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ARISTOTLE ON THE CENTRALITY OF PROOF TO RHETORIC

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Abstract
Arguably Aristotle was the first in the Western tradition to insist explicitly on a constitutive connection between logic and rhetoric. Aristotle claimed that "rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic". By this it seems he meant that central to the expert orator's expertise was a knowledge of the validity of arguments. Indeed, Aristotle insists further that the only essential component of an expertise in rhetoric is an ability to produce proofs. Such a conception of what rhetoric is differed greatly from how his predecessors (we briefly consider Gorgias and Plato) thought about rhetoric. How radical and distinctive Aristotle's conception of rhetoric was has not been properly recognised in recent work on the *Rhetoric*. Nor has it been recognised that Aristotle spends much of the first chapter deploying arguments to defend his distinctive, proof-centred view of rhetoric. Here, we consider one argument in which Aristotle's distinctive conception of rhetoric is deployed, from which it is clear how pivotal to Aristotelian rhetoric the role of proofs is. Then we will attempt to elucidate Aristotle's argumentative strategies for explaining and defending this distinctive view.

In most modern usage, calling something "rhetoric" implies a lack of decent argument. We think of rhetoric as a skill in whatever methods are successful at getting people to believe or do (or feel) certain things. Against such a background, logic's place in rhetoric might be as one — often not the most effective — among many such methods for securing conviction. In this paper, I suggest that, for Aristotle, logic (broadly construed) was absolutely central to rhetoric. Unless, he insists, you are producing proofs that meet certain inferential standards, you are not engaged in rhetoric at all! Such a view was as controversial in Aristotle's day as now — indeed, as we shall see, he seems to have been the first in the Western tradition to make such a close connection between logic and rhetoric. In what follows, I show from the text of the *Rhetoric* that this radical and distinctive view of rhetoric was

indeed his. The latter part of the paper is concerned with how he defended this view, and whether such a view remains defensible.

It is clearly one of the central functions of logic to distinguish correct from incorrect inferences.[1] As such, logic provides an important kind of normative assessment. The argument in the first part of the paper will proceed by showing first that, in Aristotle's view, the skill of rhetoric is exercised only where the audience would be *correctly* inclined to believe the speaker's conclusion on the basis of what the speaker has said. That is, I will show that the techniques of rhetoric are subject to normative constraints. But secondly, I will suggest that these constraints include specifically the correctness of the *inference* that the speaker invites the audience to make. If so, rhetoric will turn out to be a skill in providing audiences with a *correct inferential route* to the speaker's proposed conclusion. It is obvious that, on this view, logic is an essential constituent of rhetoric: the expert orator is an expert on (amongst other things) the validity of arguments.

Rhetoric and Proof in Rhetoric *I.1.*

My main purpose in this section will be to set out a series of arguments from the first chapter of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. It is a chapter and an argument that has attracted a certain amount of interest, puzzlement, and scholarly effort. In the main, attention has focussed on the important question of whether Aristotle in this chapter excludes emotion-arousal from having a place in the expertise of rhetoric, and thus whether his views here stand in contradiction to his views elsewhere in the treatise, where in fact he gives emotion-arousal a very prominent and important place in rhetorical expertise. I shall say a little about this contradiction problem in passing, but it is not my main concern here.[2]

[1] The connection we are discerning in Aristotle is between rhetoric and logic, where we understand the latter term broadly to allow for a wider class of correct inferences than just those that are deductively valid. Aristotle expresses this connection in terms of a close similarity between "rhetoric" and "dialectic", and the role of some kind of "demonstration" (apodeixis) and "reasoning" (*sullogismos*) in rhetorical argument. The precise contours of his view are explored further in (e.g.) Burnyeat [1990] and Allen [2001].

[2] The problems are most clearly canvassed in Wisse [1989] 17–20, and Barnes [1995] 259–262. I have proposed a solution in Dow [2007].

In fact, I am concerned that these issues to do with the emotions do not distract our attention from some very striking assertions that Aristotle makes about rhetoric in this opening chapter.

I want to set out from *Rhetoric* I.1 what Aristotle's view of rhetoric is, highlighting a couple of important claims involved in his view. I want to make clear what is controversial and surprising about these claims — both to us and to Aristotle's contemporaries. It will be clear from this that Aristotle's position represented a significant departure from the views of his predecessors. This lends support to the suggestion that his views represented a significant innovation in philosophical thinking about rhetoric.

Aristotle's Arguments in Rhetoric *I.1.*

Here is a fairly literal translation of how the text of *Rhetoric*. I.1, 1354a11–18 is printed in WD Ross's Oxford edition.[3]

> Now the authors of the current handbooks on the "Art [of Rhetoric]" have produced virtually no part of it at all. (For the proofs are the only thing that belongs to the art, the other things are merely accessories to it.) And these people say nothing about enthymemes which are the body of proof, whereas they busy themselves mainly with what is outside the subject at hand. For slander and pity and anger and similar passions of the soul are not concerned with the subject at hand but are directed at the judge.

My principal contention here is that one of the most important sentences of the whole of the *Rhetoric* is the one that Ross puts brackets around here. Not only is it pivotal to the argument of this passage, it is programmatic for the whole work — it expresses something utterly central in Aristotle's conception of what rhetorical expertise *is*. So I concur with Myles Burnyeat's blunt verdict on this bit of editing: "The parentheses Ross puts around [this sentence] are a disaster."[4] Quite so — they are! When the passage is understood aright, it can seem utterly mysterious what might have motivated Ross to put them in. But in fact they spring from, and have served to perpetuate, a rather widely shared view of this opening chapter. That is that Aristotle is simply fulminating against his rivals — we have here a torrent of rhetoric

[3] Ross [1959].

[4] Burnyeat [1990] 10 n.26.

(what Kennedy calls the "rhetoric of the *Rhetoric*").[5] Aristotle has, on this view, offered no argument for why enthymemes (roughly: 'rhetorical arguments', literally: 'considerations') are the main part of rhetorical expertise. Nor has he offered any argument against the use of irrelevant material. On this interpretation, he is simply trying to work his audience up, so that (almost despite themselves) they despise these writers of rhetorical handbooks for their neglect of enthymemes and their use of irrelevant material. So, on this view, Aristotle is engaged in some very broad-brush scene-setting, isn't too concerned about accuracy or about arguing the issue. Rather he concentrates simply on working his audience. There is, of course, a significant level of hypocrisy attributed to Aristotle by such a view! That may already be reason enough for rejecting it.

However, another possible motivation for Ross's punctuation is that it seems to provide a way of avoiding, or at least softening, the contradiction over emotion-arousal. If the sentence in brackets is tangential to Aristotle's main contention here, then it becomes easier to maintain, as several prominent interpreters wish to (e.g. Cooper, Wardy, Cope, Grimaldi),[6] that Aristotle here allows that "slander, pity, anger, and similar passions" do have a place within rhetoric, just not the dominant role that is occupied by enthymemes. Aristotle's point here becomes that the handbook writers have been over-occupied with a small part of rhetoric, and missed the biggest element. Of course, resolving/softening the contradiction over emotion-arousal is a creditable motivation for choosing a particular interpretation. But I think that here it skews our view of what is being said.

