 253-257, pp.327-329. Cf. Cicero. De Oratore 1.8.33-34.

³³Isocrates. Antidosis 265-271, pp.333-335.

³⁴See Jacqueline de Romilly. Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece. p.64.

Both of these beliefs demonstrate a certain naiveté about the realities of political life. This is significant because it suggests that Aristotle's moderation concerning rhetoric is directed not only against those who would use it for trickery or deception, but also against those who might be too highminded about it. The pretensions of rhetoric, even when noble rather than base, can have a negative effect if they blind one to the true nature of political life. In order to pursue this further and at the same time to clarify how Aristotle's view of rhetoric differs from that of Isocrates it is important to turn to the significance of law and legislation in Aristotle's account of rhetoric.

The Significance of Law and Legislation

In the Antidosis as well as in Against the Sophists Isocrates discusses the variability of practical affairs and the impossibility of an exact science of action. He ridicules the teachers of stock phrases whose pedagogy is based on the belief that an understanding of practical affairs can be transmitted and learned like the letters of the alphabet.³⁴ Such an approach overlooks the requirement of having to adapt one's arguments to specific circumstances and the need to discover what is appropriate in each particular situation. Aristotle would agree with the impossibility of applying hard and fast rules to such a process. Rhetoric is not simply a technical skill that can be passed on. And yet Aristotle makes it clear as well that the practice of rhetoric can be regulated and controlled to a certain extent through rules and regulations. This belief in the importance of law and legislation distinguishes Aristotle's approach to rhetoric from that of Isocrates.

Aristotle begins the Rhetoric by criticising the current practice of rhetoric and its abuses. He singles out forensic rhetoric for criticism since it is the most widely practiced form of oratory. As mentioned above he criticises the tactic of diverting the judges from the issue through emotional appeal. In order to prevent such abuse Aristotle suggests the implementation of laws regulating argumentation in court rooms. A certain amount of

³⁴See Isocrates, Isocrates, vol. 2: Against the Sophists 11-14, pp.169-171.

compulsion is necessary in order to help upgrade the practice of rhetoric. There is a proper balance between compulsion and persuasion or force and speech. Aristotle does not count on rhetoricians to reform their practices. But neither does he suggest that the law regulate everything either. Law does not replace persuasive speech but it can influence its character. For example, Aristotle says that current handbooks on rhetoric say nothing about enthymemes or rhetorical syllogisms which are the body ("soma") of rhetorical proof. By compelling rhetoricians to stick to the issues, the law can help reform the practice in the direction of sounder types of argumentation, i.e., the construction of enthymemes, since certain rhetorical tactics will no longer be tolerated.

Although it is nowhere explicitly stated, it seems clear that Aristotle approaches the subject of law and legislation on two levels in the Rhetoric. On one level law and legislation provide important "topoi" or sources of arguments. This is evident in Aristotle's discussion of topics concerning all three types of oratory: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. Knowledge of legislation and what laws in each regime prescribe is an important topic of deliberative oratory.³⁶ In fact it is the most important topic in deliberative oratory according to Aristotle. Knowing what is prescribed by the laws is also an important topic for epideictic oratory which is concerned with praise and blame.³⁷ People often praise and blame that which is prescribed and proscribed by the law. The importance of law as a source of lines of argumentation is perhaps most evident in forensic oratory. When Aristotle discusses forensic oratory he distinguishes between written and unwritten laws and the possibility of appealing to, among other arguments, the argument based on equity ("epieikeia").³⁸ The appeal to equity only makes sense because of the existence of laws. But since the laws are general and cannot cover every particularity recourse to equity becomes a possible source of arguments. Law also

³⁶See Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.4.1360a18-30, 1.8.1365b21-1366a15.

³⁷See Ibid., 1.9.1366b8-15.

³⁸See Ibid., 1.13.1373b1-1374b23.

constitutes one of the inartificial modes of persuasion ("pistis atechnoi"), modes of persuasion that are in a way external to speech itself but that provide sources for arguments. Such modes of persuasion include not only laws but also witnesses, contracts, torture, and oaths.

However there is another sense in which Aristotle deals with law and legislation in relation to rhetoric. It has to do with the way in which legislation itself can influence the practice of rhetoric. Law and legislation are not simply topics for rhetorical argumentation. As Aristotle's proposed solution to the problems in forensic rhetoric shows, there is a relationship between legislation and rhetoric which suggests that the character of latter can be influenced by the character of former. The sophistic approach to rhetoric, however, seems to ignore this relationship and in so doing ignores not only the importance of legislation, but in so doing also misconceives the relationship between political science and rhetoric by equating the two. This means that rhetoricians have a misconception about the scope of their activity because they overestimate its importance. In Aristotle's words rhetoric masquerades as political science.³⁹ Aristotle's goal, on this level, is to subordinate rhetoric to political science. This is what we shall examine next.⁴⁰

Because of the similarity of subject matter, rhetoric assumes the character of political science. While Aristotle says that the passing off of rhetoric as political science is due partly to ignorance and boastfulness, it is also due to the fact that rhetoric does deal with the same subject matter as political science. The subject matter of the three "pisteis": the topics of deliberative, forensic and epideictic oratory, questions of character, and the study of emotions all come under the study of politics. However this does not exhaust the scope of political science. Rhetoricians generally ignore the basic or architectonic branch

³⁹See Ibid, 1.2.1356a26-27.

⁴⁰The goal, within classical political philosophy, of subordinating rhetoric to political science is noted by Leo Strauss and Carnes Lord. See Strauss, What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies, pp.82-83. and Carnes Lord, "The Intention of Aristotle's Rhetoric", pp.336-339.

of political science, which deals with legislation, and instead tend to equate politics with the level at which persuasive speech comes into play. In order to clarify this issue it is helpful to turn to Aristotle's criticism of the sophistic view of politics as discussed at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics.

At the end of the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle addresses the issue of how one comes to acquire a virtuous disposition. According to Aristotle, in order to be predisposed to the effect of speeches about ethics, one must have been brought up under good laws. As we saw in the previous chapter, anyone concerned with virtue must be concerned with the art of legislation. However, the sophists think that it is enough to accumulate a stock of various laws in order to understand legislation. Here at last we can come back to the difference between Aristotle and Isocrates since this sophistic view of legislation seems also to be the opinion of Isocrates. Aristotle's criticism seems to be that people like Isocrates do not understand the relationship between ethics and legislation. It is not enough to accumulate sets of laws, one must still understand what type of legislation is appropriate. Legislative wisdom, as Aristotle says in book six of the Nicomachean Ethics is a type of practical wisdom. It is supreme and directive since it regulates the character of the political community or the regime. So one must understand the relationship between legislation and what one is trying to establish.

Aristotle does not mention Isocrates by name but it seems clear enough that his criticism is directed at the passage in the Antidosis, cited earlier, where Isocrates states that legislators have an easier task than rhetoricians since the former need only choose from among the existing stock of laws. It is interesting that Aristotle's criticism of the sophistic approach to legislation is similar to Isocrates' own criticism of the sophists in Against the Sophists. As was stated above, Isocrates criticises the sophists for their view that ethical training can be transmitted in the same way as we learn the alphabet. Similarly, Aristotle argues that the sophistic approach to legislation is simply based on getting a good stock of laws to choose from. In other words, the subject of legislation is treated simply as any other topic. The point is simply to accumulate a stock of them.

Aristotle describes the sophistic approach at the end of the Sophistical Refutations. This statement helps clarify his criticism of their approach to legislation. Aristotle says of their teaching method:

For they used to suppose that they trained people by imparting to them not the art but its products, as though anyone professing that he would impart a form of knowledge to obviate any pain in the feet, were then not to teach a man the art of shoe-making or the sources whence he can acquire anything of the kind, but were to present him with several kinds of shoes of all sorts - for he has helped him to meet his need, but has not imparted an art to him.⁴¹

We saw earlier that forensic oratory could be improved by law. Similarly, deliberative oratory can be improved by law. Aristotle does not say this in the Rhetoric but in the Politics, which deals more specifically and profoundly with the art of legislation. Where there is not the rule of law, rhetoric can degenerate into demagoguery. In book four of the Politics, chapter four, Aristotle discusses democracies governed by decrees rather than by law. The danger in the decline of the rule of law is the emergence and influence of popular leaders who sway the many. Aristotle says that in a democracy based on law popular leaders do not arise, but where laws are without authority they do.⁴² In such situations the people becomes a monarch, flatterers are held in honour and have authority over the opinions of the many.⁴³ Later on Aristotle identifies these popular leaders as rhetoricians.⁴⁴

⁴¹Aristotle, The Complete Works of Aristotle, 2 vols., revised Oxford translation, ed. by Jonathan Barnes; vol. 1: Sophistical Refutations, trans. W.A. Pickard-Cambridge, 184a2-8.

⁴²See Aristotle, Politics 1292a4-10.

⁴³See Ibid. 1292a11-30.

⁴⁴See Ibid., 1305a13.

There is another important point made by Aristotle at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics concerning laws. There are two related virtues to the rule of law. First, laws contain that element of compulsion which serves to control the many who respond more to fear than to virtue. The only way to enjoin the many to virtuous conduct is through fear of punishment. These people will not hear nor understand the reasoning of those who try to dissuade them. Aristotle says that, generally speaking, passion seems not to be amenable to reason but only to force. Law works both through fear and compulsion. This leads to the second virtue of the law. The law is an impersonal type of authority. Aristotle says that people are hated by those whose inclinations they thwart even if they do so rightly, but law enjoins virtuous conduct without being hated.⁴⁵ Law seems to generate a healthy fear, but not hatred.

What this discussion at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics seems to suggest is that there are two ways of ruling: through fear and compulsion or through virtue and instruction. However, between compulsion and instruction there is a third possibility, persuasion, and this is where rhetoric comes in. Within this discussion at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics rhetoric is not mentioned and yet its influence suggests itself as a potentially dangerous possibility. What is being suggested here is the following. The discussion at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics refers to the fact that people hate those who thwart their desires and that here persuasion seems ineffectual. But what about those who, rather than thwarting people's desires, encourage them. What about those demagogues and flatterers Aristotle refers to in book four of the Politics? Will people not be persuaded by those who encourage their pleasures and inclinations? If this is so, it appears that although the many may not be persuaded by ethical discourses there is a type of speech which can and does stimulate them, rhetoric. The passions it seems are not only amenable to force but to persuasion and this is why rhetoric has to be controlled, especially in democratic regimes where the many take part in deliberation in assemblies and judging in the courts.

⁴⁵See Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics 1180a22-24.

So while law and compulsion are necessary, they are not enough. One must also rule through speech. As Aristotle says in the Politics, the quality of rule depends on the quality or character of the ruled: "There are many kinds both of ruling and ruled things, and the better rule is always that over ruled things that are better, for example over a human being rather than a beast".⁴⁶ This means that although passion is involved it need not be ruled only by force. Once again, as he says in the Politics, there is both the rule of a master and political rule: "For the soul rules the body with the rule characteristic of a master, while intellect rules appetite with political and kingly rule."⁴⁷ Rhetoric is a form of political rule.

There is an important characteristic to ruling through speech that is similar to the effect of law. While it is, in a sense, higher than the law because it does not rely on compulsion, speech also can have a certain compellingness that is impersonal like law. This is important if one considers the fact that, in Aristotle's words, the many hate those who try to dissuade them. This helps explain the importance of arguing on the basis of "endoxa" or reputable opinions. Since people generally accept these, they are compelling sources of arguments and like law they are publicly sanctioned and somewhat impersonal. It is true that Aristotle emphasizes character appeal as an element that fosters persuasion. If people have confidence in the speaker, they are more likely to be persuaded. But Aristotle also emphasizes that character appeal has to be generated through the speech itself.⁴⁸ In other words one's character shows itself through the opinions one is defending or attacking.

It might be helpful to conclude this section by comparing once again Aristotle's position, as it has emerged thus far, with the views of Gorgias and Isocrates. Aristotle's

⁴⁶Aristotle, Politics 1254a24-26.

⁴⁷Ibid., 1254b4-6.

⁴⁸See Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2.1356a8-10.

understanding of persuasive speech differs from the enticing, magical power attributed to it by Gorgias. The endoxai that provide the grounds or premises for argumentation are usually well established. This means that the rhetorician cannot simply mould opinion any way he wishes as Gorgias seems to suggest. At the same time these opinions which will provide the basis for rhetorical argumentation are not coextensive with politics as a whole. One cannot ignore the significance of law and legislation.

Rhetoric as an Art

We can perhaps sum up what we have said thus far by examining the status of rhetoric as an art ("techne"). Aristotle refers to rhetoric both as "techne" and "dunamis".⁴⁹ At the same time it is clear that rhetoric is a "techne" of a special type. When one examines Aristotle's statements about the status of rhetoric as an art it is clear that it is both like and unlike other arts. He begins the Rhetoric by saying that some people persuade by chance but others from a familiarity arising from habit. Since both ways are possible the subject can be treated methodically since it is possible to discover why some succeed by chance and others by familiarity and such. he says, all would agree to be the function of an art. While the man of experience 'knows how' to succeed at persuasion, the man who possesses an art also 'knows why' he succeeds. He has a knowledge of causes and therefore can teach his art. Like other arts rhetoric treats of particulars, yet it has a general knowledge of what is effective in particular cases. Like all arts, therefore, rhetoric has a theoretical component.

⁴⁹Carnes Lord has argued that one should not overemphasize the extent to which rhetoric is a teachable or rational art for Aristotle. He argues that such a view relies too heavily on interpreting the first line of the Rhetoric, according to which rhetoric is the counterpart ("antistrophos") of dialectic, as marking a decisive break with the view of Socrates in the Gorgias, according to which rhetoric is said to be the counterpart of cookery, and therefore a knack. See Lord, "The Intention of Aristotle's Rhetoric".

Yet rhetoric is clearly different from other arts. There are three important ways in which rhetoric tends to differ from other arts. In listing these we get a better sense of the status of rhetoric as an art. We are told at first that, unlike other arts, rhetoric has no particular subject matter of its own (1.2.1355b32-35). It is a faculty for furnishing arguments in relation to any subject whatever. But soon after this universality is qualified since we are told that rhetoric deals especially with topics that belong to another discipline, political science (1.2.1356a25). This is the first way in which rhetoric differs from other arts: as an art, rhetoric is subordinate to a more architectonic art. At the beginning of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle makes this clear by subordinating rhetoric, along with certain other arts and faculties to political science : "The most honored faculties, too, e.g., strategy and economics and rhetoric, are observed to come under this faculty".⁵⁰ As we have said already and will see in more detail below, the topics dealt with in deliberative, forensic, and epideictic oratory all fall under political science. Such topics include issues like justice, happiness, legislation, virtue and vice. It is precisely this similarity in subject matter that allows rhetoric to assume the guise of political science. Arts such as strategy and domestic economy which Aristotle also lists as subordinate to political science are not as closely related in subject matter.

The second way in which rhetoric is peculiar as an art is related to the first. Because rhetoric deals with the same issues as political science it is unlike the other arts subordinate to political science. However, precisely because of this similarity rhetoric contests this subordination. Rhetoric not only deals with the same subject matter as political science, it is the rival of political science for the status of architectonic art⁵¹. Because of this, as we have seen, it overestimates its own power, i.e., the persuasive power of speech, and underestimates the importance of training and habituation through law.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1094b3-4.

⁵¹ Cf. Ibid., 1181a12-15, Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2.1356a25-30.

Thirdly, rhetoric is unlike the other arts in that its character as an art is closely tied to the character of political rule generally. Where law does not rule and does not properly regulate activity both in the assemblies and the court rooms, there the quality of rhetoric degenerates into trickery and deception and demagoguery. Rhetoric's quality as an art is dependent on the quality of political rule. As we saw earlier, Aristotle does not rely on rhetoric to reform itself. This suggests that rhetoric is, in a sense, a neutral art that can be improved by another art.

Rhetoric and Judgment

So far we have examined the importance of law and legislation in Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric and the way in which they serve to subordinate rhetoric to political science. However, as we have seen, law and legislation cannot regulate everything. While they can do much to influence the character of rhetoric, they cannot eliminate the need for sound political judgment relating to the choices and decisions given in court rooms and assemblies. At first glance however this does not seem to be Aristotle's position. He seems rather to be trying to limit the scope for judgment. At the beginning of the Rhetoric Aristotle says that the law should leave as little as possible to the discretion of judges for three reasons: First, it is easier to find a few good legislators than many good judges. Second, legislation is the result of long consideration whereas judgments are rendered on the spur of the moment so that it is difficult for judges to properly decide questions of justice and expediency. Third, and most importantly, the judgment of the legislator does not apply to a particular case but it is universal, whereas members of the public assembly and court rooms have to decide present and definite issues and in these cases passions like love and hate or personal interest are often involved and these can adversely affect one's judgment. As we have seen, one of the virtues of the law and part of its claim to rule is that it is free from passion and that it can enjoin virtuous conduct without giving rise to hatred. The beginning of the Rhetoric therefore, takes up a theme of the Politics. At the end of book three of the Politics Aristotle asks the question: What or who should rule? His answer is that law should rule

on all general questions (1282b1-5) and that it is free from passion (1281a34-36, 1286a15-20, 1287a29-b2).

What is significant about this section of the Rhetoric is that the focus of Aristotle's argument about the nature of rhetoric has shifted. He begins by criticising the current handbooks on rhetoric and the unethical practices of rhetoricians. The solution to that problem is regulation through law. But when he then moves on to discuss the three reasons why laws should define as much as possible the issues to be judged and should leave as little as possible to the discretion of the judges he is no longer talking about the rhetoricians. He is talking about the nature of judgment and of the judges or listeners and the problems associated with the decisions they have to take. So the focus has shifted from the rhetorician to the audience or the judges. But these are problems or issues that do not admit of complete regulation through law. These are problems associated with the nature of political judgment. This is evident if we look again at the three problems mentioned by Aristotle. The fact that one has to deal with judges who are not necessarily practically wise, the fact that certain decisions or judgments cannot be drawn out but have to be delivered quickly, and, finally, the fact that emotions are involved in rendering a judgment are all things which cannot be eradicated from political life. Nor are they issues that arise only in democracies. Much of the Rhetoric is concerned with ways of dealing with these issues. It is possible to look at each of these points in turn to see how Aristotle deals with them.

1. One of the important themes Aristotle deals with in the Rhetoric is the fact that a rhetorician is usually dealing with the many ("hoi polloi") and their judgments as delivered in court rooms and assemblies. As we have seen, it is not surprising that the importance of rhetoric and the need to regulate it should increase in democratic regimes. As we noted in the previous chapter, Aristotle, in the Politics, deals with the question concerning those things over which the many should have authority. To have them share in the greatest offices is not safe, yet to give them no role to play is dangerous also since it makes them enemies of the regime and a regime can only survive if all or most are

friendly to it. The practical wisdom of the legislator is demonstrated through his ability to foster political friendship, the intentional choice of living together (1280b37) while at the same time maintaining the city as a plurality. The solution proposed is that the many should share in deliberating and judging. This provides the basis for the importance of both deliberative and forensic rhetoric.

Now Aristotle says in the Rhetoric that one assumes that the judge is a simple person (1.1.1357a12), and that one's listeners cannot take in long, complicated arguments. He also says that with some people instruction is not possible (1.1.1355a26-27). These comments might seem to indicate that Aristotle does not have much faith in the judgments of the many. And yet he makes the following statement in the Politics regarding the judgment of the many:

For all of them when joined together have an adequate perception and, once mixed with those who are better, bring benefit to cities, just as impure sustenance mixed with pure makes the whole more useful than the small amount of the latter, but each separately is incomplete with respect to judging⁵².

This is not simply a passing comment but something Aristotle says more than once in the Politics. Although the many are not virtuous and each individually may not be practically wise, many times their judgments can be better than the judgments of the few or one.⁵³ Now this of course presupposes that the many have been formed in such a way that they are capable of exercising sound judgment. It is not simply that judgment is made better through sheer increase in numbers. As mentioned earlier, the many often fall under the sway of demagogues. The existence of laws can play an important role in controlling this, but rhetoricians also can play an important part in forming the judgment of the many. The rhetorician can influence the judgment of the audience in such a way as to try and make

⁵²Aristotle, Politics 1281b 335-38.

⁵³See Ibid., 1281b1-3, 1281b35-38, 1282a14-23, 1283b29-33, 1286a25-35.

it as sound as possible. This suggests that while the many may not individually be practically wise, those who influence their judgment and try to persuade them can be. This will be dealt with more fully below when we examine the relationship between rhetoric and practical wisdom. The point is that there is not necessarily a contradiction between Aristotle's statements that the judges are simple persons and his statements that their judgments can be sound.

Furthermore, the problems associated with the rendering of judgments are not simply due to the limited capacities of the judges. This does not appear to be self evident especially when we are faced with Aristotle's statement that in dealing with certain persons and with the many instruction is impossible. Yet, while it is true that Aristotle believed the many were not virtuous and responded more to fear than to nobility⁴⁴ it is nonetheless possible to shed a different light on Aristotle's meaning here. It need not be taken simply as an insult to the many but also as a statement on the limits of speech with the many or public speech. In other words the point here may be that public discourse with the multitude is necessarily rhetorical. The court rooms and assemblies are not forums for instruction but for decision making. There is simply not enough time to properly instruct. True instruction, as Aristotle says in book ten of the Nicomachean Ethics should be tailored as much as possible to the particular disposition of the student. This being the case, there will always be limits to public discourse and what it can accomplish.

2. This leads to the second important dimension of political judgment. We have already alluded to it in the previous paragraph. This is the need to render judgments or decisions under less than ideal circumstances. As Aristotle says judgments must be rendered on the spur of the moment and so it is difficult to decide properly questions of justice and expediency. There is often no time for long consideration. Furthermore one is dealing for the most part with probabilities or things that can happen otherwise or

⁴⁴Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1179b 5-20.

which cannot be determined with certainty. Under these circumstances the rhetorician must argue on the basis of probabilities and so must reason on the basis of premises drawn from common subjects of deliberation (1.2.1357a2). The way in which Aristotle deals with the topics of argumentation as well as the way in which he understands the enthymeme or rhetorical syllogism are based precisely on the fact that rhetoric aims at instilling conviction in order to influence judgment and action, not at instructing. First, let us examine the way in which he deals with the subjects of argumentation and then the enthymeme.

The first book of the Rhetoric is devoted for the most part to a discussion of what Aristotle calls the particular topics ("eide"). These refer to the substantive issues pertaining to argumentation in assemblies, court rooms and public gatherings. Deliberative, forensic, and epideictic oratory all have their own particular topics or sources of argumentation. When Aristotle deals with these topics he deals with them to the extent necessary in order to clarify the available means of persuasion. This does not mean that the treatment is superficial. It means rather that Aristotle does not give as full and detailed an account of the topics as he does in his scientific treatises. This is not only because one is dealing with an unsophisticated audience, but because one's goal is to influence action rather than to instruct. The topics of rhetorical reasoning will be explored with this in mind. In what follows let us look at some examples in all three types of rhetoric.

In his treatment of deliberative oratory, for example, Aristotle deals first with the following topics : ways and means, war and peace, defense, imports and exports, and legislation. The rhetorician must be familiar with these issues but he need not deal with them scientifically. For example, when he discusses the topic of legislation, Aristotle enumerates the types of regimes as democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy and monarchy. There is no discussion of the best regime nor any mention of the mixed regime as there is in the Politics. As Arnhart has argued, both of these topics represent concerns not likely to affect deliberation in existing regimes. The type of comprehensiveness that would require the investigation of these topics is the concern of political science, not rhetoric.

Aristotle states this after having dealt with the topics mentioned above : "All these inquiries, however, belong to Political science, not to Rhetoric".⁵⁵ Aristotle reminds the reader that rhetoric is subordinate to political science.

Because deliberative oratory is concerned with that which is expedient and inexpedient ("Tò sumphéron kai blaberon"), it must deal with such topics as happiness, which is the end of action, and the good. When Aristotle deals with these topics he sets them out in what Eric Voegelin has aptly called an "uncritical factualness". In other words Aristotle exposes the various opinions or "endoxai" concerning these topics. Many are at odds with each other and even contradict each other, but each of them has its advocates or has arguments in its favor. Aristotle does not critically assess or evaluate these opinions but merely sets them out. His definition of happiness for instance is meant to cover the range of public opinion on the issue :

Happiness may be defined as prosperity conjoined with virtue; or as self-sufficient existence; or as the pleasantest life, with secure enjoyment thereof; or as a thriving condition of property and persons, with the ability to take care and make use of them. Men would pretty generally admit happiness to be one or more of these things.⁵⁶

When discussing the topic of the good ("agathon"), he proceeds in a similar way. He lists the various opinions about what constitutes the good : happiness, the virtues such as justice, courage, self-control, magnanimity, magnificence, health, beauty, wealth, honour, etc... Once again he does not discuss them in detail, nor does he evaluate them.

⁵⁵Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.4.1360a35.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1.5.1360b14-17. This definition is not necessarily at odds with the definition of happiness given in the Nicomachean Ethics. There happiness is defined as an activity of the soul in accordance with complete virtue (1102a5). It is important to distinguish between the definition of happiness, which may be similar in both the Nicomachean Ethics and the Rhetoric, and the discussion of happiness. It is in relation to the latter especially that the two works differ since the Nicomachean Ethics contains the fuller discussion of the topic.

He then goes on to discuss various lines of argument concerning the good, such as the ways in which to argue about doubtful goods. For example one might suggest the following line of reasoning: "that is good, the opposite of which is evil". He is not discussing goods but suggesting ways of arguing about goods which is a different thing. For example he suggests the following line of reasoning : "...if that which is greatest in one class surpass that which is greatest in another class, the first class will surpass the second".

That Aristotle adapts his presentation to the character and capacities of his audience, and in such a way as to be persuasive rather than instructive is evident as well in his discussion of epideictic oratory which deals with praise and blame and with the topics of virtue and vice, the noble and the disgraceful. Aristotle deals with these topics in section 1.9 :

We have next to discuss virtue and vice, the noble and the base; for these are the objects of praise and blame. And our discussion will at the same time make plain the means by which a speaker may produce in his audience the impression that he is of such and such a character; this, as we noted, is our second method of persuasion. With regard to virtue, the same means will enable a man to make people accept either himself or another as trustworthy.⁵⁷

The significant thing about the discussion in this section is that it deals with virtue and vice in a very orthodox way, as they are interpreted according to the dictates of the law. We saw in the previous chapter that Aristotle did not equate virtuous conduct with obedience to the law. Here, however, it seems that Aristotle is adapting to the character of listeners as formed especially by law. Since the many are not fully or completely virtuous their conception of virtue and vice is most likely to be determined by law or public opinion. In other words, to be convincing one must address listeners on their level. Let us examine Aristotle's discussion. There are three significant and related

⁵⁷Ibid., 1.9.1366a23-28.

characteristics to it which support this argument. First, Aristotle emphasizes the notion that virtue is doing good to others or political virtue, second he emphasizes repeatedly that virtue is related to the dictates of the law, and third, there is no discussion of the doctrine of the mean in the discussion of virtue and vice.

In relation to the first point, Aristotle defines virtue as a "faculty tending to provide and preserve 'goods', or a faculty tending to confer many great benefits - indeed 'all manner of benefits on all occasions'".⁵⁸ If this is the case, says Aristotle, the greatest of virtues are the ones most useful to others. He goes on to list them in terms of their utility: justice, courage, self control, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, practical and speculative wisdom. Justice and courage are the most useful to others, then liberality. Justice is possibly ranked before courage since it is useful to others at all times while courage is especially useful in battle. All of them are discussed except wisdom which, since it is ranked last, apparently is of less use to others. Throughout the discussion of virtue, the emphasis is put on doing good to others:

And those things are noble for which the rewards are honor alone; likewise those for which the reward is the honor more than the money. And any desirable thing one does in an unselfish spirit; and absolute (general) good deeds, all that any man did for his country, neglecting his own interest - these are noble ... and goods which are not such merely for the possessor, since individual interests are selfish ... And things done on account of others are noble, as being less selfish; and all successful efforts for others which are of no benefit to the doer. What one does for one's benefactors is noble, since it is just; similarly benefits in general, as their object is unselfish.⁵⁹

Aristotle seems satisfied to conduct the discussion of virtue and vice on this ground, i.e., in terms of selfishness and selflessness. Like the discussion of happiness, the discussion

⁵⁸Ibid., 1.9.1366a35-b1.

⁵⁹Ibid., 1.9.1366b36-1367a6.

of virtue and vice is conducted in conventional terms understandable to most listeners.

This leads to the second aspect of the discussion of virtue and vice, the importance of law or convention ("nomos"). Those virtues which are to be praised as most useful to others are also related to the dictates of the law :

Justice is the virtue whereby each and all have what belongs to them in accordance with the law; injustice is the opposite, whereby people have what belongs to others, and not as the law enjoins. Courage is the virtue which moves men to perform noble deeds in times of peril, as the law enjoins, and to uphold the law; cowardice is the opposite. Temperance (self-restraint) is the virtue through which men hold themselves as the law enjoins with regard to bodily pleasures; incontinence is the opposite.⁶⁰

Aristotle makes other comments that also bring out the connection between this account of virtue and vice and convention. At 1.9.1367a7 he says that those things are noble which are the contrary of those things of which we are ashamed. As we saw, in the Nicomachean Ethics shame is not considered a virtue, although Aristotle does say that it is praised. It is an emotion related precisely to the violation of social convention. Later on in the Rhetoric Aristotle alludes to this fact (2.12.1389a29). Customs peculiar to peoples are signs of what is noble (1.9.1367a28), as is what is esteemed among our audience (1.9.1367b8-11).

Related to this emphasis on law, custom, convention is the third point, the fact that there is no mention or discussion of the doctrine of the mean in the Rhetoric. Virtue and vice are referred to as power or faculty ("dunamei") not as habit or disposition ("hexis"). Law seems to replace the doctrine of the mean as the standard of virtue. Desire is regulated by law and convention. The common man, once again, seems to know virtue and vice, first and foremost, by what is praised and blamed according to convention. This is not surprising since as Aristotle says in the Nicomachean Ethics, it is difficult to be

⁶⁰Ibid., 1.9.1366b8-16.

good, that is, to hit the mean.

In the discussion of forensic oratory, which deals with accusation and defense, Aristotle deals with three topics : the motives which lead men to act unjustly, the state of mind of those who so act, and the character and disposition of those who are exposed to injustice. Once again there is no discussion of justice in terms of the doctrine of the mean or any attempt to elucidate the topic beyond the capacity to develop arguments for prosecuting and defending. In this section Aristotle discusses as well the topic of pleasure ("hedone"). His purpose is not to deal with the topic extensively but only as it relates to the topic of justice and injustice. In other words, he deals with the topic of pleasure as a motive for the committing of acts contrary to law. It is clear, therefore that his discussion will not deal with pleasure in the same detail as he does in the Nicomachean Ethics, for example.

It is clear, therefore, that in relation to subject matter or topics, Aristotle is dealing with arguments based on common assumptions. These arguments are designed to be convincing, since only in this way are they likely to influence deliberation and action. On this basis the enthymeme or rhetorical syllogism acquires its significance. At this point, therefore it is important to examine the enthymeme, which Aristotle calls the body of rhetorical proof.

Rhetorical reasoning is one of three forms of reasoning analyzed by Aristotle. In order to understand it, it has to be compared to, and contrasted with, the other two: demonstrative and dialectical reasoning. Aristotle's examination of analytic or demonstrative reasoning is set out in the Prior Analytics and the Posterior Analytics. Demonstrative reasoning is concerned with those lines of reasoning that assert or deny something in a universal and necessary fashion. This way of reasoning posits its principles from the start and deduces its conclusions necessarily on the basis of these. The first principles themselves cannot be proved but are accepted as primary and self-evidently true. Aristotle says of the first principles of demonstrative understanding that the

demonstrator does not ask for his premise, but lays it down, and that things that are true and primitive should command belief in and of themselves. Unlike demonstrative reasoning, dialectical reasoning argues on the basis of reputable opinions ("endoxai"). Aristotle explains the differences between the two types of reasoning in both the Prior Analytics and the Topics:

A demonstrative proposition differs from a dialectical one, because a demonstrative proposition is the assumption of one of two contradictory statements ... whereas a dialectical proposition chooses between two contradictories ... (A proposition) will be demonstrative, if it is true and assumed on the basis of the first principles of its science: it will be dialectical if it asks for a choice between two contradictories (if one is enquiring), or if it assumes what is apparent and reputable, as we said in the Topics (if one is deducing). ⁶¹

The passage in the Topics which Aristotle is referring to in the last sentence of this quotation is at the beginning of the work (100a25). There, he also distinguishes between dialectical and demonstrative reasoning by saying that a deduction is demonstrative if the premises from which it starts are primitive and true, and it is dialectical if it reasons from reputable opinions. Reputable opinions are said to be believed by all, or by the majority, or by the wise. Aristotle states (100b22) that by "wise" he means the most notable and reputable. The "endoxai" may also be controversial views of well known philosophers or views that are not accepted by many but have arguments in their favour.

Therefore, the most important difference between demonstrative and dialectical reasoning is that demonstrative reasoning is conducted on the basis of first principles restricted to some definite science whereas dialectical reasoning is conducted on the basis of reputable opinions, and is therefore applicable to many different areas. As Aristotle says, dialectical examination can apply just as well to ethics, logic, and physics. As the plural form suggests, there is more than one reputable opinion and it is even possible that

⁶¹Aristotle, The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol.1: Prior Analytics, trans. A.J. Jenkinson, 24a21-24b11.

they may contradict each other as we have said. This is not the case with demonstrative reasoning since whoever reasons demonstratively accepts the "archai" or first principles of the science in question.

This helps clarify Aristotle's statement, quoted above, that a demonstrative proposition assumes one of two contradictory statements whereas a dialectical proposition asks for a choice between two contradictory statements. This means that a statement concerning contradictories (whether a thing is or is not of a certain character), is demonstrative if it determinately assumes that one side of the contradiction is true, and dialectical if it assumes either part and shows the rational grounds on each side. Dialectic can reason on either side of a problem and this is why Aristotle states that a question allows of dialectical treatment only if it is possible to answer it by "yes" or "no". For example, the question: "In how many ways is the good used?" is not dialectical because it does not allow one to argue either side of a question. The latter question becomes a dialectical question if it takes the form: "Is the good used in this way or in this?". Posed in this manner, the question allows one to appeal to reputable opinions on either side.

Because demonstration is a scientific deduction that deals with propositions that are true, it is a higher form of inquiry than dialectic which inquires on the basis of reputable opinions only. But dialectic does serve as a propaedeutic to philosophy since the ability to puzzle on both sides of a question makes it easier to detect truth and error about points that may arise⁶². But in another sense Aristotle suggests that dialectic is higher than demonstration because only through dialectic can one discuss the principles of the various sciences. This is impossible from within the sciences themselves since their principles are primitive in relation to everything else. It is in this sense that Aristotle says that dialectic is the process wherein lies the path to the principles of all sciences.⁶³

⁶²See Aristotle, The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol.1: Topics, trans. W.A. Pickard-Cambridge, 101a25.

⁶³See *Ibid.*, 101a37-101b4.

The first line of Aristotle's Rhetoric states that rhetoric is the counterpart ("antistrophos") of dialectic. Aristotle uses this term in his logical treatises to denote the convertibility of premises or forms of inference. But if the premises of rhetoric and dialectic were completely convertible there would be no need to distinguish them. It seems therefore that the term "antistrophos" means a sort of correspondence that does not entail complete identity.⁶⁴ It is important therefore to examine the ways in which rhetoric is both like and unlike dialectic. Both dialectic and rhetoric are concerned with things that belong to no definite science, that is to say: "such things as come more or less within the general ken of all men" (1354a1). Both draw upon the regular subjects of debate (1357a1) or things that call for discussion. Rhetoric, like dialectic, can argue on both sides of a question (1255a31). Both rhetoric and dialectic argue from endoxa or reputable opinions.

But there are also important differences between the two. First of all, although both rhetoric and dialectic argue on the basis of reputable opinions, dialectic is closer to the demonstrative sciences than it is to rhetoric. Dialectic lies closer to instruction than it does to persuasion because, as discussed above, dialectic can be used to reach the principles of the sciences. By sifting out endoxa the dialectician eventually may discover what is true and false, and finally reach the necessarily true principles from which each science begins.⁶⁵ Rhetoric, however, is not concerned primarily with instruction but with persuasion as we have seen. Its purpose is to influence a decision or a certain course of action. This would seem to suggest that rhetoric is inferior to dialectic since its purpose is not to instruct. While rhetoric may be inferior to dialectic in this sense, this does not involve a negative evaluation of rhetoric itself. In order to see why let us return to a passage of the Rhetoric discussed earlier. This passage is the one where Aristotle, in

⁶⁴Aristotle uses three other expressions to describe the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric : offshoot ("paraphues"), part ("morion"), and resemblance ("homoiona"). The use of these expressions emphasizes the fact that there are differences between rhetoric and dialectic. See the discussion in Cope and Sandys, The Rhetoric of Aristotle with a Commentary, pp.1-4.

⁶⁵See previous note.

discussing the utility of rhetoric, says that knowledge implies instruction and that there are people who either are not or cannot be instructed :

Even if our speaker had the most accurate scientific information, still there are persons whom he could not readily persuade with scientific arguments. True instruction, by the method of logic, is here impossible; the speaker must frame his proofs and arguments with the help of common knowledge and accepted opinions ""

When we first examined this passage we suggested that the intent was not necessarily to insult the intellectual capacities of the audience but to suggest certain limitations to public speech in general vis-a-vis proper instruction. In the context of the present discussion on the various forms of reasoning, this passage seems to indicate more the limitations of instruction by logic than the limitations of rhetoric. The emphasis, which in fact serves to highlight the importance of rhetoric, is on the fact that logic alone is rarely persuasive or that logic alone cannot instill conviction. In this sense one could argue on the contrary that rhetoric is superior to dialectic and logic. Whereas dialectic applies to all areas of inquiry, rhetoric, as we have said, is concerned more specifically with practical affairs. Like dialectic it is a faculty for providing arguments, but these arguments are not meant to instruct but to produce conviction and influence action.

It is in this sense, as will be argued below, that the example and the enthymeme differ from induction and deduction. Because rhetoric is concerned with persuasion the rhetorician need not inquire into the principles of politics and ethics beyond what is necessary to produce conviction as Aristotle makes clear many times. Because rhetoric is concerned with influencing action and producing conviction its "topoi", or the places where it finds its arguments, differ from those of dialectic. The "topoi" of dialectic are grouped into four principal classes corresponding to the four kinds of predicables (genus, accident, property, definition), whereas the "topoi" of rhetoric are based on a division

⁶⁶Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.1.1355a 24-27.

corresponding to the type of audience and therefore into deliberative, forensic and epideictic.

Because of the practical goal of rhetorical reasoning its argumentation has certain characteristics : first, since its purpose is to influence action it does not aim at establishing a universal or a generalisation. Second, since the practical world is not governed by necessity the practitioners of rhetoric must base their arguments on probabilities or what happens for the most part, as well as non-necessary signs. Third, unlike dialectical reasoning, which is often long and obscure, rhetorical reasoning is based on what is manifest or taken for granted by the audience. Thus its reasoning need not be carried too far back, nor is it necessary to put in all the steps that lead to the conclusion. Since Aristotle says that the enthymeme is the substance of rhetorical persuasion, and that everyone who affects persuasion through proof does so either through the use of enthymemes or examples it is appropriate to examine these three points by examining what Aristotle calls the body of rhetorical argumentation. This is all the more important in that, as we will see, Hobbes' interpretation of the enthymeme fundamentally alters its significance, and with it, the significance of rhetoric.

Aristotle begins by comparing the example and the enthymeme to their counterparts in dialectic: induction and deduction:

As for real or apparent demonstration, there are in Rhetoric two modes, corresponding to the two modes in Dialectic. As in Dialectic we have, on the one hand, induction, and, on the other, the syllogism and apparent syllogism, so in Rhetoric: the example is a form of induction; while the enthymeme is a syllogism, and the apparent enthymeme an apparent syllogism. 'Enthymeme' is the name I give to a rhetorical syllogism, 'example' to a rhetorical induction.⁶⁷

⁶⁷Ibid., 1.2.1356b 1-5.

Despite the analogy Aristotle makes it clear that the enthymeme and the example cannot simply be equated with deduction and induction. Unlike deduction and induction, both of which aim at attaining a universal or a generalization for the purpose of instruction, the enthymeme and the example aim at persuading or dissuading people into a particular course of action. When rhetoricians use generalisations they do so because they help instill conviction. Because these generalizations relate to the realm of action in which there is always a contingent element, they take the character of probabilities or signs which are things that hold only for the most part.⁶⁸ Furthermore, this general statement is not "given" but emerges through a patterning of particular instances in both the example and the enthymeme. This means that both ways of reasoning are based on a knowledge of particulars and, as I will argue, on a practical wisdom based on experience. In order to demonstrate this the enthymeme and example will have to be examined more closely.

Aristotle says that though some of the propositions forming the basis of enthymemes may be of the necessary type, yielding a non-refutable deduction, most will be formed either by signs ("semeia") or probabilities both of which are non-necessary (1357a31). A probability ("eikos") is a reputable proposition taken to be generally true, e.g., "the envious hate" or "the loved are affectionate". Aristotle says that the probability "bears the same relation to that of which it is probable as a universal statement to a particular".⁶⁹ He is referring to arguments such as the following : "The envious hate", "X is envious", "therefore X hates", where the general statement "the envious hate" makes probable the particular statement "X hates". But the major premise "The envious hate" is itself probable because it is the conclusion of an inductive argument from particulars. Thus Aristotle defines a probability in such a way that it is the evidence for asserting that a particular statement is probable, but he thinks of the general statement itself as something that emerges on the basis of many particular instances.

⁶⁸See Ibid., 1.2.1357a22-30.

⁶⁹Ibid., 1.2.1357b1.