I want to contend that there is a much better interpretation available. But it's more difficult to see if our attention is focussed on the emotion-arousal issue. So, let us once again look at the passage, remove the emotion terms, and consider what the passage looks like without Ross's brackets. I keep in the first item in the list — slander (and indeed, getting to grips with what should be said about *slander* vis-à-vis genuine rhetorical expertise is the real key to resolving the apparent contradiction).[7] This way, hopefully, we can avoid being distracted by the emotion issue, and see the structure of the argument.

> Now the authors of the current handbooks on the "Art of Rhetoric" have produced virtually no part of it at all. For the proofs are the

[5] Kennedy [1985]; cf. also Grimaldi [1972] 20f. and Wisse [1989] 19.

[6] Cope [1867]; Grimaldi [1972]; Wardy [1996]; Cooper [1996], [1999].

[7] Cf. Dow [2007].

> only thing that belongs to the art, the other things are merely accessories to it. And these people say nothing about enthymemes which are the body of proof, whereas they busy themselves mainly with what is outside the subject at hand. For slander [etc.] is not concerned with the subject at hand but is directed at the judge. (*Rhetoric*. I.1, 1354a11–18)

I propose that this could be roughly paraphrased as follows:

> These authors claim to have given us a systematic treatment of rhetoric. But in fact they have told us next to nothing about it. Rhetoric is all about proof. They have ignored the main thing that generates proof — that is, arguments / considerations. And they have spent virtually all their time and energy on things that cannot possibly contribute to proof — that is, things that are irrelevant to the issue under consideration.

In more detail, we might tease out two arguments here. The first is this.

Argument (i)

1. In attempting to give an account of the art of rhetoric, the handbook writers say nothing about enthymemes (a14f.)
2. Enthymemes are the most important part of proof (a15)
3. The only thing that properly belongs to the art of rhetoric is proof[8] (a13f.)

We may infer:

4. The handbook writers say nothing about the most important part of the only thing that properly belongs to the art of rhetoric

Which gives good reason to suppose:

5. In attempting to give an account of the art of rhetoric, the handbook writers have produced scarcely a part of it (a11–13)

Now, if Aristotle can secure these premises, the argument looks as though it will be sound. Premise 1, I think, is uncontroversial. Anyone who knew these works would know that they didn't contain much on the development

[8] Aristotle actually says "the proofs" here. But for Aristotle's argument to be good here, "proof" must be either simply a generic singular such that "the proofs" are instances of "proof", or it is a specification of the kind of content that the part of the speech called "the proofs" would contain.

of 'arguments' or 'considerations', which is what enthymemes are. But premises 2 and 3 look much more controversial. Much seems to turn on what Aristotle means by "proof". This issue becomes more acute in the second argument in this passage, which — it turns out — can be plausibly construed *only* on a very specific understanding of what Aristotle meant by "proof" (Gk. *pistis*). For this reason, we should devote careful attention to this second argument.

Argument (ii)

1. The handbook-writers have spent most of their time on things that are outside the issue (a15f.).
2. Only the proofs belong to the expertise of rhetoric (a13).
3. Therefore the handbook writers have contributed next-to-nothing to the expertise of rhetoric (a11–13).

Stated thus, the argument is rather elliptical. Its conclusion is that the handbook writers have said little about rhetorical expertise. The justification for this is that the "proofs" alone fall under the expertise, and the handbook writers have spent most of their efforts on what is outside the issue, or irrelevant.[9] As it stands, this argument is incomplete. What is needed is a premise to show that speaking about irrelevancies cannot constitute producing "*proofs*". Most commentators perhaps take this link to be too obvious to need elucidating, but it seems to me that it is a highly significant and substantial step in the argument. We should note here that the word I have translated "proofs" — the Greek word is "*pistis*" — is often translated "means (or modes) of persuasion".[10] Making sense of the argument in this part of the text seems to turn crucially on what the correct understanding of "*pistis*" is. Recall, then, that Aristotle's arguments here have a real target. The handbook writers were offering practical advice on rhetoric. And people followed this advice: it was certainly the practice of many ancient orators to gain a persuasive advantage by irrelevant speaking. If their irrelevant speaking was the means by which they changed the minds of their audience, wouldn't this

[9] Cooper ([1999] 391) rightly insists that what is at issue here is the fact that the handbook writers were "giving instruction on how to speak off the subject, to speak about irrelevancies;" and that "περὶ δὲ τῶν ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος τὰ πλεῖστα πραγματεύονται" does not mean, as Cope thought, that they were labouring at things lying outside the art's concerns, "*extra artem* — outside the limits of a genuine 'Art of Rhetoric'" (Cope [1877] 4).

[10] E.g. W. Rhys Roberts in the *Revised Oxford Translation* (Barnes [1984]) and Kennedy [1991].

make it a means of persuasion, and hence a *pistis*? And wouldn't an expertise in changing people's minds by speaking be *ipso facto* an expertise in *rhetoric*? Aristotle has put his point so nicely that we miss how counter-intuitive his conclusion is. On a common-sense, man-in-the-street sort of view, someone who teaches another how to bring an audience round to their point of view simply by what they say (whatever that is) is thereby conveying an expertise in rhetoric. But Aristotle wishes to deny this, and restrict expertise in rhetoric to something more specific. His view entails that someone who is effective in bringing people round to his point of view *by use of enthymemes* is exercising an expertise in rhetoric, whereas someone who is equally effective in bringing people round to his point of view *by speaking irrelevantly* in the way the handbook writers recommend, cannot properly be said to be exercising an expertise in rhetoric at all. Whatever this latter person is doing, it's not exercising a skill in rhetoric. These two cases give a clear signal of his understanding of what rhetoric *is* — for he thinks it clearly follows from the very nature of rhetoric that the first case is an exercise of rhetorical expertise, and that the second case is not.

If this is correct, then it indicates how Aristotle's second argument against the handbook writers should be understood. Let us consider once again the two alternatives for the translation of "*pistis*" here — 'proof' and 'means of persuasion'. Thus far, we have used "proofs", and we will defend the view that this is the better translation for giving a general sense of what the text says. But it is somewhat misleading. In English, "proof" has a factive implication — if you have proof of something, it can't turn out false. The Greek "*pistis*" does not have *that* implication. However, "proof" also has normative implications — if you have had proof of something, then you *ought* to believe it. And whether Aristotle's "*pistis*" has such a normative implication is precisely what is at issue here. So, to take account of these clarifications, let the two options for translating "*pistis*" be (1) "proper grounds for conviction" and (2) "means of persuasion". If you have "proper grounds for conviction", then — absent any reasons to do otherwise — you ought to be convinced. Whereas if someone has deployed on you a "means of persuasion", then nothing follows about whether you *ought* to be convinced. I want to claim that in Aristotle's text, he is talking about "proper sources of conviction".[11] If that can be established, then the argument looks like this.

1. The handbook writers have dealt mainly with what is outside the issue (i.e. irrelevant to it) (a15f.)

[11] A more extensive defence of this claim is attempted in Dow [MS].

2. If what one says is irrelevant to an issue then it contributes nothing to giving someone proper grounds for conviction (roughly, a "proof") of a particular view on that issue. (premise supplied as obvious)[12]
3. The only thing that properly belongs to the art of rhetoric is giving proper grounds for conviction (a13f.)

We may infer:

4. Most of the handbook writers' work dealt with matters that contribute nothing to the only thing that properly belongs to the art of rhetoric

This gives good reason to suppose:

5. The handbook writers have produced scarcely a part of the art of rhetoric (a11–13)

It certainly looks as though the sentence that Ross put in parentheses — premise 3 above — is needed to play a key role in connecting the premises Aristotle gives with the conclusion he takes them to support, in the above argument (ii), just as it did in argument (i).

It also seems clear that this argument can only be made good on this normative understanding of "*pistis*". Consider a comparison between the key steps of this argument using the normative "proper sources of conviction" and the non-normative "means of persuasion".

> 2a If what I say is irrelevant to whether p, then it contributes nothing to proper grounds for conviction as to whether p.
> 3a Providing proper grounds for conviction is the only thing that belong to the expertise of rhetoric.
>
> 2b If what I say is irrelevant to whether p, then saying it is not such as to help getting someone to be convinced (i.e. is not a "means of persuasion") of p.
> 3b Helping, by saying things, to get people to be convinced is the only thing that belongs to the expertise of rhetoric.

There is seemingly a problem on either reading. On the first reading, while 2a is very plausible — perhaps even rather obvious, 3a is extremely contentious, and doesn't seem to be supported by any argument that Aristotle has offered thus far in the treatise. On the other hand, while 3b looks a much less contentious thing for Aristotle to be saying at a13f., it is paired with

[12] How could one offer proper grounds for conviction to somebody of a particular view on some issue without saying something *about* that issue?

2b which is obviously false — irrelevant speaking can be highly effective at getting people convinced. We know it, Aristotle's contemporaries knew it, and Aristotle himself also surely knew it.

In the end, I think this has to be fatal to that way of construing the argument. After all, it is premise 2 that is *unstated* in Aristotle's text, so we want something that could have been too obvious to need stating. 2a is just that, and 2b is a hopeless candidate.

What then about the fact that we construe "only the *pisteis* belong to the expertise" in the contentious way we do, as "only presenting proper sources of conviction belongs to the expertise"? There are two things that are contentious about this. One is that it seems as though many aspects apparently of rhetorical technique (delivery, diction, how to stand, gestures, even matters of arrangement of the speech — the introduction, conclusion, etc.) are excluded from belonging to rhetoric, at least to the extent that they do not contribute to providing the audience with proper grounds for conviction. The other is that if an orator has failed to give his audience *proper* grounds for conviction, he has not exercised the expertise of rhetoric — even if his speech has caused them to be convinced of his claims. In short, rhetoric without proofs is not rhetoric at all!

We may distinguish two key claims:

1. Only producing '*pisteis*' counts as exercising the expertise of rhetoric.
2. Producing a '*pistis*' is giving listeners some *proper* grounds for conviction.

Let us clarify these claims briefly.

Aristotle is not denying that it can matter in public speaking how you stand, how you project your voice, what figures of speech you use, and what your introduction is like. Indeed, virtually all of book III of his *Rhetoric* is devoted to such matters. His point is just what he says here — these matters are not what the expertise consists in, they are accessories. The distinction between 'belonging to the expertise' and 'accessory to it' should be understood as follows.[13] Any non-accidental instance of rhetorical persuasion can be fully explained by reference to those things that are essential components of the art itself. Nevertheless, the instance will have lots of other features which do not play a role in explaining why *this* person was persuaded of

[13] Cf. also Dow [2007] 397–8.

that conclusion. The latter are the 'accessories'. It is easy to see why excellent delivery and gaining the audience's attention are accessories. Persuasion can take place without them — audiences often pay attention of their own accord, and follow a speaker's argument even if delivered unimpressively. Conversely, without the essential components of rhetorical persuasion, you may have all the attentiveness and excellent delivery you like, but no persuasion will take place. If all you have are 'accessories', the best you can do is create conditions in which persuasion *could* easily take place. Rhetorical expertise (the *technê* of rhetoric) is what the expert has and the novice lacks, in virtue of which the expert is able to achieve non-accidental success in convincing an audience to believe some particular thing or do something (or feel something). Things that genuinely belong to rhetorical expertise are what do the work in producing conviction, things that do not — if they play any part at all towards the production of conviction — serve as enabling background conditions against which the production of conviction takes place.[14]

The second claim is the one whose justification seems both more interesting and more difficult. The claim is that rhetoric is exercised only in presenting *proper* sources of conviction. I think that this is indeed Aristotle's rather surprising view. I think he holds it because of how it fits with his understanding of rhetoric's purpose. And having made this claim somewhat out of the blue as part of an argument for dismissing virtually the whole *oeuvre* of these handbook writers, most of the rest of the opening chapter is devoted to defending it. That is, Aristotle states here, and defends with subsequent arguments, a normative account of what can count as an exercise of rhetorical expertise. We will look shortly at how this view can be defended, indeed how Aristotle actually does defend it. But first we should see how controversial it is.

We are used to saying things like, "Let's get beyond the rhetoric, and focus on the actual evidence!" or "I don't want rhetoric, I want a decent argument, a good reason for what you're recommending!" We typically talk of rhetoric in ways that *contrast* it with the giving of good evidence, good reasons, decent arguments. We think that it is a skill in rhetoric that enables Rumpole of the Bailey to win the weakest of cases, or that enables the British Conservative Party to convince the voters of rural Herefordshire that there is a flood of asylum seekers poised to overrun and destroy their communities. More

[14] Clearly, for Aristotle, it may well be that in practice, the successful practitioner may well need to be good at creating the optimal background conditions, so as to be able to deploy his actual expertise successfully. If I am right about Aristotle's understanding of what belongs inside and outside the art of rhetoric, it certainly does not seem to stop him from offering plenty of advice to the orator on "accessory" matters in *Rhetoric* book III.

specifically, in a forensic situation, speakers can often play on prejudices to get a jury to attach more or less weight to the testimony of someone who is black, gay, Jewish, an asylum seeker or a member of the aristocracy. Clearly a person's ethnicity or sexual orientation is irrelevant (except perhaps in unusual cases) to the quality of their testimony, and yet material like this can provide the resources for influencing listeners. These methods work. And — in our everyday way of speaking — we take it that using them effectively is a skill precisely *in rhetoric*.

The ancient picture is the same.[15] Perhaps the biggest names associated with the everyday, non-normative understanding of rhetoric (from which Aristotle so radically departs) are Thrasymachus and Gorgias. Consider, for instance, this passage from Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*.