The sign is defined as something, the existence of which is indicative of another thing's existence. Necessary signs ("tekmeria") can be turned into first-figure valid syllogisms such as: "He is ill, for he has fever". Non-necessary signs are invalid syllogisms such as "The wise are just, for Socrates was wise and just". Reasoning from non-necessary signs can sometimes be very weak. It follows that an enthymeme, i.e., a syllogism from probabilities and signs is very rarely a strictly deductive argument. In other words in rhetorical argumentation one is rarely compelled to accept the conclusions if one accepts the premises, although one may think it plausible to do so. The enthymeme can be a more compelling form of argumentation than the example precisely because the syllogistic form can give the appearance that the reasoning follows necessarily. However, what this demonstrates is that the example and the enthymeme differ essentially in the way in which an argument is presented. This does not mean that they differ in the way that arguments are discovered.

At this point let us examine the example so as to point out its similarities with the enthymeme. Aristotle defines an example as a way of reasoning that proceeds from part to part or from a particular to a particular with a general, probable truth understood though unstated. The following are two examples given by Aristotle.

Thus, suppose one contends that Dionysius, in asking for a bodyguard, aims to set up a tyranny. The speaker may urge that Pisistratus, with a similar aim, once asked for a bodyguard, and, on getting it, established himself as tyrant; and that Theagenes did the like at Megara.

The speaker, say, is urging us to arm against the king of Persia, and not let him conquer Egypt; then the argument from parallels would be: 'Darius in his day did not cross (the Aegean) until he had seized Egypt; but once he had seized it, he crossed (the sea against us). And Xerxes, again, did not invade us until he had seized Egypt; but once he had seized it, he likewise crossed (against us). And so this man, if he seizes Egypt, will cross too. We must therefore prevent him'..⁷⁰

⁷⁰Ibid., 1.2.1357b31-33, 2.20.1393a31-1393b1.

An example ("paradeigma"), like an enthymeme, is designed to promote a course of action or to influence deliberation. In the first example the point is not to give Dionysius a body guard and in the second one the point is to attack the king of Persia if he takes Egypt. Neither one is based on a necessary sign but rather on a patterning of particulars that allows for the intuition of a probable generalization. In the first case what emerges from the particular instances is the general inference: "whoever asks for a body guard is seeking to become a despot". In the second case what emerges through the patterning of particulars is the inference: "whenever the king of Persia attacks Egypt, he is planning to attack Greece next".

This is similar to the enthymeme. In fact enthymemes based on signs can also be considered as arguments from examples (e.g., "when X breathes hard he has a fever because Y and Z breathe hard when they have fever"). Arguments from probabilities can also be considered as arguments from example with strong supporting grounds (e.g., "X hates Y", "I expect he is envious of Y, because most people with strong personal hatreds are envious of those they hate"). A final factor that supports the argument that enthymemes and examples are similar types of reasoning is found in book two where induction is included as a "topos" of enthymemes (1398a33-b20). Therefore both enthymemes and examples are forms of arguments based on a recursive patterning of particular instances. In both cases it is assumed that the audience will perceive the general through the particulars.

Finally we come to the third important characteristic of rhetorical reasoning. In the enthymeme a general, probable statement is implied but not stated explicitly. It may be left unstated since it is assumed that the hearers will take note of it themselves.⁷¹ This is a crucial component in the practical effectiveness of rhetorical reasoning. The more a rhetorician understands his audience, the more he understands the reputable opinions that will likely effect persuasion. But in what sense does suppressing a premise increase the

⁷¹See Ibid. 1.2.1357a15-22. 2.22.1395b20-30.

likelihood of persuasion? This can be answered by referring to Aristotle's distinction between reputable opinions and beliefs that try to pass themselves off as such. Aristotle distinguishes between them in the following way:

For not every opinion that seems to be reputable actually is reputable. For none of the opinions which we call reputable show their character entirely on the surface, as happens in the case of the principles of contentious arguments.⁷²

What does Aristotle mean by this? Because reputable opinions are accepted or recognized by the audience there is no need to make them totally explicit. However, an argument that tries to pass itself off as a reputable opinion is exposed by the fact that none of its premises can remain unstated. Because it is not sustained by any commonly accepted views, the argument must rely on a full exposition of its premises in order to be persuasive. This is the way in which Aristotle explains it in the Rhetoric:

It is possible to construct syllogisms and draw conclusions in a chain, working successively with the results of those that precede; or you may draw upon propositions that have not been thus proved, yet need proof because they are not commonly accepted. But, necessarily, the first of these processes will be hard to follow because of its length, for we assume the judge (audience) to be of but ordinary intelligence; and the second method will be unconvincing because the conclusions are drawn from premises that are not admitted nor commonly believed.⁷³

3. The third and final important element concerning the nature of rhetorical judgment has to do with the fact that pleasure and pain often interfere with decisions because particular cases often involve love, hate, personal interest. As we saw earlier though, emotional appeal constitutes one of the three proofs of rhetoric. But if emotion can skew judgment why does Aristotle include it at all ? Why not simply rely on the logical

⁷²Aristotle, Topics 100b25-28.

⁷³Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2.1357a8-13.

consistency of the argument ? Why include ethical and emotional appeal at all ? The answer is that they can help sharpen judgment as much as obscure it. As mentioned above, rhetoric, unlike dialectic, is not concerned with complex disputation or instruction but with effecting persuasion and few people are convinced only by logic. Because of this the rhetorician must be able not only to reason logically but to understand human characters and excellences, as well as the passions or emotions. These elements must all be embodied in his enthymemes.

Such being the instruments of persuasion, to master all three obviously calls for a man who can reason logically, can analyze the types of human character (ethe), along with the virtues, and, thirdly, can analyze the emotions - the nature and quality of each several emotion, with the means by which, and the manner in which, it is excited.⁷⁴

The term enthymeme itself alludes to this since the root of the word itself is "thumos", which means spiritedness. To help make this clear we can again go to the beginning of the Rhetoric where Aristotle discusses a significant difference between deliberative and forensic oratory. Earlier on we saw how certain abuses in forensic rhetoric might be corrected by law. But, even supposing that this has been accomplished, there are unavoidable problems relating to the nature of the judgment it entails. In forensic rhetoric men are usually judges in cases that do not concern them personally. It is precisely because people are not dealing with issues that concern them that they tend to become mere spectators rather than judges. Paradoxically, it is precisely this lack of concern that makes them vulnerable to emotional appeal and to giving bad decisions:

Here the judges make award regarding interests that are not their own: if they view these in the light of their own feelings, and yield to the gratification of their ears, they lend themselves to the more plausible speaker, and so decide the case. They do not judge it⁷⁵

⁷⁴Ibid., 1.2.1356a 21-24.

⁷⁵Ibid., 1.1.1354b33-1355a1.

In deliberative oratory, on the contrary, it is precisely because common interests are at stake that there is less chance of abuse. People will not tolerate talk about side issues in matters that concern them.

But sound judgment is just as important in forensic rhetoric. How is it possible to make sure that people take an interest in rendering a decision on matters that do not concern them personally? Is it possible for a judge to be impartial without necessarily being disinterested? Here is where emotional appeal can have a positive effect. Because one cannot rely on any personal interest in the judgment it is important to be able to generate feelings for such things as justice and injustice through emotional appeal. There can be a type of emotional appeal that deals with the matter at hand and helps judgment. As stated earlier, though forensic oratory is most prone to abuse through emotional appeal, it is also in forensic oratory that pathetic appeal is most important. That Aristotle should be critical of emotional appeal is understandable in view of the abuse he sees in the practice of rhetoric. But the solution is not to eradicate emotion altogether. Lack of emotion can be just as detrimental as too much emotion. A strong sense of justice for example is bound to generate pleasure and pain at perceived justice and injustice. In the Nicomachean Ethics for example Aristotle criticizes those who lack spiritedness:

For those who do not get angry on the occasions they should, and in the manner they should, and when they should, and with those they should, are thought to be fools; for they are thought to be insensitive and without pain, and since they do not get angry, they are thought not to be disposed to defend themselves.⁷⁶

Emotion at least can play a role in deliberative judgment. Just as the forensic orator can appeal to such emotions as anger and righteous indignation, so in deliberative oratory, appeal can be made to emotions such as fear, which relate to the uncertainty of the future. As he says later in the Rhetoric, fear makes men deliberate (2.5.1383a7). In the Politics

⁷⁶Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1126a 5-8

enthymeme is appropriate. Examples are more persuasive in deliberative oratory, says Aristotle, since the future is quite likely to be like the past. It is important therefore to show that one is acquainted with what has actually happened. On the other hand enthymemes often are more applauded because the audience can often foresee the conclusion from the beginning and people feel pleasure at their own intelligent anticipation. The good rhetorician is concerned with discovering the available means of persuasion in any circumstances, and this means that he must choose his instruments carefully in order to effect persuasion.

Another facet of the practical wisdom of the rhetorician concerns his ability to use apparent means of persuasion. Aristotle makes it clear that the rhetorician is to be acquainted with the real and apparent means of persuasion.⁴⁶ Only in this way can he confront the sophists and verbal jousts who use any means necessary to win an argument. A man of practical wisdom recognizes the possibilities and limits of rational speech and therefore he must be able to defend himself against those who would try to refute or confute him through false reasoning. In his examination of the apparent enthymeme in book two, chapter twenty four, Aristotle acquaints his listeners with spurious forms of reasoning and argumentation, not in order to recommend them, but because it is important for the rhetorician to be prepared if he should ever find himself in circumstances where he should have to defend himself against such arguments. The line between sound rhetoric and verbal brawling is not a formal or technical distinction but one that can be, and needs to be, determined by practical wisdom.

So far we have seen that there is a relationship between rhetoric and practical wisdom. But if rhetoric is practical wisdom, it is practical wisdom of a particular kind. Rhetoric involves also the audience one is seeking to persuade. And in this sense the relationship between rhetoric and phronesis has to be qualified because, although Aristotle says that the rhetorician must possess phronesis, he does not say that the audience

⁴⁶See Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2.1356b1-5.

he says that fear preserves regimes (1308a25).

The Importance of Character

In examining rhetorical judgment so far we have examined two of the modes of persuasion Aristotle deals with, logos and pathos. It is important as well to examine the third. What emerges through Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric is the centrality of character for judgment. In this section I want to examine the various elements relating to character in the Rhetoric. When Aristotle talks about character ("ethos") in the Rhetoric he uses it in reference to three things: The character of the speaker or rhetorician, the character of the regime or constitution, the character and disposition of the listeners according to such things as age and fortune. The first of these is the first sense in which we encounter "ethos" in the Rhetoric. Aristotle refers to it as one of the three modes of persuasion:

Of the means of persuasion supplied by the speech itself there are three kinds. The first kind reside in the character (ethos) of the speaker; the second consist in producing a certain (the right) attitude in the hearer; the third appertain to the argument proper insofar as it actually or seemingly demonstrates.⁷⁷

He goes on to say that the rhetorician persuades by this device when his speech is delivered in such a way as to render him worthy of confidence. Especially in matters that are not certain we trust people of character: "for as a rule we trust men of probity more, and more quickly, about things in general, while on points outside the realm of exact knowledge, where opinion is divided, we trust them absolutely."⁷⁸ This helps explain why

⁷⁷Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2.1356a1-4.

⁷⁸Ibid. 1.2.1356a6-8.

it is most important in deliberative oratory.⁷⁹ This is because deliberative rhetoric concerns the future, which can be uncertain. This adds an important qualification to Aristotle's early statement that in deliberative rhetoric the only thing necessary is to prove the truth of the statement of one who recommends a measure.⁸⁰ The perception of the truth or of the facts cannot easily be separated from our perception of the person making the recommendations.

Aristotle makes an important qualification about the effectiveness of character appeal. He says that it has to be effected through the speech itself. In other words the rhetorician cannot rely on any pre-established conceptions of his character. One of the ways to establish confidence in his own character through speech is to understand the character and dispositions of his audience so as to adapt his character to theirs and one important clue to the character of one's audience is the character of the political regime or constitution. At this point the first sense of character discussed in the Rhetoric blends in with the second. The speaker must appear to be of a certain character, but, as we have seen, in order to do this he has to understand the reputable opinions of his listeners. These are largely regulated by law and custom, which are regulated in turn by the regime. So we come to the second sense of ethos, which refers to the character of the regime.

The character of the regime is the last topic Aristotle discusses in the section on deliberative oratory. He says that it is the most important one:

The greatest help, the most effective of all in fitting a speaker to persuade his audience and counsel it well, is to have mastered all the forms of government. He should have analyzed the tendencies, institutions and interests of each several form.⁸¹

⁷⁹See Ibid. 2.1.1377b25-30.

⁸⁰See Ibid. 1.1.1354b30-32.

⁸¹Ibid., 1.8.1365b22-24.

The relationship between the two senses of character, that of the speaker and that of the regime, is referred to by Aristotle in a passage that marks the transition from his discussion of deliberative rhetoric to his discussion of epideictic rhetoric:

Now persuasions are effected not only by argumentative speaking, but also by ethical ... for we are persuaded when we think the speaker to be a man of a certain character - that is, when he seems to be good, or well disposed or both. And hence as speakers we should have a command of the character (tendency) of each form of government; since for each form its own character ... will be most persuasive.⁸²

It is perhaps because of this connection between the character of the rhetorician and that of the regime that Aristotle chastises the writers of treatises on rhetoric for downplaying the effectiveness of character appeal as a mode of persuasion. The character of the regime is likely to be a very important clue to the endoxa that can be appealed to. Furthermore, while Aristotle discusses the importance of understanding the different regimes specifically in reference to deliberative oratory it is important to remember that the character of the regime influences more than political deliberation. It provides at the same time the framework for law, as well as for what is likely to be considered praiseworthy and blameworthy. In this sense forensic and epideictic oratory as well will be influenced by the character of the constitution since the constitution influences the life of the community. It is perhaps not surprising that the discussion on virtue and vice follows immediately the discussion on the character of regimes.

Finally the third meaning of character discussed by Aristotle follows his discussion of the passions:

Let us now discuss the various types of human character in relation to the emotions and moral states, to the several periods of life and the varieties of fortune. By emotions are meant anger, desire, and the like ... By moral

⁸²Ibid., 1.8.1366a9-13.

states are meant virtues and vices ... By periods of life are meant youth, the prime of life, and old age; by varieties of fortune ... are meant health, wealth, power ... and their opposites - in a word, good fortune and bad⁸³

When Aristotle discusses the emotions in the Rhetoric he does so under three headings: the state of mind of people possessed of the emotion, the people in relation to whom the emotion is expressed, and the grounds on which the emotion is felt towards these people. However emotions do not simply present themselves in a raw state. They appear through different types of characters and express various dispositions. A good tempered person for example is someone who has a certain disposition in relation to the emotion of anger. If one is going to try to arouse or calm emotions such as anger, pity, and indignation, one must understand the different human types or characters. In this sense one cannot separate character from emotion. Let us look at two types of characters discussed by Aristotle, the young and the old, and see how understanding their dispositions might affect the effectiveness of persuasive speech. Just as in the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle says here that the young live by passion and that they desire with ardour. They are hot tempered and ambitious of honour. In relation to their actions Aristotle says the following:

In their actions, they prefer honor to expediency: for their lives are rather of good impulse ... than of calculation (reason); and calculation aims at the expedient, virtue at the honorable ... The young are prone to pity, because they think everyone good, or at all events better than people really are.⁸⁴

The old are the opposite of the young. Aristotle describes them in the following terms:

They 'think' - they never 'know': and in discussing any matter they always subjoin 'perhaps' - 'possibly' ... Further, they are suspicious because they are distrustful, and distrustful from sad experience ... They are cowards,

⁸³Ibid., 2.12.1388b32-1389a2.

⁸⁴Ibid., 2.12.1389a33-37.

apprehensive about everything - in temperament just the opposite of youth ... And through selfishness they live their lives with too much regard for the expedient, too little for honor ... Their lives are rather lives of calculation than of moral bias; for calculation aims at expediency, whereas the object of morality is virtue.⁸⁵

Finally Aristotle concludes his account of these types by saying:

Such are the characters of young men and elderly men. People always think well of speeches adapted to and reflecting their own character: and we can now see how to compose our speeches so as to adapt both them and ourselves to our audience.⁸⁶

The rhetorician should know how to adapt his speech to his audience or know which arguments are likely to carry more weight. From what Aristotle has said it is possible to suggest that the character of the young seems more amenable to the generation of such passions as anger and indignation. Both of these emotions are related to a sense of justice. Anger is a desire or an impulse for revenge caused by a perception of slight. Indignation is a pain felt at what is perceived to be unmerited good fortune. Based on Aristotle's description of their character, the young would seem to be much more disposed to such emotions and therefore, to being affected more by epideictic and forensic oratory, in which the emphasis is on virtue, vice, justice, than by deliberative oratory because they do not yet judge by expediency. The old, on the other hand would be more affected by deliberative oratory since they do judge by expediency.

Reasoning on the Basis of "Endoxai"

Thus far we have seen that rhetorical reasoning takes place under certain conditions that cannot simply be eliminated: time constraint, the need to instill conviction

⁸⁵Ibid., 2.13.1389b18-1390a1.

⁸⁶Ibid., 2.13.1390a24-27.

rather than to instruct, the limited capacities of the listeners, the influence of emotions in judgment. Because of these factors the good rhetorician must argue on the basis of opinions accepted by the listeners. These opinions or arguments form the premises of enthymemes. But this is far from being simply the result of having no better basis on which to argue. It is important to clarify what Aristotle means by "endoxai" and why they provide a rational basis for argumentation.

Aristotle defines "endoxai" as those opinions "which are accepted by everyone, or by the wise- i.e., by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable or reputable of them".⁸⁷ There are many reputable opinions, some of which oppose or contradict each other as we have said. There are good or acceptable arguments on either side of a question, which is why a rhetorician must be able to argue on both sides of an issue. As we saw in the previous chapter the plurality of opinions is not a sign that they are arbitrary but that they are partial or provide a limited perspective. They are neither totally true or false. Furthermore it is important to repeat that "endoxai" are not clear and distinct ideas. They are not necessarily self evident or ready to hand and so it is important that the rhetorician clarify these opinions at the same time that he appeals to them. In this sense reputable or commonly acceptable opinions are as much the product of rhetorical reasoning as their source.⁸⁸

This does not mean that "endoxai" can simply be produced by the rhetorician and that anything can pass as a reputable opinion. As we have seen already, it is possible to identify arguments that are not based on reputable opinions. Reputable opinions have a solidity and a legitimacy that makes them a sound basis for rational discussion. What are the characteristics of reputable opinions? First reputable opinions refer to a common reality. Rhetoric is public speech which is concerned with common subjects of debate

⁸⁷Aristotle, Topics 100b20

⁸⁸See Eugene Ryan, "Aristotle's Rhetoric and Ethics and the Ethos of Society," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 13 (1972): 295.

such as the expedient and the inexpedient, the just and the unjust, the noble and the base. It is not concerned with any and every topic nor with that which is idiosyncratic. Aristotle emphasises this about both dialectic and rhetoric :

Dialectic does not form its syllogisms out of any chance notions (such as the notions of crazy people), but takes problems that merit discussion; and similarly Rhetoric is applied to recognized subjects of deliberation. It has to do with things about which we commonly deliberate ...⁸⁹

Second, these opinions have a certain durability. Opinions held over a long period of time are likely to be at least partially correct. Looked at from the other side, opinions that are not accepted are likely to have some defect. Aristotle suggests this in his criticism of communism in book two of the Politics: "Nor should one ignore the fact that it is necessary to pay attention to the length of time and the many years during which it would not have escaped notice if this condition were a fine one".⁹⁰ This does not mean that reputable opinions simply endure through sheer force or obstinacy. Nor does it mean that because opinions are reputable, they are never questioned or criticised. Reputable opinions provide a basis for argumentation. Appeal to them does not exclude criticism from the course of argumentation but represents rather Aristotle's view that we should begin reasoning on the basis of what is known to us.

Finally, another important characteristic of "endoxai" is their chastening effect. Earlier we saw that according to Aristotle the judgment of the many can be better than that of the few or one. While reputable opinions may be professed in public but contradicted in private, they have a compellingness that makes them more likely to hit on what is true and just. Arnhart describes this aspect of "endoxai" in the following way:

⁸⁹Aristotle. Rhetoric 1.2.1356b35-1357a1.

⁹⁰Aristotle. Politics 1264a 1-3

Men show a better grasp of the true and just in what they say in public than in what they do and wish for in private. As a community, men are better than they are as private and separate individuals. While the multitude of men may be quite defective in their individual judgments, their collective judgments can still manifest a commonsense wisdom and a sense of justice. Since public speech, therefore, is governed by the collective wisdom of men as expressed in common opinions, true and just arguments tend to be rhetorically stronger than their opposites. It is hard to speak well for a bad cause.⁹¹

In order for these available opinions to have any effect at all on public deliberation they must of course be found or hit upon. This however is not necessarily an easy task. As stated above, these opinions are not clear and distinct ideas. In order to see the available means of persuasion the good rhetorician must have experience of practical things. This is what we shall examine next.

Rhetoric and Practical Wisdom

What is the relationship between rhetoric and practical wisdom? Nowhere does Aristotle explicitly deal with this issue. However one can make an argument that good rhetoricians are men of practical wisdom. Aristotle states explicitly at the beginning of the second book of the Rhetoric that, practical wisdom ("phronesis"), along with virtue ("arete"), and goodwill ("eunoia") help inspire confidence in a rhetorician's character.⁹² The discussion of phronesis in book six of the Nicomachean Ethics is Aristotle's most extensive discussion on the topic. By examining what he says there, and comparing it to what has been said about rhetoric so far, it is possible to clarify the relationship between them.

⁹¹Arnhart, Aristotle on Political Reasoning, p.28.

⁹²See Aristotle, Rhetoric 2.1.1378a7-9.

Let us review first what Aristotle says about practical wisdom and those who possess it. Prudent men are able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous ("agatha kai sumpheronta") for themselves and for others as a means to the good life in general. Men such as Pericles are deemed prudent because they are able to discern things good for themselves and for others. Prudence concerns those things that vary rather than things that happen by necessity. It is the virtue of the part of the soul that forms opinions since opinion deals with things that are variable. Finally, the man of practical wisdom not only has a knowledge of what is good in general but knows how to deal with particulars since action and deliberation are about particulars. To know, for example, that light meats are good, but not to be able to discern which meats are light demonstrates a lack of practical wisdom.

After describing practical wisdom in these terms, Aristotle goes on to discuss the relationship between practical wisdom and four other capacities: deliberative excellence ("euboulia"), understanding ("sunesis"), consideration ("gnome"), and cleverness ("deinoteta"). He deals with each one in turn. Someone who is practically wise possesses deliberative excellence. Aristotle distinguishes deliberative excellence from knowledge ("episteme"), opinion ("doxa"), and skill in conjecture ("eustochia"). It is not knowledge since we do not deliberate about what is known but about what is unknown. It is not skill in conjecture since deliberation involves calculation and takes time whereas the former does not operate through conscious calculation. Aristotle also distinguishes deliberative excellence from quickness of mind ("anachnoia"), which is the ability to perceive the middle term or connection between two things. Finally, it is not opinion since opinion has passed beyond the stage of investigation and is a form of affirmation. Deliberative excellence is the ability to arrive at the right conclusion, on the right grounds, and at the right time. A man of deficient self restraint can calculate how to get what he wants but he does not possess deliberative excellence since he seeks something bad. On the other hand it is possible to arrive at what is good on the basis of incorrect reasoning, which is not a sign of deliberative excellence either. Finally, although deliberation takes time, if the opportunity to act is missed, then one does not possess deliberative excellence.

Understanding or good understanding ("eusesia") concerns such things about which we may be in doubt and may deliberate. It is concerned with the same objects as prudence but it is not the same thing. Prudence issues commands, that is to say it is actualised in action, whereas understanding merely makes judgments. When we use the faculty of opinion to judge what another person says about matters that lie in the sphere of practical wisdom, we are said to understand, or to judge rightly. Consideration ("gnome") is also a form of judgment. It is concerned with what is equitable or what is appropriate in certain cases. It involves forgiveness or consideration of others.

Finally Aristotle compares practical wisdom with the faculty he calls cleverness. The man of practical wisdom possesses the ethical virtues, according to Aristotle. Virtue ensures the rightness of the end and prudence ensures the proper means. Cleverness is the ability to achieve one's ends. In this sense it is like prudence since the prudent man must be able to know the means to his end. The difference between cleverness and practical wisdom is that the latter is guided by an understanding of principles guiding proper conduct while the former is not. It is possible to be clever without being virtuous but it is not possible to be practically wise without the ethical virtues.

Based on what we have seen about the nature of rhetoric it is possible to note important similarities between rhetoric and practical wisdom. The good rhetorician seems to be the concrete embodiment of practical wisdom as it is exercised in assemblies and court rooms. Ronald Beiner has described the relationship between rhetoric and practical wisdom in the following way :

The basis of this relationship between rhetoric and phronesis is that here too, as in book six, chapter 11 of the Ethics, we find ourselves in the sphere of the particular, and we are called upon to judge not universal principles but particular contingencies⁹³.

⁹³Ronald Beiner, Political Judgment (London: Methuen, 1983), p.87.

The ability to deliberate well about what is good for ourselves and others, about the expedient and the inexpedient is the virtue of the deliberative orator. A good rhetorician will know what is good for himself and others in general and build his arguments in such a way as to persuade others. He will have a general knowledge of topics, as we have seen, acquired through experience of particulars. In book six of the Nicomachean Ethics where Aristotle describes *phronesis*, he emphasizes the fact that it is based on an understanding of particulars:

Now all objects of action are particulars and ultimates; for both a prudent man should know them, and also intelligence and judgment are concerned with them, and these objects are ultimates. And intuition, too, is of ultimates, and in both directions, for of both the primary terms and the ultimate particulars there is intuition and not reasoning; and intuition with respect to demonstrations is of immovable terms and of that which is primary, whereas in practical (reasonings intuition) is of the ultimate and variable objects and of the other (i.e., minor) premises, since these are principles of final cause; for it is from particulars that we come to universals. Accordingly we should have sensation of these particulars, and this is intuition.⁹⁴

Since, as we have seen, in both enthymemes and examples the major premise is not given but emerges through the particular instances, knowledge of the particulars is important. Only experience in practical affairs can furnish a rhetorician with the power to group particulars in such a way as to allow the audience to perceive the probable grounds that support an argument.

But the practical wisdom of the rhetorician is not only demonstrated in his ability to discover enthymemes and examples, but when to use them. We stated earlier that the example and the enthymeme differ not in the way that arguments are discovered, but in the way they are presented. The good rhetorician must know under what conditions and before which audiences an example is appropriate, and under what conditions an

⁹⁴Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1143a33-1143b6.

enthymeme is appropriate. Examples are more persuasive in deliberative oratory, says Aristotle, since the future is quite likely to be like the past. It is important therefore to show that one is acquainted with what has actually happened. On the other hand enthymemes often are more applauded because the audience can often foresee the conclusion from the beginning and people feel pleasure at their own intelligent anticipation. The good rhetorician is concerned with discovering the available means of persuasion in any circumstances, and this means that he must choose his instruments carefully in order to effect persuasion.

Another facet of the practical wisdom of the rhetorician concerns his ability to use apparent means of persuasion. Aristotle makes it clear that the rhetorician is to be acquainted with the real and apparent means of persuasion.⁹⁶ Only in this way can he confront the sophists and verbal jousts who use any means necessary to win an argument. A man of practical wisdom recognizes the possibilities and limits of rational speech and therefore he must be able to defend himself against those who would try to refute or confute him through false reasoning. In his examination of the apparent enthymeme in book two, chapter twenty four, Aristotle acquaints his listeners with spurious forms of reasoning and argumentation, not in order to recommend them, but because it is important for the rhetorician to be prepared if he should ever find himself in circumstances where he should have to defend himself against such arguments. The line between sound rhetoric and verbal brawling is not a formal or technical distinction but one that can be, and needs to be, determined by practical wisdom.

So far we have seen that there is a relationship between rhetoric and practical wisdom. But if rhetoric is practical wisdom, it is practical wisdom of a particular kind. Rhetoric involves also the audience one is seeking to persuade. And in this sense the relationship between rhetoric and phronesis has to be qualified because, although Aristotle says that the rhetorician must possess phronesis, he does not say that the audience

⁹⁶See Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2.1356b1-5.

possesses it. It is not unlikely that some of the listeners are themselves men of practical wisdom, or men capable of understanding their own interest and that of others. At the same time one cannot ignore Aristotle's statements concerning the limited capacity of the ordinary or average listener. In fact, one could argue that, from this perspective, the practical wisdom of the rhetorician shows itself precisely in his ability to adapt to people who are not practically wise themselves. There is at least one undeniable example of this. Aristotle states in book six of the Nicomachean Ethics that a young man cannot be practically wise (1142a13-24). And yet, as we have seen, the rhetorician must be acquainted with the character of the young if he is to influence them. This does not mean that the listeners are ignorant. In fact, if we return once again to the list of capacities with which Aristotle compares and contrasts practical wisdom, at least three of them would seem to be capacities possessed by the listeners if persuasion is to be effective. The faculties in question are understanding, consideration and quickness of mind.

Both deliberative and forensic oratory require that a verdict be rendered or a decision made. In both the assembly and the court room the listeners are judges and have to render judgments. In this way they differ from epideictic oratory where the listener is not a judge ("krites") but a spectator ("theoros") :

and the hearer must be either a mere observer ... or a judge ... and, if the latter, then either a judge of things past or a judge of things to come. One who decides about the future is, for example, an ecclesiast (member of the assembly); one who judges about the past is, say, the dicast (juror in a court of law); while the person who decides about the force and merit of the speech ... is the critic (observer, 'theorist').⁹⁶

Because they come to a decision based on the arguments set forth by the rhetorician, they must possess what Aristotle describes in the Nicomachean Ethics as understanding, the ability to understand things about which deliberation takes place. More importantly,

⁹⁶Ibid. 1.3.1358b2-6.

understanding involves judging what another person says about matters that are in the sphere of prudence. This is precisely the position of the audience in relation to the speaker. But we must also remember that it is possible to have understanding without possessing practical wisdom.

The audience listening to a rhetorician will also require the faculty called consideration. According to Beiner, Aristotle plays upon the interrelation between the term "sugnome" which means judgment, "suggnome" which includes sympathy and forgiveness, and "eugnomon", which is the quality of being considerate. The interplay suggests the notion of "judgment with" another person. The inference seems to be that "to judge is to understand, to understand is to sympathize, and to sympathize is to be able to forgive". Beiner brings out the connection between practical wisdom and the concept of "judging with" by arguing that both are related to action. Unlike the sense the term has in English, in which sympathy suggests a passive attitude, the Greek sense is active and praxis-oriented. As Beiner puts it "...the good judge is a man of experience, long schooled in the hard and demanding experiences of life"⁷. In other words he is a man of practical wisdom. But this is not always the case. Aristotle says in the Rhetoric that one cannot count on having good judges, and that the judge is a simple person. This does not mean that the ability to "judge with" is lacking, but that the competent orator must be able to foster this capacity for considerateness in his audience.

Finally, the capacity Aristotle referred to when discussing deliberative excellence and that is called quickness of mind ("anachnoia") is something that the audience would require. Aristotle calls this ability a form of skill in conjecture ("eustochia"). In the Posterior Analytics Aristotle describes "anachnoia" as the ability for hitting upon the middle term in an argument in an imperceptible time. Although an audience may not have deliberative excellence, it must have the ability to catch and follow the arguments as set out by the rhetorician. The rhetorician's virtue is that he possesses deliberative excellence.

⁷Beiner, Political Judgment, p.77.

In arguing he is supposed to construct enthymemes. However the audience must be able to follow the line of argumentation. The ability to catch what the rhetorician is saying or implying is important especially in the use of enthymemes since the enthymeme usually leaves something to be added by the listener. The same is true of the use of metaphors or clever sayings. These delight the audience because they have the sense of discovering something new or a connection that is only hinted at.

The point here is that people can render good judgments without necessarily being practically wise themselves. If men who deliberate are not practically wise, the next best thing would be for them to be influenced by those who are practically wise, men who know what is good for themselves as well as others. In this sense the rhetorician is a ruler, and rhetoric a form of ruling through speech. In the Politics Aristotle says that the excellent ruler is good and prudent while the excellent citizen is not (1277a17). Prudence is the virtue peculiar to the ruler while the virtue of the ruled is true opinion (1277b25-27). The importance of rhetoric can be understood within the context of the relationship between ruler and ruled. As mentioned above there are different forms of rule according to Aristotle. That the many can be ruled on the basis of opinion ("doxa") suggests that they can be ruled through speech and reason, not simply through compulsion. The character of rhetoric cannot be separated from the character of the ruled.

But neither can it be separated from the character of the ruler. The good ruler will not be someone whose happiness consists in contemplation and who has no inclination for public life. The philosopher, for example, is not necessarily practically wise. As Aristotle states in book six of the Nicomachean Ethics, people like Anaxagoras and Thales may be wise but they are not prudent. Nor would the good ruler be a demagogue, but he could be a public spirited rhetorician. This suggests the existence of a fourth important aspect to the relationship between character and rhetoric. We argued earlier that Aristotle referred to three senses of character in the Rhetoric: the character of the speaker, the character of the regime, and the various types of listeners. The discussion of practical wisdom brings out a fourth sense: the importance of character in relation to the possible addressees of

the Rhetoric itself. As Lord suggests Aristotle may be trying to attract a certain type of character, a statesman/rhetorician, towards the practice of rhetoric.

Rhetoric and Speech:

Rhetoric corresponds to that level of political life at which rational speech can become effective. This presupposes of course that the laws have had their effect in providing at least the preliminaries towards virtue through habituation and have formed the character of the citizenry. Without ignoring the preliminary work done by the supreme and directive science it is not incorrect to say that the Rhetoric is Aristotle's most political work insofar as speech is the defining characteristic of man the political animal.

Significantly, nowhere in the Rhetoric, and in fact nowhere in his other political works, does Aristotle develop a theory of speech. Speech, as we saw, is related directly to political life, to the standards, opinions, and desires that are commonly encountered and expressed in political life. Rhetoric is useful, Aristotle says, because all men have to attack and defend themselves or uphold an argument. Rhetoric deals with issues that arise in political life and this is why it must speak the language of politics. It begins at the level of opinions or reputable opinions. The result of public debate and deliberation can be a dialectical clarification of these views or opinions. This helps sustain and foster a sense of a commonly held reality. However, this sense of a commonly held reality does not transcend the level of opinions or "endoxa". The rationality of rhetoric lies in the fact that it is possible to attain higher levels of clarity and a better sense of direction within this realm. The importance of rhetoric lies in the fact that, despite this clarification, we can never completely transcend this realm. Another way of putting this is to say that the problems and issues associated with rhetoric are part of the permanent problems associated with the realm of 'human things'.

Chapter four

The Rejection of Rhetoric in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes

Introduction

We are confronted with an apparent contradiction when approaching the subject of Hobbes' relationship to Aristotle's political philosophy. While on the one hand Hobbes sees himself as the founder of political science and, therefore, sees himself as rejecting Aristotle's views on the subject, on the other hand he seems to have exempted the Rhetoric from his general and negative evaluation of Aristotle's works.¹ According to the well known report of Aubrey, Hobbes held the Rhetoric in high esteem. Aubrey reports having heard Hobbes say that: "... Aristotle was the worst teacher that ever was, the worst politician and ethick ... but his Rhetorique and Discourse of Animals was rare".² Fortunately, there is more than Aubrey's report to support this. In his study of Hobbes' political philosophy Leo Strauss has shown how Hobbes' analysis of the passions in the Elements of Law, De Cive and Leviathan rely on the account given by Aristotle in book two of the Rhetoric.³

¹Hobbes' overall negative evaluation of Aristotle is expressed in the following statement from chapter 46 of Leviathan: "And I believe that scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy, than that which is now called Aristotle's Metaphysiques; nor more repugnant to government, than much of that hee hath said in his Politiques; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his Ethiques". Thomas Hobbes. Leviathan, edited with an introduction by C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1986), p.687. All subsequent references to Leviathan will be to this edition.

²John Aubrey, Brief Lives and Other Selected Writings, edited with an introduction by Anthony Powell (London: Cresset Press, 1949), p.255.

³See Leo Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp.35-43.

As we shall see however, this is not a sign that Hobbes has a positive evaluation of rhetoric itself. On the contrary, he argues that rhetoric is an impediment to politics and its ultimate goal, promoting and maintaining peace. And yet we are confronted with yet another curious fact. Hobbes wrote an abridgment of Aristotle's Rhetoric under the title: The Whole Art of Rhetoric.⁴ What is it about Aristotle's Rhetoric that Hobbes found so appealing and how can it be reconciled with his general rejection of Aristotle's political philosophy and rhetoric?

We will begin by reviewing Hobbes' understanding of rhetoric and its dangers. The reason for this negative evaluation of rhetoric is the fact that rhetoric argues on the basis of commonly accepted opinions. This will be followed by a more thematic discussion of the dangers Hobbes sees in building arguments on the basis of common opinions and why ultimately a science of politics must transcend opinion and build on a more certain foundation. This will be done by showing that, according to Hobbes, Aristotle's political science is ultimately indistinguishable from rhetoric and should therefore be rejected. The next section will explain how this can be reconciled with the fact that Hobbes held the Rhetoric in high esteem. We will analyse finally how Hobbes' political philosophy ultimately does include a role for rhetoric but one that differs fundamentally from the place it had in Aristotle's political philosophy.

Hobbes' Criticism of Rhetoric:

Much of what Hobbes has to say about rhetoric is contained in those passages of his works in which he evaluates the various types of commonwealths by institution : monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. More specifically, rhetoric is dealt with in relation to the inconveniences of democracies. As a form of commonwealth democracy is particularly susceptible to the influence of orators. In this sense at least Hobbes is similar

⁴This work will be examined below.

to Aristotle. Hobbes refers to democracies as "aristocracies of orators".⁵ He uses this expression to contest the notion that under democratic government the "many" or the people rule. In the great assemblies that characterize democracies the "many" do not rule at all but fall under the influence of orators, according to Hobbes. This is due to the fact that in these great assemblies, where all may enter, there is no way to deliberate or to give counsel except through orations and the result is that the most eloquent speakers necessarily gain control.

Hobbes uses this argument not only to show that in democracies the "many" do not rule, but also to show that monarchy, the rule of one, is not more inconvenient than democracy. The argument according to which monarchy is more inconvenient than democracy is put forward by the advocates of the latter according to Hobbes. Hobbes dismisses the notion that monarchies are more inconvenient because power is concentrated in the hands of one person by arguing that inconvenience is the product not of power but of passion. Since the passions of the "many" are more violent and disruptive than the passions of one person, monarchy turns out to be the least inconvenient type of rule and democracy turns out to be the most inconvenient. Democracy is more inconvenient because, as noted above, debate takes place through orations, and each orator uses techniques of amplification, i.e., making the goodness or evil of what he says appear greater or less than it really is in order to sway the listeners to his side. Now this cannot be done except by working on the passions of those assembled. And the result, says Hobbes, is that "the passions of these that are singly moderate, are all together vehement: even as a great many coals, though but warm asunder, being put together, inflame one

⁵See Thomas Hobbes, The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, 10 vols., collected and edited by Sir William Molesworth (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992), vol. 4: De Corpore Politico; or the Elements of Law, Moral and Politic, Pt.2, chap.2, #5, p.141, and Pt.2, chap.5, #3, p.165. All subsequent references to this work, hereafter referred to as Elements of Law, will be to this edition (hereafter referred to as English Works).

another.”“

In De Cive, again while talking about the inconveniences of various types of commonwealths, Hobbes adds another element to his criticism of democracies which follows what he says in the Elements. He argues that deliberations are less successful in great assemblies - This relates again to what was said earlier, i.e., that orators make speeches exaggerating the goodness or evil of what they say and excite the passions of their listeners in order to gain their adherence. In order to gain adherence through the passions of their listeners the orators have to take their cue not from true principles but from opinions accepted by the listeners. So orators necessarily fit their speeches to the passions of their listeners and not to the nature of things, in order thereby to gain acceptance for what they say. Therein lies the nature of oratory:

Now the nature of eloquence is to make good and evil, profitable and unprofitable honest and dishonest, appear to be more or less than indeed they are; and to make that seem just which is unjust, according as it shall best suit with his end that speaketh: for this is to persuade. And though they reason, yet take they not their rise from true principles, but from vulgar received opinions, which for the most part are erroneous. Neither endeavour they so much to fit their speech to the nature of the things they speak of, as to the passions of their minds to whom they speak: whence it happens, that opinions are delivered not by right reason but by a certain violence of mind. Nor is this fault in the man but in the nature itself of eloquence, whose end, as all the Masters of eloquence teach us, is not truth (except by chance) but victory: and whose property is not to inform, but

“Ibid., Pt.2, chap.5, #4, p.167. Amplification is one of three “koina” or common elements treated by Aristotle in book two, chapter nineteen of the Rhetoric. These are topics concerning the possible and the impossible, whether something has happened or will happen, and the more and the less. While they apply to all three types of oratory amplification is particularly suited to epideictic oratory according to Aristotle. See Rhetoric, book 1, chapter nine. Hobbes seems to suggest that amplification, making something appear great or small, and therefore, display, constitutes the essence of rhetoric. This accounts for its deceptiveness. In Behemoth he says that: “Impudence in democratical assemblies does almost all that is done: it is the goddess of rhetoric, and carries proof with it. For what ordinary man will not, from so great boldness of affirmation, conclude there is great probability in the thing affirmed?” Hobbes, English Works vol. 6: Behemoth, Pt.2, p.250.

to allure."