> (8) But if it was speech which persuaded her and deceived her heart, not even to this is it difficult to make an answer and to banish blame as follows. Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity. I shall show how this is the case, since (9) it is necessary to offer proof to the opinion of my hearers: I both deem and define all poetry as speech with meter. Fearful shuddering and tearful pity and grievous longing come upon its hearers, and at the actions and physical sufferings of others in good fortunes and in evil fortunes, through the agency of words, the soul is wont to experience a suffering of its own. But come, I shall turn from one argument to another. (10) Sacred incantations sung with words are bearers of pleasure and banishers of pain, for, merging with opinion in the soul, the power of the incantation is wont to beguile it and persuade it and alter it by witchcraft. ...(12) What cause then prevents the conclusion that Helen similarly, against her will, might have come under the influence of speech, just as if ravished by the force of the mighty? For it was possible to see how the force of persuasion prevails; persuasion has the form of necessity, but it does not have the same power. For speech constrained the soul, persuading it which it persuaded, both to believe the things said and to approve the things done. The persuader, like a constrainer, does the wrong and the persuaded, like the constrained, in speech is wrongly charged. (13) To understand that persuasion, when added to speech, is wont also to impress the

[15] There are complications over the terminology, however. Cf. Cole [1990] for the controversial claim that Plato coined the term "rhetoric".

> soul as it wishes, one must study: first, the words of Astronomers who, substituting opinion for opinion, taking away one but creating another, make what is incredible and unclear seem true to the eyes of opinion; then, second, logically necessary debates in which a single speech, written with art but not spoken with truth, bends a great crowd and persuades; and, third, the verbal disputes of philosophers in which the swiftness of thought is also shown making the belief in an opinion subject to easy change. (14) The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions form the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.[16]

The kinds of metaphor used to describe the power of speech are those involving magic spells and potions, exercises of political power, the use of physical strength to coerce others, and the use of drugs in medicine. Thrasymachus picks up the physical force image in the reported title of one of his works on rhetoric "Knockdown Speeches" (DK 85B7), which casts the power of rhetoric in a forensic or political contest as akin to that of a wrestler. Put that together with the picture of Thrasymachus from Plato's *Republic* I, where his view of "justice" is as a tool by which the powerful exercise their power over the weak.[17] It fits nicely with that view to view rhetoric as just another tool for exercising power. The power of rhetoric (or of speech, *logos*) is comparable to any other force acting powerfully on its objects.

This is the ancient counterpart to our everyday conception of rhetoric. It may well be a bad thing if a speaker works his charm on an audience but fails to give them any good reasons for adopting his proposed point of view. But we scarcely think that this means he has failed to deploy a skill in rhetoric.

Herein lies the surprise in Aristotle's view.
Fail to give proper grounds for conviction, and you fail to deploy a skill in rhetoric.

[16] Translation from Sprague [1972].

[17] Here, I follow the interpretation of Chappell [1993] and [2000]. The contrast between Aristotle's and Thrasymachus's understanding of rhetoric is set out in more detail in Dow [2007] section III.

Notice also what this means for the stirring of audience emotions. Stirring the emotions of your audience will only count as the deployment of skill in rhetoric, if the arousal of emotions is a way of giving the audience proper grounds for conviction. It must be a way (roughly) of giving a proof. Of course, this puts some constraints on which ways of arousing emotion arousal will fit the bill. Furthermore, it seems to raise questions about whether Aristotle's understanding of what the emotions *are* (and how they *work* in affecting listeners' convictions) is compatible with thinking that when an orator stirs them up he is thereby conveying proof to his audience.[18] For the present, notice that emotion-arousal can feature as part of rhetoric only to the extent that it is a way of giving proof. But of course this is precisely where emotion-arousal *does* feature in Aristotle's developed account of rhetoric! It is one of three kinds of *pistis* — giving an argument, presenting the speaker as trustworthy, and arousing the emotions of the audience — these are Aristotle's three kinds of proof-giving.[19] If the difficult passages in I.1 that seem explicitly to exclude emotion-arousal from a place in rhetoric turn out not to do so,[20] then Aristotle's *general view*, his normative view, of rhetoric as a skill in providing proper grounds for conviction, will be entirely compatible with what he says about emotion-arousal later in the treatise.

Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric, then, is that it is a skill in providing an audience with proper grounds for conviction. It seems to have represented a substantial innovation against the previous tradition of thinking about rhetoric. And it stands in contrast to an everyday understanding of "rhetoric" in our own day.

What is proper about "proper grounds for conviction"?

What exactly are the normative constraints associated with "proof" (*pistis*) that, in Aristotle's view, limit what techniques count as part of the expertise of rhetoric? Space does not permit a detailed exegetical or philosophical answer here. Nevertheless, the fact that producing proofs excludes irrelevant speaking and that it paradigmatically includes arguments all suggests that it is *epistemic* propriety in the listener that is at issue. Exercising rhetoric should serve to preserve and enhance the epistemic propriety with which the

[18] I take up some of these questions in Dow [2009].

[19] *Rhetoric* I.2, 1356a1–20; II.1, 1377b20–24; III.1, 1403b9–13.

[20] The argument for this is in Dow [2007].

listener — the judge or jury in a lawsuit or the citizen in an assembly — arrives at his verdict. It must suffice here to simply to set out my proposal for how this requirement should be understood.[21]

Orator A gives listener B a *pistis* P for judgement J iff

1. P is so related to J that, if B regards the elements of P as reputable and is correct to do so, then it would be an exercise of good judgement on B's part if B were inclined to make judgement J because of P.
2. A presents P to B as
   a. comprised of things B is disposed to regard as reputable, and
   b. as so related to J that, if B does regard these as reputable, B should make judgement J because of P.
3. B is actually likely to
   a. regard the constituents of P as reputable
   b. see that P stands in the relevant kind of relations to J
   c. be more inclined to make judgement J as a result of A's having presented P as a basis for doing so.

If an account of this kind correctly expresses the detailed requirements that stand behind Aristotle's insistence that rhetoric is solely about presenting an audience with "proper grounds for conviction" (*pistis*), then it is clear that there is a central role in Aristotelian rhetoric for logic. For it is central to these requirements that the orator enable the listener to make *inferences* that are *correct*.

Such a close connection between logic and rhetoric vindicates not only the attention that Aristotle devotes within the *Rhetoric* to the logical devices relevant to the expertise.[22] It also seems to vindicate the preoccupation with the logical aspects of rhetoric that seems to have been shared by many of the earliest commentators.[23]

Let us now turn our attention to how Aristotle's proof-centred view of rhetoric might be defended.

[21] A more extensive explanation and defence of this proposal is offered in Dow [MS].

[22] Cf. especially *Rhetoric* I.1–3.

[23] Such a preoccupation is highly evident in the two ancient commentaries on the *Rhetoric* in *Commentaria Aristotelica Graeca*, as well as in Averroës' short commentary which shows little interest in anything other than logical devices (cf. Butterworth [1977]).

Defending Aristotle's Proof-Centred View of Rhetoric

1. The Plausibility of Aristotle's view of Rhetoric

We have noticed already that Aristotle's view is in some ways more "high-minded" than our everyday use of the concept 'rhetoric', and more high-minded in similar ways than the understanding many of Aristotle's predecessors had of what skill in speaking consisted in. Nevertheless, the first thing to say in defence of this view is that it is not nearly so high-minded as it might have been. Indeed, it is still quite a permissive view. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato (or at least the character Socrates) advocates a view of rhetoric such that possessing it required that the speaker possess not only knowledge of the truth about the topic he is speaking on, but also an extensive knowledge about human psychology — he should know all the different types of soul someone can have, and for each of these precisely what treatments will produce what results, so that he can deploy exactly the words that are necessary to bring his listeners to believe the truth on the subject in question. The Platonic conception of genuine rhetoric from the *Phaedrus* is that it is a lot like medical skill: you need to know physiology, treatments, and the human good, so you can deploy the right treatments to the right bodies at the right time to get the right results.[24]

Aristotle's view stands in contrast to that. Roughly speaking, whereas Platonic rhetoric produces knowledge or true judgement in listeners, Aristotelian rhetoric produces justification.[25] So long as I present my listener with something she has good grounds to accept, and which — if true — gives some reason for accepting my proposed conclusion, then I can to that extent be deploying rhetorical skill.

Likewise, unlike the kind of rhetoric set out by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, there is no reason why Aristotelian rhetoric cannot be exercised in defending a hopeless case. So long as there is *something* to be said for the defendant's claim, there is something that is proper grounds for believing that claim. Absent any other considerations, this one thing would be good grounds for conviction. Presenting this skilfully such that its full force in favour of the

[24] Interestingly, while (in the *Phaedrus*) the Platonic requirements on the speaker's knowledge seem impossibly high, there seems little scruple about the legitimacy of the *methods* by which the listener is induced to form true beliefs on the matter in question. On this point, Aristotle's insistence on proper grounds for conviction seems more stringent.

[25] More strictly-speaking, the listener's judgements produced by Aristotelian rhetoric will be justified only from the listener's perspective, since the starting points for the listener's reasoning are required only to be *held* to be reputable *by the listener*.

defendant's claim is appreciated could quite properly be classed as an exercise of rhetorical skill, on Aristotle's picture. This is so, even if there are other features of the case that ought vastly to outweigh it in an all-things-considered judgement.

So, Aristotle's picture of rhetorical skill does allow certain kinds of manipulation to be still genuine exercises of rhetoric. Aristotelian rhetoric can still be dangerous in the wrong hands — it will enable great effectiveness in presenting only one side of an issue, or in distorting the comparative significance of different considerations.[26]

This is significant, in that there would seem to be something wrong with a conception of rhetoric that did not have any room for its manipulative or wrongful use. So, while Aristotle's conception of rhetoric seems to exclude some things that both we and many of his contemporaries would include, it is nevertheless not so high-minded as to be intelligible as a rival account of the same thing.

2. The nature of rhetoric and its place in the state

Rhetoric, the Areopagus and Good-Governance

In the sections of the *Rhetoric* immediately following the passage analysed above (I.1, 1354a11–18), the basis becomes clear for Aristotle's controversial restriction of rhetoric to the provision of proper sources of conviction. He launches a further argument against the handbook writers which, I shall argue, is properly intelligible only against certain background assumptions about rhetoric's role in the state. It is this understanding of rhetoric's civic role that constitutes Aristotle's justification for his controversial proof-centred view of rhetoric. As will be seen, the opening chapter of the *Rhetoric* contains a sequence of several arguments that either express or presuppose this view of rhetoric as having an important role in the successful functioning of the state.

The first is this.

> The result is that if all judgements were conducted the way they actually are today in a mere handful of cities — principally those with the best governance (Gk. *eunomoumenais*) — they would have nothing to say. For everyone thinks that this should be what the laws

[26] *Rhetoric* I.1, 1355b2–7.

> declare, whereas [only] some actually implement this and forbid speaking outside the subject at hand, as they also do in the Areopagus, and they are quite correct to have this rule. (*Rhetoric* I.1, 1354a18–24)

Aristotle continues his demolition of the writers of handbooks on rhetoric. That the handbook writers' techniques are not techniques of rhetoric is shown by the fact *not* that they are unusable in political and forensic contexts as they actually are, but that they are unusable in political and forensic contexts as they *should be*. Aristotle even seems to concede that in most actual civic situations there is no difficulty deploying them. His remarks are thus focussed on a handful of actual cases where civic affairs are run in the way they *should* be. And his claim seems to be that even if there were no such cases in the actual world, his point would still hold. The fact that techniques for slander and irrelevant speaking would be barred in well-governed civic institutions shows that they cannot be part of genuine rhetoric. How does his argument work?

One simple construal might be this. The Areopagus (amongst other things a court for homicide cases) and similar institutions are situations in which jurors should listen with equanimity to speakers on both sides of a case, even though in the end, one side of the case was bound to be rejected. Hence, it seems as though these are paradigm situations in which rhetoric is actually needed to give each side its fair chance and its best representation. So it cannot plausibly be thought that rhetoric itself is ruled out by the *correct* running of such institutions. Not just that, but it seems as though the idea that all sides should get their best possible representation in the kind of way that rhetoric seems to provide is absolutely central to good governance (Gk. *eunomia*), the correct running of institutions to which Aristotle appeals in this passage. Areopagus rules cannot plausibly be thought to eliminate the possibility of exercising rhetorical skill. Neither can good governance be thought to leave no room for it. So, on this simple construal, the argument is based on thinking that good governance cannot bar every exercise of rhetorical expertise.

This cannot, however, be all that is intended here. On this construal, the argument would show merely that the handbook writers had not given us *everything* that is involved in rhetorical expertise. But Aristotle clearly aims to show not just that there are some significant aspects of rhetoric that the handbook writers have omitted, but that what they *have* included tells us

little or nothing about rhetoric. So, construed thus, the argument doesn't deliver what Aristotle needs.

What he needs is an argument to the effect that for any given kind of activity, if a correct ordering of civic institutions would bar it, then that kind of activity cannot constitute an exercise of rhetoric. I suggest the argument of this passage must have the following structure.

1. If something is an exercise of genuine rhetorical expertise then it would not (except *per accidens*) be prohibited by a well-ordered state.
2. Hence, if techniques for irrelevant speaking are exercises of genuine rhetorical expertise then they would not be prohibited by a well-ordered state.
3. But a well-ordered state *would* prohibit the use of techniques for irrelevant-speaking (1354a23f.).
4. Therefore techniques for irrelevant speaking are not exercises of genuine rhetorical expertise ("*The result is* . . . " a18).

The argument hangs largely on the plausibility of the first premise. It is perhaps quite intuitive — good orderings of state are not supposed to rule out debate and deliberation, and the skills that enable that to happen surely would not be such that exercising them would be prohibited in a well-ordered state. In fact, Aristotle's use of this premise seems to rest on more interesting foundations, which suggest why we too might have good reason to take a similar view of rhetorical skill to his.