Later, in chapter 12 of De Cive entitled: "Of the Internal Causes Tending to the Dissolution of Any Government", Hobbes mentions "eloquence without wisdom" as one of the causes leading to the dissolution of the commonwealth. This expression would seem to suggest that there is also a form of eloquence with wisdom. This is in fact what Hobbes goes on to say. He distinguishes between two types of eloquence. The one type he calls a clear and elegant expression of the conceptions of the mind, which arises partly from the contemplation of the things themselves and partly from a proper understanding of words which are used in their proper signification. The other he refers to as a commotion of the passions of the mind deriving from a metaphorical use of words fitted to the passions. The one proceeds from true principles, the other from opinions already received. The one seeks truth, the other victory. The one is called logic, the other rhetoric.⁸ Those, says Hobbes, who sever eloquence from wisdom are troublers of the peace. They poison the people's minds with absurd opinions contrary to the preservation of peace and civil society.⁹ It is in the very nature of this second type of eloquence to be disruptive and to trouble concord among men. When Hobbes lists the reasons why concord among humans is more likely to be disturbed than concord among animals, one of the reasons he gives is that humans possess the art of words, which allows them to represent that which is good in the likeness of evil and vice-versa, as well as representing

⁷Hobbes, English Works, vol.2: Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society, chap.10, #11, pp.137-138. This work will be cited hereafter by its more popular title: De Cive.

⁸See Ibid., chap.12, #12, pp.161-162. See also Hobbes, English Works, vol.4: Human Nature or the Fundamental Elements of Policy, chap.6 for the distinction between science and opinion, and chap. 13 for the distinction between teaching and persuading. This work will be cited hereafter by its more popular title: De Homine.

⁹See Hobbes, Elements of Law, Pt.2, chap.8, #14 and #15, pp.211-212, and De Cive, chap. 12, #13, pp.163-164.

goodness and evil as better and worse than they are in truth.¹⁰

Rhetoric and Political Science:

The argument to be set out here is the following: what Hobbes finds troubling about rhetoric is at the same time what he finds troubling about the study of moral philosophy in general and Aristotle's in particular. Aristotle being the chief authority in such matters. Both, according to Hobbes, start from opinions that are commonly received. and a political or moral philosophy that begins from common opinions is, therefore, ultimately indistinguishable from rhetoric and its dangers. In Hobbes' opinion, both Aristotelian political philosophy and rhetoric are dangerous because, by basing their arguments on commonly accepted opinions, they promote an instability in political life which is detrimental to the ultimate goal of political life, the maintenance of peace and the relief of man's estate through commodious living.

In chapter 13 of De Homine, Hobbes distinguishes between "teaching" and "persuading" and identifies each one respectively with a type of person believed to be learned. He calls them "mathematici" and "dogmatici". The "mathematici" proceed from evident and humble principles evident to all. The "dogmatici" proceed on the basis of authority or custom and, as Hobbes puts it: "take the habitual discourse of the tongue for ratiocination".¹¹ They proceed from those vulgarly received opinions which according to Hobbes are false for the most part. Hobbes accuses the moral philosophers up to his

¹⁰See Hobbes, De Cive, chap.5, #5, p. 67, and Leviathan, chapter 17, p. 226. It is interesting to compare Hobbes' statements in this regard with Aristotle's. Hobbes agrees with Aristotle that what distinguishes human beings from animals is that, while the latter have voice which allows them to express desires and affections, humans can express good and evil. However while Aristotle says that speech allows humans to express what is advantageous or harmful and therefore what is just and unjust, Hobbes says it allows humans to express the advantageous *as* disadvantageous and vice-versa. Cf. Aristotle, Politics 1253a10-19.

¹¹Hobbes, De Homine, chap.13, #4, pp. 72-73.

time of being "dogmatici". Instead of removing doubt in moral matters they have increased it. The "mathematici" and the "dogmatici" correspond respectively to the two types of eloquence mentioned above. The one combine wisdom with eloquence, the other encourage sedition by severing them.¹²

Hobbes accuses Aristotle, along with Cicero and Seneca of being "dogmatici". They refer to things as right and wrong, good and evil, according to their passions or according to the authority of other men. For example, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, according to Hobbes, was simply the common view of moral matters at the time and is still accepted by the generality of men and is likely therefore to be inaccurate. We will return to the doctrine of the mean below. Just as Hobbes criticizes these thinkers for uncritically accepting the views they put forward, so does he criticize those who follow the views of these thinkers. Like Descartes, Hobbes argues that those who base their reasonings in whatever field of knowledge on the opinions or the authority of those who preceded them are proceeding on the basis of unclarified assumptions and unfounded definitions: "For words are wise men's counters, they do but reckon by them: but they are the mony of fooles, that value them by the authority of an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Thomas, or any other doctor whatsoever, if¹ but a man".¹³

But what is it, more specifically, about building a political science on the basis of common opinions that disturbs Hobbes? The answer, I suggest, lies in the belief that it troubles the peace because it enhances or encourages certain dispositions that are natural to men and that can have dangerous consequences if they are not bridled. In order to see why this is the case we have to understand the most important aspect of Hobbes' view of human nature, the desire for recognition. All, or most people, according to Hobbes, have a certain conception or imagination of their own worth or value that they desire others to

¹²Cf. Ibid., chap.13, #3 and #4, pp. 72-74 with Elements of Law, Pt.2, chap.8, #13 and #14, pp. 211-212, and De Cive, chap.12, #13, pp.163-164.

¹³Hobbes, Leviathan, chapter 4, p.106.

recognize and acknowledge as well. Signs of being undervalued provoke a reaction such that, as Hobbes puts it: "most men would rather lose their lives than suffer slander".¹⁴ It is in our associations with others that this self-love shows itself. We frequent those whose society offers us honour or profit.¹⁵ And even in these relations there is more of jealousy and competition than love and good will.¹⁶ Hobbes sums up his account of human nature in De Cive by saying: "All society therefore is either for gain, or for glory; that is, not so much for love of fellows, as for love of ourselves".¹⁷

Hobbes acknowledges that man is naturally gregarious, but this natural gregariousness is inseparable from a natural vanity. According to Hobbes the purpose of politics is to tame this natural gregariousness. It is not enough to desire society with others, one has to be made fit for it. This is the sense in which Hobbes wants his statement, that we are not naturally political, to be interpreted. Hobbes does not deny that human beings naturally shun isolation and seek and require society with others. But this does not imply that we are willing to do what is necessary in order to make the association as mutually advantageous as possible. This is clearly brought out, once again, when Hobbes discusses why human beings as opposed to animals require politics : Men are continually in competition for honour and dignity and consequently arise envy and hatred. Men subordinate the common good to the private good, seeking to stand out. Humans like to show their wisdom in public because they think themselves wise. Also, as mentioned earlier, men seek to augment or diminish the apparent goodness and evil of things, seeking some good of their own.¹⁸

¹⁴Hobbes, De Cive, chap.3, #12, p. 38.

¹⁵See Ibid., chap.1, #2, p. 3.

¹⁶See Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., chap.1, #2, p. 5.

¹⁸See Hobbes, Leviathan, chap. 17, pp. 225-226.

Such being the case, basing precepts of moral philosophy on commonly accepted opinions merely adds fuel to the fire. As we saw when discussing Hobbes' views on rhetoric, in order to gain recognition for their views, the rhetoricians appeal to the passions and opinions of their listeners. Out of a desire to have their own views prevail, and in order to gain some personal advantage thereby, they flatter the many. Since people are fond of their own views it is likely that they will be pleased with those who expound them.¹⁹ This explains, according to Hobbes, the motivation behind the arguments of those who defend a popular or democratic state:

because that where all men have a hand in public business there all have an opportunity to show their wisdom, knowledge and eloquence, in deliberating matters of the greatest difficulty and moment; which by reason of that desire of praise which is bred in human nature is to them who excel in such like faculties, and seem to themselves to exceed others, the most delightful of all things.²⁰

The result is that democratic politics and rhetoric enhance the already natural disposition towards pre-eminence, comparison, and vanity, the control of which, as noted above, is precisely one of the reasons why human beings require politics.

Instead of countering this tendency, moral philosophy, Hobbes suggests, has allied itself with it. In the preface to De Cive, Hobbes accuses the moral philosophers of being more concerned with entertaining the affections than enlightening the minds of their listeners. Through "the successful rhetorications of their speech they have confirmed them in their rashly received opinions".²¹ He accuses moral philosophers of fostering and

¹⁹Aristotle also says in the Rhetoric that people like to hear their own views praised. This is one of the advantages of using maxims: "One great advantage of maxims to a speaker arises from the uncultivated mentality of an audience. People are delighted when he succeeds in expressing as a general truth the opinions they entertain about special cases". Aristotle, Rhetoric 2.21.1395b1-3. The second advantage of using maxims is that it shows the speaker to be of a certain character. Aristotle says that this advantage is greater than the first. See *Ibid.*, 2.21.1395b12-13.

²⁰Hobbes, De Cive, chap.10, #9, p. 136.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. v.

encouraging the notion that the study of political things is easy and that each person knows as much as any other precisely because they base their reasoning on commonly accepted opinions.²²

A similar tone can be discerned in Hobbes' criticism of the doctrine of the mean in Aristotle. As mentioned already, Hobbes believes that this doctrine is the commonly received view: "I know that this doctrine of mediocrity is Aristotle's, but his opinions concerning virtue and vice, are no other than those, which were received then..."²³ Hobbes, for his part, says that the sum of virtue is to be sociable with those who will be sociable and formidable to those who will not. By criticising the doctrine of the mean, Hobbes seems to be suggesting that Aristotle's account of virtue does not ensure sociability. He says that the moral philosophy of the Greeks is but a description of their own passions and that they call good and bad what they like and dislike. But with such diversity of taste there is no agreement, and everyone does what seems good to himself, which dissolves the commonwealth.²⁴

What is it about the doctrine of the mean that would lead Hobbes to reject it on the basis of his own views concerning moral doctrine? Referring specifically to the doctrine of the mean, Hobbes says that he himself cannot find such mediocrity.²⁵ He suggests, I submit, that the doctrine of the mean is too vague, imprecise, and unstable a measure to provide a solid basis for and standard of virtue. The doctrine of the mean allows too much leeway in interpretation. It lends itself too easily to the possibility of interpreting virtue and vice according to our personal likes and dislikes and, in so doing, it encourages the natural propensity toward vanity. For example, there is no real criterion

²²See Hobbes, De Homine, chap.13, #3, p. 73.

²³Hobbes, Elements of Law, Pt.1, chap.4, #14, p.110.

²⁴See Hobbes, Leviathan, chap. 46, p. 686.

²⁵See Hobbes, Elements of Law, Pt.1, chap.4, #14, p. 110.

by which to judge say courage as opposed to fool heartiness. The doctrine of the mean allows excesses to be painted as virtues since a mean can never be established precisely.

Furthermore, those who judge moral matters on the basis of such a criterion are more likely to believe themselves insulted and to interpret as an injury or an offense that which is not. The doctrine of the mean could be used by people to argue that they have not received their due. Hobbes gives the example of so-called distributive justice. Hobbes believes that there is no such thing as distributive justice. There is nothing unjust about giving someone more than his due or selling something for as much as one can get for it. To feel injury at a breach of so-called distributive justice is nothing but a vain conceit about one's own worth. This is what Hobbes suggests in dismissing it :

And let this suffice to be spoken against this distinction of justice, although now almost generally received by all; lest any man should conceive an injury to be somewhat else than the breach of faith or contract ...²⁶

It is the same with liberality. It is not the sum but the reason of the gift that makes liberality. A doctrine of virtue that lends itself to variable interpretation, especially in matters relating to honour and dishonour, is likely to promote a sense of slight or insult where none is intended, which cannot but trouble the peace. This is why Hobbes replaces the doctrine of the mean with his laws of nature that, according to him, are laws of peace easily grasped or intuitable by all. The doctrine of the mean is too prone to separating ethics and politics to the detriment of the goals of the latter. The importance Hobbes attributes to sociability is intended precisely to unite ethics and politics.

As has been stated many times the end of moral philosophy for Hobbes should be the maintenance and preservation of peace. With this in mind, ultimately, he criticises moral philosophy up until his time. It is not simply because Hobbes wants to reproduce the precision of the other sciences that he is critical of the plurality of views in moral

²⁶Hobbes, De Cive, chap.3, #6, p. 34.

philosophy, but because these opinions ultimately trouble the peace. If this variety of views were ineffectual there would be no real problem. Unfortunately this is not the case. If errors are made or are undetected in other types of speculation, it is usually not dangerous. In moral philosophy it is different. Here errors and ignorance can have serious consequences.²⁷ The true benefit of political science is discerned when people reflect on the mischief arising from what Hobbes calls its "counterfeit and babbling form".²⁸ The true benefit of political science is that it saves us from the danger that false political science encourages - sedition.²⁹ Those who claim to be concerned with the public good are really more concerned with displaying their own wit and reputation. In fact, as mentioned earlier, a public forum seems only to enhance and promote this:

And even those men themselves, that in Councells of the Commonwealth love to show their reading of Politiques and History, very few do it in their domestique affairs, where their particular interest is concerned; having Prudence enough for their private affairs: but in publique they study more the reputation of their owne wit, than the succeſſe of anothers businesse.³⁰

Because of Hobbes' understanding of human nature, which reduces everything ultimately to the desire for recognition, the possibility of there existing a definite criterion in moral theory for distinguishing public spiritedness from private vanity is quite problematic. Where men's interests are at issue, says Hobbes, "as oft as reason is against a man so oft will a man be against reason".³¹ That is why a true science of politics must "put such principles down for a foundation, as passion, not mistrusting, may not seek to displace."³²

²⁷See Ibid., p. xi.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹See Ibid., chap.12, #13, p. 163.

³⁰Hobbes, Leviathan, chapter 5, pp. 117-118.

³¹Hobbes, De Homine, Epistle Dedicatory, p.xiii.

³²Ibid.

In other words one must get beneath the common opinions and conventional pieties to the passions informing them and build on this secure foundation :

For were the nature of human actions as distinctly known as the nature of quantity in geometrical figures, the strength of avarice and ambition, which is sustained by the erroneous opinion of the vulgar as touching the nature of right and wrong, would presently faint and languish; and mankind should enjoy such an immortal peace that...there would hardly be left any prepense for war.³³

It is important to note here that Hobbes is not suggesting that it is possible to eliminate avarice and ambition, but rather the ways in which they masquerade in the guise of morality. Here we may recall Hobbes' statement in the introduction to Leviathan according to which "... the characters of mans heart, blotted and confounded as they are, with dissembling, lying, counterfeiting, and erroneous doctrines, are legible only to him that searcheth hearts".³⁴ Thus a truly public spirited political philosophy must transcend the level of opinion. Precisely in so doing it shows its true concern for the welfare of mankind.

By transcending the level of opinion Hobbes undermines both the foundation of classical political philosophy and the basis for the legitimacy of rhetoric. As we saw in chapters one and two, the plurality of opinions is part of what informs Aristotle's understanding of the practical world as well as what provides the basis for rhetorical argumentation. This being the case, on what basis then could Hobbes view Aristotle's Rhetoric in a positive light? As mentioned above, Leo Strauss has shown how Hobbes' discussion of the passions in his political treatises is patterned on Aristotle's discussion of the passions in the Rhetoric. Is it because he finds in the Rhetoric a discussion of the passions, characters and dispositions of men on the basis of which they truly act and can be swayed ? Is it because the passions are not covered over or coloured but presented in

³³Hobbes, De Cive, Epistle Dedicatory, p. iv.

³⁴Hobbes, Leviathan, Introduction, p.83.

such a way that they provide the foundation that Hobbes is looking for ? This is certainly part of the answer. Hobbes was not the first critic of the ancients to appreciate the Rhetoric for its treatment of the passions. In The Advancement of Learning Francis Bacon had already set out an argument similar to the one espoused by Hobbes. An examination of Bacon's position will help clarify Hobbes' since their views are quite similar.

In The Advancement of Learning Bacon examines the current state of knowledge in various fields of study and comments on what might be reformed and what might be maintained so as to advance knowledge. When Bacon deals with the topic of ethics he notes that those who have written on this subject have not dealt adequately with how to frame and subdue the will of man. He notes that scant remarks on the moral virtues are not enough to supplement this lack. In order to explain this omission he writes that

The reason of this omission I suppose to be that hidden rock whereupon both this and many other barks of knowledge have been cast away: which is that men have despised to be conversant in ordinary and common matters...but contrariwise they have compounded sciences chiefly of a certain resplendent or lustrous mass of matter, chosen to give glory either to the subtilty of disputations or to the eloquence of discourses.³⁵

This reminds us of Hobbes' distinction between the "mathematici" and "dogmatici". the former proceeding from low and humble principles, the latter pressing to have their opinions taken for truth without any evident demonstration.³⁶

Like Hobbes, Bacon suggests that there is little difference between moral philosophy and rhetoric. A true science of ethics must transcend common opinion. As

³⁵Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis ed. Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974): The Advancement of Learning, Bk.2, chap.20, #2, p.146.

³⁶Cf. Ibid. with Hobbes, De Homine, chap.13, #3 and #4, pp. 72-74.

Bacon puts it, we must begin with the roots of good and evil and the strings of those roots.³⁷ It is precisely at this point that he refers positively to Aristotle's Rhetoric:

These observations and the like I deny not but are touched a little by Aristotle as in passage in his Rhetorics ... but they are never incorporate into moral philosophy, to which they do essentially appertain ...³⁸

After knowledge of the diverse characters of men's natures, it is important to know the perturbations of the affections. Here again he praises the Rhetoric:

And here again I find strange, as before, that Aristotle should have written diverse volumes of Ethics, and never handled the affections, which is the principal subject thereof; and yet in his Rhetorics, where they are considered but collaterally and in a second degree (as they may be moved by speech), he findeth place for them, and handleth them well for the quantity; but where their true place is, he pretermitteth them. For it is not his disputations about pleasure and pain that can satisfy this inquiry.³⁹

It is however when Bacon deals with the purpose of such investigations that he most clearly prefigures Hobbes. Knowledge of the passions allows one to see how they encounter one another:

Amongst the which this last is of special use in moral and civil matters: how, I say, to set affection against affection, and to master one by another ... upon which foundation is erected that excellent use of praemium and poena whereby civil states consist: employing the predominant affections of fear and hope for the suppressing and bridling the rest.⁴⁰

³⁷Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, Bk.2, chap.20, #6, p. 148.

³⁸Ibid., Bk.2, chap.22, #5, p. 163.

³⁹Ibid., chap.22, #6, p. 163.

⁴⁰Ibid. Bk 2, chap.22, #6, p. 164.

This prefigures Hobbes' use of the desire for recognition and the fear of violent death as the two fundamental passions on the basis of which to construct a civil order that avoids the dangers of classical political philosophy.

However, is the influence of the Rhetoric on Hobbes due only to its discussion of the passions? That Hobbes found in Aristotle's treatment of the passions a firm ground on which to build is beyond doubt. But is his appreciation of the work confined to the first ten chapters of the second book? I suggest that there is a more general reason why Hobbes is attracted to the Rhetoric. It has to do with the fact that it exposes problems that, in Hobbes' view, cannot adequately be resolved within Aristotelian "politike", but that can only be addressed through a science of politics such as the one Hobbes himself develops. As we have seen, Hobbes criticises the attempt to base a science of politics on commonly received opinions or "endoxai". The Rhetoric of Aristotle might be significant for Hobbes precisely because, in his view, it exposes the problems associated with basing one's arguments on common opinions. How might the Rhetoric lend itself to such an interpretation?

Aristotle presents his discussion of topics in the Rhetoric in such a way as to leave them in a state of uncritical factualness as we have seen. He does not distinguish between better or worse accounts of the good, happiness, or pleasure but states that one must adapt one's speech to one's audience. He exposes the endoxa in all their contradictoriness and shows how to build counter-arguments on that basis: "for the sources (of arguments) are the ordinary opinions of men, and such opinions often contradict one another".⁴¹ In so doing Aristotle reveals the plurality and instability of all criteria of judgment regarding such topics. In his discussion of common topics Aristotle numbers the use of ambiguous words among possible means of persuasion. He even seems to reveal the arbitrariness and instability of his own doctrine of the mean which was discussed above. Although he does not refer to it explicitly he alludes to it in the chapter on epideictic oratory when dealing

⁴¹Aristotle, Rhetoric 2.25.1402a34-35.

with the portrayal of virtues and vices:

For the purposes of praise and blame, the speaker may identify a man's actual qualities with qualities bordering on them. Thus a cautious man may be represented as cold and designig, a simpleton as good-natured, a callous man as easy going. And so in each case we may substitute one of the collateral terms, always leaning towards the best ... And men whose bad qualities are on the side of excess may be represented as possessed of the corresponding virtues. Thus the rash man may be described as courageous, and the spendthrift as liberal.⁴²

Now such a presentation would appeal to Hobbes precisely because his science of politics is based on the fact that such distinctions as virtue and vice, good and evil are unstable and subject to various interpretations depending on the audience in question. Therefore the Rhetoric brings out problems that are not dealt with but are re-enforced within Aristotelian moral and political philosophy. Thus there is no contradiction in the fact that Hobbes could despise rhetoric and admire Aristotle's treatise since the nature of rhetoric is clearly revealed in it. In so doing it points to the need to transcend the level of common opinion altogether.

At this point we can turn to Hobbes' own translation of Aristotle's Rhetoric which contains certain elements which support the argument set out above. Why would Hobbes have translated the Rhetoric? Hobbes says nothing himself regarding this. According to the preface prefixed to the text in the edition of 1681: "Mr Hobbes chose to recommend by his translation the rhetoric of Aristotle, as being the most accomplished work on that subject which the world has yet seen".⁴³ The work itself is actually an abridgment of Aristotle's work supposedly containing in substance all that Aristotle said in his work. Although the work is much smaller than the original it does follow the divisions into three books and the division of chapters within the books.

⁴²Ibid. 1.9.1367a32-1367b3.

⁴³Hobbes, English Works, vol. 6: The Art of Rhetoric, p. 422.

There are however certain alterations made by Hobbes which characterise rhetoric in such a way as to have it fall even more into line with his own negative evaluation of it. The first is Hobbes' repeated contrasting of rhetoric to logic when in fact Aristotle compares it to dialectic. This is significant because, as we have seen, both rhetoric and dialectic argue on the basis of reputable opinions. Despite their differences they are alike in this sense. By comparing rhetoric to logic Hobbes paints a starker contrast between the two that devalues the former. As we saw earlier Hobbes contrasts two types of eloquence, one based on wisdom and the other based on a commotion of the passions designed to obtain victory. The former was called logic, the latter, rhetoric. Hobbes' translation, or mistranslation, therefore fits in with his view that rhetoric aims only at victory and neglects the fact that, according to Aristotle, reputable opinions provide a legitimate basis for reasoning. This is confirmed by a second significant alteration made by Hobbes. In his translation, Hobbes adds a sentence that is not in Aristotle's original and which states explicitly that the goal of rhetoric is victory:

For as in logic, where certain and infallible knowledge is the scope of our proof, the principles must be all infallible proofs: so in rhetoric the principles must be common opinions, such as the judge is already possessed with. Because the end of rhetoric is victory: which consists in having gotten belief.⁴⁴

There is one more significant addition to Hobbes' translation. Throughout the work Hobbes constantly refers in chapter headings to the fact that what is being dealt with are common opinions. This is not something Aristotle does. It is significant when we remember that common opinions are for the most part false according to Hobbes. By emphasising this therefore Hobbes emphasises the irrationality of rhetoric. By contrasting rhetoric to logic, by emphasising the importance of victory in argumentation, and by emphasising repeatedly that what is being dealt with are common opinions, Hobbes portrays rhetoric in such a way as to make his own science of politics more legitimate.

⁴⁴Ibid, p.426. Cf. Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.3.1358b20-1359a10. See also footnote 7 above.

This science, as we have seen, is based on the need to transcend the level of common opinions.

From Practical to Theoretical Science:

Moral philosophy has not discharged its duty because it has not established certain principles in the study of moral matters. It has not done this because it has based itself on common opinions, which contradict and oppose each other. In order to establish principles that are certain and will conduce to peace one must reject common opinions. In doing this Hobbes transforms political science from a practical science to a theoretical science. Where Aristotle started with common opinions and the perspective of politicians and citizens, Hobbes understands politics on the basis of the pre-political and excludes the perspective of citizens and politicians. But the goal of this science is peace and commodious living and therefore it is meant to be useful, to be applied. Here the relationship between "theory" and "practice" acquires its modern sense. Here "practice" acquires its meaning as an application of theory. What is important here is that practice, understood as application of theory, is not something external to theory. In other words, the modern notion of "practice" understood as application of theory presupposes the modern notion of "theory" as instrumental or useful. The notions of utility and practicality are standards internal to Hobbes' understanding of theory itself.⁴⁵

The practical world constituted as it is by contradictory opinions cannot provide the criteria for the implementation of theory precisely because these opinions are the problem and have been rejected on the basis of that theory. In other words the link between prudence and practice has been severed. What then does provide the criteria ?

⁴⁵"I recover some hope, that one time or other, this writing of mine, may fall into the hands of a sovereign, who will consider it himself ... without the help of any interested or envious interpreter; and by the exercise of entire sovereignty, in protecting the publique teaching of it, convert this truth of speculation, into the utility of practice". Hobbes, Leviathan, chapter 31, p.408.

When practice is reconceived as application of theory, prudence is replaced by methodical procedure. Method must help make the truth of theory applicable if it is to be effective. But on what basis are we to understand the truth of what Hobbes says ? The problem here has to do with the popularisation of science or truth, or, in other words, enlightenment. The answer given by Hobbes is that it is on the basis of our own experience.

In order to explain this let us return for a moment to the level of opinions. Opinion, says Hobbes, is opposed to truth and science. All propositions that are not based on evidence of truth are called by Hobbes opinion, and opinion is based on trust, belief or faith.⁴⁶ What constitutes evidence? Evidence is constituted by the correspondence of word and conception. When an expression gives rise to the conception it was designed to represent, then there is evidence and the person can be said to understand. Understanding and evidence are defined as "conception caused by speech".⁴⁷ It is clear that in order for there to be evidence in this sense the expressions we use must be univocal, i.e., purged of ambiguity, so that the image that is raised in us by the term might be clear and unambiguous as well.

This is why, according to Hobbes, opinion cannot produce evidence and therefore cannot produce clear thinking. Opinions vary owing to the inconstant meaning of terms, some people meaning one thing, others something else, each one basing his opinion on his own passions and desires. So in common usage the equivocation of meaning makes it difficult to recover any clear conception of what an expression may stand for.⁴⁸ Furthermore, opinion and common usage of speech derive force from custom and habituation so that most of our opinions cannot even be traced back to our own intuitions or conceptions. We cannot be said really to know or to understand them. This was

⁴⁶See Hobbes, De Homine, chap.6, p. 29.

⁴⁷See Hobbes, Leviathan, chapter 4, pp. 108-109, and De Homine, chap.6, #3, p. 28.

⁴⁸See Hobbes, De Homine, chap.5, #8, p. 23.

alluded to earlier when referring to Hobbes' criticism of Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero. This is why Hobbes says that opinion and even ultimately what we call conscience is based on trust.⁴⁹ Through habituation we often simply "mouthe" things without any evident intuition accompanying the words, like people reciting the "paternoster". The first word merely suggests the rest so that we act like parrots. Such a situation in Hobbes' view transforms "ratio" into "oratio".⁵⁰

In order to purge thought of all ambiguity and the problems arising from it one must start afresh, starting from clear and evident conceptions and building from these in such a way that each subsequent inference follows clearly and logically. Now the basic principle or conception is not itself provided by method or logic but by "experience" or reading over one's conceptions.⁵¹ Hobbes believes that the basic principles of his science of politics are known on the basis of experience.⁵² Hobbes enunciates the basic principle as follows: "... the dispositions of men are naturally such, that except they be restrained through fear of some coercive power, every one will distrust and dread each other ...".⁵³

Those who would deny this, and Hobbes admits that there are many, are asked to reflect on their own experience.⁵⁴ What Hobbes is doing can be described as trying to get people to use their own experience against their opinions that, as we have just said, according to Hobbes are not our own. The one, experience, is an awareness that is the

⁴⁹See Ibid., chap.6, pp.28-30.

⁵⁰See Ibid., chap.5, #14, pp. 25-26.

⁵¹See Ibid., chap.5, #14, p. 26.

⁵²See Hobbes, De Cive, Preface to the Reader, pp. xiv-xv, xx, De Homine, chap.1, #2, pp. 1-2; Leviathan, Introduction, pp.82-83; Hobbes, English Works, vol.1: Elements of Philosophy. The First Section Concerning Body, Pt.1, chap.6, #7, pp. 73-74. This last work will be cited hereafter by its more popular title: De Corpore.

⁵³Hobbes, De Cive, Preface to the Reader, pp xiv-xv.

⁵⁴Cf. Ibid., p.xiv and Leviathan, chapter 13, pp. 186-187.

result of a conflict of passions (fear of violent death and desire for recognition) that leads us to consider in what sense human nature is and is not fit for society and that guides us towards what is necessary in order to maintain peace. The other, opinion, is based on a desire we have to contradict each other, which leads to the consequences we have described already. Now since much of the latter is fuelled precisely by false reasoning on the basis of inconstant names and definitions, a science of politics proceeding on the basis of the former must proceed to rid speech of all ambiguity, methodically constructing our duties and rights. We will return to this below.

If we consulted our own experience rather than the opinions of others, we would be more fit for society. Hobbes says: "Now when a man reasoneth from principles that are found indubitable by experience, all deceptions of sense and equivocation of words avoided, the conclusion he maketh is said to be according to right reason".⁵⁵ One may proceed methodically from such a principle or toward it, either "compositively" or "resolutively".⁵⁶ It is on this basis for instance that we are able to deduce the laws of nature. These are precepts of reason, not based on the opinions or agreement of men but intuited as rational means to an end. They are articles of peace. Nor are these subtle deductions, but available to the meanest capacities.⁵⁷

Reference has been made to the fact that method replaces prudence in Hobbes' understanding of practice. It is important to clarify the implications of this change. Methodical procedure guarantees certainty by eliminating the tensions and ambiguities revealed in the realm of opinion. According to Aristotle these tensions and ambiguities of political life could not be eliminated. They revealed the complexity of the practical world. The variability of practical things evoked the permanent problems of political life.

⁵⁵Hobbes, De Homine, chap.5, #12, p. 24.

⁵⁶See Hobbes, De Corpore, Pt.1, chap.6, #7, pp.73- 74.

⁵⁷Cf. Hobbes, De Homine, chap.5, #11, p. 24, chap.13, #3, p.72, and Leviathan, chapter 15, pp. 214-215, chapter 30, p.379.

These had to be addressed through practical wisdom. With Hobbes the complexities of political life are reduced to historical problems that can be resolved technically. Most political problems are not a consequence of the complexities of human nature and human existence, but to false teachings, erroneous doctrines, vainglory. The realm of what constitutes the human things, the permanent problems, becomes historicized.

As we have seen already, according to Hobbes, the need to start reasoning about political things from reputable opinions was nothing more than the prejudice of an age. It is the inability to understand the true foundations of political life that compels one to pay heed to authority or tradition, or historical precedent: "Ignorance of the causes, and original constitution of Right, Equity, Law, and Justice, disposeth a man to make Custome and Example the rule of his actions."⁵⁸ Science requires a certain foundation, which Hobbes believes he has discovered in relation to moral philosophy and which, according to him, can be known through experience. Like Descartes, Hobbes believes that appearances can be deceiving and that one must get behind them in order to find a secure basis on which to reorder appearances. This is the purpose of the resolute-compositive method mentioned above. It breaks a compound down into its smallest parts and reconstitutes them as a whole.

But here we must ask the following question. How does Hobbes know that the "endoxai" or reputable opinions are not already the smallest component parts of political life? How does he know that they are simply arbitrary or historical constructions? Is it their variability and their uncertainty? Aristotle also had acknowledged that the plurality of opinions in politics made some believe that they existed merely by convention and not by nature, yet as we have seen, Aristotle does not therefore deny revelatory power to these things. Hobbes, on the contrary, rejects the opinions right from the start. He resolves them into smaller components. But here the same question re-emerges and could be formulated as follows: How does Hobbes know when he has reached the smallest

⁵⁸Hobbes, Leviathan, chapter 11, p.165.

component parts ? The answer is determined by the end that Hobbes believes is the goal of political life, and that is peace.

One proceeds methodically, resolving the components of political life such as customs, beliefs, opinions, speeches, until one has reached a level that is somehow conducive to the end one has in mind. Thereafter one reconstructs methodically from that basis. At what level or on what basis can one start reconstructing methodically in order to ensure peace ? Precisely at that level at which the opinions, beliefs, customs, speeches, supposedly reveal their arbitrariness and consequently the possibility of re-ordering them precisely in such a way that the ambiguities and tensions that first characterized them can be eliminated or at least managed. This level is constituted by our basic passions and desires. Reduced to basic impulses our conceptions of the human good appear as nothing more than arbitrary manifestations of these impulses. The basic elements Hobbes works with are fear of violent death and the desire for recognition. Once this appears to experience as self-evident the precariousness or fragility of society leaps to consciousness. It becomes apparent that without a power to ensure peace and keep us all in awe we are perpetually on the brink of a war of each against all.

Proceeding from this foundation, one can then methodically reconstruct social bonds in such a way that peace becomes the ultimate goal and sociability the overriding social virtue. Because we control the process, we are certain that we understand every step in the process. Thus politics can be as certain as geometry. It is no less a product of the human will. Here finally is the answer to the question of how we know that the "endoxa" are arbitrary or historical. They are arbitrary because we can alter them. What is human is defined in contradistinction to what is natural. Nature is what is pre-human or sub-human. Humans are defined by the capacity for artifice, a capacity understood not in the Aristotelian sense of completing nature but in the modern sense of correcting it. This mathematical drive to re-order human relations is evident throughout Hobbes' political philosophy.

According to Hobbes, the only true science of his time is geometry. He believes however that politics can be no less scientific. The scientific status of geometry is constituted by the certainty of its propositions. This certainty is due to the fact that its propositions are artificial, a result of human agreement or definitions agreed upon. Political science can achieve the same degree of certainty since it is constituted by pacts and covenants that are also the result of human agreement and therefore it can reach the precision of definitions agreed upon. Science for Hobbes is knowledge of consequences. All sciences are hypothetico-deductive which is to say that they proceed on the basis of conditional inference according to the model "If ... then ...". Reason is conceived as an ability to infer. Reason is nothing but "the reckoning of the consequences of general names agreed upon." Reckoning is nothing more than counting either by addition or subtraction: "When a man reasoneth, hee does nothing else but conceive a summe totall, from addition of parcels; or conceive a remainder, from subtraction of one sum from another."⁵⁹ Both the account of reason and science are based on the elimination of anything ambiguous or unclear from the inferential process. This requires nothing less than a complete re-ordering of the scope and purpose of human speech.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of speech or language in Hobbes' thought. Without the use of speech there would be no reason, no science, no concord, and human beings would scarcely be able to rise above the life of beasts. The capacity to speak represents the potential limitlessness of human reason and it is because of the greatness of its advantages that Hobbes is also concerned with its abuse or misuse. The nature of speech is to a certain extent revealed by the fact that in Leviathan Hobbes treats it between the chapters on thought trains and the chapters on reason and science. Speech is the lynchpin between our natural faculties and our acquired capabilities. It raises us above nature by perfecting our natural faculties and lifting us above the limits imposed on them. Hobbes states this at the end of chapter three:

⁵⁹Ibid., chapter 5, p.110.

There is no other act of man's mind, that I can remember, naturally planted in him, so, as to need no other thing, to the exercise of it, but to be born a man, and live with the use of his five senses. Those other faculties, of which I shall speak by and by and which seem proper to man only are acquired, increased by study and industry: and most of men learned by instruction, and discipline: and proceed all from the invention of words, and speech. For besides sense, and thoughts, and the trayne of thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion: though by the help of speech, and method, the same faculties may be improved to such a height, as to distinguish men from all other living creatures.⁶⁰

Speech therefore lifts man above nature and is responsible for all his progress. But it is also responsible for all his problems. Through language we either abound in wisdom or in folly.

Speech is understood by Hobbes to have a certain function, to be an effective tool of some sort. The advantages and disadvantages of speech are a function of the human will and a desire to use it properly or improperly. What then is the function of speech? According to Hobbes "the general use of speech, is to transference our mentall discourse into verbal; or the trayne of our thoughts, into a trayne of words". Speech can then serve either as a mark of remembrance, and in this sense it perfects our memory, or it can serve as a sign by which we communicate our thoughts to others. When upon hearing a speech a person has the thoughts that the words of that speech and their connection were meant to signify, then, that person is said to understand, understanding being nothing but conception caused by speech. As seen earlier, in order to understand words must bring to mind corresponding intuitions that are clear and distinct. Speech then "stands for", or "represents" a thought or a series of thoughts. Its purpose is to "express" thoughts. When speech is used properly it registers these thoughts accurately and gives rise to understanding. In order to perfect the symbolic function of speech, language has to be purged of its ambiguity and lack of clarity. The importance of speech in political science as well as in geometry has to do with the fact that both are a matter of definitions. They

⁶⁰Ibid., chap.3, pp.98-99.

are apriori sciences: "Finally, politics and ethics can be demonstrated apriori; because we ourselves make the principles whereby it is known what justice and equity, and their opposites injustice and inequity are".

Hobbes, by rejecting the validity of arguing on the basis of opinions at the same time rejects the understanding of speech that this represents. If one takes certainty rather than opinion as one's criterion, then all ambiguity has to be rejected from speech since certainty entails or demands clear or precise speech. This requires that one direct oneself not to speech in its contradictoriness, but to a theory of speech the purpose of which falls in line with the quest for certainty. From this perspective the contradictoriness of opinions is interpreted not as a reflection of the complexities of human nature, or along the lines of the irreducible plurality of perspectives, but rather as error, misunderstanding, lack of method, and a desire to deceive.

In this sense the plurality of opinions is interpreted as a defect or error attributable to human will and desire. Because it is seen as the result of error or deception, there is nothing necessary or irreducible about it. It can be eliminated. Speech, purged of ambiguity, that is connected to method rather than to opinion, is thereby ready to serve the purpose of science, itself interpreted according to the criterion of certainty. Speech and opinion thereby becomes historicized. They are severed from an understanding of the human things and the permanent, irresolvable problems of political life. The uncertainty of opinions and the political dangers that they entail make agreement about definitions important. This same reductionism is applied to another important aspect of Aristotle's thought examined in the last two chapters, character.

Unlike Aristotle, Hobbes does not believe that character plays an important role in a science of politics. He reduces character to a manifestation of passion. Reason, which is for Hobbes the ability to draw inferences, is an instrument of the passions. It allows us to think hypothetically either from causes to consequences or from consequences to causes. The differences in capacity to reason are due to differences in passion. Those with

strong passions have a greater capacity to reason. Hobbes refers to this capacity as "ranging". It can be either wild or ordered. When it is ordered it is guided by some passion. It is passion that dictates the ends and reason, which seeks the means to that end. Passion should steady reason and direct it. "For the thoughts, are to the desires, as scouts, and spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things desired: All stedinesse of the minds motion, and all quicknesse of the same, proceeding from thence."⁶¹ The relationship between reason and passion is a relationship between means and ends, which allows us to gauge the relationship between our desires and our ability to satisfy them. In other words it gives us a sense of our own power. The overriding passion governing politics should be the desire for commodious living. It is a modest goal but within our power. With this passion in mind reason sets out to discover means to attain that end.

By transforming political science from a practical science to a theoretical science with a practical intent, Hobbes, we have seen, has to face the issue of the popularisation of his science. It is here, if anywhere, that rhetoric may have a role to play but it is a role completely different from the one that it played in Aristotle's political science since it only acquires its role on the basis of a rejection of this science. This new role has to do precisely with the elimination of the significance of opinions from political science and practical reasoning and its replacement with an emphasis on the relationship between the faculties of the mind. Like Aristotle, Hobbes subordinates rhetoric to political science but the nature of that subordination is quite different. In Hobbes' scheme rhetoric serves only to communicate knowledge. It has no legitimacy apart from its role as handmaiden to science. In order to clarify this it is useful, once again, to refer to Bacon's understanding of the purpose of rhetoric which, as I will argue is also the view of Hobbes.

In On the Advancement of Learning, Bacon describes rhetoric as a tool serving for the communication of science. In order to advance learning and science, says Bacon, it is important to evacuate whatever obstacles impede its progress. According to him the

⁶¹Ibid., chap.8, p139.

first distemper of learning is to prize eloquence for itself rather than for the matter with which it should deal. He refers to this as delicate learning and false affectation : "for words are but the images of matter and except they have life of reason and invention, to fall in love with them is all one as to fall in love with a picture".⁶² Since words are but signs for the things they represent, which is also Hobbes view as we have seen, their purpose is to provide clear intuition or understanding. But eloquence has a role to play here according to Bacon, precisely because of the complexity of philosophical reasoning. He says that "it is a thing not to be hastily condemned to clothe and adorn the obscurity of philosophy with sensible and plausible elocution".⁶³ Eloquence can serve to make clear or concrete what is obscure or difficult to understand.

This provides eloquence with the goal of communicating knowledge. While eloquence can be a hindrance in the acquisition of knowledge, it can be useful in its transmission. Rhetoric will therefore serve in the popularisation of science, the purpose of which is precisely the relief of man's estate. On this basis Bacon goes on to criticize the early emphasis in education given to logic and rhetoric. These are sciences that are useful for the transmission of knowledge, not for its discovery, and therefore to begin with their study is to put the cart before the horse :

For these two (logic and rhetoric) rightly taken, are the gravest of sciences, being the art of arts; the one for judgment, the other for ornament. And they be the rules and directions how to set forth and dispose matter: and therefore for minds empty and unfraught with matter ... to begin with those arts ... doth work but this effect, that the wisdom of those arts which is great and universal, is almost made contemptible, and is degenerate into childish sophistry and ridiculous affectation.⁶⁴

⁶²Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, Bk.1, chap.4. #2, p.26.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., Bk.2, #12, p.65.

Bacon also sees rhetoric as playing an important role in the interrelationship between the understanding and the will, or the intellect and appetite. Imagination is the faculty that serves as ambassador between the will and the understanding. What role can rhetoric play here? According to Bacon the "duty and office of rhetoric is to apply reason to imagination for the better moving of the will"⁶⁵. Rhetoric is understood here in relation to the potential conflict between the various faculties. Here again, its role is to make the dictates of reason more palpable: "the end of rhetoric is to fill the imagination to second reason and not to oppress it."⁶⁶ Reason needs imagination because virtue cannot be thrust upon man by sharp disputations and conclusions that have no sympathy with the will of man. Here Bacon makes a statement that seems to foreshadow the significance of Hobbes' argument about the state of nature:

And therefore the present filling the imagination more, reason is commonly vainquished; but after that force of eloquence and persuasion hath made things future and remote appear as present, that upon the revolt of the imagination reason prevailith.⁶⁷

Hobbes appropriates Bacon's understanding of the role of rhetoric in relation to his science of politics. He synthesizes or brings together the two roles Bacon outlines for rhetoric : an aid in the communication of knowledge and an instrument to work on the imagination so as to help bring the will into line with reason. Here it will be useful to summarize and draw together some of the aspects of Hobbes' teaching we have seen so far, those pertaining to the popularisation of science. We saw first of all that Hobbes' science is meant to have a practical effect, but that he rejects the legitimacy of common opinions. His scientific teachings must therefore be popularised on the basis of something else which he refers to as experience. We also saw that Hobbes distinguished between two

⁶⁵Ibid., Bk.2, chap.18, #2, p.139.

⁶⁶Ibid., p.140.

⁶⁷Ibid., #4, p.141.

types of eloquence, one that was tied to wisdom but involved long and complicated arguments, the other that was based merely on persuasion and flattering peoples' opinions. These corresponded to logic and rhetoric respectively. Hobbes' task is to communicate his truths in such a way as to accommodate the limited capacities of the many and therefore to avoid those long chains of reasoning associated with logic but not in such a way as to appeal to common opinions which would be to forsake truth for rhetoric and flattery.

Does Hobbes manage to do this? I believe that he does and that it is evident in two of his most important arguments: the argument about intuiting the laws of nature and the state of nature argument.⁶⁸ The laws of nature, as we have seen are the basic precepts of Hobbes' doctrine of civil peace. They are not laws per se, but precepts of reason, yet they are co-extensive with the civil laws. The civil laws and the laws of nature include each other. These laws of nature, as Hobbes explains at the end of chapter fifteen of Leviathan, are designed to replace Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, which misconceived wherein the nature of virtue lay. The laws of nature provide a more certain basis for virtue. Having said this Hobbes recognises that the discovery or intuition of the laws of nature may be complicated. The problem as well as the solution are described by Hobbes in the following terms:

And though this may seem too subtile a deduction of the lawes of nature, to be taken notice of by all men: whereof the most part are too busie in getting food, and therest too negligent to understand; yet to leave all men unexcusable, they have been contracted into one easie sum, intelligible, even to the meanest capacity: and that is, Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe; which sheweth him, that he has no more to do in learning the lawes of nature, but, when weighing the actions of other men with his own, they seem too heavy, to put them into the other part of the ballance, and his own into their place, that his own passion and selfe-love, my adde nothing to the weight: and then there is none of those lawes of nature that will not appear unto him very

⁶⁸My interpretation of the significance of these examples follows that of Tom Sorell. See Tom Sorell, "Hobbes's Un-Aristotelian Political Rhetoric," Philosophy and Rhetoric 23, (1990) pp. 96-108.

reasonable.⁶⁹

Hobbes' solution therefore is to simplify the deduction by compressing it. Hobbes attributes the use of this strategy to the limited capacities of the listeners and their inability to follow complicated lines of reasoning. It seems, therefore, to possess the same characteristics as the Aristotelian "enthymeme". This however is not the case. It is important to remember that the "enthymeme" has two defining characteristics. First, it argues on the basis of commonly accepted opinions, and, second, because it appeals to things familiar to the listeners, it leaves certain things unstated so that the listeners can add it themselves. Neither of these characteristics is present in the example of the deduction of the laws of nature. It is not based on commonly accepted opinions and instead of gaining its brevity from omission it gets it from compression.⁷⁰ It could of course be argued that by invoking the golden rule Hobbes is in fact appealing to a reputable opinion, one that would be accepted by his listeners. However this ignores the fact that in this case the golden rule does not receive its self evidentness from revelation but from the natural light of reason. It is intuited on the basis of personal experience, not common opinion. It serves Hobbes' purpose because it makes clear the goal of politics to those of even limited capacities.

At this point we should remind ourselves again of the distinction Hobbes had drawn between wisdom with eloquence, which is long and complicated, and eloquence without wisdom, which is based on opinion. When Hobbes discussed these two types of eloquence in the Elements he seemed to be suggesting that they were mutually exclusive. What the example of the deduction of the laws of nature shows is the resolution of this tension. It shows the ability to communicate a truth simply and directly, bypassing opinion, and making it directly intuitible. Synthesis or compression serves the goal of

⁶⁹Hobbes, Leviathan, chap. 15, pp. 214-215.

⁷⁰See Sorell, "Hobbes's Un-Aristotelian Political Rhetoric", p.104.

communicating truth. In this way Hobbes can maintain on the one hand that the study of politics is not easy and yet, on the other hand, that we can understand its principles on the basis of experience.⁷¹

Something similar can be said for the state of nature argument. This bit of counterfactual reasoning also serves to communicate the truth of politics, not through subtle deduction, nor on the basis of opinion, but on the basis of experience. This experience is acquired through introspection, through reflecting on one's thoughts and passions. It is also available to the meaner capacities since it is based on simple inference rather than a long deduction. At the same time it is not related to common opinion precisely because it is counterfactual. It goes beyond our common experience by allowing us to intuit a situation which no one has actually experienced. This is not a grave defect according to Hobbes since the science of politics itself is more important for what it prevents and so it is important to be able to get a palpable sense of what this might be like. Here again let us quote Hobbes himself on the significance of the state of nature argument :

It may seem strange to some man, that has not well weighed these things: that nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade, and destroy one another: and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself, when taking a journey, he armes himself, and seeks to go well accompanied: when going to sleep, he locks his dores: when even in his house he locks his chests: and this when he knows there bee lawes, and publique officers, armed, to revenge all injuries, shall be done him: what opinion he has of his fellow subjects, when he rides armed: of his fellow citizens, when he locks his dores: and of his children and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words?⁷²

⁷¹Cf. Hobbes, *De Cive*, pp.x-xi with p.xiv.

⁷²Ibid., chap.13, pp.186-187.

As is the case with the intuition of the laws of nature, the significance of the example lies in its synthetic power. It concentrates in one reflective moment what Hobbes has been drawing out as an inference deduced from his analysis of the passions. It also, therefore serves to communicate truth directly to experience. Here the opposition between experience and opinion is clearer than in the previous example. The state of nature argument is designed precisely to oppose our experience to our opinions as mentioned earlier. Furthermore it is a palpable example. It fills the imagination with fearful images. It thereby serves to help bring the will into conformity with reason. It makes present what seems to be far off, as Bacon put it. The imagination makes clear certain truths of reason as Bacon had called for. The argument shows how reason and imagination can unite to influence the will or how eloquence can adorn reason. In this way rhetoric is subordinated to political science in such a way as to eliminate any tension between them at all. Rhetoric finds its place not in reference to the issues of politics as was the case with Aristotle, but in relation to the conflict of the faculties where it is subordinated to reason. As we shall see it is also on the basis of the contest between the faculties that rhetoric will contest its subordination.

Chapter five

The Defense of Rhetoric in the Thought of Giambattista Vico

Introduction

Despite their differences both Aristotle and Hobbes relate the significance of rhetoric directly to political life. Aristotle had defended the legitimacy and rationality of rhetoric while at the same time recognising its dangers. In Aristotle's view the tension between opinion and knowledge or persuasion and instruction could not be eliminated. The nature of practical affairs made rhetoric an important practice. Hobbes, as we have seen, transforms the significance of rhetoric by the way in which he subordinates it to his political science and the intention that informs it. By denying any revelatory power to opinions he calls into question the validity of arguing on the basis of probabilities and therefore he denies the rationality of rhetoric. Hobbes rejects rhetoric because of the dangers he feels it holds for political life. His attempt to overcome the tension between opinion and knowledge, as we saw, resulted in the transformation of political science from a practical science to a theoretical science with a practical intent based on having the proper method. With Hobbes political science becomes abstract.

When the legitimacy and importance of rhetoric are once again defended it is on the basis of a reaction against the logic of the modern scientific method, which "abstracts" from practical life. The revaluation of rhetoric is based on a defense of the concrete against the abstract. Rhetoric takes on the role of a "corrective" or a solution to the one-sidedness of modern scientific reason. As we shall see it is this understanding of rhetoric that informs the views of its twentieth century defenders as well. The defense of rhetoric is part of a defense of the irreducibility of the "lifeworld" and the integrity of the logic of the historical or cultural sciences over against the logic of the natural sciences.

This defense of rhetoric on the basis of a reaction against modern scientific method can be found in the thought of Giambattista Vico and particularly in his work entitled : On

the Study Methods of our Time. For most of his life Vico was a professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples. As professor of rhetoric one of Vico's tasks was to deliver an oration at the beginning of each new school year. On the Study Methods of our Time was the inaugural speech delivered at the opening of the school year in 1708. Vico chose as his topic a comparison of the study methods of antiquity with those of his own time. The latter were represented by the growing dominance of the cartesian method, which equated reason with the criteria of clarity and distinctness. This of course rendered illegitimate any type of inquiry based on the merely probable or "verissimilar". Vico's oration was directed against what he considered to be an illegitimate encroachment of the cartesian or scientific method into fields of study to which it did not apply, as well as the systematic neglect of the study of ethics in favour of the natural sciences.

On the Study Methods of our Time

Vico's attack on the triumph of cartesian thought in his time, with its emphasis on certainty, its restriction of thought to the strict inferential process of deductive reasoning, and its neglect of what he calls topical reasoning, is contained in this small work. Vico's anti-cartesianism expresses itself as a defense of the ideals of civic humanism. What Vico finds disturbing in modern thought is its contempt for the humanities. He finds in modern scientific method an attempt to sever the intellect from the imagination. This not only destroys the life blood of the humanities, but it abstracts as well from the nature of man who is a unity of reason, passion, and imagination.

As we saw when we examined Hobbes' understanding of reason, modern scientific rationality is based on the model of mathematics. Reason is counting or drawing inferences. Vico does not reject the validity of this model but he does not want this spirit to encroach on fields that are beyond its competence. These fields are governed by what Vico calls topical reasoning. It is precisely topical reasoning, arguing on the basis of probabilities, that is jeopardized by the criteria of clear and distinct perception. By focusing exclusively on clear and distinct perception as criteria for rationality other

faculties such as imagination and memory get neglected. These are the faculties associated with the production and study of poetry and history, with human making and the "vita activa".

Vico begins his work by asking the question: "Which study method is finer and better, ours or the Ancients?"¹ There are, he says, advantages and drawbacks to both, which he will discuss. His goal is to "indicate in what respect our study methods are superior to those of the Ancients; to discover in what they are inferior, and how we may remedy this inferiority".² Vico does not ignore the advantages that have come through modern science and that make it vastly superior to ancient science. Analytic geometry and the introduction of geometry into physics have enriched science by making it possible for us to solve problems that the ancients could not. Chemistry, of which the ancients were totally ignorant, has made important contributions to medicine. The invention of the microscope and the telescope have allowed us to explore an infinite universe in two directions, both of which were out of range of ancient science. Modernity has therefore made spectacular advances in such fields as anatomy, astronomy and geography. At the same time the advances of the modern age should not blind us to the virtues of the ancients: "even if you know more than the ancients in some fields, you should not accept knowing less in others".³

After celebrating the advantages of modern science, Vico then examines its shortcomings and tries to ascertain whether it lacks some of the good qualities possessed by the study methods of antiquity. The first thing he criticizes is what he calls 'speculative criticism' or the rejection of all standards that do not conform to the criterion of certainty or to those of clarity and distinctness. The pedagogical approach

¹Giambattista Vico, On the Study Methods of our Time, translated with an introduction and notes by Elio Gianturco (Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p.5.

²Ibid., p.6.

³Ibid., p. 5.

which requires adolescents to take up speculative criticism has the effect of destroying common sense because judging everything by the criterion of certainty has the effect not only of rejecting that which is false but also that which is probable. Vico believes that the rejection of the notion of the probable as irrational has had pedagogical effects. The young need to be trained in common sense. It is an important part of early education and psychic development. One should not try to replace it by focussing on the criterion of certainty :

Such an approach is distinctly harmful, since training in common sense is essential to the education of adolescents, so that that faculty should be developed as early as possible; else they break into odd or arrogant behavior when adulthood is reached. It is a positive fact, that, just as knowledge originates in truth and error in falsity, so common sense arises from perceptions based on verisimilitude. Probabilities stand, so to speak, mid way between truth and falsity, since things which most of the time are true, are only very seldom false.⁴

We see here Vico's concern with the practical effects of pedagogy. He is concerned with the effect this type of training will have on behavior. A proper care for the development of each faculty ensures that every aspect of human nature and every faculty gets developed. Common sense should be the first faculty developed. Common sense is an extremely important concept in Vico's thought. What Vico means by common sense or "sensus communis" is not stated explicitly in On the Study Methods. He does discuss it however in his magnum opus, the New Science. We can turn to this work therefore in order to understand what Vico means by common sense. In book one of the New Science which is entitled "Establishment of Principles", Vico makes the following statements :

141. Human choice, by its nature most uncertain, is made certain and determined by the common sense of men with respect to human needs or

⁴Ibid., p.13.

utilities, which are the two sources of the natural law of the gentes.

142. Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the entire human race.⁵

An education in common sense is an initiation into that which is held in common, that which is shared at a pre-reflective level. Common sense provides the logic for understanding the practical world in which probability is the highest level of certainty one can achieve. To lack common sense is to be a stranger to civic life, to the "mondo civile", the world of men, made by men. Because we have made this world we can understand it and be familiar with it as opposed to the world of nature, which we have not made. Vico states that it is a truth beyond all question "... that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind".⁶ To lack common sense is to act oddly and arrogantly because it involves a neglect of the tacit, taken for granted standards of practical life and a demand for clear, explicit explanations and justifications for everything.

Common sense provides the standards for practical judgment as well as the guiding standard for eloquence. Eloquence is itself the actualisation of common sense and, therefore, to ignore common sense is to destroy the life blood of eloquence : "There is a danger that instruction in advanced philosophical criticism may lead to an abnormal growth of abstract intellectualism, and render young people unfit for the practice of eloquence".⁷ This reference to the danger of abstract intellectualism is a sign that the emphasis here is clearly on the relationship between the concrete and the abstract.

⁵Giambattista Vico, The New Science of Giambattista Vico, revised translation of the third edition (1744) by Thomas G. Bergin and Max H. Fisch (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), #141 and 142, p.63.

⁶Ibid., #331, p.96.

⁷Vico, On the Study Methods of our Time, p.13.

Education should proceed from the concrete to the abstract. A young mind cannot adequately grasp abstractions. It needs the aid of gross, palpable bodies that fill the imagination and the memory with vivid images. In youth, imagination and memory outstrip all other faculties and should therefore be cultivated first. The arts to which these faculties are most receptive are sensuous ones such as painting, oratory, poetry, jurisprudence. Art should 'second' nature not oppose it. Unfortunately, says Vico : "In our days, instead, criticism alone is honoured". One of the arts, the neglect of which is particularly troubling to Vico, is, as has been said, the art of topical reasoning. Topical reasoning is the art of finding arguments or discerning probabilities concerning any topic. Topical reasoning is the source of eloquence. Knowledge of it, i.e. the ability to find persuasive arguments allows one to respond to situations that do not admit of delay:

Those who know all the loci, i.e. the lines of argument to be used, are able (by an operation not unlike reading the printed characters on a page) to grasp extemporaneously the elements of persuasion inherent in any question or case... Our experts in philosophical criticism, instead, whenever they are confronted with some dubious point, are wont to say: "Give me some time to think it over!"

The reference to extemporaneity is important. Training in topical reasoning allows one to grasp at once what is likely to be persuasive in any case. The more one is immersed in the "sensus communis" the more one is able to find what is effective without delay. Since invention or discovery of arguments precedes judgment concerning their validity, the former art must be taught first. Whereas certainty is the criterion of critical reasoning, comprehensiveness or copiousness is the criterion of topical reasoning. In matters that are by nature uncertain one must be able to gather together every line of argument that might insure that we have acted or judged rightly." Here Vico refers to

¹Ibid., p.15.

²"The most eulogizing epithet that can be given to a speech is that it is "comprehensive" : praise is due to the speaker who has left nothing untouched, and has omitted nothing from the argument, nothing which may be missed by his listeners. Nature and life are full of incertitude:

Aristotle's discussion of emotional appeal. Sometimes an audience is not moved by intellectual reasons alone. One must know how to tug at their heart strings. He says this is why Cicero was the greatest of orators. Truth must be seconded by eloquence. After this course of study, students may move on to more abstract pursuits :

At the very outset, their common sense should be strengthened so that they can grow in prudence and eloquence. Let their imagination and memory be fortified so that they may be effective in those arts in which fantasy and the mnemonic faculty are predominant. At a later stage let them learn criticism, so that they can apply the fulness of their personal judgment to what they have been taught. And let them develop skill in debating on either side of any proposed argument. Were this done, young students, I think, would become exact in science, clever in practical matters, fluent in eloquence, imaginative in understanding poetry or painting, and strong in memorizing what they have learned in their legal studies.¹⁰

Modern mathematical or deductive reasoning moves forward by small incremental steps. It is governed by strict chains of inference. This stifles what Vico calls a student's specifically philosophical faculty, "his capacity to perceive the analogies existing between matters lying far apart and, apparently, most dissimilar". This capacity constitutes the source of all ingenious, acute and brilliant forms of expression. This capacity is actualised through metaphorical speech : "Metaphor, the greatest and brightest ornament of forceful, distinguished speech, undoubtedly plays the first role in acute, figurative expression".¹¹

Another reason those accustomed to geometrical exposition are less capable of presenting ideas with eloquence is because it is to the modes of thinking of an ignorant

the foremost, indeed, the only aim of our "arts" is to assure us that we have acted rightly". Ibid., p 15.

¹⁰Ibid., p.19.

¹¹Ibid., p.24.

multitude that eloquence is particularly suited. The orator cannot overtax their attention. He should adopt a "free and ample manner of utterance". The modern physicist places primary axioms first, the orator omits things well known. He tacitly reminds the listeners of it so that they feel they are adding it themselves. Vico goes on to suggest that ingenuity is not a result of analytic procedure. Ingenuity and invention are the product of imagination not abstract analysis. He says that many great inventions pre-date analytic procedure. In his words: "Is there no significance to the fact that those scientists who contributed new and spectacular inventions in mechanics, after analytical geometry had become a current practice, clearly despised that geometrical method".¹² He sums up by saying:

It may be inferred from this that we need to train young minds for the produce of mechanics by means of a close study of visual geometrical figures, and not by means of abstract, algebraic symbols.¹³

This ability to be guided by sensitive images and tacit awareness which forms the basis of Vico's method is continued in section six of the Study Methods where he says that we should be guided in medicine or the diagnosis of physical illness as courtiers are guided in the diagnosis of mental illness, by symptoms instead of causes. Courtiers, he says, are not only ignorant of the nature of the anger of the ruler but also of the impulses that cause him to become angry, yet they are taught by experience to anticipate the moment when he will burst into anger as well as the appropriate moment to ingratiate themselves. The ability to read symptoms and to diagnose is more useful than the ability to construct a syllogism that teaches nothing new since the conclusion is already implied in the initial proposition. But illnesses are always new and different. Moderns rely too much on deduction. The concrete particular is more important and therefore it is safer to rely on induction.

¹²Ibid., p.29.

¹³Ibid., p.30.

The greatest drawback, though, to modern educational methods is the excessive attention paid to natural science and the lack of attention paid to ethics. This has been suggested up to this point in Vico's praise of common sense, which he said initiates us into the human world. It seems the emphasis on method leads to a neglect of ethics. The chief concern of modern science is truth. Science investigates physical phenomena because their nature seems unambiguous. On the other hand freedom of the will makes human nature difficult to determine. But too much emphasis on science leads to an unfamiliarity with practical affairs, an inability to participate in the life of the community. Young men who pursue only science cannot understand human psychology or permeate their utterances with passion. Human affairs cannot be assessed by inflexible standards: "We must gauge them by the pliant Lesbian rule, which does not conform bodies to itself, but adjusts itself to their contours".¹⁴ This is why eloquence is important in human affairs. Eloquence does not address itself to our rational part but to our passions: "The rational part in us may be taken captive by a net woven of purely intellectual reasonings, but the passionate side of our nature can never be swayed and overcome unless this is done by more sensuous and materialistic means".¹⁵ Here Vico accounts for the significance of eloquence in a way that reminds one, strangely enough, of Hobbes' view. According to Hobbes, as we saw, the purpose of rhetoric was to provide sensuous images or to use imagination so as to better bring the will in conformity with the intellect. Commenting on the power of eloquence over the many Vico says :

But the multitude, the vulgus, are overpowered and carried along by their appetite, which is tumultuous and turbulent: their soul is tainted, having contracted a contagion from the body, so that it follows the nature of the body, and is not moved except by bodily things. Therefore, the soul must be enticed by corporeal images and impelled to love; for once it loves, it is easily taught to believe; once it believes and loves, the fire of passion must be infused into it so as to break its inertia and force it to will. Unless the speaker can compass these three things, he has not achieved the effect

¹⁴Ibid., p.34.

¹⁵Ibid., p.38.

of persuasion; he has been powerless to convince.¹⁶

Vico goes on to suggest that there is an important connection between language and ways of thinking. He compares the French and Italian languages. Because Italian is a more sensuous language than French it is more conducive to eloquence while French is more conducive to science

"Since arts and sciences are mostly concerned with general notions, french is therefore splendidly suited to the didactic genre. While we Italians praise our orators for fluency, lucidity and eloquence, the French praise theirs for reasoning truly".¹⁷

It is no surprise to Vico that analytical geometry and method were discovered in France. Italian on the contrary is full of figurative, concrete expressions. By the use of metaphors it forces the attention of listeners to move back and forth between ideas that are far apart. Whoever intends to devote himself to politics instead of science should cultivate his mind with an ingenious method, study topical reasoning and probability. In disciplines that depend on judgment and discretion, one is guided by countless peculiarities. These cannot be systematized. The inability to deal with the discrete fosters the bad habit of relying on general maxims.

The Significance of Topical Reasoning

The centrality of topical reasoning is quite evident in Vico's thought. Its significance lies in the fact that it represents much more than the ability to discover lines of argumentation in order to effect persuasion. Topical reasoning, according to Vico, is part of a process of psycho-genetic development in the individual which parallels certain

¹⁶Ibid., p.38.

¹⁷Ibid., p.40.

stages of cultural development. This is well described by Elio Gianturco:

Vico believes in the existence of a psychogenetic law, by which the individual develops through a certain series of phases, the sequential order of which is immutably fixed by nature. These stages parallel an equally immutable set of "cultural stages" which the whole of mankind has traversed in its growth from infancy to adulthood, from primitivism to civilization. In other words, the single individual recapitulates the entire process of development of the species.¹⁸

Just as in the individual's natural psychic development, the capacity for topical reasoning precedes the capacity for critical reasoning, so it was in the history of the species. This is evident if one compares the two following statements of Vico's, the first from the Study Methods and the second from the New Science:

In our days, instead, philosophical criticism alone is honored. The art of "topics", far from being given first place in the curriculum, is utterly disregarded. Again I say, this is harmful, since the invention of arguments is by nature prior to the judgment of their validity, so that in teaching, that invention should be given priority over philosophical criticism.¹⁹

Providence gave good guidance to human affairs when it aroused human minds first to topics rather than to criticism, for acquaintance with things must come before judgment of them. Topics has the function of making minds inventive, as criticism has that of making them exact. And in those first times all things necessary to human life had to be invented, and invention is the property of genius.²⁰

Cultural development also moves from the sensuous and concrete to the abstract. The first logic is a "poetic logic", the first universals are "imaginative universals" and the first

¹⁸Ibid., Translator's introduction, p.xxvii.

¹⁹Ibid., p.14.

²⁰Vico, The New Science of Giambattista Vico, #498, pp.166-167. On the connection between pedagogy and cultural development see also #211, 212, 215-217.

speech following communication through gestures is metaphorical speech.

Topical reasoning is therefore the original form of coming into being of the human mind and the human world. Its significance is related primarily to the type of thought processes it evokes and the mental faculties it engages. How does this relate to Vico's understanding of rhetoric or oratory? It will be remembered that in the Study Methods Vico mentions painting, poetry and jurisprudence along with oratory as arts in which imagination, memory, and inventiveness or ingenuity are prevalent. Rhetoric or oratory represents more than the means of effecting persuasion. As an activity that uses topical reasoning it also evokes the inner workings or form of the human world. According to Donald Phillip Verene rhetoric is crucial to understanding Vico's thought as a whole: "Vico's conception of rhetoric is the key to his construction of the inner form of the human world".²¹ Rhetoric has more to do with origination than with persuasion. In other words Vico is less concerned with the actual goal and means of achieving persuasion and is more concerned with the way in which rhetoric evokes primary and concrete thought processes. In what follows I will be drawing on Verene's analysis in order to explain the significance of rhetoric in Vico's thought.

It is useful to begin with a backward glance at Hobbes' view of rhetoric. We saw that Hobbes distinguished between logic and rhetoric, that the former's concern was truth whereas the latter's concern was deception. At the same time we saw that, according to Hobbes, rhetoric could be subordinated to science and logic. Rhetoric served to communicate truth. This required, as we saw, that speech be purged of all ambiguity so as to make it a vehicle for clear thinking. This implied regulating the imagination in such a way as to have it serve reason, and it implied as well a rejection of metaphorical speech as deceptive speech.

²¹Donald Phillip Verene, Vico's Science of Imagination (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p.163.

In order to understand the significance of rhetoric for Vico it is important to note that he reverses the priority between the elements just discussed in our summary of Hobbes' position. Where Hobbes posits the priority of logic over rhetoric or abstract over topical reasoning, Vico does the opposite. Where Hobbes subordinates imagination to reason, Vico again does the opposite. And finally where Hobbes dismisses metaphorical speech as deceptive, Vico sees it as primary or original speech. This type of reversal or overturning has already been described above in discussing Vico's argument for the priority of common sense over abstract intellect. As we have seen already, on both an individual and cultural level topical reasoning precedes critical reasoning. As Verene puts it:

What Vico calls criticism (that which the moderns made the basis of knowledge and education) exists always within the larger life of human culture, which itself depends upon our power of poetic, rhetorical, and jurisprudential formation.²²

Since Vico's understanding of rhetoric is closely tied to his understanding of topical reasoning it is important to examine this more closely. This will allow us to understand how Vico's view of rhetoric differs from that of Aristotle. Following Verene we will consider Vico's understanding of topics in relation to his notion of ingenuity, and his conception of "sensus communis".

As we have seen above, according to Vico the art of topics has the function of making minds inventive. Invention or ingenuity is related to the faculty of memory, which in fact contains three faculties: memory, imagination and ingenuity or invention.

Memory thus has three different aspects: memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship.²³

²²Ibid., p.166.

²³Vico, The New Science of Giambattista Vico, #819, pp.313-314.

Invention like memory and imagination is related to sensuous existence. Invention does not free the mind from sensation but functions to make connections within sensation. According to Verene, invention "is the power to extend what is made to appear from sensation beyond the unit of its appearance and to have it enter into connection with all else that is made by the mind from sensation".²⁴ This is the virtue of metaphorical speech as we have seen and it requires the "ars topica".

Topics is the art of finding the middle term says Vico in the Study Methods. The middle term is the term common to the two premises of a syllogism that makes the conclusion possible but does not itself appear in the conclusion. For example in the following syllogism: "All men are mortal"/ "Socrates is a man"/ "Therefore Socrates is mortal", "man" is the middle term. This relatively simple example does not require much ingenuity but Vico's point is that if the middle term is not found or invented reasoning cannot go forward since no connections can be made. What Vico is concerned with is the actual thought processes that are revealed through the capacity for topical reasoning.

In this sense the significance of topical reasoning in Vico's thought is different from what it is in Aristotle's. Vico's overall position seems in many ways quite similar to Aristotle's. The defense of reasoning on the basis of probabilities or common sense, the irreducible character of civic life, the importance of eloquence and the capacity to speak with the many, and the orator's capacity to omit things well known, which as we have seen is the characteristic of enthymemes, are all reminiscent of Aristotle's views. Furthermore the importance of being able to find the middle term, which is what topical reasoning is all about according to Vico, is also discussed by Aristotle. As we saw in chapter three, Aristotle refers to this ability as "anchinoia", the capacity that allows us to perceive quickly the middle term. Despite these similarities there are important differences between Aristotle and Vico. As we have seen, topical or dialectical reasoning,

²⁴Verene, Vico's Science of Imagination, p.167.

of which rhetoric is part, is for Aristotle the ability to argue on the basis of reputable opinions. These opinions are the topics or sources of arguments designed to persuade an audience. Aristotle is not interested in the origin of these topics and does not assign to them a constitutive and originary role in the creation of the human world. Vico's concern is different. As Verene puts it:

In Aristotle's view what is generally accepted is what is generally held in a discursive sense. It is what is believed by everyone, by most people, or by those particularly learned. Vico's view asks the fundamental question of how we come to have such commonalities of mind at all. On what do these discursive topics depend? His answer is his notion of the sensory topos.²⁵

The sensory topic as we have said is not simply a line of argument to effect persuasion. It is the form in which the human world first emerges. The human world is organized on the basis of sensory topics which organize our experience of the world.

This difference between Vico and Aristotle appears more clearly through a reference Vico makes to Aristotle's treatment of maxims in the Rhetoric. In book two of the Rhetoric, as we have seen, Aristotle discusses the use of maxims in rhetorical argumentation. A maxim is a general statement that deals with the objects of human action. Maxims are useful because an audience is pleased if it hears enunciated in general terms the opinions it holds, and more importantly the use of maxims makes a speaker appear ethical. This is as much as Aristotle has to say about the nature of maxims, how they should be used, and what their advantages are.

Vico's reference to Aristotle's treatment of maxims is in paragraph 816 of the New Science. It is significant because it puts the emphasis precisely on the originary or constitutive significance of maxims. For Aristotle the maxim provides a source or background from which to draw arguments. For Vico the maxim evokes the way in which

²⁵Ibid., p.170-171.

the background of the mind itself is created. I will quote the paragraph almost in its entirety since it is particularly clear:

The poetic characters, in which the essence of the fables consists were born of the need of a nature incapable of abstracting forms and properties from subjects. Consequently they must have been the manner of thinking of entire peoples, who had been placed under this natural necessity in the times of their greatest barbarism. It is an eternal property of the fables always to enlarge the ideas of particulars. On this there is a fine passage in Aristotle (Rhetoric 2.15.139b1-10) in which he remarks that men of limited ideas erect every particular into a maxim. The reason must be that the human mind, which is indefinite, being constricted by the vigor of the senses, cannot otherwise express its almost divine nature than by thus enlarging particulars in imagination.²⁶

Maxims, like fables, are imaginative universals or sensuous topics that embody or express the ingenuity or inventiveness of the human mind. "Sensory topics are the primordial places, or loci, of the human mind".²⁷

These topics or places constitute the "sensus communis". As we have seen already sensus communis is a pre-reflective or felt unity. We recall that in the Study Methods Vico said that advanced speculative criticism stifled the growth of common sense or sensus communis. Common sense is judgment without reflection. It is formed through imagination. Here again we can sense a difference between Vico and Aristotle. "Sensus communis" in Vico does not correspond to what Aristotle means by "endoxai" or reputable opinions. Sensus communis is not opinion, nor is it reputable opinion. It is more primordial. It is not the basis for argumentation or persuasion but provides the archetypes for the common features of the human world or cultural practices. Vico mentions three important aspects of sensus communis. These do not vary from nation to nation. They are foundational. I list them in paragraph 333 of the New Science:

²⁶Vico, The New Science of Giambattista Vico, #816, p.312.

²⁷Verene, Vico's Science of Imagination, p.175.

We observe that all nations, barbarous as well as civilized, though separately founded because remote from each other in time and space, keep these three human customs: all have some religion, all contract solemn marriages, all bury their dead.²⁸

This common origin, despite variations of detail, gives what Vico calls the "mental dictionary" which provides the archetypes for the histories of all nations and for assigning origins to all the diverse languages. Verene explains the significance of this mental dictionary in the following way:

Whenever we use an actual language to communicate, our ability to achieve meaning is based on the common mental language that contains the commonplaces of human mentality itself and that is a product of our fantasia. Fundamental human communication depends upon us making touch with this common mental language in a direct fashion.²⁹

Rhetorical speech taps into or actualizes the "sensus communis" whenever it tries to persuade. This understanding of rhetoric as first speech or originary speech as opposed to persuasive speech has been defended by contemporary vichians such as John Schaeffer whose criticism of Aristotelian rhetoric we referred to in chapter three. The significance of rhetoric in Vico's thought as a whole and the way in which it differs from Aristotle's appears as well if we compare the significance of metaphor in Vico and Aristotle.

In Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric, metaphor is a useful instrument for effecting persuasion. It serves its purpose insofar as it provides a means whereby a rhetorician can simplify a line of argument by using an analogy. Metaphor allows us to discover something unknown or new on the basis of something known. Metaphor gives pleasure because it allows the audience to make a discovery and people, says Aristotle enjoy discovering or learning new things. However Aristotle treats of metaphor in the

²⁸Vico, The New Science of Giambattista Vico, #333, p.97.

²⁹Verene, Vico's Science of Imagination, p.178.

third book of his Rhetoric, in other words, in the section on style and disposition not in books one and two which deal with the discovery or invention of arguments. As we saw in chapter three it is with reluctance that Aristotle deals with these issues. He attributes the need to do so largely, though not exclusively, to the depravity of the listeners.

Metaphor plays a much more significant role in Vico's thought. As we said above Vico reverses the devaluation of metaphorical speech one finds in thinkers such as Hobbes. In his attempt to purge speech of ambiguity Hobbes proscribes the use of metaphorical speech. Metaphor represents nothing more than unclear or ambiguous speech. This is a problem that can be solved by technical means, by establishing clear definitions. According to Vico metaphor lies at the root of the human world. Imaginative universals provide the basis for the development of the thinking process. Metaphor for Vico is part of the substance of speech and thought. The view according to which metaphor is simply a figure of speech or an ornament of speech is a perversion or technical deformation of its true essence. The ability to perceive similarities or resemblances between things which appear initially to be dissimilar is a mental capacity that can be fostered only through metaphorical speech and which is destroyed when reason is equated with the strict inferential process of deductive reasoning.

By examining and comparing their understanding of topics and topical reasoning, their understanding of maxims, and their understanding of metaphor, we have seen that there are important differences between Aristotle's approach to rhetoric and Vico's. In all three cases, moreover, the same basic difference emerges. Aristotle's approach to these subjects is based primarily on the possibility of effecting persuasion. He sees them as means to that end. Vico's concern in reference to the same subjects is primarily to understand their origin, the thought processes they evoke and the way the human mind works. Aristotle understands rhetoric in relation to politics as we have seen. Vico, on the contrary, understands rhetoric in relation to epistemology and questions concerning the nature of rationality. Whereas Aristotle treated rhetoric as the rival to political science, Vico understands it as the rival to scientific method and its restricted and abstract

understanding of rationality.

Vico's Influence in Contemporary Thought

In order to clarify the sense in which Vico's thought transforms the significance of rhetoric from political to epistemological questions I would like to refer to the thought of a contemporary proponent of a vichian perspective whose work makes this particularly clear. One of the most prominent contemporary advocates of a vichian understanding of rhetoric is Ernesto Grassi who was referred to in the introduction. In his book entitled Rhetoric as Philosophy, Grassi argues that the philosophy of the humanist period, of which Vico is the outstanding representative, provided a view of philosophical activity which provided an alternative to the abstract view of philosophy represented by Descartes and his progeny. He believes that the spirit behind the Heideggerian critique of metaphysics based on the analytic of dasein is already at work in the humanist enterprise. The title of the book, Rhetoric as Philosophy is intended precisely as an attack on the exclusion of rhetoric from philosophical activity initiated by Plato. However this exclusion was always contested and reached its highest philosophical consciousness in the thought of the Italian humanists.

Grassi's thesis can be summarized in the following way. Since philosophy today, on the basis of the triumph of cartesian science, culminates in formal logic any real criticism must be based on an attempt to draw philosophy away from logic and towards rhetoric. Grassi's argument is not based on a simple advocacy or substitution of one view for another. It is in fact based on a radicalization of modern epistemological analysis, that is an inquiry into the conditions and possibility of knowledge. What such an investigation reveals according to Grassi is that the foundation of philosophy is not logic but rhetoric. In other words the modern quest for ultimate or certain foundations did not go far enough. This is why epistemology has to be radicalized.

Here the debt to Vico is clear. According to Grassi, all critical thought, all deductive logic has its basis or foundation in a "poetic logic". It is only by denying this deeper logic that formal logic can assume priority. According to this view human insight does not come through inference. Inference is not "originary", it must be based on something that cannot be a result of inference. Grassi's answer is that this basis of human insight is based on "invention" grounded in "ingenuity". All thought is originally "metaphoric" or "imagistic". All meaning is originally figurative as opposed to literal. Metaphor is the original form of the interpretive act, it is a logic of discovery. This discovery has two important consequences for Grassi. First, it shows the primacy of topical philosophy over "rational" thought. Secondly, it shows the primacy of rhetorical speech as imagistic and effective speech, and, so the primacy of dialogue over monologue.

Rhetorical speech is recovered at the origin of meaning. This intimate connection between rhetoric and thinking provides a ground for criticizing the view that rhetoric has a practical-technical function of "persuading". Such a view is a rationalistic prejudice based on the view that the influence of feeling and imagination disturbs the clarity of thought. According to Grassi we must reverse the priority between rational, scientific speech and rhetorical speech. Rhetorical speech is originary, it grounds all insights and discoveries and provides the basis for the former. As stated above, rational, demonstrative speech must rest on non-demonstrative grounds because first principles are non-demonstrative. But if the original assertions are non-demonstrable, what is the character of the speech in which we express them. It cannot have an apodictic, demonstrative character, therefore it must be metaphoric. Grassi states the implication of his line of argument in the following way: "Thus the term rhetoric assumes a fundamentally new significance; rhetoric is not, nor can it be the art, the technique of an exterior persuasion. It is rather the speech which is the basis of the rational thought".³⁰

³⁰Ernesto Grassi, Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980). p.20.

What consequences can be drawn from this? What this radicalization of epistemology reveals, according to Grassi, is the partiality or oneness of modern reason. The goal, therefore, is to restore the fullness and concreteness of thinking. This would require us to recognize, for example, that man is both logical and emotional, and that speech must unite both dimensions. This is the insight that humanism preserved. Humanism examined man in his concrete, emotive, historically bound evolution. The human world is created through speech and work. But this speech or language out of which human society develops is imagistic, not argumentative. It is the language created by the poet as orator who defines a historical area with his speech.

The reaction to modern scientific rationality brought about a renewed emphasis on the significance of rhetoric. Despite similarities however, this did not involve a return to the Aristotelian view of rhetoric. As we have seen, according to a Vichian perspective Aristotelian rhetoric already represents the limitation of rhetoric to a technique for persuasion. This perverts the "originary" quality of rhetoric and its more primordial relationship with the nature of speech itself. Rhetoric is organically tied into the whole of cultural existence. It represents the irreducibility of social existence to the criteria of modern scientific rationality.

Chapter six

Rhetoric and Hermeneutics

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer and his criticism of the modern age's increasing submission to the criteria of rationality exemplified in the methodology of the modern natural sciences. Gadamer's criticism takes the form of raising to the level of reflective awareness an experience of understanding and an understanding of experience that have been eclipsed and de-legitimized through the rise of modern science, but that lives on nonetheless in certain intuitive experiences and certain traditional forms of understanding.

I begin to examine Gadamer's conception of understanding by focussing on one of the concrete experiences in which it manifests itself: a conversation. Gadamer himself uses this example and so it provides a good point of entry into his thought. In the following section I extrapolate from Gadamer's conception of a 'productive' and a 'failed' conversation to the way in which both of these manifest themselves in such experiences as the interpretation of art, texts and history. Here, the conversational character of understanding reaches conceptual clarity in two interpretive principles, which Gadamer refers to as the 'hermeneutics of reconstruction' and the 'hermeneutics of integration'. The latter, according to Gadamer, does justice to the historicity of experience and rehabilitates the legitimacy and rationality of tradition, while the former embodies the same deficient understanding of experience at work in the natural sciences.

Focussing on the notion of integration, I examine in the next section how proper understanding, according to Gadamer, includes the notion of 'application'. Here I examine Gadamer's interpretation of Aristotle's practical philosophy. This is important because here the understanding of experience defended by Gadamer is raised to scientific status. I then examine how Gadamer's understanding of practice and practical philosophy are

influenced by the thought of Hegel and Heidegger. Following this, I argue that this understanding of practical philosophy, because it is designed to counter the view of understanding as technique, which arises on the basis of modern scientific reason, goes too far in the other direction by trying to separate "praxis" from "poesis" and that in so doing it differs from Aristotle's view in significant ways. Throughout, the main focus will be on ascertaining the significance of rhetoric in Gadamer's thought. It will be argued that while his understanding of rhetoric provides him with a type of knowledge that cannot be reduced to the criteria of modern science, there is nevertheless a tension between the nature of rhetoric and Gadamer's assimilation of understanding to a conversation.