The first foundation is dialectical. The views of Thrasymachus and Gorgias on rhetoric were sketched above. They tended to think of discourse, speech and rhetoric as fundamentally about power. Rhetoric was a skill in using particular techniques (involving speech) to exert power over others. These views have their contemporary counterparts in those who are sceptical about the value of *argument* to help us towards political or legal judgements that are genuinely better, truer, more accurate, better founded. In their view, arguments and speeches are simply ways of manipulating people. Indeed, the very concepts "true", "better" and "more accurate" are part of the same apparatus of power, typically establishment power. Such views seem as vulnerable to Aristotle's argument as those of Gorgias and Thrasymachus. The argument is this. Suppose you think that the very idea of "good governance" or "correct regulation" of the state is simply a tool of those in power. Suppose too that you think that (as Gorgias and Thrasymachus did) that rhetoric is the supreme tool for gaining and maintaining power — people submit to its

influence *willingly*, with the illusion of autonomy! There's at least paradox and perhaps direct inconsistency in supposing that the tools of those in power (the "good governance" of civic institutions) could cut off the very means by which the very same people, the powerful, gain and maintain control. On this view, you just would not expect a conflict between "good governance" and rhetoric, since both are tools of the powerful. Thrasymachus and Gorgias and those with similar views are already committed to agreeing with premise 1 of our outline above — that rhetoric would not be prohibited by a "well-ordered" state.

Rhetoric, Good Governance, and the purpose of Orator and Listener

For Aristotle himself, though, assent to the connection between rhetoric and good-governance (*eunomia*) that the above argument requires is likely to have rested on rather different foundations. In brief, Aristotle's view seems to be that rhetoric is an expertise which enables someone to perform well certain functions within a state — presenting arguments in court, advocating a course of action in political deliberation, recommending someone or something for public honour or censure. That is, rhetoric is one of the mechanisms that helps the state to be well-governed. That is rhetoric's goal: assisting the mechanisms of *eunomia*. *Eunomia* is, in turn, part of the wider business of the state, aimed at the well-being of the state and its citizens — or, in Aristotle's terms — "the human good". So, on this view, Aristotle's view of rhetoric is (perhaps unsurprisingly) teleological, rhetoric has a purpose which is ultimately to make a particular kind of contribution to the flourishing of the state and of people. It is easy to see how, if this view is correct, he would think that things that are *rightly* barred in *well*-governed states could not be genuine exercises of rhetorical expertise.

Aristotle's Teleological View of Rhetoric

(i) At the start of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains how certain activities and forms of expertise fall "under" or within a larger activity or expertise, such that the goal of the first is pursued for the sake of the goal of the second larger (more 'architectonic') activity or expertise. So, the expertise of bridle-making aims at making good bridles, but since this is a case where bridle-making is governed by a larger expertise, horsemanship, this end — good bridles — is itself desirable for the sake of the purpose of the larger activity, i.e. riding horses.[27] Aristotle goes on to suggest that we see just this hierarchy

[27] *EN* I.1.1094a9–16.

of expertises in relation to political expertise, indeed that political expertise has all[28] activities and forms of expertise within its scope — specifically including rhetoric.

> If so, then one must try to grasp it at least in outline, that is, what it [the chief good] might be, and to which sort of expertise or productive capacity it belongs. It would seem to belong to the most sovereign, i.e. the most 'architectonic'. Political expertise appears to be like this, for it is this expertise that sets out which of the expertises there needs to be in cities, and what sorts of expertise each group of people should learn, and up to what point; and we see even the most prestigious of the productive capacities falling under it, for example generalship, household management, rhetoric; and since it makes use of the practical expertises that remain, and furthermore legislates about what one must do and what things one must abstain from doing, the end of this expertise will contain those of the rest; so that this end will be the human good. (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.1.1094a24–b7)[29]

It seems clear that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle sees rhetoric as falling within the scope of political expertise. Hence, the aim of rhetoric is choiceworthy for the sake of the aim of political expertise, namely the human good. If his view of rhetoric is unchanged between the *Rhetoric* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, then it is clear that Aristotle has here part of the basis for the kinds of arguments we have been looking at in *Rhetoric* I.1. If rhetoric's aim is choiceworthy ultimately for the sake of the human good, and if this is the aim of political expertise, then it is clear that anything that was a genuine exercise of rhetorical expertise would make some contribution towards a good that was choiceworthy for the sake of the overall human good, and hence recognised as valuable by political expertise. Thus, according to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, rhetoric aims at some good.[30] Clearly, also, an activity that was prohibited by the exercise of political expertise (for example, by correct laws) because it made no contribution to any goal recognised as valuable by political expertise, could not be an exercise of rhetoric

[28] If, against Bywater, "πρακτικαῖσ" is retained at 1094b4, then Aristotle may intend a restriction of the scope of this claim.

[29] Translation: Rowe [2002].

[30] This, of course, was already entailed by the very first sentence of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a1–2.

or of any other genuine expertise. Nevertheless, Aristotle's argument in the *Rhetoric* requires more than merely that rhetoric promote *some* good goal. We require something more like the view that rhetoric promotes a goal that is indispensable to the success of the state. The *Nicomachean Ethics* arguably gives us a hint in this direction in classifying rhetoric as one of the "most prestigious" (1094b3) of the capacities, alongside generalship and household management. Aristotle's point in context seems to be that the most likely alternative candidates for being the expertise in the human good[31] are themselves subordinate to *politikê*, hence the latter has a better claim to be the expertise to which the human good belongs. The significance for our argument here is that rhetoric's good goal is something that is so significantly valuable it might be mistaken for the human good itself. Our proposal is that this is good judgement. At any rate, this passage supports the claim that for Aristotle rhetoric's purpose was such that genuine techniques of rhetorical expertise could not be barred by an ideal ordering of the state.

(ii) There is a good case to be made that, in the *Rhetoric* also, Aristotle's view of rhetoric is teleological, and no good reason to suppose it substantially different from his view in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Indeed, at several points, Aristotle explicitly states what he takes to be the purpose aimed at by an orator in speaking. This purpose is to demonstrate that things are as he claims, and this can be made more precise in each oratorical situation by attending to what judgement is at issue, that is, what kind of judgement the listener is to make.

> Moreover it is plain that the job of the disputants is nothing beyond demonstrating the matter at hand — is it the case or isn't it? Has it happened or hasn't it? (*Rhetoric* I.1, 1354a26–28)

> For here [in political deliberation] the judge judges about his own affairs, such that all there is to do is[32] demonstrate that things are as the speaker says. (I.1, 1354b29–31)

[31] That some saw rhetoric this way is perhaps suggested also by Aristotle's remark at *Rhetoric* I.2, 1356a27–30 about those who, for various reasons, mistakenly practise rhetoric *in place of 'politikê'*.

[32] The thought is that this represents how things *should* be, ideally, in every rhetorical situation: as such it sheds light on what rhetoric's purpose is. What is worthwhile in other situations may show nothing about the purpose of rhetoric, but about the vices of other participants which the orator must undertake to counteract.