Gadamer, like Vico, is concerned with the epistemological status of those activities which do not conform to the criteria of the modern scientific method. His own philosophical effort is described in his own words by

the necessity of seeking an epistemological self-understanding which is not based on the credence of the natural sciences and of the ideal of method as it was characteristically called at the beginning of the seventeenth century and as it dominates the research work and our academic activities in the humanities.¹

Like Vico he sees the criteria of rationality of modern science encroaching on fields where it does not apply. His analysis is not based on a type of anti-scientific romanticism. According to Gadamer there is no point in trying to make prescriptions for modern science. Science will always pursue its own logic unimpeded. Gadamer's analysis focuses on something else. It focuses on that which precedes the scientific investigator, something that is "always already" there and constitutes the background to any scientific investigation. This background has to do with the fact that any investigator

¹Hans Georg Gadamer, "Practical Philosophy as a Model for the Human Sciences," trans. James Risser, Research in Phenomenology, 9 (1979): 74.

is a member of a society and is part of a living solidarity that is irreducible to scientific imperatives. Again, in Gadamer's own words:

Where can we find an orientation, a philosophical justification, for a scientific and critical effort which shares the modern ideal of method and yet which does not lose the condition of solidarity with and justification of our practical living?²

It is in his magnum opus Truth and Method that he sets out his epistemological grounding for a view of understanding which opposes the view of understanding as a technique.

Understanding as Conversation

In the forward to the second edition of Truth and Method Gadamer explains what were his goal and concern in writing the work:

I did not intend to produce an art or technique of understanding, in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics. I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodological procedure of the human sciences. Nor was it my aim to investigate the theoretical foundation of work in these fields in order to put my findings to practical ends. If there is any practical consequence of the present investigation, it certainly has nothing to do with an unscientific 'commitment'; instead it is concerned with the 'scientific' integrity of acknowledging the commitment involved in all understanding. My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing.³

Here Gadamer repeats in his own way Hegel's injunction that philosophy is not concerned with edification. Gadamer is not advocating an opposition to modern science but recognizing a resistance, within understanding, to the type of knowing that characterizes

²Hans Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Social Science," Cultural Hermeneutics 2 (1975): 311.

³Hans Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, 2d. ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1988). Foreword, p.xvi.

modern science. In order to explain what he means by understanding Gadamer suggests the example of a conversation. This example comes up at many places throughout his works and he means for us to take it quite literally : to understand means for two people to come to an agreement or, in other words, to find a common ground. It is important to stick with this example and to flesh it out so as to draw out all its implications. What "happens" in a real conversation, according to Gadamer, is known intuitively to anyone who has had the experience. Gadamer raises this intuition to a level of reflective awareness.

In a conversation we are prepared to listen to our counterpart because we are receptive to the claim that what he says exerts on us. Openness to this claim does not mean that we bracket or render inoperative our own opinions or beliefs, since it is only by "risking" our own perspective that the perspective of our counterpart can have any influence on us at all. Risking one's perspective means being open to the possibility that it may be found lacking or inferior. One is not engaged in conversation if one holds on to one's opinions at any cost. Therefore, one's posture in a conversation is neither one of obstinate self-assertion, which would block out the truth claim that is addressed to us, nor is it one of a blissful self-forgetfulness that would try to exclude one's own prejudices. The result is that in a conversation both participants are present but not in an obtrusive manner. In other words the conversation takes on a life of its own. If one can speak at all about self-forgetfulness it arises from attention to the common object, the conversation itself or that which the conversation is about. This description contains the essence of what Gadamer calls a "fusion of horizons". Since this is an important dimension of understanding it is important to describe it further keeping to the example of a conversation.

In a conversation the participants are like two poles of a relation, this relation being the conversation itself. Now it is in the nature of a real conversation that the more understanding occurs the more the relation itself or the conversation is prominent or highlighted. When we understand what someone is saying we are relating what they are

saying to our own views. This constitutes the "give and take" nature of a conversation. The more we understand the less alien our counterpart becomes and this to the point where his particular historical or psychological idiosyncracies recede into the background and do not come into play. The concept of "play" is in fact quite appropriate for explaining what happens here. According to Gadamer the operation of a dialogue is the same as the structure of a game. When a game is being played it takes on a life of its own. The consciousness of the players themselves is not what counts.⁴ Even in the most active of games, sports for example, there is a certain passivity involved in that the players are "taken up" into the game and have to respond to the play. It is the same thing in a conversation. There is a passivity to a real conversation that has to do with being taken up into something common. In a conversation understanding is not 'mine' or 'yours' but 'ours' in that we are transformed into a communion. As Gadamer puts it "To reach an understanding with one's partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one's own point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were".⁵

On the other hand, when a conversation breaks down or cannot even get started, the relation itself disappears and the poles emerge in all their particularity. Under these circumstances we sense that our counterpart has nothing to say to us. The more alien what he says appears to us, the more we try to rescue or salvage understanding by taking refuge in 'interpreting' our counterpart. This means that we no longer relate what he says to ourselves and our opinions, but relate it back to him. What Gadamer means when he says that we interpret our counterpart by relating what he says back to him is that we ascribe the significance of what is put forward to psychological determinants such as one finds, for example, in "ad hominem" arguments (you say that because you're a conservative!).

⁴See Hans Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 66, and Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp.91-99, 345-347, 446.

⁵Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 341.

or to historical determinants (he believed that because of the times he lived in). Therefore to understand someone by 'reconstructing' the historical or psychological basis of his beliefs is a limited type of understanding according to Gadamer. He recognizes that there are circumstances in which something may be so alien that this type of understanding may be the only one available. It is deficient nonetheless. A real conversation, and therefore real understanding, maintains itself between the limits of familiarity and strangeness. It maintains the inviolable distance proper to what is other since this is what first stimulates our interest, yet it maintains familiarity to the extent that we feel that we are being addressed. This is the basis for the sharing in what is common that constitutes understanding.

What Gadamer emphasizes through the example of conversation is true, according to him, for hermeneutics in general. Conversation is a mode of understanding that is a concrete human practice and a fundamental human capacity. Like conversation, hermeneutics or interpretation is a type of practice. In fact, hermeneutics is conversation and therefore embodies the characteristics of a real or a failed conversation.

The hermeneutical experience is concerned with what has been transmitted in tradition. This is what is to be experienced. But tradition is not simply a process that we learn to know and be in command of through experience: it is language, i.e. it expresses itself like a 'Thou'. A 'Thou' is not an object, but stands in a relationship with us. It would be wrong to think that this meant that what is experienced in tradition is to be taken as the meaning of another person, who is a 'Thou' ... Still, the relation to the 'Thou' and the meaning of experience in this case must be capable of contributing to the analysis of the hermeneutical experience. For tradition is a genuine partner in communication, with which we have fellowship as does the 'I' with a 'Thou'.⁶

⁶Ibid., p.321.

Reconstruction vs. Integration

According to Gadamer, understanding as exemplified in conversation is paradigmatic in that it extends to our encounters with such things as art, literature and history in general. When we interpret these we are no less involved in a conversation in which something has addressed us. And just as in a conversation with a person so here also there is the possibility of understanding or lack of understanding. Here what Gadamer refers to in conversation as understanding and lack of understanding take the form of two interpretive principles which he refers to as the hermeneutics of reconstruction and the hermeneutics of integration. What Gadamer calls the hermeneutics of reconstruction corresponds to what was referred to above as a breakdown of conversation, although its proponents see it as a positive interpretive principle. Gadamer sees this view of understanding as the basis for interpretation in various fields. It provides the basis for the interpretation of art stemming from the 'aesthetics of genius' which has its origin in Kantian aesthetics, the interpretation of texts stemming from the 'romantic hermeneutics' of Schleiermacher, and the interpretation of history as found in the work of the historical school (Ranke, Droysen) as well as the epistemology of the human sciences as formulated by Dilthey. There is a unity in all of these founded on a metaphysical principle, a principle that, according to Gadamer, is based on the same assumptions as modern natural science. Before explaining this last point however it is necessary to explain what constitutes understanding according to the hermeneutics of reconstruction.

According to the hermeneutics of reconstruction what it means to understand something is to be able to reconstruct the original conditions of its production or to replace it into its original context. To understand something is to re-experience its genesis, to move back from the product to the life that created it. Here the concepts of experience ("erlebnis"), life, creativity, and expression are key elements of understanding. Because understanding involves a reconstruction of original conditions it necessarily involves a process of self-forgetfulness. This can be clarified by referring to examples in the interpretation of art, texts, and history.

According to the aesthetics of genius art is understood as 'an expression of life', as 'creativity'. It is the sheer expression of productive energy and, as such, it makes no claim to knowledge or truth. The notion of art as 'expression' replaces the notion of art as 'imitation' ("mimesis"), which does make a claim to truth. Art as imitation raises reality into its truth by revealing its essence. Imitation of reality or nature does not mean the production of a second copy but rather recognition of the essence. Gadamer gives the example of mimicry to explain this. When someone mimicks another person he does not reproduce or copy everything about that person but exaggerates a certain feature so as to present something revelatory about the true being of the person. Thus art makes a claim to truth by bringing forth the essence of reality. This truth, whether as art or as dramatic performance speaks to and for a spectator who in recognizing its claim makes it contemporary by applying it to himself.

The aesthetics of genius is different. Here we can see the connection between the concepts of 'life' and 'experience' mentioned above. If one is to reconstruct the experience that created art, one must oneself have a spark of genius within oneself. In other words, there must be a universal connection between individuals which makes this empathic communion of souls possible. Therefore the ability to re-experience is a manifestation of the universal life force that runs through all individuals. The experience of the work of art takes one out of the context of one's own life and relates one to the primordial productivity of life itself. This is why Gadamer says that the metaphysical basis of this form of understanding is pantheism.

Romantic hermeneutics is based on the same principle. According to Schleiermacher, understanding a text is a divinatory act in which one works backward from a production to the creative spirit that engendered it. This presupposes that historical distance can be overcome through empathy. To understand a work is to understand the life of its author. Dilthey will try to transform the assumptions of romantic hermeneutics into a methodology of the human sciences in opposition to the methodology of the natural sciences. Contrary to natural science in which the subject and object of investigation are

different. in history 'like studies like' or spirit examines itself. Dilthey tries to use psychology as a basis for the understanding of history. But while psychology may be useful in order to explain the structure of continuity within the experience of an individual life it cannot easily be transferred to the level of historical continuity. In history what is dealt with are events and episodes which were not experienced by the investigator. According to Dilthey, however, empathic understanding is possible because what asserts itself in history is the unfolding of 'life', the spiritual reality which unites all individuals. Thus, here again one finds the pantheism that was the presupposition of the aesthetics of genius.

What is of real importance here for Gadamer is that this methodology of the human sciences is really no different from that of the natural sciences. While the emphasis on life and empathic understanding may have been understood to be in opposition to the cold rationalism of modern science. Gadamer notes important similarities. Just as modern natural science is alienated or distanced from its object of study, nature, so are the historical sciences alienated from what they study. They also take the stance of the spectator or the observer. According to the 'historical school' the past is not a living part of the present. History is the study of objects or data from which the past can be reconstructed. The primary datum here is 'experience' which can be just as certain and just as verifiable as the data of the natural sciences and therefore just as subject to methodical investigation.

In fact it is Gadamer's contention that modern natural science and reconstructive hermeneutics have fundamentally the same understanding of experience. In modern experimental science experience is entirely oriented towards its perfection by science. A valid experience is essentially one that is repeatable. Experience is a 'result' that can be verified and confirmed. This view of experience also holds for reconstructive hermeneutics according to which understanding is based precisely on the capacity to re-create or repeat an experience. There is however a mode of experience and understanding that resists this reduction to the model of modern science and which Gadamer refers to

as the hermeneutics of integration.

The hermeneutics of integration exemplifies the type of understanding that takes place in a productive conversation. Just as in a conversation one does not try to reconstruct the presuppositions of the other's assertions, so in interpreting art, a text, history, one does not try to re-create an unmediated presence. Understanding is always 'mediated' according to Gadamer in that we can never abandon our own perspective. Understanding is, as he calls it, "thoughtful mediation with contemporary life". Here understanding does not mean to 'reconstruct' but to 'integrate'. But to integrate means that one can never totally forget oneself and that all understanding is a form of self knowledge. It means that what is familiar and common is "always already" there. But this does not mean that something new cannot address us. To integrate something means also that something new has previously addressed us. An encounter with a text or a work of art does not transport us into an alien world, rather we achieve a better self understanding in and through it. To understand is to preserve the continuity of existence through the encounter with otherness. Gadamer uses the expression 'contemporaneity' to explain how something attains full presence only through our encounter with it.⁷ This can be explained by referring again to the example given above of a dramatic performance.

A play does not exist independently of its performance and of spectators. Gadamer refers to this phenomenon as 'aesthetic non-differentiation'. This means that we cannot differentiate a work from its representation since only in representation does it attain full presence. Just as a game only exists in being played so a play only exists in being performed. And what attains presence here is a truth that speaks to the spectator, that he

⁷For Gadamer it is of the essence of experience that something new addresses us. But to recognise newness is at the same time to recognise what is familiar and already given. Gadamer explains this in the following way : "There is always a world already interpreted, already organized in its basic relations, into which experience steps as something new, upsetting what has led our expectations and undergoing reorganization itself in the upheaval". Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p.15.

integrates so that it becomes part of his continual self-understanding. Gadamer uses the example of a performance of a tragedy to explain this:

The tragic emotion is not a response to the tragic course of events as such or to the justice of the fate that overtakes the hero, but to the metaphysical order of being that is true for all. To see that 'this is how it is' is a kind of self knowledge for the spectator, who emerges with new insight from the illusions in which he lives.⁴

Now what is true for the experience of art is true for other forms of understanding as well. Gadamer often refers to the exemplary significance of legal and theological hermeneutics to emphasize the nature of understanding. Law and scripture are not there to be understood historically as they were in their originality but are to be made concretely present through their application. Just as law cannot be separated from its manifestation in particular circumstances and concrete decisions, so scripture only attains its full significance in the act of preaching. Through the sermon, for example, the redeeming act of Christ is experienced as something present, not as something past.

This view of the 'experience of understanding' contrasts with the one underlying modern science and modern hermeneutics and renders it questionable or at least reveals deficiencies. It restores to the notion of experience the element of 'historicality' that is abolished in the latter through its emphasis on 'repeatability'. Doing justice to the historicality of understanding means showing how time is not something that has to be overcome in order to understand properly. Once this is acknowledged it becomes possible to do justice to the rationality of tradition and prejudices. It is important to understand what Gadamer means by these so as not to confuse them with a romantic opposition to the enlightenment.

⁴Ibid., p.117.

According to Gadamer romanticism shares the enlightenment's understanding of history but merely reverses the evaluation of it. It accepts the conquest of 'mythos' by 'logos' but mourns the loss. As Gadamer puts it: "In contrast to the enlightenment's belief in perfection, which thinks in terms of the freedom from superstition and the prejudices of the past, we now find that olden times, the world of myth, unreflective life, not yet analyzed away by consciousness".⁹ In fact romanticism is the mirror image of the enlightenment :

In fact the presupposition of a mysterious darkness in which there was a mythical collective consciousness that preceded all thought is just as dogmatic and abstract as that of a state of perfection achieved by a total enlightenment or that of absolute knowledge.¹⁰

One must be careful therefore not to equate prejudice and tradition as Gadamer understands them with the notion of a pre-discursive, unreflective level of reality. Prejudice, for example, is a legal term referring to a judgment given in advance, a provisional verdict, and corresponds to Gadamer's contention that a certain perspective always precedes us. One should not confuse the notion of 'judgment in advance' with the notion of 'before judgment', which expresses some pre-reflective level of reality similar to the sub-conscious. For Gadamer prejudices do not have the character of a reality that determines our understanding without our ever being able to do anything about it. There are good and bad prejudices, ones that foster understanding and ones that hinder it. Gadamer's point is that we only discover this when we try to understand. Similarly tradition is not something that imposes itself obstinately to the point of obscuring reason. Its transmission and appropriation are based on making it meaningful for ourselves. Here the example of the sermon can be used again. Christian teaching and the Christian tradition become effective through making the Christian message meaningful for us. This

⁹Ibid., p.242.

¹⁰Ibid., p.243.

means applying it to our own lives and this occurs through the sermon. The alternatives of modernizing the church or returning to the good old days reflect the abstract dichotomy of enlightenment and romanticism. Tradition is never simply given. As Gadamer puts it there is always a tension which constitutes the true hermeneutical task :

The place between strangeness and familiarity that a transmitted text has for us is that intermediate place between being an historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition. The true home of hermeneutics is in this intermediate area.¹¹

Here the notion of 'application' acquires its centrality. Application is not something that follows after understanding but is an inherent part of understanding. It is the medium through which we integrate and share in something common. It is important therefore to examine what Gadamer means by application.

The Significance of Application

Gadamer's references to legal and theological hermeneutics add another dimension to his view of understanding because they introduce a 'theoretical' component that does not exist in the experience of art. One cannot separate their self understanding as 'theory' from their 'practice' or 'what they do'. They are paradigmatic of a type of science that serves as a counterexample to the modern separation of theory and practice which views practice as the 'application' of theory:

As far as hermeneutics is concerned it is quite to the point to confront the separation of theory from practice enailed in the modern notion of theoretical science and practical technical application with an idea of knowledge that has taken the opposite path leading from practice toward making itself aware of itself theoretically.¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp.262-263.

¹²Hans Georg Gadamer, Reason in the Age of Science trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: MIT Press, 1981), p.131.

With this in mind Gadamer turns to the practical philosophy of Aristotle because it, like legal and theological hermeneutics, embodies the above mentioned relationship between theory and practice and therefore provides an understanding of application that does not reduce practice to technical application: "Practical philosophy functions in our context only as an example of the tradition of this kind of knowing that does not correspond to the modern notion of method".¹³

Gadamer develops this insight through a reflection on the relationship between practical philosophy and the virtue of "phronesis". What is of importance to Gadamer is the methodological character of Aristotle's practical philosophy. Practical philosophy is not knowledge of the right thing to do in a given situation. In other words practical philosophy cannot be reduced to the virtue of "phronesis". The question however is whether, as theory, it is teachable or applicable in a special way. According to Gadamer the nature of its teaching is quite specific. It must arise from practice and relate back to it. It demands of the one learning it the same relation to practice as the one teaching it and this poses a challenge:

Thus it is essential that philosophical ethics have the right approach, so that it does not usurp the place of moral consciousness and yet does not seek either a purely theoretical and historical knowledge but, by outlining phenomena, helps moral consciousness to attain clarity concerning itself. This asks a lot of the person who is to receive this help, namely the person listening to Aristotle's lecture. He must be mature enough not to ask of his instruction anything other than it can give. To put it positively he must himself already have developed through education and practice an attitude in himself that he is constantly concerned to preserve in the actual situations of his life and to prove it through right behavior.¹⁴

¹³Ibid., p.118.

¹⁴Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp.279-280.

Practical philosophy is the cultivation of practice through a theoretically heightened awareness of it. By helping moral consciousness attain clarity concerning itself, its rules must be made concrete. In other words practical philosophy can only illuminate normative viewpoints if it sees them in their concreteness and recognizes their validity. Because of the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice Gadamer notes that in order to truly understand what is meant by practice one must not contrast it with "theoria" but with "poesis":

The most important delimitation that the concept of practice undergoes with Aristotle is not vis à vis theoretical science, which itself emerges from the enormous range of life possibilities as a type of the most noble practice. Rather it is the delimitation over against production based on knowledge, the poesis that provides the economic basis for the life of the polis.¹⁵

Practical philosophy as theory or knowledge of the universal raises no independent claim to validity but must be transformed into concrete application. Through application, understanding always has the character of an event, a growth in self awareness through which new experiences are taken up into the continuity of one's life. And since it is based on integrating and making contemporary what is passed on and shared it serves as an example of a science that does justice to the historicity of understanding and the legitimacy of tradition: "It is even a mark of the superiority of classical ethics over the moral philosophy of the modern period that it justifies the transition of ethics into politics ... by the indispensability of tradition".¹⁶ Aristotle's practical philosophy serves as an historical counter-example to the standards of rationality in modern science and, in so doing, gives legitimacy to forms of understanding that in the wake of modern science have been rejected as unscientific.

¹⁵Gadamer, Reason in the Age of Science, p.91.

¹⁶Gadamer, Truth and Method, p.249.

Gadamer understands rhetoric in a similar way. The significance of rhetoric in Gadamer's thought relates also to his struggle against what he calls the one-sidedness of modernity. This one-sidedness expresses itself in two ways : misunderstanding self-consciousness as self-assertion, and reducing understanding to a form of calculating that gains disposition over things. We have seen how important aspects of Gadamer's thought such as his notions of conversation and play as paradigmatic of understanding are opposed to this reduction. Once again, in dialogue what comes into being is the same structure that comes into being in a game and what is manifest in a game is not the self-consciousness of the players but the game itself. The same basic characteristics of understanding which Gadamer finds at work in conversation and play provide the foundation for his appreciation of the leading concepts of the humanist tradition such as judgment, taste and "sensus communis". By examining Gadamer's understanding of this last concept, which he gets from Vico, we are afforded a good point of access to his understanding of rhetoric.

"Sensus communis", as we saw in the last chapter, refers to a sense of the common, a social sense. It cannot be transmitted methodically or technically. It is a concrete, participatory type of understanding. When Gadamer discusses it he associates it with the notion of the concrete universal:

The most important thing in education is still something else, the training in the *sensus communis*, which is not nourished on the true, but on the probable. The main thing for our purposes is that *sensus communis* here obviously does not mean only that general faculty in all men, but the sense that founds community. According to Vico, what gives the human will its direction is not the abstract generality of reason, but the concrete generality that represents the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race. Hence the development of this sense of the community is of prime importance for living.¹⁷

¹⁷Ibid., p.21.

The significance of rhetoric is discussed in relation to "sensus communis". Because "sensus communis" has a social significance as the sense that founds community and rhetoric actualises "sensus communis" in speech, Gadamer, like Vico, attributes to rhetoric a significance which goes beyond the goal of achieving persuasion :

But what Vico means goes far beyond the defense of rhetorical persuasion. The old Aristotelian distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge is operative here - a distinction which cannot be reduced to that between the true and the probable. Practical knowledge, *phronesis*, is another kind of knowledge. Primarily, it means that it is directed towards the concrete situation.¹⁸

Although Gadamer attributes the source of the concept of "sensus communis" to the Roman tradition of public and social life he relates it as well to Aristotle's notion of "phronesis" as the citation makes clear. Therefore, "sensus communis", rhetoric, and "phronesis" all have a similar significance for Gadamer. They are paradigmatic of a type of knowledge directed towards the concrete. More importantly they all arise out of the concrete. What this means is clarified by a comparison of rhetoric and hermeneutics both of which have a similar structure according to Gadamer.

The existence of rhetoric like the existence of hermeneutics attests to fundamental experiences of life. Both rhetoric and hermeneutics are types of "praxis" or life achievements before they are "arts" or techniques:

For it is clear that rhetoric is not mere theory of forms of speech and persuasion; rather, it can develop out of a native talent for practical mastery, without any theoretical reflection about ways and means. Likewise, the art of understanding, whatever its ways and means may be, is not dependent on an explicit awareness of the rules that guide and govern it. It builds, as does rhetoric, on a natural power that everyone possesses to some degree ... In both rhetoric and hermeneutics, then, theory is subsequent to that out of which it

¹⁸Ibid.

is abstracted: that is, to praxis.¹⁹

According to Gadamer the tradition of practical philosophy stemming from Aristotle is the embodiment of a notion of understanding as thoughtful mediation which by integrating tradition establishes a commonly shared reality. In other words Aristotelian practical philosophy embodies the notions of integration and application discussed above. In order to clarify Gadamer's understanding of practice and practical philosophy, as well as his understanding of Aristotle as set out so far, it is important to examine the influence of both Hegel and Heidegger on his thought. Since Gadamer clearly acknowledges their influence it is important to assess the impact they have on his views.

The Influence of Hegel and Heidegger

The understanding of practice, which Gadamer makes the basis of his philosophical hermeneutics and which he opposes to the technical self understanding of modern science, is influenced by his reading of Hegel. In Hegel's thought he finds the relationship between the universal and the particular that represents the basis of the hermeneutic experience of application. This relationship takes the form of what Hegel calls the concrete universal. Gadamer acknowledges this:

In the end it was the great theme of the concretization of the universal that I learned to think of as the basic experience of hermeneutics, and so I entered once again the neighborhood of the great teacher of concrete universality, Hegel.²⁰

The notion of concrete universality is part of Hegel's philosophy of 'objective spirit'. Here Gadamer sees in Hegel an attempt to overcome the abstractions of modern subjectivism and reflective philosophy with their emphasis on individual consciousness.

¹⁹Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, pp.20-21.

²⁰Gadamer, Reason in the Age of Science, p.49.

Through the notion of objective spirit Hegel argues that the foundation of life in society is not the particular consciousness of the individual but a common and normative reality. Institutions such as the family, society, the State, each represent an overcoming and surpassing of subjective spirit, of individual consciousness, of the particular, in the direction of the common or the universal. In order to understand the significance of this process it is necessary to examine Hegel's notion of "Bildung".

Gadamer examines Hegel's notion of "Bildung" at the beginning of Truth and Method along with the notion of "sensus communis" which we have already examined. "Bildung" which Gadamer claims is perhaps the most important idea of the eighteenth century is also, according to him, the source from which the human sciences of the nineteenth century draw their life. "Bildung" can be translated as 'culture' if one understands by this a process of growth and formation. While this emphasis on growth may be similar to the ancient Greek notion of "physis", it should be noted that "Bildung" represents the properly human way of developing, which in modernity represents a break with nature as we saw when examining the thought of Hobbes in chapter four. "Bildung" is therefore opposed to nature. This opposition takes the form of a break with the immediacy of nature. To be human means to be able to raise oneself above the immediate and the particular to the universal. "Bildung" represents the domain of human practice. Practice as defined by Gadamer is "a way of life, a life that is led in a certain way". So human practice or "bildung" is a way of life directed toward the universal. Whoever is not able to transcend his own particularity is 'unformed'.

This may take a number of forms, from labour, which as obstructed desire has already transcended the sphere of immediate satisfaction, to the stabilization of norms of conduct, to the cult of the dead.²¹ All of this is human practice and therefore "bildung"

²¹There are important similarities between the notion of "Bildung" and Vico's notion of the "mondo civile" or world of man. It will be remembered that the cult of the dead represents for Vico one of the three basic components of "sensus communis". Gadamer also attributes great significance to the cult of the dead. See the essay "What is practice?" in Reason in the Age of

represents the essential determination of human rationality as a whole. There is no real distinction between theory and practice here. Theory itself is a form of practice or formation: "Hence all theoretical Bildung ... is merely the continuation of a process of Bildung which begins much earlier".²² Philosophy itself is "bildung" inasmuch as it is a way of life brought to self awareness or as Hegel puts it in the preface to the Philosophy of Right: "philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thought".

Now what is significant about "bildung" and practice as described above is the way in which the universal manifests itself or how it is applied. This points to the connection between practice and objective spirit. "Bildung" is not achieved in the manner of a technical construction or 'external reflection' but grows out of an 'inner process' of cultivation. In "bildung" that through which one is formed is made one's own, it is absorbed or integrated so as to constitute a growth of self awareness within the continuity of life. In other words, the universal is not confronted as something external but through it we encounter ourselves. The common reality expressed through the concrete universal is not the abstract commonality of a genus but the concrete substance of self consciousness. It is in this way that we 'grow into' the language and customs of a people.

To confront the universal as something external or alien is referred to by Hegel as 'positivity'. Here the universal is applied in a technical manner as Gadamer would say. It is clearer now how Gadamer's notion of hermeneutics, his conception of practice, and his understanding of integration, mediation, and application are influenced by his reading of Hegel's notion of "bildung" and objective spirit. He states explicitly that the hermeneutics of integration, described above, is the sound core of Hegel's thought.²³ However because Gadamer wants to do justice to the historicity of understanding he

Science, pp.69-87.

²²Gadamer, Truth and Method, p.15.

²³See *Ibid.*, pp.146-150.

does not follow Hegel all the way. That is to say, he does not take the step from objective to absolute spirit. According to Gadamer the totality of meaning in history is never the meaning of the totality of history. In line with this he views himself as a proponent of the 'bad infinite', the philosophical justification of which he finds in Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity. It is important therefore to turn to the influence of Heidegger on Gadamer's thought.

As is the case with Hegel, Gadamer refers explicitly to Heidegger's influence on his thought, especially as regards his turn to Aristotle :

In considering the structure of the hermeneutic process I have explicitly referred to the Aristotelian analysis of phronesis. Basically I have followed here a line that Heidegger began ... when he was concerned with the hermeneutics of facticity ...²⁴

Heidegger's explanation of understanding as a fundamental mode of 'being in the world' is taken over by Gadamer in relation to the understanding of tradition. The existential structure of 'Dasein' is the clue to explaining the rationality of tradition.

Heidegger's account of the nature of understanding occurs in section 31 of Being and Time. It is part of the fundamental analysis of 'being in'. Understanding is described there as 'equiprimordial' with 'state of mind' as a constitutive mode of the being of the 'there'. Understanding is not the abstract correspondence of a subject and an object but rather a fundamental way of being in the world. It cannot be treated in a 'present at hand' manner. Understanding is the concrete manifestation of dasein's 'spatiality', its 'there'. 'State of mind' and 'understanding' constitute dasein's space. Both of these disclose dasein's possibilities. They are projective insofar as dasein is 'always already' involved in a world of concern and care which is determinative for it. As Gadamer puts it: "Everything that makes possible and limits the project of There-being precedes it.

²⁴Ibid., p.489.

absolutely".²⁵ In understanding *dasein* 'throws itself' into the 'for the sake of which'. Understanding makes up *dasein*'s sight. Its possibilities are not based on a liberty of indifference but are traced out in advance. Heidegger opposes this to a notion of understanding considered as something present at hand which he regards as a derivative mode of understanding : "By showing how all sight is grounded primarily in understanding (the circumspection of concern is understanding as common sense) we have deprived pure intuition of its priority ...".²⁶ Interpretation works out these possibilities by showing how things appear 'as' something. All understanding interprets and we see something 'as' something because of the totality of involvements of which it is part.

Now this totality is not something thematic but has to do with what is true in advance: fore-having, fore-conception, fore-sight. Thus, interpretation operates within that which it understands. This is the essence of the 'hermeneutic circle'. Gadamer applies Heidegger's notion of the projective character of understanding to the being of tradition where it appears in his notion that 'prejudices' constitute the basis of understanding. As noted above 'prejudice' refers to a preliminary verdict and therefore discloses in advance the possibilities for understanding. Prejudices are 'always already' there in advance influencing what is to be investigated and the way in which it is seen. It is impossible to break free from them because they anticipate in advance the totality of our involvements. Heidegger especially influences Gadamer's notion that understanding is what we are, it is our way of life, and therefore undercuts the abstract distinction between theory and practice. To understand is always to be involved in a concerned manner.

We noted earlier the influence of Vico's notion of "sensus communis" on Gadamer's understanding of rhetoric. Rhetoric is seen as more than simply a means of achieving persuasion. Heidegger also understands rhetoric as representing something more

²⁵Ibid., p.234.

²⁶Martin Heidegger, Being and Time trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 187.

fundamental than the means of effecting persuasion. He too therefore seems to have influenced Gadamer's conception of rhetoric. In Being and Time Heidegger refers to Aristotle's analysis of rhetoric in relation to his analysis of "being with" :

Aristotle investigates the affects in the second book of his Rhetoric. Contrary to the traditional orientation according to which rhetoric is conceived as the kind of thing we 'learn in school', this work of Aristotle must be taken as the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of being with one another. Publicness as the kind of being which belongs to the 'they', not only has in general its own way of having a mood, but needs moods and 'makes' them for itself. It is into such a mood and out of such a mood that the orator speaks. He must understand the possibilities of moods in order to rouse them and guide them aright.²⁷

This understanding of rhetoric as an expression of our "being with one another" seems quite similar to Vico's understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and "sensus communis". Heidegger's understanding of rhetoric as different from the kind of thing we learn in school seems to purify it from any admixture of the technical. Here the doctrine of the "topoi", or commonplaces, which in Aristotle does carry a sense of being technical devices to a certain extent, seems to be overshadowed by the more fundamental 'spatiality' of dasein.

Gadamer approaches rhetoric in a similar manner as we have seen already. Here we can turn once again to the connection between rhetoric and hermeneutics. Rhetoric expresses a deep sense of what we have in common. Both rhetoric and hermeneutics represent a communicative and a performative ability through which people live together and mediate the tradition in which they stand. In fact it is the ancient practice of rhetoric that evokes for us the existence of the hermeneutic circle:

²⁷Ibid., p.178.

Whoever wants to understand something already brings along something that anticipatorily joins him with what he wants to understand - a sustaining agreement. Thus the orator always has to link up with something like this if his persuading and convincing in disputed questions is to succeed.²⁸

Like hermeneutics, rhetoric is ubiquitous because it refers to a natural human capacity. As we said earlier its 'theory' is subsequent to its 'practice' and what its practice attests to is the fundamentally linguistic nature of our being in the world. Thus Gadamer says of Aristotle's Rhetoric that it "presents more a philosophy of human life as determined by speech than a technical doctrine about the art of speaking".²⁹ Like Heidegger, Gadamer believes that the technical aspects of rhetoric are a secondary manifestation of a more fundamental type of activity and understanding. Thus stylistic devices such as metaphor already presuppose the more fundamental 'metaphoricity' of language itself and the former represents a reification of the latter.

For only a grammar that is based on logic will distinguish between the real and the metaphorical meaning of a word. What originally constituted the basis of the life of language and made up its logical productivity, the spontaneous and inventive seeking out of similarities by means of which it is possible to order things, is now pushed to the side and instrumentalized into a rhetorical figure called metaphor.³⁰

Both hermeneutics and rhetoric help join the experience of science to our own universal and human experience of life. They cannot be eliminated by the logic of science:

²⁸Gadamer, Reason in the Age of Science, p.136.

²⁹Ibid., p.119.

³⁰Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp.391-392. Here again Gadamer is quite similar to Vico. The latter also emphasizes, as we have seen, the logical productivity of metaphor.

the ubiquity of rhetoric indeed is unlimited. Only through it is science a sociological factor of life, for all the representations of science that are directed beyond the mere narrow circle of specialists ... owe their effectiveness to the rhetorical element they contain ... There can be no doubt, then about the fundamental function of rhetoric within social life. But one may go further, in view of the ubiquity of rhetoric, to defend the primordial claims of rhetoric over against modern science, remembering that all science that would wish to be of practical usefulness at all is dependent on it.³¹

In the thought of Hegel and Heidegger Gadamer finds support for his defense of the rationality of tradition against the method of modern natural science. Both the notion of objective spirit and the analytic of *dasein* embody forms of understanding that are irreducible to a technical conception of practice. What Hegel calls 'positivity' and Heidegger calls 'present at hand' are defective forms of understanding that resemble the defects that Gadamer finds in reconstructive hermeneutics. They all represent a technical, external, abstract view of understanding. Real understanding embodies a conception of practice as a way of life and as the participation in something common: tradition, objective spirit, being with ("Mitscin").

In what follows I will argue that Gadamer's conception of practice, as influenced by Vico, Hegel, and Heidegger is based on a rigid separation between "praxis" and "poesis". This influences Gadamer's understanding of Aristotle's practical philosophy. While Aristotle clearly draws a distinction between "praxis" and "poesis" it seems to be a peculiarly modern concern to ground this distinction by drawing a transcendental distinction between the two. I will refer back to the examination of Aristotle's practical philosophy in chapter two in order to suggest that it is not as homogeneously opposed to "poesis" as Gadamer's analysis might suggest and I will focus especially on the relationship between the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics, which Gadamer himself focuses on.

³¹Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p.24.

In order to do this we must keep in mind his struggle against what he calls the one-sided procedures of modernity. This one-sidedness expresses itself in two ways as we have seen: misunderstanding self-consciousness as self-assertion, and reducing understanding to a form of calculating that gains disposition over things. As part of this reaction Gadamer asserts the legitimacy of ways of knowing that are participatory in nature and that do not impose an external standard of intelligibility. These ways of understanding, which we have examined above, have in common a resistance to a way of knowing based on the model of technical application.

This understanding of practice informs Gadamer's turn to Aristotle's practical philosophy and his understanding of "phronesis" as particular. It is the separation of "praxis" from "techne" that Gadamer finds significant:

In the critical paragraphs of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle rejects the ideal of a unified (or molar) method by insisting on the special preconditions for theorizing on practical and political matters ... In my own eyes, the great merit of Aristotle was that he anticipated the impasse of our scientific culture by his description of theoretical knowledge and technical skills.³²

As mentioned above, Gadamer is led to Aristotle's practical philosophy because it represents a type of scientific knowing that is irreducible to the scientific standards of modern science. We also noted that, according to Gadamer "praxis" is to be distinguished not so much from "theoria" as from "poesis". This interest leads Gadamer to inquire into the status of the *Politics* and its relationship to the *Nicomachean Ethics* because he notices that there is a shift in emphasis from the one work to the other, a shift from "praxis" to "poesis" :

A separate investigation would be necessary to establish more precisely the locus of Aristotle's politics within the theory of scientific knowing. In the treatise called the *Politics* we find no methodological reflection, evidently

³²Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Social Science," *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2: 312.

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because the beginning of the Nicomachean Ethics is conceived of as the general methodological introduction to the whole of politics. The conclusion of the Nicomachean Ethics, which makes the transition to politics, takes up this theme again explicitly. Of course the version of the Politics that we have is not very well connected to this transition. Hence one might well question the extent to which this treatise on the polis is subject to particular requirements of its own field of inquiry - requirements that are not the general ones of practical philosophy as such. For it is clear that the concern in this political treatise is lawgiving. The act of lawgiving, however, is certainly very different from anything in political or juridical decision making, both of which are confronted with concrete cases. In the Nicomachean Ethics 1141b the art of lawgiving is explicitly distinguished from the other applications of political reason.³³

When Gadamer discusses Aristotle's practical philosophy he draws especially from the Nicomachean Ethics. There he finds a treatment of questions relating to the problem of application and the significance of the concrete case, matters that concern hermeneutics as well. As noted earlier, Gadamer sees similarities between "phronesis" and legal and theological hermeneutics because in all three fields the relationship between knowledge of the universal and the particular cannot be reduced to a matter of technical application. This hermeneutic concern helps explain his own focus on decision-making rather than on lawgiving in Aristotle. The latter is much closer to "techne" and "poesis" than to "praxis". Instead of focussing on the making of laws and citizens Gadamer focusses on the account of political reasoning given in book six of the Nicomachean Ethics where questions of equity and the need to understand particulars are dealt with.

That there is a difference between the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics is beyond question and this difference clearly has to do with the more technical character of the Politics. However because Gadamer's conception of "praxis", which develops in reaction to modern science, is purified from any element of "poesis", he downplays, I suggest, the

³³Hans Georg Gadamer, The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy translated and with an introduction and annotation by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp.168-169.

significance of the Politics in Aristotle's practical philosophy. It might be more correct to say that he recognizes the difference between the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics but does not examine how they might be related apart from the reference he makes, noted above, to the indispensability of tradition in understanding the passage from one to the other. Gadamer is correct when he suggests that the science of legislation is more technical than the science of virtuous activity. Nevertheless the point being made here is that the former is inextricably bound to the latter. The examination of Aristotle conducted earlier served to make the point that there are important connections between "poesis" and "praxis" insofar as the science of legislation, as the most authoritative science, can provide for the coming into being of the basic requirements for the exercise of the moral virtues and even "phronesis" itself.

The same is true, as we have seen, for the practice of rhetoric. Legislation can influence the character of rhetoric according to Aristotle. However, just as with his analysis of practice in general, Gadamer's analysis of rhetoric tries to preserve it from any admixture of the technical. This leads to an important characteristic of Gadamer's thought. To see what this is though we must draw together the themes of this chapter and compare his understanding of rhetoric to his notion of understanding as exemplified in dialogue or conversation, which is where we began. We began this chapter with Gadamer's own example of a conversation in order to explain the nature of understanding. We then extended it in such a way that it provided a model for the rehabilitation of a notion of understanding exemplified as well in the practice of rhetoric. Insofar as the goal was to awaken us to a fundamental experience of human understanding that could not be reduced to a technique the example of dialogue and the example of rhetoric had something fundamental in common.

However, the similarities between conversation and rhetoric cannot obscure the differences. We have seen already in our study of Aristotle's Rhetoric that rhetoric is public speech and that public speech operates under certain constraints that cannot be abolished or overcome. Gadamer, despite his defense of rhetoric, shows an awareness of

the same problem. Gadamer finds the most concrete examples of understanding as conversation in the platonic dialogues. It is the platonic Socrates, in discussion with his interlocutors, who exemplifies the logical structure of openness, which defines real understanding. This openness, according to Gadamer, has the structure of a question. The question opens up the being of the thing to be investigated. In order to ask questions one must truly want to know. This presupposes knowing that one does not know or knowledge of one's ignorance, which is exemplified by Socrates. Therefore a true dialogue proceeds by question and answer. This living conversation is the model of platonic dialectic.

But the structure of a dialogue is not the same as the structure of rhetoric. Here it will help to return to Heidegger's understanding of rhetoric and to reflect on something that was not brought into view when we first examined it. As we have seen, according to Heidegger, Aristotle's Rhetoric provides the first systematic hermeneutic of the everyday. When we argued above that Gadamer's view of rhetoric followed Heidegger's we focussed on the relation with hermeneutics and how this could not be reduced to a technical notion of understanding. Here, however, what is important is understanding what is meant by the expression 'everyday'.