> Let us take rhetoric to be an ability in relation to each thing to observe what is capable of being persuasive. This is the function (*ergon*) of no other expertise. (I.2, 1355b26–28)

> The forms of rhetoric are three in number. For that is how many kinds of listeners that there are for speeches. Indeed it is from three things that a speech comes about: the one who speaks, what is spoken about, and the one spoken to, and the purpose (*telos*) is in relation to the latter — the listener, I mean. Necessarily the listener is either a observer or a judge, and a judge is either a judge of things past or of things future. The one who makes a judgement about future things is, for example, an assemblyman; the one who makes a judgement about things past is, for example, the juror; and about ability, the observer. So there must necessarily be three forms of rhetorical speeches — advisory, forensic and epideictic. ... Each of these has a different purpose (*telos*), three [purposes] for three [forms of speech]. For the advisor it is the advantageous and the harmful (indeed, someone proposing something advises it on grounds that it is better; the opposition opposes it as being worse), and he marshals other matters in relation to this — whether it is lawful or unlawful or fine or shameful. To forensic speakers it is what is lawful and unlawful — these too marshal everything else in relation to these. To those praising or blaming it is what is fine and what is shameful — these also refer other matters back to these. (I.3, 1358a36–b8, b20–29)

The above passages seem to present a consistent view. The function (*ergon*) of rhetorical expertise is enabling the orator to see what features of the situation offer a basis for convincing someone of his preferred view of the issue. The latter is the aim (*telos*) — to prove his case as securely as the situation permits. These passages offer various formulations of this aim "to demonstrate the issue, that it is the case or isn't ..." (1354a27f.), "to demonstrate that things are as the speaker says" (1354b30f.), and more bluntly for each kind of rhetoric, the aim is stated as "the advantageous and the harmful ... the lawful and the unlawful ... the fine and the shameful" (1358b22, 26, 28). Aristotle is careful to point out at 1355b10–14[33] that the function of rhetorical expertise is not to persuade but to observe the persuasive features offered by the situation, and this is reflected also in the wording of 1355b26ff. above.

[33] On the basis of comparison with other *technai*, particularly medicine.

Rhetoric's function serves to enable its aim to be achieved. Rhetoric's aim is to prove some particular view of any given issue; rhetoric's function is to pursue that aim as best the situation permits, by bringing to light whatever features of the situation count in favour of that particular view of the issue. Where the situation does not have much to offer, the final result may be that the orator has not convinced the listener, despite having flawlessly exercised rhetorical expertise.

Much of this is familiar fare in the interpretation of the *Rhetoric*. But what is important here is to draw attention to the *way* in which the role and purpose of the orator are determined by their relationship to the role of the listener. The two are intimately interrelated, as 1358b1f. (cited above) makes explicitly clear. Indeed, it makes sense additionally to suppose that Aristotle thought that the role and purpose of both orator and listener are determined by their place in a larger political arrangement whose goal is the human good.[34] There is no conflict between the orator's aim of proving *his* case, and the aim of the listener, and of the aim of these political institutions — for instance the aim of the judge and of the courts to return the best possible verdict.

Rhetoric's purpose, the Orator's purpose, and the Judge's purpose

Let us, then, revisit the argument based on the Areopagus and well-governed institutions (1354a18–26, quoted above). We have seen that Aristotle understood rhetoric as a skill in discharging a valuable public role whose goal was good publicly-deliberated judgements. This background — expressed in the first four steps of this argument — now renders intelligible how the argument works overall.

1. Insofar as something is a way of exercising the expertise of rhetoric, to that extent that thing contributes to producing good public judgements (cf. 1354a13).
2. Insofar as something contributes to producing good public judgements, to that extent that thing enables the state to run properly.
3. Insofar as something enables the state to run properly the laws should not prohibit that thing.
4. (from 1, 2 and 3) Insofar as something is a way of exercising the expertise of rhetoric, the laws should not prohibit that thing.

[34] There is a worry here that in (re)defining rhetoric this way, Aristotle has simply changed the subject. I take up this worry in Dow [MS].

5. Insofar as using some speaking technique influences the listener irrespective of the merits of their case, the laws should prohibit the use of that technique. ("the laws should . . . prohibit speaking outside the subject" 1354a21–4)
6. All of the speaking techniques of the handbook writers are techniques for influencing the listener irrespective of the merits of the speaker's case. (background information about what the handbook writers taught, under the title "rhetoric": 'they busy themselves predominantly with things outside the subject' 1354a15f.)
7. (from 5 and 6) The laws should prohibit all of the speaking techniques of the handbook writers. (1354a20–21 "they would have nothing to say")
8. (from 4 and 7) The techniques of the handbook writers are not techniques of rhetoric (i.e. "they have produced virtually nothing of the art" (1354a11–13)).

The same background understanding about rhetoric's role in the state that renders this argument intelligible and cogent also serves to justify Aristotle's claim that rhetoric is a skill in producing proper grounds for conviction. We see this understanding expressed in the arguments that follow.

The importance of the Judge to the Purpose of Rhetoric

There are a number of indications in the text that Aristotle sees the purpose of the orator *qua* orator as intimately related to the task of the judge. As we have seen, at I.3.1358b1–2 (and throughout 1358b1–59a6) he says that the orator's purpose is related to the listener, and specifically that the orator's purpose in each kind of rhetoric will be given by what it is that the listener is trying to form a judgement of, in the situation addressed by rhetoric of that kind. So, for example, the fact that the listener is the judge in a forensic case supplies the orators' purpose, namely to show that such-and-such a crime was or was not committed as alleged (depending on whether one is prosecuting or defending). This seems to indicate that whereas for Gorgias, Thrasymachus or Callicles the listener is merely a tool or plaything for the orator's purposes, for Aristotle the orator's role is ancillary to that of the listener.

One passage in *Rhetoric* I.1, however, might seem to suggest otherwise.

> For one shouldn't warp the judge by bringing him into anger or envy or pity. For that would be like someone warping the ruler he is about to use. (I.1, 1354a24–26)

In the analogy, the ruler is the judge, the carpenter is the orator — so this might suggest that the judge is ancillary to the orator's purpose, rather than *vice versa*. Such an interpretation, however, seems to miss the point of the comparison. The suggestion of the simile is that warping the judge defeats the orator's own purposes, just as warping his ruler defeats the carpenter's purposes. Aristotle is not interested in whether there is some kind of priority to the role of orator or of judge. One can make sense of the passage by seeing the role and purpose of each as interdependent. The judge's purpose is to make a justified judgement on the matter in hand — for this he needs justifications, proofs, things that bear one way or the other on the matter in hand, and this is why the orator is useful to him as a supplier of these things. The orator's purpose is that the judge form a justified judgement on the matter at hand, and that that judgement be the one he is urging! It will defeat this purpose if the orator's approach prevents the judge from making a justified judgement at all. But it is crucial to notice that if the judge's verdict is in the orator's favour, this confirms the correctness of the orator's position in just the same way that a ruler can confirm the straightness of the carpenter's handiwork. A ruler is a cognitive instrument, it tells the carpenter something about his handiwork. Similarly, the judge's verdict is germane to the orator's purpose, confirming the correctness, the likely truth of the orator's position. Even though a bent ruler or a warped judge can announce a verdict of a sort, the verdict announced has lost its cognitive value as confirmation that joints are straight, or that the orator's contention is correct. The carpenter's rule simile suggests that the purpose of the orator himself is not just to get a particular verdict, but to get it in such a way as to validate the truth of his position.