Everydayness is what Heidegger refers to as the mode of *dasein*'s 'being with others'. He describes this everyday mode of being with others as the mode of the 'they' or 'publicness'. This is a mode of 'inauthentic' existence according to Heidegger. Inauthenticity is, according to Heidegger, a fundamental existential structure and therefore he does not use it in a derogatory sense. For the most part all our worldly involvements partake of the mode of publicness. Our understanding is usually one that comports itself in relation with the mode of being of the 'they'. We are 'delivered over' to this way of being. It constitutes our 'thrownness'. Communication in this mode takes the form of what Heidegger calls idle talk ("Gerede"). Again Heidegger does not mean this in a derogatory sense. In the mode of publicness "*dasein*" communicates in such a way that what is talked about is not really disclosed. There is a common sense or taken-for-grantedness

to public discussion that does not involve any deep probing into what is talked about. Idle talk is not speech that seeks to distort reality or deceive people but neither is it speech that discloses or on the basis of which a real understanding takes place. Idle talk can take the form of gossip, clichés, appeals to what "everybody should know", sports talk, ... etc. All true understanding defines itself against this background. Rhetoric also is the discourse of the 'they' and therefore of publicness and inauthenticity.

It is clear that measured against the model of a real conversation rhetoric comes up short. Dialogue is guided by openness and proceeds through question and answer. Rhetoric is not guided by the logic of question and answer, nor by awareness of one's own ignorance. Although the rhetorician must understand his audience, and this type of understanding represents a hermeneutic experience different from the model of scientific method, the rhetorician knows beforehand what he wants to say and where he is going. This difference between dialectic and rhetoric comes out clearly in Gadamer's discussion of platonic dialectic:

When Plato says that usually we are content with that which the means of presentation bring to the fore because for the most part our "bad upbringing" has left us unused to seeking the real thing itself, he is referring to the whole realm of everyday experience within which we find ourselves under way, trusting what everybody says and the opinions and points of view which everybody has.³⁴

It is precisely these opinions that provide the basis for rhetorical argumentation. According to Gadamer, Socratic questioning was "based on the suspicion that he who says something does not always know what he is saying and that it was precisely the art of rhetoric and the general acceptance of mere opinions which made this ignorance dangerous".³⁵

³⁴Hans Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* translated and with an introduction by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp.113-114.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp.122-123.

Therefore, both Heidegger's and Gadamer's accounts of rhetoric remind us of the Aristotelian view that rhetoric argues on the basis of "endoxai" or reputable opinions. "Endoxai" correspond to what Heidegger means by "publicness", "inauthenticity" and "idle talk". There is however an important difference between Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric and that of Gadamer and Heidegger. Here we come to that important characteristic of Gadamer's thought mentioned earlier. Gadamer, following Heidegger, seems to see rhetoric in terms of the existential structure of everydayness. These structures cannot be improved in any way. Because Gadamer tends to understand "praxis" as a type of understanding which can only be destroyed by "techne", rhetoric as a form of "praxis" cannot be improved through any type of technical intervention. Any corrective to rhetoric can only come from a higher or more authentic type of "praxis". I suggest that this helps explain why Gadamer views the improvement of rhetoric solely in relation to dialectic. In other words the corrective to inauthentic speech is to be found in authentic speech.

Aristotle, on the other hand, does not seem to be as pessimistic about the possibilities for improvement. He understands rhetoric not only in relation to dialectic but also in relation to political science and to that dimension of it concerned with legislation. Legislation, as we saw, can improve the character rhetoric. Similarly the good rhetorician, although remaining within the realm of opinions can nevertheless clarify them and improve the character of the judgments based upon them. To summarize : Gadamer sees the corrective to rhetoric in dialectic or genuine conversation, not in legislation as does Aristotle. Only the true dialectician can carry out a genuine foundation for rhetoric according to Gadamer, whereas Aristotle looks also to the practical wisdom of the legislator and the statesman-rhetorician. We will come back to this in chapter eight when we examine Plato's view of rhetoric in the Gorgias. Before doing this however, let us examine the views of a thinker in whose opinion publicness can in fact be reconciled with authenticity, a thinker who views rhetoric within the paradigm of the Enlightenment, Jürgen Habermas.

Chapter 7

Rhetoric and Communicative Action

Introduction

Despite the fact that Hobbes reduces the complexity of political problems to historical problems admitting of resolution through the proper application of method, there remains nonetheless a spirit of compromise and moderation that informs his understanding and analysis of human affairs. According to Hobbes the self evidentness of the need to convert political questions into technical ones is grounded ultimately in the conflict of the passions. The fear of violent death provides the ordering principle of political life. What this means is that reason is, and remains for Hobbes, the servant of the passions. He does not attempt to sever reason from the passions because the passions provide steadiness to reason by guiding it to some end which should be the satisfaction of some desire within our power. What follows from this subordination of reason to desire is an inability to distinguish neatly between freedom and compulsion. Voluntary motion is not the result of a will freed from the compulsive element of desire. If Hobbes reduces everything to passions it is not in order to free us from their influence but so that we may recognize what it is that influences our actions.

The whole artifice of Leviathan, as we saw, is constructed on the basis of a compromise so as to allow us to pursue our desires in peace and tranquility. Peace, as we have also seen, is the ultimate goal of politics and while Hobbes may demonstrate confidence in our ability to re-order our social institutions with this goal in mind, it is important to realise that this is at least partially due to the fact that the goal itself is modest enough. But, even with this modest goal in mind, Hobbes does not ignore the fact that the requirements of peaceful life impose certain inevitable inconveniences. To those who would complain about these, Hobbes reminds them of the potential alternative, which is civil war. Politics remains for Hobbes more important for what it prevents than for what it promotes. In order to achieve the goal of politics Hobbes emphasises the

overriding virtue of sociability among the citizens, the capacity to get along with others. Here again we notice that Hobbes does not have high expectations. He is not overly optimistic or demanding concerning the strength of the social bonds. Sociability is effectively equated with non-interference and at no time does Hobbes try to construct stronger bonds than this. By re-ordering the nature of the political community it is not likely that Hobbes is unaware of the fact that he is frustrating the longing for rootedness or embeddedness that one finds satisfied for example through traditions and long standing customs and beliefs. He believes that this is a reasonable trade-off in order to ensure peace. It is with this in mind that he transforms politics from a practical to a theoretical science.

We have seen as well the reaction to this aspect of modernity in the thought of Vico and its continuation in the thought of Gadamer. In reaction to the abstract, mathematical schemes of Descartes and Hobbes Vico emphasises the concreteness of historical and social existence, the poetic origin of both language and society, and the constitutive role of "sensus communis". It is on a similar basis that Gadamer develops his philosophical hermeneutics as a defense of the legitimacy of tradition, prejudices and those types of understanding which do not conform to the standards of scientific rationality. Both Vico and Gadamer recognise the corrosive effect scientific rationality has on those forms of self-understanding which precede the scientific investigator and constitute him in his practical life as part of a living solidarity. Scientific rationality has the power to destroy these bonds but it cannot replace them.

In the thought of Jürgen Habermas we see the attempt to synthesize these two inflections of modernity, the mathematical and the poetic. On the one hand Habermas pursues the enlightenment project of subjecting all human affairs to the scrutinizing gaze of critical inquiry. He radicalizes Hobbes' goal of rendering transparent the grounds of human affairs by unmasking what he sees as ideologically based forms of social intercourse. This has a corrosive effect on the legitimacy of traditions and customs by forcing them to account for their legitimacy and in this sense critical analysis is disruptive

of consensus and solidarity. On the other hand, and at the same time, Habermas does not believe that this endangers the bonds of community since the elimination of distorted communication allows for the construction of social bonds based on a true consensus of all those concerned. In other words a critical theory of society holds forth the possibility of reconciling the drive for clarity, certainty, freedom and autonomy, without compromising the longing for community and solidarity.

I will begin by examining Habermas' assessment of the gains and losses related to the modern rejection of classical thought as well as his diagnosis of what he understands to be the central pathology of modernity. After identifying this problem I will examine in the second section the solution proposed by Habermas for overcoming this pathology and restoring some of the sound insights of the classics. This solution is based on an epistemological analysis designed to expand our conception of rationality beyond the limits of modern scientific reason. In this sense Habermas follows the same path as Vico and Gadamer. However while the consequence of the analyses of Vico and Gadamer was a restoration of the validity of tradition, Habermas' analysis is thoroughly grounded in the enlightenment project. This will be shown in the third section. In the fourth section I will deal with the way in which this supposed restoration of the sound insights of the classics can be reconciled with the enlightenment project. In the fifth section I will address specifically Habermas' understanding of speech and the way in which it influences his understanding of rhetoric. At the same time I will examine what I consider to be some of the shortcomings of Habermas' analysis. Finally in the sixth section I will examine the debate between Gadamer and Habermas.

Habermas and Modernity

In his assessment of the passage from ancient or classical political science to modern political science, that is to say with Hobbes' criticism of Aristotle, Habermas believes that something has been lost and something has been gained. In an attempt to capture descriptively and assess critically the gains and the losses he makes use of two

sets of classical distinctions: the distinction between "praxis" and "techne" on the one hand, and the distinction between "episteme" and "doxa" on the other. The former is used as a guide to what has been lost, and the latter serves as a guide to what has been gained.

As opposed to the classical doctrine of natural law, modern social philosophy can assert its claim to competitive status : to be taken seriously from a scientific viewpoint, only at the cost of a separation from that connection with experience which practical philosophy maintains. Social philosophy, having taken on monological form, is no longer capable of essentially relating to praxis, but merely to goal-directed purposive action guided by social-technical recommendations.¹

While the full sense of this quote must await a clarification of Habermas' theory of communicative action, what Habermas is alluding to is clear enough. He is renewing, from the perspective of a theory of communication, the diagnosis that Adorno and Horkheimer made of modernity : reason understood as "instrumental" issues in domination.

However, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas is not willing to indict modernity completely. In fact, although modern social theory has lost the proximity to praxis characteristic of classical political thought, in another way it is clearly superior to classical thought. The achievement of modern political science, starting with Hobbes, is the claim to a scientific status and this means, to use the second set of classical distinctions, overcoming the distinction between "episteme" and "doxa". This advance over the classics is clearly stated in another work where Habermas criticizes Hannah Arendt for her attachment to the latter distinction. While he praises what he refers to as her "communicative concept of power" and her emphasis on what he calls "unimpaired intersubjectivity", he criticizes her unwillingness to distinguish between a "true" and a "false" or illusionary consensus. He attributes this to Arendt's attachment to an outmoded conception of the relation between theory and practice :

¹Jürgen Habermas, Theory and Practice trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), pp.2-3.

... we would have to lay down a standard of criticism and be able to discriminate between illusionary and nonillusionary convictions. This possibility is just what Arendt disputes. She holds onto the classical distinction between theory and praxis, which is that praxis is based on opinions and convictions that are incapable of being true in the strict sense ... With this outmoded concept of theoretical knowledge that builds upon ultimate evidence, Arendt abstains from conceiving the coming to agreement about political questions as a rational formation of consensus.²

Habermas believes that it is possible to reconcile the best of the ancients with the best of the moderns, the irreducibility of practical life and interaction with a certainty that transcends the level of opinion. Posing it as a question, Habermas asks:

how can the promise of practical politics - namely of providing practical orientation about what is right and just in a given situation - be redeemed without relinquishing, on the one hand, the rigor of scientific knowledge, which modern social philosophy demands in contrast to the practical philosophy of classicism? And on the other, how can the promise of social philosophy, to furnish an analysis of the interrelationships of social life, be redeemed without relinquishing the practical orientation of classical politics ?³

In terms of the classical distinctions that serve as the guiding threads of his analysis, the challenge lies in the possibility of maintaining a viable distinction between "techne" and "praxis" while at the same time overcoming the distinction between "episteme" and "doxa". This challenge describes the orientation of the Enlightenment. Truth, understood as enlightenment, must necessarily be confirmed in the "action orientations" of individuals through a growth of self-consciousness. This requires the abolition of the distinction between theory and practice alluded to in Habermas' criticism of Arendt. This orientation is evident as well in his praise of historical materialism:

²Jürgen Habermas, Philosophical-Political Profiles trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: MIT Press, 1990), p.186.

³Habermas, Theory and Practice, p.44

Within this framework historical materialism can be understood as a theory of society conceived with a practical intent, which avoids the complementary weakness both of traditional politics and of modern social philosophy: it thus unites the claim to a scientific character with a theoretical structure referring to praxis.⁴

Habermas sees himself as working within this tradition. He refers to his project at one point as a "reconstruction" of historical materialism. This reconstruction is necessary because Marx misunderstood his own achievement. By interpreting his work as a science modelled on the natural or "empirical-analytic" sciences, Marx failed to grasp the full import of the "emancipatory interest" guiding his thought. Marxism, like psychoanalysis, is a "critical science", not a "natural science". By trying to model themselves along the lines of the natural sciences the proponents of these sciences in fact concede that all action is reducible to "instrumental action" and all rationality is reducible to "cognitive-instrumental rationality": "Marx conceives of reflexion according to the model of production. Because he tacitly starts with this premise, it is not inconsistent that he does not distinguish between the logical status of the natural sciences and of critique". In other words there is a methodological difference between natural and critical or hermeneutic sciences that affects the way knowledge can be implemented. Emancipatory knowledge cannot be "applied" to people in the same way natural scientific knowledge is applied to nature or "implemented". Emancipatory knowledge cannot be applied "from above" but must be implemented "communicatively" through "interaction".

The shortcomings of Marxism are in fact symptomatic of most modern theorists from Hobbes to the early Frankfurt School. According to Habermas this shortcoming can be described as the "foreshortening of the rationality problematic" to the limits of "monological" or "purposive-rational" activity. The early Frankfurt School theorists,

⁴Ibid., p.3.

⁵Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p.44.

according to Habermas, accepted uncritically Weber's assessment of the modern age as representing the triumph of instrumental or means/end rationality. If one equates reason with instrumental rationality then the only refuge for criticism lies in irrationalism or something like Adorno's turn to aesthetics. In order to avoid this consequence the scope of 'rationality' has to be expanded to its full range and shown in the multiplicity of facets that modernity has made available. What is required are concepts that enable us to grasp descriptively a specific experience of modernity that is present to us intuitively. This is the task that Habermas takes on through his theory of communicative action.

Like Gadamer therefore, Habermas engages in a critique of modern reason. He begins with the question : what is the nature of understanding? He claims to be making epistemological arguments, not ethical ones. However this epistemological critique which is to serve as the basis for a critical theory of society can only be constituted on the basis of a 'paradigm shift' away from the philosophy of consciousness towards a philosophy of language. Habermas' theory of communicative competence, which he calls "Universal Pragmatics", is a heuristic device which helps diagnose the pathologies of modernity. The major pathology, the one responsible for all others is, as has just been said, what Habermas calls the foreshortening of the rationality problematic. Reason understood as instrumental, that is as calculating the relationship between means and ends, has extended its reach beyond its legitimate domain. In order to show this however, one requires a conceptual framework allowing us to recapture the full and varied scope of rationality.

Universal Pragmatics and Communicative Action

'Universal Pragmatics' is what Habermas calls a 'reconstructive science'. Reconstructive sciences are sciences that "systematically reconstruct the intuitive knowledge of competent subjects".⁶ 'Universal Pragmatics' in particular seeks to "identify

⁶Jürgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society translated and with an introduction by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979),p. 9.

and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding"'. or what Habermas calls 'communicative competence' since understanding takes place through speech at the "socio-cultural stage of evolution"⁷. Like Gadamer, Habermas begins with an analysis of what it means to come to an understanding. Just as Chomsky argues that there is a 'linguistic competence' or an implicit knowledge or 'know-how' that allows individuals properly to construct sentences on the basis of phonetic, syntactic, and semantic properties, Habermas argues that there is a 'communicative competence', an intuitive and implicit knowledge that allows us to master the pragmatic aspects of speech. Just as one can reconstruct the ability to form a proper sentence, which is the basic unit of language, so can one reconstruct the capacity to produce a proper utterance, which is the basic unit of meaning in a speech act. In other word, speech analysis cannot be reduced to linguistic analysis or to a study of syntactical elements:

The basic universal-pragmatic intention of speech act theory is expressed in the fact that it thematizes the elementary units of speech (utterances) in an attitude similar to that in which linguistics does the units of language (sentences) ... Whereas the latter starts from the assumption that every adult speaker possesses an implicit, reconstructible knowledge, in which is expressed his linguistic rule competence (to produce sentences), speech act theory postulates a corresponding communicative rule competence, namely the competence to imploy sentences in speech acts."

It bears mentioning, though it may be self evident, that the reconstruction of 'communicative competence' starts with the assumption that what Habermas calls 'communicative action' or action oriented to reaching understanding is the basic form of social interaction :

⁷Ibid.,p.1.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.,p.26.

Thus I start from the assumption (without undertaking to demonstrate it here) that other forms of social action - for example, conflict, competition, strategic action in general - are derivatives of action oriented to reaching understanding ...¹⁰

Whenever we engage in communicative action we "always already" make certain presuppositions, or implicitly raise certain claims, which Habermas calls 'validity claims'. Since these claims are presupposed in any speech act they have a transcendental status. They are general and unavoidable conditions of possible understanding. The claim that there are formal or universal presuppositions to speech acts differentiates Habermas' approach from the approach of socio-linguistics. The claim that they are 'intersubjective universals' provides the epistemological basis for a critique of 'monological' reasoning. These claims provide the criteria on the basis of which the rationality of our utterances may be judged. We do not make explicit reference to these claims but they are "always already" there whenever we try to communicate something to someone. What are these claims and what do they reveal?

Whenever we communicate we raise a claim for the 'truth' of what we say, for its 'normative rightness' or appropriateness, and for the 'truthfulness' or sincerity of what we say. In so doing we are involved in relationships, respectively, to an 'objective world' of existing states of affairs, a 'social world' of interpersonal affairs, and a 'subjective world' to which each of us has privileged access. Each of these worlds in turn is governed by a specific attitude and a corresponding type of rationality. The objective world is governed by an objectivating attitude and 'cognitive-instrumental' rationality. The social world is governed by an interactive attitude and 'moral-practical rationality'. The subjective world is governed by an expressive attitude and 'aesthetic rationality'.

These distinctions are present to us intuitively. It is possible to give a relatively simple example of what Habermas means in the following way. If I say to someone :

¹⁰Ibid., p.1.

"Please get me a glass of water", then, according to Habermas, I am making reference to something in the objective world because I am assuming the existence of a state of affairs in which the possibility of getting a glass of water is realisable. I am also making reference to a social world or to a dimension of interpersonal relations because I am assuming that the normative conditions are such that it is appropriate for me to make this request of the person I am talking with. Finally, I am making reference to a subjective world to which I have privileged access because I am implying or suggesting that I sincerely want a glass of water.

Now, the person I am speaking to may contest what I have said on the basis of any or all of the validity claims that I have raised implicitly. They may raise an objection on the basis of the validity claim of 'truth' by suggesting that the objective state of affairs does not make this possible. They may say for example: "There is no water fountain around here" or "The water fountain is broken". They may question the 'normative rightness' of what I am asking by suggesting that this is an inappropriate request under existing normative conditions. They may say, for instance, "I'm not your slave, get it yourself!". Finally they may question the 'truthfulness' or sincerity of my utterance by questioning my motives. In this case they might say something like "You don't really want a glass of water, you just want me to leave the room".

By starting with the reconstruction of communicative competence Habermas claims to reveal or expose the nature of the 'lifeworld'. The lifeworld is the 'always already' existing background or context out of which arises all action and all knowledge. According to Habermas there are three implications to this. First, by starting at the level of our intuitive foreknowledge we start with the concrete. We therefore avoid abstractions because these claims are actualised in our day to day common sensical encounters with others. Second, this concrete reality is shown to have a tripartite structure. We therefore avoid reductionism because the world is shown in its irreducible plurality. Third, this reality contains its own implicit standards of evaluation. This allows us to be critical. Speech is the clue to the tripartite structure of the lifeworld. By revealing conceptually

what is intuitively and implicitly known. Habermas believes he has the basic tools to diagnose the problems or distortions of modernity. These distortions take the form of not doing full justice to the structure of the lifeworld. Universal Pragmatics therefore expands or restores the full scope of rationality by raising claims to validity in relation to all three dimensions of the lifeworld : "With the concept of communicative action there comes into play the additional presupposition of a linguistic medium that reflects the actor - world relations as such."¹¹

Universal pragmatics provides the foundation for a critique of modernity from within modernity itself because, according to Habermas, only in the modern age does the lifeworld split into the three worlds described above. Through the reconstruction of communicative competence Habermas reconstructs a link with aspects of rationality that have been eclipsed. By working at the level of what Habermas calls "ontological presuppositions" he reveals the implicit assumptions about the lifeworld underlying various fields of knowledge. For example the modern emphasis on consciousness, monological reasoning, and purposive-rational or teleological action is based on the presupposition of only one world, the objective world, and the relations between an actor and this objective world :

The concept of teleological action presupposes relations between an actor and a world of existing states of affairs that either obtain or could arise or could be brought about by purposeful intervention. The model equips the agent with a "cognitive-volitional complex", so that he can, on the one hand, form beliefs about existing states of affairs through perception, and can, on the other hand, develop intentions with the aim of bringing desired states of affairs into existence.¹²

¹¹Jürgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, 2 vols. trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); vol.1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, p. 94.

¹²Ibid., p. 87.

When this objectivating attitude is directed to the objective world, Habermas refers to the type of rationality as cognitive-instrumental and the type of action as instrumental. He considers this the proper attitude to take toward external nature. However this same attitude is often carried over into the social world of legitimate interpersonal affairs. When cognitive instrumental action is used to deal with issues in the social world Habermas refers to the type of action as 'strategic action'. In strategic action no differentiation is made between an objective world of states of affairs, and a common world of legitimately ordered intersubjective relations. In other words strategic action tacitly presupposes the existence of one world governed by an objectivating attitude :

Here we start with at least two goal directed acting subjects who achieve their ends by way of an orientation to, and influence on, the decision of other actors. Success in action is also dependent on other actors each of whom is oriented to his own success and behaves cooperatively only to the degree that this fits with his egocentric calculus of utility.¹³

As we saw earlier, Habermas regards strategic action as a derivative form of social interaction. By contrasting it with communicative action he wants to argue that the latter is the more appropriate type of social action. While both types refer to the coordination of social action, communicative action demonstrates a higher level of interactive competence because it is able to differentiate between the social and the objective worlds and take up an appropriate attitude to the former, which he calls the interactive attitude. In other words communicative action approaches social action on the basis of subject - subject relations, while strategic action approaches social action on the basis of subject - object relations.

Habermas uses these insights as a clue to analyzing the philosophical discourse of modernity especially as it relates to issues of social integration, which are of particular concern to him. He sees, for example, the intuitive foreknowledge that social relations are

¹³Ibid., pp.87- 88.

governed by an interactive rather than a strategic attitude as constituting the essence of Hegel's critique of Kant, although Hegel did not develop his insight:

Because Hegel conceives self-consciousness in terms of the interactional structure of complementary action, namely, as the result of a struggle for recognition, he sees through the concept of autonomous will that appears to constitute the essential value of Kant's moral philosophy. He realizes that this concept is a peculiar abstraction from the moral relationship of communicating individuals.¹⁴

Kant's understanding of moral reasoning through the categorical imperative is much closer to the model of strategic action because it abstracts from the positive relation of one's will to the will of another established through communication and substitutes for it "a transcendently necessary correspondence of isolated goal directed activities under abstract, universal laws".¹⁵ The problem, as Habermas sees it, is that Kant cannot achieve through the categorical imperative what he wants to achieve. He wants to give recognition to the autonomy and dignity of individuals in such a way that they should never be treated as means but as ends. On the other hand the model according to which he tries to do this presupposes the very logic of means and ends which is inappropriate for intersubjective relations. Building on Hegel's insight that the relation between self and other is constitutive for self-consciousness, Habermas argues that moral competence is the result of communicative competence or interactive competence. Moral autonomy and responsibility are not acquired monologically but intersubjectively and that means through communication with others .

The theory of communicative action therefore not only reveals the nature of the lifeworld but in so doing it reveals as well a model for social integration based on understanding moral development in terms of the acquisition of interactive competence.

¹⁴Habermas, Theory and Practice. p.150.

¹⁵Ibid., p.151.

Before examining this though it is important to highlight a crucial component of Habermas' thought that will set the stage for an understanding of his theory of interactive development. This is his notion of the relationship between cognitive interests and the rationalisation of the lifeworld. Once this has been explained Habermas' understanding of moral development as interactive development and his assimilation of rhetoric to communicative competence becomes clear.

Cognitive Interests and the Rationalisation of the Lifeworld

According to Habermas the exposition of the structure of the lifeworld not only reveals the way in which the rationality problematic has been restricted to the ontological presuppositions of one world, it also helps reveal the relationship between knowledge and the lifeworld itself. The relationship knowledge bears to the lifeworld is described by the expression 'rationalisation'. According to Habermas the various sciences 'carry forth' or embody basic attitudes which are in fact constituted on the basis of practices embedded in the lifeworld. These practices constitute the pre-theoretical, transcendental ground for the emergence of various types of knowledge. These practices embody the various attitudes and forms of rationality discussed in relation to the various dimensions of the lifeworld. There are in fact two basic cultural practices that condition the types of knowledge we obtain : labour and interaction. The objectivating attitude discussed above, which embodies a cognitive-instrumental form of rationality, is in fact grounded concretely in the cultural practice of labour. What this entails is that the objectivating attitude towards nature or the objective world is not based on a pure consciousness of objects but on an attitude deriving from a living engagement with nature, i.e., labour. On this basis we carry forth a cognitive interest in technical knowledge. Similarly, we have an interest in moral-practical knowledge that arises on the transcendental basis of the cultural practice of interaction.

Labour and interaction are the two basic modes of being in the world. By prejudicing the object domain of the various sciences they do not interfere with the

accumulation of knowledge but rather make it possible. Just as Kant believed that the categories of the understanding provided the innate conditions for the possibility of experience, Habermas believes that labour and interaction provide the socio-cultural conditions for the possibility of experience and knowledge. This is in fact a radicalization of transcendental analysis or epistemology. Kant took for granted the objective attitude as the basis for his analysis of the a-priori structure of consciousness without probing more deeply into the socio-cultural conditions for it. This attitude, as we have just said, is, according to Habermas, the result of the cultural practice of labour. Instrumental action (labour) predetermines the object domain of the empirical-analytic sciences while communicative action (interaction) prejudices the object domain of the historical - hermeneutic sciences. Habermas explains:

I have let myself be guided by the problem posed by the system of primitive terms ... within which we organize our experience a priori and prior to all science, and do so in such a manner that, of course, the formation of the scientific object domains is also prejudiced by this ... The object domains of the empirical-analytic and of the hermeneutic sciences are based on these objectifications of reality which we undertake daily always from the viewpoint either of technical control or intersubjective communication ... Therefore the technical and practical interests of knowledge are not regulators of cognition which have to be eliminated for the sake of the objectivity of knowledge; instead, they themselves determine the aspect under which reality is objectified, and can thus be made accessible to experience to begin with!¹⁶

There is one more category of inquiry for which a connection can be shown between knowledge and a cognitive interest. The critical sciences that seek to identify illegitimate forms of domination are based on a cognitive interest in emancipation that is rooted in the capacity for self-reflection. This connection between knowledge and the cognitive interest in emancipation is hidden from view, as are the other cognitive interests, by the illusion of objectivism : "... as long as philosophy remains caught in ontology, it

¹⁶Ibid., pp.7-9.

is itself subject to an objectivism that disguises the connection of its knowledge with the human interest in autonomy and responsibility..."¹⁷. What is Habermas' clue to the existence of this cognitive interest in emancipation? It lies a-priori in the structure of speech itself :

The human interest in autonomy and responsibility is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a-priori. What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know : language. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus.¹⁸

By trying to construct a link between knowledge and human interests Habermas is attacking what he calls the traditional notion of 'theory'. As we saw earlier he criticises Arendt for holding on to this traditional notion. This notion of theory is based on the separation of "episteme" from "doxa". In Habermas' words "It reserves for logos a realm of being purged of inconstancy and uncertainty and leaves to doxa the realm of the mutable and the perishable"¹⁹. The notion of cognitive interests tries to ground scientific knowledge in concrete worldly practices and in so doing calls into question the very distinction between theory and practice and knowledge and opinion:

... the expression "interest" is intended to indicate the unity of the life context in which cognition is embedded ... The underlying "interest" establishes the unity between this constitutive context in which knowledge is rooted and the structure of the possible application which this knowledge can have²⁰

¹⁷Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests. pp. 310-311.

¹⁸Ibid., p.314.

¹⁹Ibid., p.301.

²⁰Habermas, Theory and Practice. p.9.

The notion that cognitive interests link knowledge to the lifeworld not only destroys the illusion of objectivity and the traditional distinctions that derive from it but in so doing gives knowledge another purpose. What is this purpose? It is precisely to overcome the distinctions between theory and practice, knowledge and opinion. This is what is meant by rationalisation. Knowledge arises on the basis of practices in the lifeworld and is then applied to the lifeworld in such a way that the lifeworld itself and our manifold relations of involvement with it become clarified. Knowledge enlightens or rationalises the various actor / world relations and in so doing increases our autonomy in relation to all three worlds : external nature, society, and our own internal nature. Knowledge serves to increase self-consciousness and self-consciousness manifests itself as a growth of awareness vis-a-vis the proper attitudes governing the various actor / world relations. In relation to external nature we gain increased capacity toward technical mastery, through hermeneutic knowledge we gain increased knowledge of intersubjective relations, and through critique we gain freedom vis-a-vis our internal motivations :

The specific viewpoints from which, with transcendental necessity, we apprehend reality ground three categories of possible knowledge : information that expands our power of technical control; interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions and analyses that free consciousness from its dependence on hypostatized powers.²¹

Communicative Reason as a Model for Social Integration

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Habermas' critical theory of society is designed to preserve the sound insights of the ancients with those of the moderns. This can be analyzed in terms of an attempt to reconcile Aristotle with Kant, or what could be called ancient and modern notions of freedom. The one conception, which could be characterized as the ancient understanding of freedom is given paradigmatic expression in the ethical and political treatises of Aristotle. Here freedom refers to the active life in

²¹Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p.313.

the public affairs of the "polis". Freedom, for Aristotle, refers at once to the ability and the desire, if not the duty, to participate in public life, in community with others, discussing and debating matters of public concern. This represents the sphere of practical wisdom. This is a form of political reasoning and judgment that is acquired and developed through involvement in political matters. The other conception, which could be characterized as the modern understanding of freedom, is given paradigmatic expression in the thought of Kant. Here freedom refers to the moral autonomy and responsibility of the individual. Freedom is the ability to give oneself and follow universal moral principles which recognize the dignity and integrity of persons. In this tradition practical affairs refer to a particular disposition of the will in relation to one's desires. We know we are free, according to Kant, because we can legislate to ourselves a law that goes against our inclinations. In one view then emphasis is on the existence of a public realm, the exercise of civic virtue, and the duty of the citizen. In the other, emphasis is on moral autonomy, recognition of others, and the rights of the person.

Habermas, I suggest, tries to weave together these two models of freedom, the Aristotelian and the Kantian. I use the term model because Habermas wants to preserve what he takes to be the sound core of each of these views. What Habermas preserves from Aristotle, for example, is the notion of "praxis" and participation in public life. However he wants to jettison the metaphysical assumption of a "telos" and of a substantial notion of the good. From Kant he preserves the universal recognition of persons as well as the presupposition of deontological ethics : that moral judgment cannot settle questions concerning substantive notions of what constitutes the good life, but must restrict itself to the procedural question of how conflicts of action can be settled on the basis of rationally motivated agreement. However, as we have seen, he rejects the essentially private nature of kantian moral reasoning. In place of the monological reasoning of the solitary individual he wants to place actual dialogue between individuals. With this in mind Habermas reformulates the categorical imperative along the following lines:

Rather than ascribing as valid to all others any maxim that I can will to be a universal law, I must submit my maxim to all others for purposes of discursively testing its claim to universality. The emphasis shifts from what each can will without contradiction to be a general law, to what all can will in agreement to be a universal norm.²²

In this way each view compensates for the supposed shortcomings of the other. The Kantian position adds a universal and moral dimension to the Aristotelian one, and the Aristotelian position adds a public dimension to the Kantian one.

This attempt at reconciliation also helps to situate Habermas' project in relation to two other contemporary schools of thought whose advocates have engaged in debate with each other, liberalism and communitarianism. Since liberals such as John Rawls make explicit reference to the spirit of kantian thought while communitarians such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Sandel rally under the banner of neo-aristotelianism, they provide a good vantage point from which to clarify Habermas' position.

The communitarian attack on liberalism centres for the most part around the notion of the individual that underlies both the liberal vision of society based on the discourse of rights and the Enlightenment project of establishing a secularized morality free of metaphysical and religious assumptions. This vision and this project rest on a notion of the self referred to as the 'unencumbered self'.²³ The unencumbered self refers to a view of individuals as divested of all situatedness and rootedness whether in relation to a community or a tradition. Critical reference is often made to John Rawls's notion of an 'original position', which goes back to the tradition of social contract theory and the notion of isolated individuals who, prior to any social bonds, possess the ability to

²²Jürgen Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), p.67.

²³For the source of this concept see Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

pursue their objectives and interests in monological fashion. The communitarians argue that such fictions imply certain metaphysical assumptions about human nature. They entail a view of people as 'subjects of possession' or possessive individualists whose approach to community cannot transcend the level of cooperation based on enlightened egoism or what Habermas would call strategic action.

In opposition to this, the communitarians put forward a view of persons as embedded in relations that always precede them, constitute their self understanding, and regulate their interactions. Over against the liberal vision of the pre-social individual is posited an individual who is the product of a community. Over against the rational covenant of autonomous individuals is posited the awareness of prior social bonds. And finally, over against the notion of rights and the recognition of the individual are posited duty and the pursuit of the common good. So the communitarians argue for the preservation or the recovery of a more contextual type of understanding, but they do so at the cost of a wholesale attack on the discourse of rights and the view of individuals as bearers of rights.

Habermas believes that it is possible to avoid the excessive one-sidedness of both the liberal and communitarian projects. He accepts the communitarian critique of the liberal notion of the individual as well as the liberal notion of justice because they cannot extend beyond consumerist and possessive individualist modes of life. They thereby promote a certain depoliticization of individuals. By depoliticization Habermas is referring to a process that promotes an ideal of civic privatism through which individuals come to regard themselves as clients of the state rather than as citizens.²⁴ This is corrosive of the ideal of participation that Habermas considers important.

²⁴For a more detailed account see Jürgen Habermas, Legitimation Crisis (London: Heinemann, 1976).

On the other hand Habermas is not prepared thereby to accept the communitarian alternative. Habermas regards the strong recognition of persons, which underlies the discourse of rights and entitlements, as an unquestionable advance in the development of moral consciousness and social interaction. In this sense his project "is emphatically opposed to going back to a stage of philosophical thought prior to Kant".²⁵ The danger of civic privatism that lurks within liberalism is matched for Habermas by the danger of parochialism that lurks within communitarianism. The attempt to defend a substantive notion of the good over a procedural notion of justification falls behind the moral universalism that is a product of the Enlightenment.

What then is Habermas' alternative to the one-sidedness of liberalism and communitarianism? Habermas's alternative will be based on two main points. First, he will try to show how the autonomy and responsibility of individuals does not rest on a model of "monologically constituted subjectivity". Second he will have to show how it is possible to recover and maintain a sense of the contextuality of understanding without relying on traditional conceptions of the good. Thus his project is based on developing a notion of community and contextuality that is grounded in a strong recognition of individuals and the integrity and dignity of persons. This was suggested earlier when we said that the theory of communicative action contains a model for social integration based on understanding moral development in terms of the acquisition and growth of interactive competence. At that time we said that the discussion of that model had to wait until the notion of lifeworld rationalisation was explained. We can now clarify the relationship between the two.

Communicative action becomes increasingly important because through the process of cultural rationalization greater and greater areas of the lifeworld are delivered over to evaluation and discussion. The social world is rendered 'communicatively fluid' as it loses its self-evident, pre-discursive base. This represents a growth in the sphere of

²⁵Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, p. 206.

communicative action. In other words consensus becomes more and more a matter of reflective activity or what Habermas calls a 'discursive formation of the will'. The reproduction of the social lifeworld can no longer legitimately take place without the growing self conscious approval of individuals because intersubjective agreement becomes the only ground for building consensus. In this process traditions as well as the cultural values that provide the motivational basis for their activities are raised to the level of reflective awareness.

However Habermas wants to argue that this process of passing from a traditional to a post-traditional society is not simply a historical transformation but represents an actual growth in moral practical insight and interactive competence. He claims that this change does not simply represent the ability of individuals to adapt to new historical circumstances but represents a real learning process. In order to support this he turns to cognitive development psychology and the research of people like Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. He relies on their arguments that moral development follows an internally reconstructible sequence of stages of competence.²⁶ He argues that there is a basic homology between a post-traditional social order and a post-conventional morality. Both are based on interactive development and, therefore, on a growth of communicative competence. The highest stage of interactive development corresponds to what Habermas calls the level of 'universalized need interpretation' at which individuals acquire a strong 'ego identity'.

These refer to two essential and interrelated elements of the post-traditional identity. By achieving a reflective attitude towards one's cultural traditions, one is able to thematize culturally ingrained notions on the basis of which we formulate our needs and desires: "... need interpretations are no longer assumed as given, but are drawn into the discursive formation of will ... at this stage internal nature may no longer be merely examined within an interpretive framework fixed by cultural tradition in a naturelike

²⁶See Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, pp.69-95.

way".²⁷ Also, it means that we acquire the capacity to articulate these needs discursively which means in relation to others: "the principle of justification of norms is no longer the monologically applicable principle of generalizability but the communally followed procedure of redeeming normative validity claims discursively."²⁸ By discursively bringing to light and managing what motivates us we gain control over it. Since this is achieved intersubjectively it means that moral autonomy is not acquired autonomously but through interaction with others.

Thus the individual acquires ego identity through 'intersubjectivity' or 'dialogically'. In this way Habermas can claim to unite the two types of freedom discussed earlier. While this process destroys an unreflective, taken-for-granted notion of community, it constructs a reflective, intersubjectively achieved and recognized community. Since this community is by essence communicative it is based on complete symmetry and reciprocity. This means that all claims have a right to be put forward and no claim has a validity that protects it from discursive evaluation.

Rhetoric and Communicative Competence

What significance does this have for rhetoric? Habermas incorporates rhetoric within his overall theory of communicative competence. He expresses this relationship in the following way :

Rhetoric, too, is based on an ability which is part of the communicative competence of every language user and which can be stylized into a special skill. Rhetoric and hermeneutics have both emerged as teachable arts which

²⁷Ibid., p.93.

²⁸Ibid., p. 90.

methodically discipline and cultivate a natural ability.²⁹

Rhetoric, or the ability to persuade, is a practical skill that is acquired or perfected through the development of interactive competence. The ability to convince and persuade others demonstrates the ability to move within one's native language and to use it creatively. Rhetoric is the concrete manifestation of the communicative or pragmatic use of speech. The practice of rhetoric evokes the logic of the social world, which is governed as we have seen on the basis of the validity claim of normative rightness: "We are consequently here dealing with practical questions which can be traced to decisions about the acceptance or rejection of standards, of criteria for evaluation and norms of action."³⁰

Because rhetoric represents a type of skill or ability it can be evaluated on the basis of whether it serves to achieve distorted or real communication. In fact it is possible to evaluate it within Habermas' typology of social action. As we have seen, Habermas differentiates social action into communicative action and strategic action. As a skill rhetoric can fit into both categories. Rhetoric can be used to arrive at a rationally motivated agreement or it can be used to manipulate people. In one case rhetoric is used in such a way as to achieve a real consensus while in the other case it is not:

Competent orators know that every consensus attained can in fact be deceptive; but they must always have been in possession of the prior concept of rational consensus underlying the concept of a deceptive (or merely compulsory) consensus.³¹

With this distinction Habermas is able to preserve his Kantianism without having to reject rhetoric altogether. Kant had a negative view of rhetoric. He shared the view that it was

²⁹Jürgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," in Josef Bleicher ed. Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p.181.

³⁰Ibid., p.183.

³¹Habermas, Theory and Practice, p.17.

based on trickery or deception. Habermas would agree with Kant but would ascribe this only to the strategic use of persuasion. There is a positive or good rhetoric which actualises communicative action demonstrates the development of interactive competence. In fact this type of rhetoric becomes even more effective and important as the social world becomes rationalised. As we have seen, Habermas argues that through the process of lifeworld rationalisation norms get delivered over to discursive or intersubjective validation. Through this process the moral-practical logic which governs the social world manifests itself ever more clearly and distinctly. Human interaction becomes governed more and more by the strength of the better argument.

This can be clarified by examining the two sub-categories of communicative action which Habermas calls 'consensual action' and 'action oriented to reaching understanding'. Habermas distinguishes between these two in the following way:

In consensual action agreement about implicitly raised validity claims can be presupposed as a background consensus by reason of common definitions of the situations; such agreement is supposed to be arrived at in action oriented to reaching understanding ... ³²

Consensual action presupposes a consensus already established or presupposed. Although Habermas says nothing here about Aristotle it seems clear that on the basis of his typology of social action Aristotelian rhetoric presupposes an understanding of social action as consensual action. The following characteristics of Aristotle's Rhetoric will make this clear. The appeal to the "endoxa" or commonly accepted opinions would correspond to the notion of 'background consensus'. Since Habermas' scheme of lifeworld rationalisation is based on the growing differentiation of the lifeworld into its tripartite structure, Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between the character of the rhetorician and the character of the regime represents the non-differentiation of the

³²Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, p.209, ft. 2. Here Habermas sets out his understanding of the various types of social action in schematic form.

validity claim of "truthfulness" and that of "normative rightness", or the non-differentiation between the social world of legitimately ordered interpersonal relations and the subjective world to which we have privileged access. Habermas refers to social action in which the distinction between the objective world (nature) and the social world is made, but not the distinction between the social world and the subjective world as 'normatively regulated action' :

... the concept of normatively regulated action presupposes relations between an actor and exactly two worlds. Besides the objective world of existing states of affairs there is the social world to which the actor belongs as a role playing subject, as do additional actors who take up normatively regulated interactions among themselves.³³

In normatively regulated action the emphasis is on the existence of common values and a customary system of norms which determine one's personal identity.

Action oriented to reaching an understanding does not presuppose a pre-existing normative consensus. As described by Habermas, this consensus has to be established. This situation is precisely the one that obtains more and more through the process of lifeworld rationalisation. The stage of rationalisation through which the social world is differentiated from the subjective world brings with it the specific problem that social integration can no longer proceed on the basis of unquestioned or accepted norms. This requires, as we have seen, a higher level of interactive competence on the basis of which the individual reconsolidates in a critical, reflective way his relationship to his community. At this stage the individual has acquired a level of interactive competence that allows him to engage in practical discourse or as Habermas calls it, 'discourse ethics'. This represents the highest stage of moral-practical development.

³³Habermas, Theory of Communicative Action, vol.1, p.88.

At this stage persuasive speech must reflect the newly attained level of interactive competence. Rhetoric becomes assimilated to 'discourse ethics'. Whereas in normatively regulated action and consensual action the ability to persuade is reflected in the ability to appeal to an already existing consensus, in action oriented to reaching understanding the ability to persuade is reflected in the ability to create a rationally motivated consensus. Moral argumentation must proceed on the basis of complete reciprocity and mutual recognition. At this stage all referential finalities have been rendered questionable if not inoperative. Since substantive notions of the good no longer provide the legitimate grounds for consensus, it becomes important to clarify the formal conditions according to which argumentation can take place. In argumentation participants continue communicative action but in a reflective attitude. Here rhetoric takes a procedural form that corresponds to what Habermas calls the "ideal speech situation".

In argumentative speech we see the structures of a speech situation immune to repression and inequality in a particular way : it presents itself as a form of communication that adequately approximates ideal conditions. This is why I tried at one time to describe the presuppositions of argumentation as the defining characteristics of an ideal speech situation ... The intention of my earlier analysis still seems correct to me, namely the reconstruction of the general symmetry conditions that every competent speaker who believes he is engaging in an argumentation must presuppose as adequately fulfilled.³⁴

Such presuppositions involve the exclusion of all force except the force of the better argument, the recognition that no issue is beyond questioning or 'taboo', and the recognition that everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires or needs.

Such a theory of argumentation differentiates between the social currency of norms and their validity. It is also based on the exclusion of any psychological considerations. It derives its force exclusively from the pragmatic presuppositions of communicative

³⁴Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, p.88.

action. Once again, on the basis of Habermas' account, Aristotelian rhetoric seems to belong to a less sophisticated stage of interactive development. First of all Aristotle does not seem to distinguish between the social currency of an opinion and its validity or between conventional claims and universal validity claims because he advises the rhetorician to appeal to the reputable opinions recognised by the listeners. He does not pay any attention to the internal structure of argumentation that derives its articulation from the presuppositions of communicative action. He also approaches moral-practical argumentation on the basis of institutional or sociological criteria since he divides rhetoric according to the listeners who themselves are distinguished according to whether they are in political assemblies or courts or public gatherings. Another sign that Aristotelian rhetoric does not rely on the formal presuppositions of communicative action is the fact that it sanctions emotional appeal in order to effect persuasion. In other words, Aristotle's rhetoric is based on the lack of differentiation between what Habermas calls the logical criteria of argumentation on the one hand, and institutional and psychological criteria on the other.³⁵

By assimilating rhetoric to the process of lifeworld rationalisation and the acquisition of interactive competence Habermas historicises it. On the basis of his model of lifeworld rationalisation, rhetoric becomes assimilated to a logic of human discourse which must seek to convince a universal audience on the basis of the pragmatic presuppositions of speech. The difference between Habermas' understanding of rhetoric and Aristotle's corresponds therefore to different stages of lifeworld rationalisation.

Habermas' project is based, as we have seen, on an inquiry into the nature of rationality. His attack on the triumph of positivism and the triumph of instrumental rationality is based on the view that this represents an eclipse of reason. Based on our intuitions from everyday experience he argues for the legitimacy and irreducibility of

³⁵See Habermas' discussion of these distinctions in The Theory of Communicative Action, vol. 1, pp.22-42.

another type of rationality called communicative rationality. His approach reminds us in certain ways of Aristotle's approach. The irreducibility of "praxis" to "techne" seems to be mirrored in the irreducibility of communicative reason to instrumental reason. His development of a wider conception of reason is, in his own words, a conscious attempt at retrieving to a certain extent the sound insights of the ancients: "... if we start from the communicative employment of propositional knowledge in assertions, we make a prior decision for a wider concept of rationality connected with ancient conceptions of logos".³⁶ At the same time, Habermas' concept of practical philosophy is not Aristotelian but Kantian. It is based on mature autonomy understood as liberation from desire.

Habermas' understanding of desire provides a basis from which the soundness of his approach to practical life can be examined. Habermas' scheme of individual, social, and cultural development is based on the systematic abstraction from the influence of desire and passion. This is attributable, I suggest, to the strong cognitive claims he wants to make for practical reasoning. Habermas begins with the sound insight that if reason is equated with modern science or positivism, forms of understanding that cannot conform to these strict standards are necessarily irrational. Since moral-practical reasoning cannot conform to these standards then it appears to be irrational. According to Habermas, this means that moral or ethical claims can only be defended on one of two grounds: emotivism or decisionism. Emotivism bases the defense of ethical choices on feelings: "I do it because I like it". Decisionism defends moral or ethical choices on an act of will so that the ultimate ground for any decision is that decision itself. Ultimately decisionism and emotivism reduce to the same thing, personal preference devoid of rational justification.

The only way, according to Habermas, to defend ethical cognitivism or the rationality of choices is to expand the scope of rationality by grounding it transcendently. In so doing, however, Habermas seems to go too far in the other direction. Moral and ethical development become overly intellectualised. The systematic

³⁶Habermas, Theory of Communicative Action, vol.1, p.10.

neglect of the influence or effect of the passions or emotions is evident throughout Habermas' work. It is evident, for example in his approach to issues of individual and societal enlightenment. Both are based in a transcendently grounded interest in emancipation. His understanding of psychoanalysis as a critical science is based on the view that liberation comes through therapeutic dialogue in which the troubled individual gradually becomes conscious of and liberated from his problems. He abstracts from the fact that therapy does not proceed simply at the level of rational dialogue but that it involves techniques and approaches that can shock and disturb the patient.

Similar problems arise on the level of public enlightenment. Generally speaking the whole process of lifeworld rationalisation is based in the unproblematic growth of self-consciousness. The capacity to reconsolidate existence at a higher level of consciousness is seen as an unproblematic cognitive achievement that involves few if any problems of adaptation. I quote the following passage at length because it brings this out clearly. Habermas is talking about the passage from the conventional to the post-conventional stage of moral development:

The social world of legitimately regulated interpersonal relations, a world to which one was naively habituated and which was unproblematically accepted, is abruptly deprived of its quasi-natural validity.

If the adolescent cannot and does not want to go back to the traditionalism and unquestioned identity of his past world, he must, on penalty of utter disorientation, reconstruct, at the level of basic concepts, the normative orders that his hypothetical gaze has destroyed by removing the veil of illusions from them. Using the rubble of devalued traditions, traditions that have been recognized to be merely conventional and in need of justification, he erects a new normative structure that must be solid enough to withstand critical inspection by someone who will henceforth distinguish soberly between socially accepted norms and valid norms, between *de facto* recognition of norms and norms that are worthy of recognition. At first principles inform his plan for reconstruction; these principles govern the generation of valid norms. Ultimately all that remains is a procedure for a rationally motivated choice among principles that have been recognized in turn as in need of justification. In contrast to moral action in every day life, the shift in attitude that discourse ethics requires for the procedure it singles out as crucial, the transition to argumentation,

has something unnatural about it: it marks a break with the ingenuous straight forwardness with which people have raised the claims to validity on whose intersubjective recognition the communicative practice of every day life depends.³⁷

What is important here is the way in which Habermas differentiates between reflective awareness and the taken-for-granted, quasi-naturalness of existence. We are either in an attitude of uncritical acceptance, or critical reconsolidation of the lifeworld. The former represents a natural or quasi-natural dependence which operates in a quasi-lawlike way. This is reminiscent of the distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence discussed in the last chapter. The crucial difference is that, according to Heidegger, authenticity was defined in contradistinction to publicness. This was reflected in Gadamer's view that the corrective to rhetoric lay in dialectic. According to Habermas, public speech and authenticity are reconcilable. The whole process of moral development is based, as we have seen, on the notion that mature autonomy is acquired through interaction with others. Mature autonomy means gaining liberation or a reflective posture towards the motivational basis of desire. It is this strong dichotomy between reason and emotion, freedom and nature which influences his interpretation of Hobbes.

Here we come to deal again with the issues we described at the beginning of this chapter. While Habermas agrees with Hobbes' attempt to introduce truth into politics, he bemoans, as we have seen, the lost proximity to "praxis". According to Habermas, Hobbes is the founder of modern social philosophy. He destroys the distinction between "techne" and "praxis" by assuming that it is possible to secure true knowledge of the nature of justice according to the procedures of the empirical-analytic sciences. Hobbes reduces politics to questions of technique. The order of virtuous conduct is replaced by the regulation of social intercourse. Along this road toward science, social philosophy lost what politics was once capable of providing as prudence. This was recognised, according to Habermas, by Vico :

³⁷Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, pp.126-127.

Vico hits on the difficulty with which Hobbes has wrestled in vain. The scientifically established theory of social action fails to include the dimension of praxis to which the classical doctrine offered direct access. Social philosophy constructed after the model of modern physics, namely with the attitude of the technician, can only reflect the practical consequences of its own teachings within the limits of technological self evidence.³⁸

Hobbes presumes that the knowledge provided by social philosophy, the certainty of which does not require public discussion, can have practical results. However, according to Habermas, unlike the technical application of scientific results "the translation of theory into praxis is faced with the task of entering the consciousness and convictions of citizens prepared to act".³⁹ With this in mind, says Habermas, Vico recommends the art of rhetoric. "This art knows that truths which are to have consequences require a consensus prudently attained : this is the "semblance" of truth in the *sensus communis* of citizens participating in public discussion".⁴⁰

Based on the presuppositions of the theory of communicative action Hobbes restricts himself to relations with one world, the objective world. He conceives of a practical science on the model of empirical-analytic science and reduces the logic of the social world to that of the objective one. This is evident insofar as Hobbes reduces normative relations to what Habermas calls the "causal compulsion of instinctual human nature". Thus Hobbes presents his account of human nature prior to 'sociation' in purely mechanistic or causal terms :

For his analysis of the natural state of the human species prior to all sociation is not ethical at all: it is purely physicalistic : it deals solely with the apparatus of sensation, with instinctive reactions, with the animal motion of biological entities, with the physical organization of men and

³⁸Habermas. Theory and Practice. p.74.

³⁹Ibid.. pp.74-75.

⁴⁰Ibid., p.75.

their causally determined modes of reaction.⁴¹

By reducing, as Habermas puts it, a normative interpretation of natural law to a causal one, Hobbes creates a dilemma which he cannot resolve : "The difficulty here is evident: Hobbes has to derive from the causality of human instinctive nature the norms of an order whose function is precisely to compel renunciation of primary satisfaction of these instincts".⁴²

The anti-materialism of Habermas' thought comes through in this evaluation of Hobbes' project. He reduces what Hobbes takes to be the inseparability of reason and passion to the level of instinctive drives. Only in this way is it possible for Habermas to argue that Hobbes only works on the presupposition of one world, the objective world. The objective world, according to Habermas, provides the logic for understanding phenomena such as instinctive drives and animal motion, which function in a mechanistic or a causal, law-like way. Unlike the objective world, the social world, according to Habermas, functions on the basis of interaction or 'intersubjectivity'. He argues that Hobbes ignores this logic of the social world.

Yet it is precisely on the basis of 'intersubjectivity' that Hobbes' understanding of the importance of the desire for recognition acquires its significance. Hobbes does not ignore what Habermas understands as the ontological and epistemological distinctness of the social world. He is much more concerned however with the political dangers this might pose. If humans only reacted in mechanistic, causal, and instinctive terms, there would be no problem. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Hobbes is not overly optimistic about the strength of the bonds of sociability and he feels as well that it is politically sound to keep reason attached to the passions. Reason ultimately finds its

⁴¹Ibid., p.65.

⁴²Ibid., p.66.

purpose as the result of the conflict of the passions. Habermas, on the contrary, is much more optimistic about the power of the bonds of intersubjectivity and the possibility of equating freedom with a transparent will totally emancipated from nature. As we saw, the capacity to gain reflective distance from desire and passion is precisely the result of an enhancement of communicative reason.

In reacting against the abstractness of Hobbes' thought, Habermas does not turn to a different understanding of the relationship between reason and desire, such as the one we find in Aristotle for example, but tries to recapture the concreteness of "praxis" through an epistemological grounding of an interactive realm based on 'intersubjectivity'. This is the social lifeworld. At the same time, this does not constitute a rejection of the importance of critical reflection since the growth of interactive competence is supposed to culminate precisely in liberation from pre-reflective, non-discursive sources of motivation which function in a law-like way. This allows for unimpaired intersubjectivity. He accepts Hobbes' insight that the desire for recognition constitutes the foundation of our relations with others but transforms the principle which informs it from the fear of violent death to the transcendently grounded desire to come to an understanding .

The Gadamer - Habermas Debate

The debate between Gadamer and Habermas is paradigmatic of the conflict between the perspectives of mathematics and poetry. However one cannot understand the debate between Gadamer and Habermas without understanding the similarities between them. Both ground their arguments on an inquiry into the nature of understanding and rationality: what does it mean to understand? Both their efforts are directed against the hegemony of modern science or positivism and its over-extension into areas governed by other criteria of rationality and intelligibility. Both deny any moral or ethical intention behind their work. Their inquiries are epistemologically rooted. They are not based on what we should do but on what we always do, or what happens to us, whenever we understand. Both claim to recover a dimension of concreteness, masked or eclipsed by

scientific reason. In both this concreteness takes the form of 'intersubjectivity' interpreted either as 'fusion of horizons' or as 'communicative action'. Both argue for the "always already" or transcendental character of the 'lifeworld' which provides the context for all understanding.

This relationship between understanding and the lifeworld provides the basis for the debate between Gadamer and Habermas. The issue at stake is the relationship between 'being' and 'consciousness'. Habermas' criticism of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is its inability to identify and suppress power relations or ideological elements that distort understanding. According to Habermas, Gadamer operates with an exaggerated notion of interpretation by making a claim for the universality of the hermeneutic situation. Habermas launched the public debate with his review of Gadamer's Truth and Method. In it he sees Gadamer's achievement as a more radical critique of positivism than that of Wittgenstein: "Despite the abandonment of an ideal language, the concept of a language game remains bound to an implicit model of formalized languages".⁴³ In other words, while introducing the significance of language as a practice, Wittgenstein nonetheless sees each language game as a closed system. There is no general system of rules, but each language game is itself completely ordered. Examined on their own, the rules of each game could be deciphered. Gadamer, on the other hand, sees language as more porous, as an open horizon. For Gadamer the phenomenon of translation or learning a second language is in some ways more significant than learning to speak one's native language because it reveals the open-endedness of language. Gadamer's achievement, according to Habermas, is in showing how ordinary or natural language provides its own criteria for preserving the unity of reason.

The ability to translate or to learn another language shows the open endedness of language and also the nature of understanding. Understanding is an integration of the

⁴³Jürgen Habermas, On the Logic of the Social Sciences trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989), p.149.

unknown on the basis of the known or a self-transcendence that does not imply a self-forgetfulness. This model of translation is also at work in tradition. Like translation, tradition is always an integration. Both of these are in fact achievements of life before they ever reach methodological clarity in the cultural sciences. Habermas sees his own notion of cognitive interests confirmed by Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics: Ordinary conversation provides the model for hermeneutic understanding which itself always serves to influence a life practice. This is captured in Gadamer's notion of understanding as application as exemplified in such fields as theological and legal hermeneutics. Hermeneutic understanding arises out of tradition. It develops on the basis of pre-understanding. In appropriating tradition hermeneutic tradition continues it. One is "always already" immersed in a lifeworld.

Habermas' criticism of Gadamer begins with his view that the latter denies the significance of the moment of reflection that supervenes on any act of interpreting tradition. This is an unavoidable implication of hermeneutic understanding according to Habermas:

In addition, it is the particular achievement of hermeneutic understanding that in relation to the successful appropriation of tradition it has also made clear and accessible to reflection the prejudices that attach to the initial situation of the interpreter.⁴⁴

Gadamer denies or seems to deny the consequences of this achievement, that the binding, integrating power of tradition is loosened when tradition is reflectively appropriated. The power of integration, as we saw, is reconsolidated on a higher level and becomes the synthetic achievement of individuals in interaction. We saw how Habermas develops this at the level of ontogenesis in a theory of moral development:

Gadamer sees living traditions and hermeneutic research fused in a single point. Against this stands the insight that the reflective appropriation of

⁴⁴Ibid., p.161.

tradition breaks the quasi-natural substance of tradition and alters the positions of subjects within it.⁴⁵

Because of this Gadamer does not see how reflection "shakes the dogmatism of life practices". Prejudices can no longer function as prejudices when they have been rendered transparent. In other words reflection alters the relationship between being and consciousness by raising pre-reflective aspects of the former to the level of the latter.

Thus, reflection can deny the claim of tradition:

But as reflection recalls the path of authority through which the grammars of language games were learned dogmatically as rules of worldview and action, authority can be stripped of that in it that was mere domination and dissolved into the less coercive force of insight and rational decision.⁴⁶

Hermeneutics must not neglect its critical dimension. Language is not merely a medium of understanding but also of domination and power. Understanding social action cannot be limited therefore to the dimension of intersubjectively transmitted meaning, at least not until distorted communication is eliminated. Insofar as this is not detected, language is also ideological, i.e., it does not serve to actualize its transcendently grounded ideal, communicative action. True understanding requires unconstrained public communication. Habermas uses the example of psycho-analysis as a critical science the goal of which is to raise to reflective awareness an unconscious or subconsciously operating obstacle to free flowing communication. Only in this way can the obstacle be dissolved. Emancipation coincides with reflective awareness. This emancipation re-inserts the patient into the ordinary functioning language community. On a societal level, critique of ideology plays the same role that psychoanalysis does on a private or individual level. It exposes forms of domination by raising them to the level of reflective awareness. For example, the transformation of the working class from a 'class in itself' to a 'class for itself' reproduces at the societal level what happens in psychoanalysis on an individual

⁴⁵Ibid., p.168.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.170.

level. A dimension of being, operating in an unreflective 'nature-like' way, loses its power by being raised to consciousness.

Gadamer's response to Habermas came soon after. Gadamer responds that Habermas is using a dogmatic conception of both tradition and reflection, which leads him to oppose one to the other. This opposition leads Habermas to the supposition that he can somehow step outside of tradition and behind language and analyse them from a privileged perspective. Furthermore, Gadamer argues that the understanding of hermeneutics as the possible coincidence of action and meaning or, in other words, the notion that all meaning becomes fully manifest to the agent is an exaggerated view. According to Gadamer, Habermas believes that reason is always in the service of emancipation and is therefore always corrosive of tradition. It is dogmatic, says Gadamer, to assert that reason is somehow always against tradition. Hermeneutics teaches us "to see through the dogmatism of asserting an opposition and separation between the ongoing, natural "tradition" and the reflective appropriation of it".⁴⁷

The reflective appropriation of tradition presupposes the ability to raise being to full self-consciousness. This is also something that Gadamer thinks is impossible. Our existence is always more being than consciousness. On this basis, Gadamer questions the validity of Habermas' use of the psychoanalytic model :

For Habermas, and for psychoanalysis, the life of society and the life of the individual consists of the interaction of intelligible motives and concrete compulsions which social and psychological investigation in a progressive process of clarification appropriates in order to set man, the actor and agent free ... The question we must ask ourselves, however, is whether such a conception does justice to the actual reach of hermeneutical reflection : does hermeneutics really take its bearings from a limiting concept of perfect interaction between understood motives and consciously

⁴⁷Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p.28.

performed action (a concept that is itself, I believe, fictitious) ?⁴⁸

Authority is not always wrong and reflection does not always serve to shake existing life-praxis according to Gadamer. The model of psycho-analysis cannot be transported from the individual to the societal level. Here, Gadamer refers to the metaphor of the game, the significance of which we saw earlier, to question the universal validity of psychoanalysis. Referring to the technique of the psychoanalyst he asks the following:

But what happens when he uses the same kind of reflection in a situation in which he is not the doctor but a partner in a game? Then he will fall out of his social role! A game partner who is always "seeing through" his game partner ... is a spoil sport whom one shuns.⁴⁹

This criticism is reminiscent of the odd and arrogant behaviour of those ill bred rationalists discussed by Vico. A person who has no sense for the requirements of social life, who cannot take anything on trust, who continually questions motives or seeks to go behind statements to discover the true motive or intention, cannot fully participate in any community. Such people do not understand what it means to participate in dialogue or conversation.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.30.

⁴⁹Ibid., p.41.

Chapter 8
Plato's *Gorgias*

Introduction

It may seem somewhat curious to pass from an analysis of the thought of Gadamer and Habermas to an examination of Plato's Gorgias. Judged by the standards of either a 'fusion of horizons' or 'communicative action' the dialogue is a resounding failure since it does not actualise the conditions for either. The dialogue, as the title suggests and the discussion makes clear, is about rhetoric and the power of persuasion. However, in the dramatic action of the dialogue no one seems to be really persuaded by anyone else. All attempts to come to an agreement or a consensus seem to be frustrated. As the dialogue itself progresses the conditions for discussion seem to disintegrate more and more until at last the final of Socrates' interlocutors, Callicles, refuses to continue the discussion altogether. That a dialogue about persuasive speech should reveal it as ineffective would seem to support the argument that Plato despised rhetoric and that what the dialogue shows is precisely the irrationality of rhetoric.

The argument I wish to develop and support through an examination of the Gorgias is that Plato presents a more complex view of rhetoric than the one that is often attributed to him. Clearly, Plato was a severe critic of rhetoric. At the same time I will argue that the dialogue itself suggests that rhetoric does have a role to play in political life. This emerges gradually in the dialogue through the passage from one interlocutor to the next. I will argue as well that the Gorgias, by revealing the possibilities and the limits of rhetoric, reveals complexities of political life that do not seem to be taken into account either by Gadamer's hermeneutics or Habermas' communicative ethics. A third purpose of this chapter will be to suggest that the account of rhetoric given by Plato in the Gorgias is similar in many ways to Aristotle's account.

The Setting of the Dialogue

The Gorgias is not the only dialogue in which Plato treats of rhetoric. In the Phaedrus we find an account of the noble or philosophical rhetoric that is based on adapting speeches to souls. When compared to the treatment of rhetoric in the Gorgias it is tempting to suggest that the Phaedrus gives a positive view of rhetoric while the Gorgias gives a negative view and therefore that the Phaedrus is the corrective to the Gorgias. This implies that the two dialogues are dealing with the same issues and that one is designed to solve the problems brought out by the other. The argument put forward here is that this is not the case and that the difference between the dialogues and the accounts of rhetoric in each must take into account the different settings and issues of each dialogue. To put it as succinctly as possible, the difference between the Gorgias and the Phaedrus is the difference between public or political rhetoric and private or philosophical rhetoric. Just as the Phaedrus abstracts from political concerns as suggested by the fact that the dialogue takes place outside the city walls, so does the Gorgias abstract from erotic ascent and divine madness. The Gorgias concerns the type of rhetoric directed towards discourse with the many and the theme of speech with the many pervades the dialogue. The Phaedrus concerns a rhetoric adapted to the specific inflection of a particular individual's soul. If this is the case and there is a difference between public and private rhetoric, between a political and a philosophical rhetoric, then the Phaedrus cannot solve the problems raised by the Gorgias. If there is a solution to these problems, the problems associated with public rhetoric, then this solution is likely be found in the Gorgias itself.

Gorgias

The first section of the Gorgias is for the most part a discussion between Socrates and Gorgias about rhetoric. Gorgias, the famous teacher of rhetoric, is in Athens and has been giving displays of rhetorical prowess all day before an audience. As we saw in chapter three, Gorgias was renowned for his skill in "epideictic" oratory. Socrates and his associate Chaerephon would like to hear Gorgias and are given the opportunity to do so

through the hospitality of Callicles, an aspiring statesman who is playing host to Gorgias. Socrates tells Callicles that he is not interested in hearing Gorgias display but would like to have a discussion with him. He says he wants to learn about the nature and the power of the art Gorgias professes to teach. As we shall see there is a close connection between the nature of rhetoric and its power because only through the revelation of the real or full power of rhetoric does its nature reveal itself.

Socrates tells Chaerephon to put the question about rhetoric to Gorgias by asking him who he is. Polus, a student of Gorgias, intervenes to answer for his master who, he claims, is tired out from his displays. In response to Chaerephon's question about what art Gorgias practices, Polus launches into a display speech praising rhetoric as the finest of crafts. Socrates objects to this by noting that Polus is obviously more practiced in rhetoric than in dialogue because instead of answering the question he is praising rhetoric as if someone had attacked it. In order to get an answer concerning the nature of rhetoric Socrates turns to Gorgias, the master, instead of the pupil. He asks Gorgias to put off his long display speeches and to engage in dialogue instead. Through Socrates' request that the encounter take the form of a discussion the suggestion is made, even before rhetoric is defined as the art of persuading the many instead of instructing them, that rhetoric is not the proper medium for true learning or instruction. Dialogue is the proper medium for this.

But even though Gorgias consents to enter into dialogue the rhetorical element, the element of display, is still present throughout the discussion. This is evident from the very beginning. Although Gorgias consents to have a dialogue with Socrates he clearly sees dialogue as merely a different medium for displaying his skills. When Socrates first inquires of Callicles whether Gorgias would be willing to talk with them instead of displaying, Callicles refers to Gorgias' claim to answer any question put to him. When Chaerephon subsequently asks Gorgias if this is true Gorgias says it is so, but that it has been many years since he has been asked anything new. His claim to be able to answer any question presupposes that he already knows what he's going to be asked and implies.

therefore, his subsequent remark that he has not been asked anything new in many years. As Gadamer would say, the hermeneutic priority of the question is put out of play. True dialogue presupposes knowledge of one's own ignorance which Gorgias does not seem to acknowledge.

That Gorgias sees no real difference between dialogue and rhetoric is further revealed in Gorgias' way of consenting to dialogue. Socrates had rebuked Polus for wanting to make speeches praising rhetoric instead of clarifying its nature. But in consenting to dialogue Gorgias himself merely displays the versatility of his craft. He states as one of his claims that nobody can answer a question as briefly as he can. "Micrologia", no less than "macrologia", seems to be one of the skills of the rhetorical craft. So Gorgias is still displaying and performing in discussion and his account of the nature of rhetoric will turn out to be a speech of praise about rhetoric similar to the one Polus had begun.

What is even more interesting here is that Socrates does not object to this as he had objected to Polus' display speech. He encourages Gorgias to display his brief style (449c). Socrates seems to acknowledge the fact that the discussion he is to carry on with Gorgias is going to be a public display or contest. As Eric Voegelin suggests, the theme of 'war and battle', the words with which the dialogue begins, is a central theme of the dialogue. The discussion, despite its surface politeness, is a struggle for the soul of the younger generation. What is at stake has to do with who will form the future leaders of the polity.¹ At two points in the dialogue, the discussion moves forward on the basis of Socrates' encouraging Gorgias to display the power of rhetoric. At both points we learn something about Gorgias' view of rhetoric. The brief style that Gorgias consents to use has the disadvantage that it reveals very little about Gorgias' views. Up to this point Gorgias has been answering 'yes' or 'no' to Socrates' questions and not really revealing

¹For Voegelin's interpretation of the Gorgias see Eric Voegelin, Plato and Aristotle. Order and History, vol. 3 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), pp.24-45.

himself or the nature and power of rhetoric. He claims to be a rhetorician and to be able to make others rhetoricians as well. But only when Socrates prods him, spurs him on, does he reveal himself and the nature of the rhetoric he practices.

The first such point is at 451d. Up to this point Socrates has been trying to get Gorgias to define rhetoric. He questions Gorgias about the art of rhetoric by using the analogy of other arts. If weaving is about producing clothing, and music about producing melodies, what is rhetoric about? Gorgias answers that it is about speech. Socrates again uses an analogy from other arts, medicine and gymnastics, to suggest that they are also about speech and yet they are surely different than rhetoric. Gorgias answers that rhetoric does everything through speech while the arts mentioned by Socrates do not. Gorgias divides the arts into manual and non-manual. Medicine and gymnastics are in the former category while rhetoric is in the latter. Again Socrates refers to other arts. He argues that arts such as arithmetic, calculating, astronomy also do everything through speech and yet Gorgias cannot be suggesting that these are the same as rhetoric. The series of examples culminates in astronomy which Socrates defines as speech about the movement of stars, the sun and the moon. When he asks Gorgias again what rhetoric deals with, Gorgias answers, in a way that contrasts with these celestial or divine things, that rhetoric deals with the greatest things in human affairs (451d).

It is at this point that Socrates prods Gorgias a little. He does so by imaginatively bringing forth competitors for the claim of craftsman of the greatest good for humans : a doctor, a gymnastics trainer and a money maker. The example of the arts of medicine and gymnastics were unable to draw a proper response from Gorgias, so Socrates summons forth the practitioners of these arts as potential rivals of Gorgias. Socrates has each one display his good in competition with Gorgias. Gorgias responds to the challenge by claiming that he is, in reality, the craftsman of the greatest good, which is responsible for freedom and rule over others in one's city. This greatest good is the power to persuade by speech in courts, chambers and assemblies. With such a power, the power to persuade the many, says Gorgias, the doctor and trainer will be your slaves and the money maker

will make money for you (452e).

At this point the emphasis shifts slightly from the question of what rhetoric is or which of the things it is about, to its power. However, as was suggested above, this is only an apparent shift since the nature of rhetoric is inseparable from its power. Gorgias does not dispute the hierarchy of goods : health, beauty, wealth justly gotten, which are brought forth as rivals to the good that comes through rhetoric, but says that the rhetorician could subordinate the purveyors of each through the truly greatest good, the power to persuade by speech in public. It is significant that Gorgias does not distinguish between these goods or any others as being better or worse. This suggests something he will state explicitly later on, that rhetoric is a neutral craft. It gives one the power to do whatever one wants, it does not distinguish between good and bad, noble and base. Rhetoric has power over all the other arts and will emerge victorious in response to any challenge coming from other arts. At this point Gorgias has given a definition of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the power to persuade by speech, jury men, council men, assembly men and any other gathering of the many about justice and injustice. Rhetoric seems to be architectonic. It controls the other crafts through its power.

After this revelation Socrates gets Gorgias to agree that there are two forms of persuasion. He does this by getting Gorgias to distinguish between learning and being convinced and by getting him to agree that both those who have learnt and those who have reached conviction are persuaded so that there are two types of persuasion : one producing conviction without knowledge, the other producing knowledge. Since these distinctions become important later on it is important to examine briefly what they imply in relation to rhetoric. If Gorgias teaches rhetoric, then he persuades since it has been agreed that one who teaches also persuades. If a rhetorician practices rhetoric, i.e., produces conviction, he also persuades. The first refers to the transmission or teaching of an art, while the second refers to the product of an art. So on the level of transmission, rhetoric is a teaching that persuades or a form of persuasion that teaches (about how to persuade). On the level of product, rhetoric creates conviction. So rhetoric teaches the

rhetorician and convinces the many according to what Gorgias has agreed to.

Gorgias admits that the persuasion rhetoric produces in jury courts about just and unjust comes from conviction without knowing. It does not teach the many about the just and unjust. Here it is important to note that this admission does not puzzle Socrates. He himself suggests that the rhetorician could not teach such things to a large mob in such a short time. This issue of instilling conviction without knowledge becomes important later in the dialogue. At 455b Socrates again brings about a situation which taunts Gorgias into displaying the power of rhetoric.

He asks Gorgias what a person shall get then from studying rhetoric ? Is it only the ability to produce conviction about justice and injustice as Gorgias himself suggested in his definition of rhetoric (454b) ? What will one be able to advise the city about ? Socrates gives Gorgias a chance to ply his wares once again and to display the power of rhetoric. He imaginatively sets up another scenario in which the city gathers to discuss the selection of craftsmen. Surely, says Socrates, the rhetorician has no role to play here. Nor will he advise about other important city matters. Socrates goes even further here by suggesting that there are people present who might want to become Gorgias' pupils. He should reveal to them just what they will be able to advise the city about. Gorgias cannot resist. He says that he is going to reveal the whole power of rhetoric to Socrates (455d-e). Once again he displays the power of rhetoric. Here Gorgias speaks openly and longer than before. He says that, in fact, rhetoricians do advise on the important matters of the city, and that rhetoric captures all powers and keeps them under its control.

He gives two examples of the power of rhetoric. The first one is public spirited. He says that he often visits patients with his brother, who is doctor, and persuades the patients to take their medicine when the doctor is unable to do so. The second example is the complete opposite. In the second example the rhetorician does not help the doctor but usurps his place. Gorgias says that if a rhetorician and a doctor competed before a gathering about which one of them should be chosen as doctor, the rhetorician would win.

as he would against any other craftsman. He goes on to say that, while this shows the power of rhetoric, it should however be used properly like other crafts. Although the rhetorician can steal any craftsman's reputation, he should not do this. Furthermore, one should not blame the teachers of rhetoric if their students use the craft unjustly. Rhetoric can be used for good or bad since it is a skill, like boxing. Here Gorgias, not Socrates, uses the analogy from other crafts. Rhetoric can be used for justice or injustice because it is all powerful, but it should be used for justice. As in the previous case, when Gorgias reveals the power of rhetoric it appears as potentially unjust. There is a tension between rhetoric and justice. This tension is revealed in Socrates' refutation of Gorgias which follows the latter's display. As Socrates will describe the problem: either rhetoric can only serve justice and is therefore not all powerful, or rhetoric is all powerful and is therefore essentially unjust.

At 457c Socrates begins his refutation of Gorgias. He begins by claiming a certain commonality of experience with Gorgias regarding discussions. He refers to the experience of a breakdown in conversation or dialogue that occurs because one interlocutor accuses the other of bad faith or motives other than the desire to know. He says that Gorgias is now saying things that do not quite follow from what he said earlier about rhetoric. However, he is hesitant about completing the argument for fear that Gorgias will interpret this as an attempt to defeat him in discussion. Socrates says that he himself prefers being refuted to refuting because it is a greater good to get rid of the greatest evil in oneself than in another. The greatest evil is false belief about the things Socrates and Gorgias are now discussing, justice and injustice. If Gorgias is the same sort of man as Socrates then the discussion should proceed, if not the discussion should be terminated.

Gorgias responds that he is the same sort of man as Socrates, but he wants to put it to a vote. He says that he has been displaying for quite a long time and that the listeners are perhaps tired (458b). This again reveals the fact that Gorgias does not distinguish between display and discussion. Gorgias has been performing before an

audience and his next move will depend on the decision of that audience. We are shown on the level of the action of the dialogue something that Socrates will state explicitly later on : rhetoric is a form of pandering, a type of flattery of the many. Socrates does not decide what he will do on the basis of the opinion of the many and later he will say in his discussion with Polus that he does not even talk to the many. He thinks it is better to deliver oneself from evil and to be in unity with oneself than with others.² The audience decides against Gorgias and he is compelled to go on. Callicles refers to the gratification he is getting from the discussion (458d), which anticipates Socrates' description of rhetoric as a knack that aims at producing gratification. Gorgias says it would be shameful not to go on after promising to answer all questions. He is trapped by the many whom he claims to be able to control through rhetoric.

This issue about the relationship between the rhetorician and the many will come up in the discussion between Socrates and Callicles. The issue is important because it has to do with what constitutes the supposed power of rhetoric. The suggestion has already been made that rhetoric panders to the many by gratifying them. If this is the case, then rhetoricians like Gorgias are deluded about their profession. Gorgias thinks that he persuades the many through the power of his art. He does not see that his power of persuasion is based on the fact that he tells people what they want to hear. Why is this significant? It is significant because it suggests that the power of rhetoric is in fact a result of something other than rhetoric. This 'something other' is what makes the many susceptible to the influence of rhetoricians like Gorgias in the first place. What this is comes up later in the dialogue.

At 459 Socrates comes back to the distinction between teaching and persuading and gets Gorgias to admit that a rhetorician will be more convincing than a doctor before

²In this sense the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias is a microcosm of the more general topic as to whether one should use rhetoric to deliver oneself from evil or in order to pander to the many.

a crowd of unknowers but not before doctors. The rhetorician only appears to know. This, in and of itself, is not a serious criticism of rhetoric since it concerns the relations between knowers and non-knowers. Doctors may be good at curing, not at persuading their patients. In this sense the rhetorician could in fact be of service to the doctor as Gorgias is to his brother. The more serious problem seems to be, as we have seen, that Gorgias' rhetoric does not seem to be able to distinguish between the rhetorician who would help the doctor and the one who would take his job.

Socrates then asks Gorgias if it is the same regarding justice and injustice, the fine and shameful, the good and bad, that the rhetorician does not know these things or that he persuades without teaching. Socrates wants to know if Gorgias' students must know these things before they come to study with him, and if he feels he must teach them these things if they do not know them beforehand. Gorgias answers that if someone does not know about these things, he will teach them. Socrates responds by once again using an analogy from the arts in order to show that whoever has learnt a skill or craft acquires that disposition. For example, he who learns carpentry is a carpenter, he who learns music is a musician, and he who learns medicine is a doctor. Therefore whoever learns just things is just. Gorgias agrees. The issue as to whether justice is learnt in the same way as carpentry or music is not raised. Gorgias also agrees that the just man does just things. He then agrees further that it is necessary for the rhetorician to be just and for the just man to want to do just things, and therefore that he will never want to do injustice. From this it follows the rhetorician will never want to do injustice.

The consequence seems to be the following. Since Gorgias has said that rhetoric is a skill that can be used for good or evil, and is therefore all powerful, then he contradicts himself if he also maintains that the rhetorician will never do what is unjust. If Gorgias changes his mind and acknowledges that the rhetorician can be unjust, this does not necessarily salvage the power of rhetoric since he had agreed earlier that whoever teaches persuades. And since persuasion is supposed to influence behavior, the teacher of rhetoric, who teaches about just things, fails if he does not make people just. It is at this

point that Polus intervenes.

The discussion between Socrates and Gorgias ends in aporia. According to Socrates the contradiction at the heart of Gorgias' account of rhetoric, concerning justice and injustice, poses a serious stumbling block to a proper understanding of rhetoric. The investigation would require a long meeting according to Socrates so as to work things out adequately and discover exactly how things stand concerning rhetoric. However we are not totally in the dark regarding the nature of rhetoric. The discussion between Socrates and Gorgias has introduced the themes on which the discussion will proceed for the rest of the dialogue. The problems concerning the nature and power of rhetoric are problems Socrates will have to address through his discussions with Polus and Callicles. Therefore, the account of rhetoric given by Gorgias has revealed important insights into the nature of rhetoric and the problems it raises. The problem with Gorgias, and the type of rhetoric he practices, is that he is unable to deal with the issues and problems he has raised. In order to clarify this let us examine what has been established through the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias.

One of the themes that emerges in this discussion is the difference between dialectic and rhetoric or instruction and persuasion. Socrates says he wants to have a dialogue with Gorgias in order to learn from him what he professes to teach. But the conditions for a real dialogue, a true communion of souls, are never really present either here or in the discussions between Socrates and the other two interlocutors. We have seen that, despite the fact that Gorgias consents to have a dialogue, the rhetorical element of display is still at work and is even encouraged by Socrates. The dialogue, as we have seen, takes place in a public setting before an audience. This suggests, I submit, something important about the nature of public discourse, something, as I argued earlier, that Aristotle sensed as well. True dialogue, proper instruction, a real communion of souls, cannot be actualised in a public setting. This means that public speech will always be based, at best, on persuasion rather than instruction. We may recall here that when Gorgias admits to Socrates that he persuades the many about justice rather than instructing

them Socrates adds that this is presumably because he could not instruct so many in such a short time about such important things.³ This distinction between teaching and persuading about justice and injustice is never repudiated in the dialogue. This suggests that rhetoric is an indispensable element of public speech and discourse with the many and that it cannot simply be dismissed or ignored. Despite Socrates' severe criticism of rhetoric, and despite the fact that he himself does not talk with the many, as he will tell Polus, he recognizes the need for rhetoric. Persuasive speech will always be necessary since our convictions about justice will always be based on assumptions or presuppositions which are less than certain.

The problem that presents itself here is that Gorgias' rhetoric suffers from an inability to do what it professes to do, that is, to deal with justice and injustice. As we saw, the power of rhetoric is in tension with justice. Wherever the power of Gorgias' rhetoric appears it reveals itself as unjust. This tension led to Gorgias' defeat. But the fact that Gorgias has been led to an impasse by Socrates does not discredit everything Gorgias says about rhetoric. In fact what Gorgias does say about rhetoric establishes the fundamental problem that Socrates will have to address. There are two important things Gorgias says about rhetoric. First, as we saw, it instills conviction about justice without knowledge. Second, it is a neutral skill. Socrates, as we have seen, does not reject Gorgias' view that the many are persuaded about justice rather than instructed. Similarly he does not reject the view that rhetoric is neutral and that it can be used for justice or injustice. The former issue demonstrates the need for rhetoric, while the latter issue demonstrates its danger. Rhetoric is both necessary and dangerous. If rhetoric is in fact neutral and therefore unable to police itself and ensure on its own that it will serve justice, then it will have to be subordinated to a craft that can ensure this. Socratic rhetoric will differ from Gorgias' rhetoric by reversing rhetoric's architectonic status and trying to

³Time constraint seems to be an important limiting factor here. Socrates tells Gorgias that a real discussion would require more time (461b). When Callicles says that he is not convinced by what Socrates says he responds that it would take time to extract the love of "demos" from his soul (513d).

subordinate it to a more authoritative craft, politics. Here as well we recognise a similarity with Aristotle's view.