If this is right, and the cognitive competence of the judge is precisely what is needed to achieve the orator's aim, then this will illuminate both why "warping the judge" fails to promote that aim, and also, more widely, why saying *anything* that is outside the issue will fail to promote that aim. This seems to shed helpful light on a further difficult passage, almost immediately after the carpenter's rule simile.

The Argument from Well-Governed States and Virtuous Judges

There is a puzzling passage that runs from 1354a31 to 1355a3, but whose conclusion seems highly significant for our claim that for Aristotle only providing proofs constitutes an exercise of the expertise of rhetoric. The sentence immediately following this passage begins,

> Since it is clear that the method that belongs to the expertise is concerned with the proofs . . . (1355a3f.)

and this seems to be a way of summarising what has become obvious as a result of the preceding arguments. We may therefore expect the intervening passage to contain arguments that support Aristotle's proof-centred view of rhetoric.

The first part of the passage (1354a31–1354b16) aims to establish that the role of the judges should be confined to making a judgement on the particular facts of the case, and as little as possible else (b11–15). The role of the judges will *necessarily* involve a judgement on the facts of the case — since no lawgiver can foresee such things (b13–16). And the role of the judges will *ideally* involve nothing else at all besides this (a31–3, b11–13). In an ideal situation, if the judges are deliberating only about the facts of the case, then it is pointless for the orator's speech to contain material that does not bear on these. On the simplest interpretation of this passage, then, establishing the correct role of the judge enables Aristotle to make clear what the "issue" (τὸ πρᾶγμα) is in a forensic context. Once this is clear, it is obvious that the handbook writers have instructed on speaking "outside the issue", that is on speaking in a way that is pointless if the judges deliberate as they should. Establishing the subject matter of the judges' deliberations shows the irrelevance of the handbook writers' techniques.

This simple line of interpretation cannot be right. Firstly, it leaves Aristotle open to an obvious objection. The fact that certain techniques would be pointless before *ideal* judges seems to show nothing about whether they are pointless before *actual* judges. If, as Aristotle seems to think (1354a19), law courts and laws typically fall short of the ideal, then the issues that jurors are *in fact* considering may not so obviously render the handbook writers' materials irrelevant.

Secondly, this view generates a problem with the concluding part of this passage.

> If this is correct, then it is obvious that it is an expertise in irrelevance that is the subject discussed by those who give definitions of other things, such as what the introduction or narrative should contain or each of the other parts of the speech — since in them they busy themselves with nothing except how to put the judge into a certain condition, and they set out nothing about the proofs that

> belong to the expertise, that is to say the means of becoming good at enthymemes. (1354b16–22)

It is hard to see how 1354b20ff. ("and they set out . . . ") adds any further intelligible reason for supposing that the handbook writers were instructing on speaking irrelevantly. And yet, if the passage were centrally about whether or not the handbook writers' techniques were relevant, we should expect that it should add a further reason to support the charge of irrelevance.[35] Aristotle's remarks at 1354b20ff. cannot be such a reason. The problem is that at 1354a11ff., the irrelevance of their techniques has been cited as a basis on which to suppose that the handbook writers had said nothing about the proofs that constitute rhetoric. If this were his argument, Aristotle had better establish the irrelevance of the handbook writers' material *independently* of the conclusion he uses it to support — namely their failure to address the proofs, the real constituents of the art of rhetoric. Yet, on the interpretation under consideration, since Aristotle is now citing their failure to address the proofs that constitute rhetoric as a basis for the charge of irrelevance, he is guilty of a damaging circularity of argument.

It seems much better to take the argument of 1354a31–b22 to be more like the argument below. Crucially its conclusion serves to corroborate the main contention of this section of the *Rhetoric*, from 1354a11 onwards — that the handbook writers have contributed next to nothing to rhetoric. The key concluding sentence (1354b16–22) could be paraphrased, "establishing the correct role of the judge makes it plain that by instructing in speaking outside the issue the handbook writers have not instructed in using the expertise of rhetoric." Its argument is, I suggest, as follows.

1. It had previously been shown that (a) the orator's role involves the judges successfully discharging their role (1354a25f.); and (b) the orator's role is solely to offer proof of some particular view of those subjects on which judges may properly deliberate and be assisted by orators (1354a26–31).
2. It is correct [that the proper subjects for the judges' deliberations and hence for an orator are restricted to x, y and z]. ("*if this is correct*" b16)

[35] The structure of the passage on this view would be "If this is so, they are teaching irrelevancies when they say lots about such-and-such, and say nothing about the artful proofs," to paraphrase 1354b16–22.

3. The handbook writers spent all their time defining what each part of the speech should contain (b17–19), and in doing so covered exclusively emotional techniques [not involving x, y and z]. (b19–20)
4. Therefore (from 2 and 3) the handbook writers' techniques are for speaking that is irrelevant to the only proper subjects for judges and orator. (b16–17)
5. What is irrelevant to a subject cannot constitute any kind of proof, and specifically proof by enthymeme, of a particular view of that subject. (presupposed as obvious)
6. And therefore (from 4 and 5) they have said nothing about how to give proofs on the only subjects that are proper for an orator. (b21)
7. (from 1 and 6) They have said nothing about how to do the only thing that "belongs to the expertise" (b21). i.e. They have said nothing about successfully discharging the one activity in which the orator's role consists (which in fact is a matter of being good at enthymemes (b21–2)).

What this argument highlights is that once it is assumed that rhetoric is a skill in discharging the valuable civic role of promoting well-deliberated public judgements, it is clear that only what contributes to the production of proofs will count as exercising this skill. Such a view makes sense of the interlocking aims of the speaker to have his case vindicated, of the judge to make a well-founded judgement, and of the state to secure the best possible verdicts in courts, assemblies and elsewhere. This view, I have argued, is presupposed by the above argument and the argument from Areopagus rules, and is supported by the "Carpenter's Rule" argument. It is because rhetoric aims at citizens' making judgements that are well-founded that it must consist in the provision of materials that assist them in making correct inferences in forming their judgement. That is, rhetoric must consist essentially in the provision of proofs.

Conclusion

This view of rhetoric, in which proof occupies such a central place, makes the ability to distinguish correct from incorrect inference a vital part of the expertise. Arguably, the slogan with which the *Rhetoric* begins, "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic!" advertises just this feature. And it may not, on reflection, seem so surprising that the inventor of logic emphasised how important this was to the education of the aspiring orator! Young men in Athens had plenty of teachers of rhetoric from which to choose. Not all would be so well placed to educate them in logic as Aristotle, and — on the interpretation defended here — he did not shrink from emphasising at the

start of his course on rhetoric the centrality to the expertise of proof. He did so by reference to rhetoric's role in politics — possibly itself a central reason why young Athenian men wished to acquire skills in rhetoric in the first place. Aristotle's claim is that this political role entails a central role in rhetoric for proof and hence for the skills of dialectic, including logic. In doing so, he perhaps implies to his students how well they had done to choose him as their teacher![36]

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