The need for this regulation of rhetoric is suggested on the level of the action in the dialogue by the appearance of Polus. As Voegelin has argued, Polus is existential proof of the effects of Gorgias' rhetoric. The discussion about the nature of rhetoric that Socrates said would take time is not to take place. It is interrupted by the necessity of confronting the problem of Polus.

Polus

Polus intervenes when Socrates reveals the flaw in Gorgias' reasoning. The problem, as we saw, revolves around the tension between the power of rhetoric and justice. Polus will try to deal with this tension by ignoring it. He will drop the whole issue of justice and argue in defense of the power of rhetoric. We see in Polus the concrete manifestation of what Gorgias was referring to when he said that teachers cannot be blamed if their students misuse the craft they have been given. Gorgias' rhetoric is incapable of dealing with the tyrannical tendencies of Polus. The superiority of Socrates' rhetoric over Gorgias' rhetoric will show itself through the attempt to control or sublimate the tyrannical disposition and desires of someone like Polus.

Polus intervenes because he is not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion. He believes that Socrates exploited Gorgias' sense of shame in relation to knowing about just and unjust things. Gorgias was ashamed to admit that his students might not know about justice and Socrates merely exploited this. Polus will reject the first premise of the argument leading to Gorgias' downfall, that Gorgias must teach students the just things. Socrates answers him by saying that he is willing to withdraw any argument that was poorly stated as long as Polus continues the discussion along the lines set out by Socrates and Gorgias, and refrains from making long speeches such as the one with which he began. Polus is compelled by Socrates to submit to certain requirements or else the discussion will not take place. Polus agrees and accepts the role of questioner. He asks

Socrates what art ("techne") he thinks rhetoric is since he is not satisfied with Gorgias' answer and Socrates answers that it is no art at all but a knack ("tribe") for producing gratification and pleasure. Polus responds by asking Socrates if he doesn't think it is therefore a fine thing.

Polus is not troubled by Socrates' claim that rhetoric is not an art but a knack to produce pleasure and gratification. As long as rhetoric has the power to produce gratification Polus is satisfied. Gorgias, we will remember, had said that rhetoric was responsible for the greatest good in human things, the ability to persuade. The emphasis on persuasion disappears in the Polus section and gives way to an emphasis on gratification. As we saw however, this shift from persuasion to gratification really only makes explicit what had been implicit in the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias. Since Polus is not affected by Socrates' characterisation of rhetoric as a knack, Socrates has to draw Polus back to what he has just said in order to elaborate. Polus is too concerned with gratification. Here Gorgias, who does seem concerned with rhetoric's status as an art, intervenes. He wants to know what Socrates means. Socrates is reticent to say what he thinks of rhetoric. He admits that it is perhaps a little ill bred to speak what's true. Only at Gorgias' urging does he go on. This is not the only time Gorgias intervenes to keep the conversation going.

At this point Socrates sets out his mathematical proportions in order to explain what he means when he says rhetoric is a knack. This discussion takes place between Socrates and Gorgias. Socrates begins by distinguishing between body and soul, the good condition of each, and the arts overseeing the good condition of each. He then displays what he means in the form of a mathematical proportion. The gymnastic and medical crafts are concerned with the well being of the body, while legislation and politics oversee the well being of the soul. Legislation corresponds on the level of the soul to what gymnastics represents on the level of the body and similarly justice corresponds in the soul to what medicine represents in relation to the body. Flattery impersonates these four arts by making that which is pleasant appear as that which is good. Cookery impersonates

medecine, cosmetics impersonates gymnastics, sophistry impersonates legislation and rhetoric impersonates justice. This impersonation is shameful because it aims only at what is pleasant. Socrates then draws an analogy: as cosmetics is to gymnastics, so is sophistry to legislation, and as cookery is to medecine, so is rhetoric to justice.

These analogies brings out interesting points. They serve the purpose of degrading the type of gratification produced by rhetoric by describing it as a form of pandering or flattery. In so doing, they also serve the purpose of subordinating rhetoric to the true craft that it mimicks in trying to produce gratification, the craft concerned with justice. Rhetoric, according to Socrates, is an image of a part of politics (463d). So this schematisation subordinates rhetoric to politics or to the branch of politics called justice. This has the effect of reversing the achitectonic status of rhetoric in relation to justice, which was the view put forward by Gorgias, and sets out the condition under which rhetoric can be controlled.

There is another significant aspect to these proportions or analogies. It has to do with the suggested relationship between gymnastics and medecine and between legislation and justice. Both medicine and justice are portrayed as cures for sickness. If gymnastics can influence or affect the need for medecine, then legislation can also affect the need for justice. Both the need for justice and the need for medecine depend respectively on the degree of psychic and physical health that are influenced respectively by legislation and gymnastics. Just as rhetoric is subordinate to justice, according to these analogies, so is justice subordinate to legislation. By subordinating rhetoric to politics or justice and justice to legislation, the proportional schemes suggest that the character of politics affects the character of rhetoric. Legislation appears as the architectonic or supreme activity here. Once again, there is a similarity between this view and that of Aristotle since he also subordinates rhetoric to political science and, as we saw, believes that legislation can influence the character of rhetoric.

Although this scheme is set out in a discussion between Socrates and Gorgias it takes place in the context of the discussion between Socrates and Polus and seems to be for the sake of Polus. At 456a Socrates says that he is addressing Polus. As mentioned earlier, Polus thinks rhetoric is fine or noble because it produces gratification. According to the analogies set out by the scheme, rhetoric appears as something base. The first thing Polus asks, after Socrates sets out his scheme and explains what it suggests about rhetoric, is whether Socrates thinks good rhetoricians are considered to be worthless and flatterers. Polus, like Gorgias, decides issues on the basis of public opinion.

In response to the question about whether good rhetoricians count as worthless and as flatterers Socrates says something Polus considers absurd. This is the first of two occasions on which Socrates says things which appear absurd to Polus. But both have the effect of making Polus ready to submit to examination in order to discover what Socrates means. Polus is a proponent of public opinion and common sense. The only way to affect him is to attack common sense and public opinion. We must remember that on the basis of Socrates' scheme, rhetoric is a type of pandering or flattery of the many. It is likely therefore to derive its power from popular opinion. It is necessary therefore to attack common opinion if one is going to criticise rhetoric. So when Polus asks if rhetoricians count as flatterers, Socrates responds that they don't count at all. When Polus responds by asking if they don't have great power to do whatever they want like tyrants and whatever they think fit, Socrates says that both rhetors and tyrants have the least power in the cities.

By comparing the rhetorician to the tyrant we see how Polus drops the notion that rhetoric deals with justice in order to defend its power. Socrates must begin therefore to address him on the issue of power. To Polus' query about rhetoricians having the greatest power in cities, Socrates says that if power is a good for the man with power then rhetoricians have the least power of all. He picks up on a distinction Polus himself suggests, between doing what one wants and doing what one thinks best. Socrates suggests that neither rhetoricians nor tyrants have power since neither do what they want

to do but only what they think best (467b). Polus finds this monstrous and shocking but it has the effect of making him willing to answer questions in order to discover Socrates' meaning (467c).

Socrates uses the standard of instrumental rationality to show Polus that rhetoricians have no real power. He asks him whether people want the things they are doing at any time or that for the sake of which they do these things. The emphasis is on the good ("agathon") we seek to achieve through our actions. He uses the example of taking medicine to show that we often do something painful for the sake of getting something good. Polus agrees that this is the case. After the example of medicine, he uses the example of seafaring. Both of these examples relate to the preservation of the body. Socrates then generalises from these by saying that whatever we do is for the sake of some good and he gives three examples of goods we pursue: wisdom, health, wealth. He then gets Polus to agree that when we kill or expel anyone, which was the example Polus had used to argue that rhetoricians have great power, we think it is better for us to do it than not to, and so it has to be seen in relation to some good. Therefore, if the rhetorician kills, expels, or expropriates someone, thinking it is better when it is not, he does what he thinks fit but not what he wants. Socrates gets Polus to agree to this and concludes that this proves his argument that it is possible for someone who does what he thinks fit not to have great power since he does not do what he wants.

Polus is not persuaded by this argument despite the fact that it is logically correct. He believes that rhetoric is above instrumental rationality. Its nobility lies in allowing one to do things with impunity, to kill, expropriate, or imprison whomever one thinks fit. He answers Socrates by ridiculing him and suggesting that Socrates, like anyone else, is envious when he sees someone who is able to kill with impunity. He appeals, once again, to what he takes to be common sense. At this point Socrates introduces the criterion of justice into the argument once again (468d). He asks Polus whether he means killing justly or unjustly. This is important since it is on this basis that Polus' brutality will be dealt with. Polus is not convinced by a strictly rational argument as his scoff at Socrates

reveals. Existentially he is beyond the point of being convinced by purely logical arguments. Socrates will try to tame his brutality by sublimating it, by turning it towards the exercise of justice in the form of punishment.

Polus answers Socrates by saying that killing is enviable whether it is done unjustly or justly. Socrates tries to silence Polus by rebuking him. He tells him, on the contrary, that killing is better when it is done justly and worse when it is done unjustly because doing injustice is the greatest of evils (469b). Socrates says that he would rather suffer injustice than do it. The notion of a just killing or punishment that is introduced here is important because it introduces an alternative to the type of tyrannical life Polus has been celebrating up to this point. So far the rhetorician has been equated with the tyrant. Socrates is trying to bring about a situation in which the rhetorician can be identified instead with the dispenser of just punishment. If the type of disposition exhibited by Polus cannot be eradicated, it might at least be redirected toward a more public-spirited function.

Polus is not persuaded and says even a child could refute Socrates and show that many men doing injustice are happy. He gives the example of Archelaus, a tyrant. Polus presents his argument as if it were simply common sense, something that everybody knows. And therefore when Socrates says that he is not persuaded, Polus says that Socrates actually does think the same way but does not want to agree. Socrates responds by saying that Polus is trying to refute him rhetorically, as they do in the courts, by calling witnesses. He also acknowledges that common sense is on the side of Polus, and that most Athenians and foreigners would agree with him (472a). Socrates will produce for his case only one witness, Polus himself. As was the case in his discussion with Gorgias, Socrates does not call on the many.

To begin with, Socrates formulates the issue to be decided as follows. Polus believes that a man who does injustice and is unjust is capable of being blessed. Polus agrees that this is his view. Socrates says, on the contrary, that such a man is incapable

of being happy. He says, furthermore, that someone who does injustice and does not pay for it is more wretched than someone who does injustice and does pay. Polus once again says that this is absurd. He again tries to refute Socrates by appealing to witnesses (473e). At 474a-b the different positions are stated in clear and absolute terms. This represents the second place where Socrates says something so shocking to common sense that it compels Polus to submit to questioning in order to find out what Socrates will say. The first such attack on common sense, we saw, was when Socrates said that tyrants and rhetoricians had no power. Here it takes the form of Socrates saying that he believes that he himself, Polus, and all other men, believe that doing injustice is worse than suffering it, and that not paying justice is worse than paying it (474b-c). Polus responds that he does not. Socrates does not, nor does any other man.

At this point Socrates gets Polus to admit that suffering injustice is worse than doing it but that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it. Socrates gets Polus to agree thereafter to the following points: 1. Something is finer by being more pleasurable or more beneficial, and something more shameful is so by exceeding in pain or evil. 2. If doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it, then it is more distressing by exceeding in pain, or evil, or both. 3. Doing injustice does not exceed in pain, therefore doing injustice must be more evil. 4. Therefore, by exceeding in evil, doing injustice is worse than suffering it, not only more shameful. Polus is compelled to agree to the argument.

Socrates then moves to the refutation of the next argument: whether doing injustice and paying the just penalty is worse than not paying. Again Polus is compelled to agree to the conclusion that it is better to pay the just penalty than to escape it. When all is said and done however, Polus has not been convinced by Socrates. Although he agrees that all these things follow on the basis of what has been agreed to, he finds the conclusion absurd (480e). What then comes out of this discussion ? Through his discussion with Polus, Socrates suggests a type of public rhetoric to replace Gorgias' display rhetoric. This type of rhetoric would serve justice and encourage temperance rather than injustice and

license. This type of rhetoric is identified at the end of the discussion between Socrates and Polus (480b-481b). An important question resulting from this section concerns what it would take really to convince Polus. As we saw, rational arguments alone were not effective. The last section suggests an answer to that question. The discussion with Callicles reveals the conditions that have led to the existing state of affairs in Athens and shows what it would take to change this. Here the role of politicians and legislators becomes evident.

Callicles

In the discussion between Socrates and Callicles the issue of politics is addressed explicitly for the first time. It is not unrelated however to what has preceded. In the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias two issues came up. One was the distinction between instruction and persuasion and the other was the notion that rhetoric cannot police itself. In the discussion between Socrates and Polus two more important issues have come up. One is the notion that rhetoric is flattery and that it panders to the many. This is evident in Polus' appeals to common sense or what the many believe. Both Gorgias and Polus think that rhetoric is powerful because it persuades. But it persuades because it tells people what they want to hear. In this sense, Socrates is not simply being absurd when he tells Polus that rhetoricians have no power. If the power rhetoric claims to have proceeds from the fact that it panders and flatters, then it's success is attributable to something else. The second issue is closely tied to the first and concerns the rhetorician's relationship to the many. We have already seen that Socrates does not talk to the many. Gorgias and Polus talk to the many but only through flattering them. The question is whether there exists a type of rhetoric that deals with the many without pandering to them. This possibility is suggested, once again, at the end of the discussion with Polus.

Both of these issues come up in the Callicles section. Callicles is an aspiring politician. He is a lover of the "demos", or of the many, as Socrates calls him. That the discussion of rhetoric should culminate in a discussion of the character of political life

suggests that the character of rhetoric is related to the political situation. As Voegelin argues in describing the encounter between Socrates and Callicles : "The battle has now reached the real enemy, the public representative of the corrupt order".⁴ The other issue, the fact that Socrates does not talk to the many, comes up in his own self-characterization as a lover of philosophy. We seem, then, to be faced with the following alternatives: Callicles, a lover of the "demos", a panderer to the many, or Socrates, a lover of wisdom who does not talk with the many. The question, as we have indicated, is whether there is a type of statesman/rhetorician who can practice a salutary form of public rhetoric, someone who like Callicles can talk with the many, and yet someone like Socrates who will not pander to them but encourage temperance and justice.

As the discussion between Socrates and Callicles begins it is precisely this vision of a public spirited rhetoric in the service of justice and temperance that is called into question by Callicles. At the end of Socrates' discussion with Polus, Callicles asks Chaerephon if Socrates is serious or joking. He has obviously not been persuaded by what Socrates has said. He says that if what Socrates says is true our lives must be completely upside down and we are doing the complete opposite of what we should be doing. Socrates answers by noting that both he and Callicles are lovers. He says that he loves philosophy and that Callicles loves the "demos", the many. Just as Callicles cannot contradict his love neither can Socrates contradict his. Philosophy makes him say the things that amaze Callicles and, therefore, Callicles must refute her and show that doing injustice and doing it without paying justice are not the worst of evils.

Callicles responds by accusing Socrates of being an orator and making speeches, of being a demagogue. He argues that Socrates has used the same devious tactic to ensnare both Gorgias and Polus. Like a clever rhetorician, Socrates used the distinction between nature ("physis") and convention ("nomos") to get Gorgias and Polus to contradict themselves. Both Gorgias and Polus were trapped by shame according to

⁴Voegelin, Plato and Aristotle, p.28.

Callicles. Gorgias was shamed into admitting that he would teach his students about the just things if they did not know them already, and Polus was shamed into admitting that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it. Both were ashamed to say what they really thought. Callicles will not be inhibited by shame. Only by convention is it more shameful to do injustice than to suffer it. By nature to suffer injustice is more shameful. This is the fate of a slave, not a man. Those who lay down rules to the contrary are the weak, the many, who create rules in order to bind the strong. By nature it is just for the stronger to have more. Callicles appears to be the first of Socrates' interlocutors to reject public opinion. However, if what Socrates says is true, and Callicles panders to the "demos", then he is not likely to reveal to them what he has just revealed to Socrates.

He continues by saying that Socrates would know these things if he gave up philosophy and turned to greater things, to politics. Callicles says it is shameful and unmanly to pursue philosophy in later years since one acquires no experience of political life. Such a person would have no idea how to defend himself in a courtroom against false charges brought by an inferior accuser. Socrates' response is to call Callicles a touchstone on which he can truly judge his own way of life. Since Callicles has been so forthright with him, it is clear that if he agrees with Socrates on any point in their discussion, it will prove Socrates is right since unlike Gorgias and Polus, Callicles will concede nothing out of a sense of shame.

The first discussion between Socrates and Callicles (488b-491d) concerns Callicles' statement that by nature the stronger should rule over the many. It concludes with Callicles stating that those wise in the city's affairs, and brave should rule and that true justice is for such people to have more than the rest, for the rulers to have more than the ruled. Socrates then brings up the issue of self-rule or temperance. He asks Callicles if they must not also rule their own appetites and pleasures through temperance. Callicles scoffs at this and says that the man who is to live rightly should let his desires grow and have the power to serve them. Intemperance is only considered a vice by the many who cannot satisfy their desires. Socrates commends Callicles for speaking freely and saying

what others believe but will not say. He then tells Callicles two short stories designed to persuade him that the life of temperance is better than the life of intemperance. The first story describes the type of life Callicles is praising as similar to someone who tries continually to fill a leaky jar with a sieve. The second one refers to how the inability to fill these jars or vessels leads to extreme distress. He asks Callicles if he is not persuaded by these stories to pursue a moderate life. Callicles says that he is not. Living pleasantly means having as much inflow as possible.

Socrates begins by asking him if it is not possible to distinguish between better and worse pleasures. Callicles denies this since he argues that all pleasures are good. Socrates, following the logic of Callicles' argument, suggests a form of gratification that Callicles finds revolting. Callicles says that Socrates should be ashamed to introduce such issues into the discussion. In so doing he shows that he does in fact distinguish between good and bad pleasures. But in order to maintain his argument that pleasure is the same as the good, Callicles does not say what he truly believes (495a). Although Socrates suspects that Callicles does not really believe what he's saying, he undertakes his examination assuming that Callicles does in fact believe that pleasure and the good are the same. From this point on the discussion begins to degenerate. Socrates alludes to the fact that the conditions for carrying on a true dialogue do not exist. Socrates cannot persuade Callicles. All he can do is compel Callicles' agreement to lines of reasoning he does not really believe.

He gets Callicles to agree that we cannot possess good and evil at the same time so that if we possess two things at the same time they cannot be the same as good and evil (495e-496c). He goes on to argue that since it is possible to have pleasure and pain at the same time, for example drinking when one is thirsty, but one cannot possess good and evil at the same time, therefore these are not good and evil and therefore the argument equating pleasure with good is false. At this point Callicles is compelled to agree but he refuses to go on answering. Gorgias intervenes to persuade Callicles to go on (497b). Henceforth, Callicles only continues the conversation in order to gratify

Gorgias.

The discussion then proceeds on the grounds established with Polus. According to that argument, we do things for the sake of the good, and therefore we should do pleasant things for the sake of good things and not vice versa. The distinction between an art and a knack reappears here in connection with the distinction between pleasure and good, since only on the basis of an art can one determine which pleasures are good and which are not. Socrates gets Callicles to agree that rhetoric aims at gratifying and pleasing but not making people better. At 503a, a distinction is made between good and bad public rhetoric. Callicles says that some rhetoricians are concerned with making people better. Socrates agrees that there is a noble form of public rhetoric, but he says that there is no existing example of it. This good rhetorician will look to justice and temperance when he applies his speeches to souls. He will encourage virtue and condemn vice. Justice and temperance are the important virtues for a well ordered soul. At 507a, piety is also introduced as a virtue.

What emerges through Socrates' discussion with Callicles is the relationship between the exercise of rhetoric and the political situation in Athens. The emphasis on forensic oratory, the ability to persuade in courts so as to preserve oneself against false charges, as well as the type of rhetoric that panders to the many, is related to the neglect of the type of public rhetoric directed towards encouraging justice and temperance in the soul. A political regime is corrupt if what is necessary in order to preserve us from suffering injustice does not prevent us from doing it (511a). One cannot become a successful rhetorician in such a regime unless one's character is suited to it (513b). One cannot be a friend of the Athenian "demos", i.e., a rhetorician, without being like the "demos" in character. When Callicles says he's not convinced by Socrates, Socrates says that it is because he has the love of "demos" in his soul. That is why he cannot be persuaded. These things would have to be considered often and better in order to persuade Callicles.

Socrates goes on to criticise famous Athenian politicians. Here we are reminded of the mathematical proportions set out in the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias in order to describe rhetoric as a type of flattery. Here they take on existential or historical characteristics. As we saw these mathematical proportions suggested an important relationship between rhetoric, politics, and legislation. The role of legislation is important in determining the character of the regime and this includes the type of rhetoric that will be practiced. Athenian politicians and legislators are responsible, according to Socrates, for not having paid sufficient attention to making the citizens better. He accuses Callicles of eulogizing those politicians who are responsible for indulging the appetites of the Athenians. They are responsible for the fact that political life has been reduced to flattery and pandering. When he asks Callicles if this is the life he's advising for Socrates, Callicles answers yes. Socrates should gratify rather than cure the city. He adds that Socrates seems to believe that nothing evil can happen to him. Socrates responds on the contrary that he expects evil because he is the only Athenian practicing the real political craft. But Socrates practices this craft by admonishing in private. He does not go into public life. He knows he would not be persuasive in public. Athens is too corrupt.

The Myth of Judgment

Socrates' discussion with Callicles, and the Gorgias as a whole, ends with Socrates' account of a myth. The myth, which he says he believes to be true but which he says is not likely to persuade Callicles, concerns the fate of unjust souls after they have departed this life. As Eric Voegelin interprets it, the myth is the culmination of Socrates' indictment of the corrupt order of Athens. The myth of the well ordered soul provides a new ordering principle which supersedes the old one. In terms of what we have been examining, the myth represents a form of public rhetoric opposed to the display rhetoric with which the Gorgias began. The myth is an example of public spirited or political rhetoric that would have to serve as a foundation for a political order that would embody the spirit of what Socrates has been maintaining throughout his discussions.

The myth draws together the different themes that have come up throughout the dialogue. One of these, as we saw is the recognition of the indispensability of rhetoric despite its dangers. The distinction introduced by Socrates between instruction and persuasion endures throughout the dialogue and culminates in the myth of judgement. Socrates never says that the many can be instructed about justice. If this is the case, then our conceptions of justice will always be based on convictions that are less than certain. The myth of judgement instills convictions about justice that are not certain but that have a salutary effect. The existence of the myth suggests that discourse with the many is important and necessary. But as we saw, Socrates suggests that he is not the type of person to do this. If the philosopher does not speak with the many who will? The answer which I believe is suggested in the Gorgias, is that it would be a public spirited rhetorician/politician. The myth of judgement is an example of public spirited rhetoric that enjoins the virtues of justice, temperance, and piety. It represents one of three types of rhetoric presented in the dialogue: Gorgias' display rhetoric, Socrates' private rhetoric and the public spirited rhetoric that enjoins virtuous conduct. I would like to relate this discussion to the themes that have been examined throughout and in particular to the positions of Gadamer and Habermas.

When we examined Gadamer's thought we saw that he interpreted rhetoric as representative of inauthentic existence, a characteristic of 'there being' that could not be modified. Only authentic existence, represented by real conversation, liberates us from this. It might be helpful to recall Gadamer's position by referring to his early work on Plato's dialectical ethics.⁵ In the first part of the first chapter of this work entitled "Conversation and the Way We Come to a Shared Understanding" Gadamer contrasts the motives underlying a true conversation with what he refers to as degenerate forms of speech. True dialogue, as we have seen, is guided by an open questioning in which the

⁵Hans Georg Gadamer, Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus translated and with an introduction by Robert M. Wallace (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

partners take part in a common search or inquiry into some question.

Gadamer contrasts this with what he calls degenerate forms of speech. The characteristics of this form of speech, as described by Gadamer will be familiar to anyone who has read the Gorgias. Although Gadamer does not refer to the Gorgias many of his insights about degenerate forms of speech remind us of the dramatic action of the dialogue. Unlike genuine speech, the aim of which is understanding, degenerate speech is characterized by what Gadamer calls "phthonos" or the desire or concern to be ahead of others and not to be left behind. Here conversation is governed by a desire to distinguish oneself in front of others instead of pressing towards a discovery of the true state of affairs. This does not mean that the claim to come to an understanding in relation to the facts of the matter is not put forward. This claim is put forward but as a means for the speaker to distinguish himself from others. In this situation, therefore, the claim to want to come to an understanding is carried out by trying to "outdo" one's partner in dialogue. This pretended search for understanding takes the form of simply getting someone's agreement or refuting them. As Gadamer describes it, the function of such speech:

is not primarily to make the facts of the matter visible in their being and to confirm this through the other person but rather to develop in speech, independently of the access that it creates to the facts of the matter, the possibility precisely of excluding the other person in the function (which belongs to him in the process of coming to an agreement) of fellow speaker and fellow knower.⁶

In this sense, the strongest "logos" is not the one that gains access to the facts of the matter, but the one that protects itself from other claims.

⁶Ibid., p.46.

This takes the form of claiming a knowledge of everything, a readiness to answer any question because one believes in advance that one commands speech in such a way as to cut short any contradiction regardless of its substantive justification. The claim to knowledge is therefore something that is put forward at the beginning of the conversation. Such a claimant, therefore, cannot take conversation seriously. Such a person is always anticipating his counterpart's next move and trying to respond to it. If, perchance, one's argument should be refuted, then it is replaced with a new one : "Thus each logos, when it is refuted, is entirely dropped and replaced with a new one that seems to be strong enough to stand up against this refutation in particular."⁷ Therefore, contradiction and refutation do not function productively so as to further the inquiry into the matter at hand, but are rather a sign of weakness that must be met by a new argument. In other words, since each argument is put forward as definitive, if it should be refuted it becomes useless and is dispensed with.

Since the essence of such talk is to avoid contradiction, part of its goal to avoid dialogue. It tends toward the making of speeches ("macrologia") or long windedness. It takes the form of speaking to crowds rather than individuals. Such speech aims at persuasion and makes its impression through being pleasing or gratifying. Therefore, such speech reaches its highest level of virtuosity in rhetoric. Finally, according to Gadamer, the ability to avoid refutation finds its counterpart in the ability to refute others for the sake of refutation. Once again, this ability gives one the appearance of having knowledge. It makes its claim to knowledge not by demonstrating one's superiority but by showing the other's inferiority. Again, in Gadamer's words "One's purpose is not, by refuting the other person, to bring him to the point of making another statement as part of his own developing train of thought; rather, one's purpose is precisely to silence him."⁸ Contrary to what we saw above where the solution to avoiding contradiction lay in

⁷Ibid., p.47.

⁸Ibid., p.50.

"macrologia", the ability to refute others lay in the ability to induce "micrologia". In other words, one's counterpart in dialogue is not permitted to say anything more than "yes" or "no".

As we saw earlier, Gadamer sees the alternative to inauthentic speech in authentic speech. Dialectic is seen as the corrective to rhetoric. However, this position tends to abstract from the concrete political issue concerning the possibility of regulating the character of rhetoric. I suggest that this is because Gadamer understands rhetoric ontologically, as part of the 'lifeworld'. In other words, rhetoric is assimilated to a fundamental, inalterable condition of "Dasein". The analysis of the Gorgias set out above shows that despite Socrates' condemnation of rhetoric, and more generally of Athenian political life, he does not see the character of rhetoric as unmodifiable. Certainly, things are presented as so corrupt that nothing less than a political revolution based on a new founding myth might rehabilitate the character of public rhetoric. But the crucial point is that rhetoric is related specifically to political life and to political issues. Socrates does subordinate rhetoric to politics. The practical wisdom of legislators and statesmen can have an effect here as we saw when analyzing Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric.

Interestingly, when Gadamer discusses Aristotle's Rhetoric in relation to Plato's views, he suggests that Aristotle's treatise elaborates on the position set out in the Phaedrus, concerning the noble or philosophical rhetoric, based on accommodating speeches to souls.⁹ This argument abstracts once again from the more basic, technical aspects of politics that can in fact influence the character of public discourse. On the basis of the analysis carried out here, it seems that Aristotle's Rhetoric is just as much an elaboration of arguments set out in the Gorgias. The similarities between them have been noted already but it is possible to state them explicitly. Both emphasize the importance of public speech or rhetoric in political life. Both recognise that this public speech will fall short of truth or instruction. Both subordinate the practice of rhetoric to political

⁹See Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, pp.22-26.

science, recognising that rhetoric is, in a sense, a neutral skill and therefore requires the controlling influence of another art. Both recognise that the overall character of political life influences the character of rhetoric. Finally, both recognise the need for public spirited rhetoricians. It is possible to distinguish between good and bad politics and between good and bad rhetoric according to Aristotle and according to the view set out in the Gorgias. In this sense, Socrates would agree with Habermas against Gadamer. Philosophical hermeneutics does not have the capacity to distinguish properly between good and bad prejudices.

But while the Gorgias does not advocate the poetic view of rhetoric, which assimilates it to an inalterable feature of the 'lifeworld', neither does it advocate the mathematical view either. The Enlightenment view according to which rhetoric can be reconciled with the actualisation of the validity basis of speech is no less criticized through this dialogue. It is visible in the theme just discussed in relation to the myth of judgment, the distinction between conviction and instruction. This distinction is introduced by Socrates in his discussion with Gorgias. There, as we have seen, Socrates said that in matters relating to justice the many are persuaded but not instructed. This distinction is never superseded. The emphasis is on persuading, convincing, believing, without knowing. The myth itself, and the dialogue as a whole, show the limits of rational speech and the need for rhetoric. The content of the myth is also based on the power of persuasion and belief, not knowledge.

The Gorgias brings out two other important points relevant to an evaluation of Habermas' views. First, it shows that intellectual agreement does not necessarily entail a real existential agreement. Both Polus and Callicles are compelled to agree with Socrates but are not persuaded by him. What the Gorgias reveals is that the force of the better argument does not necessarily persuade. Second, it shows that rational discussion is not necessarily enhanced when everything is called into question. This is an important aspect of communicative ethics. As we saw, according to Habermas, reason and rational discussion are enhanced the more commonly held, unreflective assumptions are called into

question. Everything should be up for discussion and discursive validation.

The Gorgias shows that there must be a level of commonly held assumptions and opinions, which are beyond discursive validation if persuasion is to take place. This does not mean that they impede discussion. They provide a basis for rational discussion by providing a common ground. As Aristotle says: someone who believes snow isn't white or doesn't know whether gods should be honoured cannot be persuaded by arguments. What does one do when faced with characters like Polus and Callicles? Is the transcendental validity basis of speech enough to engage such people in rational discussion? To be fair, Habermas does recognise that there are such people. These people, when they engage in dialogue, choose to act strategically rather than communicatively. But the issue of choice is precisely the important and crucial issue. This is why Aristotle considers the training of desire so important. The choice between acting communicatively or strategically is not strengthened by calling into question all the grounds on the basis of which we make our choices.

One of the issues brought up in this dialogue is the issue of shame. Both Gorgias and Polus were shamed into certain admissions and even Callicles showed that he could be made to squirm. There is therefore a non-discursive basis to our beliefs and our opinions. This also is dealt with in the myth of judgement. The myth supplements the feeling of shame with the passion of fear. Shame is a feeling that is manifested in public. One can avoid shame if one can avoid public scrutiny. The myth of judgement counters this by introducing an omniscient judge or judges. But this is a fear that can have a salutary result and provides the basis for a sounder type of rhetoric. In this sense the Gorgias introduces an element we are perhaps most familiar with from the thought of Hobbes, the element of fear. But the Gorgias introduces it in such a way as to allow it to influence the character of rhetoric rather than try to replace it.

The Gorgias presents a view that, like Aristotle's treatise, resists the twin charms of mathematics and poetry. It recognises the importance of the discursive dimension of

politics but not to the extent of assuming that we can simply remake our world on the basis of intersubjectively validated norms. There will always be the need for a level of non-discursive reference points. On the other hand these reference points are not simply a dispensation of fate beyond our power.

Conclusion

According to a saying of Tacitus, rhetoric thrives under democracy and languishes under tyranny and dictatorship. That rhetoric should languish under tyranny is perhaps not surprising. Even though Aristotle, in the Rhetoric, includes tyranny as one of the regimes with which the rhetorician must familiarize himself, he adds that the goal of tyranny is the protection of the tyrant. Under these circumstances open public debate and deliberation are not likely to be possible. Such a situation is attested to by the words of one of the greatest orators of all times, Cicero. Writing to his son about the reason why he devotes much of his time to philosophical studies, Cicero explains that it is the result of the fact that public affairs do not occupy his attention anymore. Given a choice he would much rather devote his efforts to political issues but this has been made impossible due to the passing of the republic and its institutions. As an answer to those who find his devotion to philosophy curious he says :

I would reply that as long as the state was ruled by its own elected representatives, I devoted all my thought and attention to its interests. But when it became wholly subject to the domination of one man and there was no longer any place for my leadership and advice, when, above all, I had been deprived of those eminent men who had been my colleagues in governing the affairs of state, I neither abandoned myself to despair, which would have been my undoing had I given in to it, nor gave myself up to the sort of pleasures which ill befit a man of learning.¹

The other part of Tacitus' statement, that rhetoric flourishes under democratic conditions, is not something surprising either. This relationship between rhetoric and democracy is a theme that has come up many times throughout this thesis. And yet the existence of tyrants and dictators is not the only threat to the flourishing of rhetoric. Democracy poses its own threat to the existence of rhetoric. In democracy the enemy of

¹Cicero, On Moral Obligation. A new translation of Cicero's 'De Officiis' with Introduction and Notes by John Higginbotham (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p.99.

rhetoric is not the tyrant but the demagogue. As we saw, according to Hobbes it would be difficult to distinguish between the rhetorician and the demagogue and on that basis he rejects rhetoric outright. Aristotle as we saw has a more sober view. Certainly it is possible for rhetoric to degenerate into demagoguery but it is also possible to take measures to ensure the soundness of public deliberation.

One of the important ways in which it is possible to ensure a measure of soundness in public deliberation and debate is through the appeal to common or reputable opinions. As we saw, Aristotle argues that political or deliberative rhetoric is less subject to deceptive and manipulative practices than forensic rhetoric because the former treats of wider issues which involve common interests and people are less likely to be deceived about those things that concern them. People have less of a stake in the outcome of a trial and so are more susceptible to manipulation. We have also seen that the existence of common or reputable opinions provides a basis for detecting clever speakers since a rhetorician who does not know how to appeal to these will have to engage in long, drawn out arguments. These common opinions provide a legitimate basis on which to conduct political reasoning. The extent to which democracy allows rhetoric to flourish depends then on the extent to which there is the capacity to establish consensus through speech by appealing to some sense of commonality.

This notion of commonality, of coming to an agreement, has also been a constant theme in this thesis. The importance of this notion of commonality bears mentioning by way of a conclusion since the extent to which contemporary democracy fosters a sense of commonality has now become questionable and under these conditions Hobbes' view that rhetoricians are indistinguishable from demagogues cannot simply be discounted. The crisis facing contemporary democracies is described by Jean Elshtain in her book Democracy on Trial.

In her book Elshtain remarks that at the very moment when tyrannies are crumbling in the East, western democracies are faltering not flourishing. More and more,

says Elshtain, we are confronting each other as aggrieved groups instead of as free citizens. Her diagnosis identifies a certain number of dangerous symptoms: the growth of cynicism, corrosive individualism, statism, which have led to the gradual erosion of civil society. Elshtain describes civil society as "the many forms of community and association that dot the landscape of a democratic culture, from families to churches to neighbourhood associations to trade unions to self-help movements to volunteer assistance to the needy."² Democratic culture depends on a vibrant civil society since this is what fosters our sense of membership and therefore our ability to participate with others. But it is precisely the sense or spirit of commonality that is being gradually eroded by the phenomena listed above.

According to Elshtain, the growth of a culture of mistrust fuels declining levels of involvement in politics and cynicism about politics and politicians generally. A corrosive form of individualism based on viewing rights more and more in terms of entitlements is gradually transforming the notion of a citizen into that of a client. The notion of civic obligation is giving way more and more to the ideal of civic privatism in which the participating citizen is transformed into the client of a State responsible for distributing goods. Civic privatism is therefore inseparable from statism or the belief that politics is about distributing goods. Discussion and debate between citizens gives way to a bureaucratisation of politics. According to Elshtain, the inevitable reaction to this condition, populism, is no more conducive to restoring a vibrant democratic culture. Because populism calls for pure democracy or the direct expression of the will of the people it also undercuts public debate and the use of political judgment.

Besides the extremes of bureaucratisation and populism, Elshtain identifies another phenomenon contributing to the erosion of civil society which is the growth of identity politics and what she calls the politics of displacement. The politics of displacement refers to the gradual politicization of every dimension of human life and therefore contributes

²Jean Bethke Elshtain, Democracy on Trial (Concord, Ontario: Anansi Press, 1993),p.6.

to an erosion of the distinction between the public and the private. While this might appear initially as a sign that politics is thriving since many more issues are described as 'political', Elshtain argues that this phenomenon in fact represents an impoverishment of politics since it calls into question the very notion that politics is about public and common concerns. Identity politics is the most prominent form of the politics of displacement. It is based on the notion that who you are (based on race, sex, class) ultimately determines what you advocate politically. In this sense politics becomes idiosyncratic. The consequence is that politics is reduced to the validation or public recognition of personal preferences and becomes a celebration of feeling or authenticity as opposed to the exercise of public reason and political judgement about common concerns.

What effect is this likely to have on the character of rhetoric or public speech? One of the important insights of both Plato and Aristotle, as we have seen, is that the character of politics influences the character of rhetoric. Rhetoric is public speech and so it requires a notion of the public or the common in order to flourish. Once the notion of the common or the public begins to degenerate so does the character of rhetoric. Under the conditions described by Elshtain the prospects for the exercise of public reason are not promising. Neither the juridification of politics nor populism provide the conditions necessary for the exercise of sound rhetoric. As Elshtain has argued both destroy the possibility of engaging in public debate about issues of common concern. If political life is reduced to rules and procedures that have to be followed, and if laws and procedures replace political judgement instead of providing a framework for it, then there is no need for public debate and discussion. If politics is reduced to a reaction against these rules and procedures and is nothing but the expression of popular will then rhetoric can serve only to fan the flames of popular discontent and disillusionment and is therefore inseparable from demagoguery. Under these conditions, as Aristotle says, the people becomes a tyrant.

The growth of the politics of displacement and identity politics is also likely to have a negative effect on the character of public speech. If every attempt to establish a

common ground or reach consensus is continually unmasked as a cover for putting forward particular agendas then the whole notion of a coming to an agreement is called into question from the start. As Gadamer has argued, if we are continually relating what someone says to us back to their historical or psychological characteristics then it is clear that they have nothing to say to us. This is a limited form of understanding according to Gadamer. The politics of displacement sees this limited form of understanding as the defining logic of political life. If political speech is irremediably idiosyncratic, then all positions are considered incommensurable. Once again there is no way to appeal to a common ground. As Aristotle says, rhetoric cannot construct its reasoning on the basis of any and every material. Persuasive speech requires that there be common issues or regular subjects of debate that call for discussion. It requires what was referred to in chapter two as the generalizing operations of the *logos*. This allows our perceptions of the good to be scrutinized, discussed, and debated with others.

To confront the situation described by Elstain is to encounter once again the twin charms of mathematics and poetry. Here they take the form, respectively, of legalism and antinomianism. Politics is perceived either as a set of rules and procedures to manage the distribution of resources on the basis of competing claims, or as a forum for the spontaneous expression of popular will and personal authenticity. Resisting both charms means working to restore a forum for the exercise of public reason. This means recognising that laws and procedures should provide the framework for debate and discussion instead of replacing them. It means recognising as well that while politics can deal with many issues and solve many problems it is not likely to be able to satisfy our deepest longings and aspirations because it requires that we take into account the plurality of opinions and perspectives about the human good and this requires accommodation and compromise. Only on this basis can rhetoric remain an important dimension of political life.

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the same problem. Gadamer finds the most concrete examples of understanding as conversation in the platonic dialogues. It is the platonic Socrates, in discussion with his interlocutors, who exemplifies the logical structure of openness, which defines real understanding. This openness, according to Gadamer, has the structure of a question. The question opens up the being of the thing to be investigated. In order to ask questions one must truly want to know. This presupposes knowing that one does not know or knowledge of one's ignorance, which is exemplified by Socrates. Therefore a true dialogue proceeds by question and answer. This living conversation is the model of platonic dialectic.

But the structure of a dialogue is not the same as the structure of rhetoric. Here it will help to return to Heidegger's understanding of rhetoric and to reflect on something that was not brought into view when we first examined it. As we have seen, according to Heidegger, Aristotle's Rhetoric provides the first systematic hermeneutic of the everyday. When we argued above that Gadamer's view of rhetoric followed Heidegger's we focussed on the relation with hermeneutics and how this could not be reduced to a technical notion of understanding. Here, however, what is important is understanding what is meant by the expression 'everyday'.

Everydayness is what Heidegger refers to as the mode of *dasein*'s 'being with others'. He describes this everyday mode of being with others as the mode of the 'they' or 'publicness'. This is a mode of 'inauthentic' existence according to Heidegger. Inauthenticity is, according to Heidegger, a fundamental existential structure and therefore he does not use it in a derogatory sense. For the most part all our worldly involvements partake of the mode of publicness. Our understanding is usually one that comports itself in relation with the mode of being of the 'they'. We are 'delivered over' to this way of being. It constitutes our 'thrownness'. Communication in this mode takes the form of what Heidegger calls idle talk ("Gerede"). Again Heidegger does not mean this in a derogatory sense. In the mode of publicness "*dasein*" communicates in such a way that what is talked about is not really disclosed. There is a common sense or taken-for-grantedness